

WCSFAzine

The Fannish E-zine of the West Coast Science Fiction Association
Dedicated to Promoting VCON, Canada's Oldest Continuing SF Convention.

#21

Jan 2011



You can't go to sleep! This room party is just getting started!

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ART CREDITS:

Clip Art: Cover, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

Jean-Pierre Normand: 3, 4.

EDITORIAL

Well, this was supposed to be published last year prior to VCON 35. And considering I won the 2010 Fan Achievement (Fanzine) Prix Aurora Award for the previous 20 issues of WCSFAzine (Hurrah!), it certainly would have made sense for me to put out another issue as soon as possible.

However, I was physically and mentally worn out by the physical demands of my warehouse job. I'd reached the point where I'd come home, fall asleep for a nap, and sleep right through to the next morning with my wife completely unable to wake me for supper. I might manage an hour or two of mental effort on the weekend, but not sufficient to get any writing done. Frankly, I felt I was sinking into an early grave.

All that changed with an inheritance. After weeks of number crunching I determined that, in the immortal words of Picasso 'I want to be rich enough to live like a poor man'. If Alyx and I live as frugally as we've been accustomed to, the combination of inheritance and assorted pensions should allow us to survive **without me working!** That's good enough. Enough to save my life, or at least add a few more years. Freedom 59.5! I am now officially retired.

Originally WCSFAzine was sort of half 'club' zine and half 'perzine'. But as I intend to revive my perzine SPACE CADET articles on fannish history, movies, and other such personal interests will be assigned to its pages. WCSFAzine, on the other hand, will concentrate on promoting VCON, revealing VCON history, and exploring the history of other Canadian SF conventions. I will include Fannish news worthy of note, plus Mr. Science & Mr. Guess-It-All to lighten things up. Overall, I hope to be as informative and entertaining as possible.

Cheers! R. Graeme Cameron

Many thanks to Bill Burns at < <http://www.efanzines.com> > for hosting.
Please send me feedback! You can reach me at: < rgraeme [at] shaw.ca >

VCON 36 NEWS

(Convention Dates: Friday Sept 30th, Saturday Oct 1st, & Sunday Oct 2nd, 2011)

LATEST VCON 36 ANNOUNCEMENTS!

VENUE CONFIRMED: [THE SHERATON VANCOUVER AIRPORT HOTEL](#) at 7551 Westminster Hwy, Richmond, B.C., Canada V6X 1A3.

This is right next door to last year's hotel. In fact it is where the Gaming Room and Dealer's room of VCON 35 were placed. Now we'll have the bulk of the function space which offers approximately twice as much room as last year! Hospitality will be bigger, the Art Show will be bigger, everything will provide more elbow space to move about and mingle. (See page 27 for more details)

THEME DECLARED:

[VISIONS OF THE FUTURE:](#)
[IMAGINING TOMORROW](#)
[FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT](#)

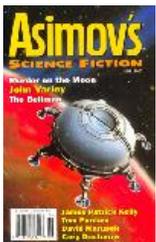
This theme covers everything from the history of Fandom to the reality of today VS what our contemporary world was supposed to be like as predicted by writers, artists, films and fans 30 years ago, 50 years ago, etc. Are we worse than their shining vision of the future? Where are all the glittering towers of adamantine steel and diamond glass they anticipated? Are we in some ways better than their vision of what would come to pass? And what the heck is going to happen in OUR future? Do we even HAVE a future? Is it too late to switch to THEIR future? Points to ponder.

The programming will by no means be restricted to the theme, but undoubtedly a great deal of interest will be inspired by it.

The editor, for instance, will give an illustrated slide lecture on Canadian fans and clubs from the 1930s to the 1950s. You'd be surprised what went on back then. And if you think fans are eccentric now... Some very interesting personalities back in the day...

ARTIST GoH ANNOUNCED: [JEAN-PIERRE NORMAND](#)

Jean-Pierre Normand is a professional illustrator specializing in Science Fiction and Fantasy art for 20 years. Over 100 pieces of his book and magazine cover art have been published in North America to date. He usually works in ink and acrylic applied with brush and air-brush, the average size of his originals being 9 by 16 inches.



His work has been shown at various conventions and exhibits. He has won several awards, most notably the Aurora for Artistic Achievement in Canada which he received in 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2001. Examples of his work were published in the book SPECTRUM: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART. Among the magazines featuring his cover art are ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION, ANALOG, SOLARIS, ON SPEC, and SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE.

He also conceived and designed some of the sets for the movie THE ADVENTURES OF PLUTO NASH, and designed machinery for the production of OCEANIA.

Editor's note: I met Jean-Pierre at the Primedia convention in Toronto in 1997. Here are some excerpts from my trip report which convey some of my impressions of Jean-Pierre:

While perusing the art show proper I see the original 'Titanic about to strike the dorsal plates of a submerged Godzilla' by Jean-Pierre Normand. A note states that prints are for sale in room 510. Immediately I hotfoot it to said room only to discover no one is in. Later, I promise myself, later. I will not go home without one.

.....
1) Jean-Pierre Normand wins for ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT for assorted book and magazine covers. He won in the same category last year as well. With a beard as black and curly as his hair he rather resembles Zeus.



.....
I then go up to Jean-Pierre Normand to congratulate him on his victory. As we shake hands I ask him how I can get a hold of that beautiful Titanic/Godzilla print of his. He tells me to come on up to the Boreal Con*cept party he will be throwing in his room once he gets up there. Great!

.....
Jean-Pierre greets me as I enter his room. It is very crowded with people sitting everywhere, including the floor. He sells me a print (out of a limited edition of 200) of the Titanic about to strike Godzilla's fins. It's beautiful. I especially like the deep blue of the water which well emphasizes how cold the scene is. He also offers me a print of the "Seaview" and I snap that up as well. I praise the realism of both pictures.



Pleased by my response, he hauls out his portfolio from underneath the bed. He does the kind of hard-edged, photo-realist art that I especially like. And he does more than just spacecraft, as I pour through the covers he's done for "SOLARIS" and "ON SPEC" as well as covers for assorted novels, I find his attention to detail with old sailing ships and aircraft (albeit posed in fantasy or SF situations) to be nothing short of fantastic. (And by the way, his Godzilla print recently graced the cover of "G-FAN", the slick semi-pro Godzilla Fanzine out of Manitoba.)

Inspired by my interest, Jean-Pierre pulls out his photo collection depicting his many SF models. Hordes of them. Shelf after shelf after shelf of models of assorted monsters and spaceships from various films. I am impressed that he has so many. He is impressed that I recognize most of them. We get along hugely well....

So you see, Jean-Pierre is more than just a brilliant SF illustrator, he is also a passionate fan of old time sci-fi B movies! I sincerely hope we can snag him for some programming to do with the old classics. As a noted (infamous) devotee of such films I'd dearly love to share a panel with him and others of our ilk. It would be educational! Inspirational! Maybe even hilarious! I await the will of the Goddesses of programming...

At the very least, it's a topic I'm sure he'd be delighted to discuss in conversation at room parties, in hospitality, and so forth. After all, he did with me. Why not you?

MEDIA GoH ANNOUNCED: [LISSA LASSECK](#)

lissa Lasseck is a film editor and producer whose credits include her role as associate producer for Joss Whedon's television show **FIREFLY** and film editor for his feature length film **SERENITY** and his internet show **DR. HORRIBLE'S SING-ALONG BLOG**. Lisa has also edited episodes of **BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER**, **ANGEL**, **TRU CALLING**, **WONDERFALLS**, **BLADE: THE SERIES**, and **PUSHING DAISIES**.

WRITERS WORKSHOPS NOW OPEN TO SUBMISSIONS:

Once again I will be hosting/moderating three Writers Workshops. Professional authors and fellow participants will critique YOUR 5,000 word Science Fiction or Fantasy short story or Novel first chapter beginning. Manuscripts will be distributed by email. Price? Your convention membership. No other costs. **For details on how to enter and what to submit see page 20.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:
FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION ON VCON 36
HOTEL RATES, CONVENTION RATES, PROGRAMMING, ETC.
GO TO PAGE 27**

CONVENTION HISTORY ARTICLES

VCON 34, OCTOBER 2-4, 2009, PART TWO

By R. Graeme Cameron

Here is the text (and some illos) of the talk I gave on Friday, October 2nd 2009 at VCON 34 about

THE MONSTER CRAZE!

(Note: given that the theme of the convention was 'Creatures of the Night', I was originally going to title this lecture 'Creatures of the NightLight' i.e. referring to the delicious thrill of sneaking awake in bed late at night & reading monster mags under the covers by flashlight, but realizing this would be too obscure a concept to be readily grasped by those who have never shared the experience, I switched to a title more descriptive of the subject of the lecture.)

BEGINNINGS:

I'm here to discuss the magic monster decade of 1957 to 1967... the Monster Craze! For me this is an exercise in Nostalgia. The Monster Craze was a tremendous influence on me as I grew from age six to sixteen. A major influence, a formative influence, I would have been someone totally different were it not for the Monster Craze.

Oh, there were earlier monster crazes, of sorts. An 1820 stage play THE VAMPIRE was a huge hit in Victorian England. VARNEY THE VAMPIRE in 1847 had an even bigger impact, spawning songs and editorial cartoons comparing politicians to Varney, who quickly entered popular culture.

By coincidence, 1847 was the year Bram Stoker was born. And of course he grew up to write the classic Gothic horror novel DRACULA, published in 1897. Dracula forever after a household name, eclipsing Varney into oblivion.

In 1931 Universal studios released both FRANKENSTEIN and DRACULA, promptly followed by many sequels. Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi soon becoming household names as well.

The thing to remember, though, is that there was no juvenile film market as such back then. The wonderful Warner Brothers cartoons, BUGS BUNNY and ilk, the THREE STOOGES two-reelers, and horror films, were all aimed at adult audiences. Even Popeye! In fact, the Three Stooges were so popular they doubled the house for any film they were shown with, a fact kept hidden from them by Columbia throughout their career so they wouldn't demand more than the studio was willing to pay. But I digress.



MY monster craze was the first to be aimed at teenagers. And it all had to do with economics...

ORIGINS:

Blame World War Two. Or rather, the fact that the war little impacted the production capacity of America whereas that of Europe was devastated. Immediately after the war there was a bit of a recession as the economy adjusted back to civilian purposes, but by 1950 the American economy was booming, producing 60% of the world's consumer goods! Workers were rolling in money, at least compared to previous decades.

Point is, for the first time in history, the average dad could afford to keep his kids in school till they graduated. Not only that, but the kids themselves were earning money through part time jobs, spending money which collectively made them a brand new marketing phenomenon.

How big a phenomenon you might ask? Well, in 1959 a Playboy Magazine survey revealed that 72% of the movie-going public were teenagers, and that in 1958 no less than 75 monster films (of one sort or another) had been released, earning \$100 million profit, which was more than all the hardcover books published that year in the USA combined had earned. Monster flicks were bigger than books as a business!

No wonder teenagers and monsters became intertwined as a money-to-be-earned proposition. (One critic said that the title of the film I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF was redundant.. sorry, another digression...) In short, monsters equaled big bucks!

MONSTER FILMS:

Now the fifties started with fairly big budget science fiction films, such as DESTINATION MOON (1950), THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951), THE THING (1951) and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE (1952).

Yet low budget films like ROCKETSHIP X-M (1950), FLIGHT TO MARS (1951), and THE MAN FROM PLANET X (1951) proved just as lucrative.

The lesson the studios drew from this was you didn't have to spend much money to earn big bucks. Despite the occasional high budget masterpiece like FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956), most films aimed at teenagers degenerated to, at best, B level films.



Further, monsters proliferated in science fiction films, starting with THE THING. A monster equaled menace, the obstacle to be overcome, thus providing the basis of the plot and no need for fancy screenwriting. Most SF films of the fifties were, in reality, monster movies. Many film makers soon decided SF elements could be dispensed with entirely and simply made monster movies. Cheap monster movies. In fact, the cheaper the better. Most independent productions were produced on a shoestring, then sold to a distributor for a fixed one time payment, sometimes as little as \$10,000! This was incentive to spend as little on production as possible, to put it mildly. In terms of film quality, explains a lot doesn't it?

But what about B movies? Traditionally the bottom half of a double bill. How to match a B level monster flick with an A film (and not many of those being made, at least in the same genre) and still bring in the teenagers?

Here comes the influence of Samuel Z. Arkoff and James Nicolson, the men behind American International Pictures. They were the first to come up with the idea of a double bill featuring TWO B movies, and the first to aim said double bill directly at teenagers! Sheer genius!

Even so, they were super cautious. Movies cost money. They had to be sure the film would earn a profit before they would commit to making it. What they came up with was the practice of shopping around distributors and theatre owners a title and a poster, say, as an example, THE BEAST WITH A MILLION EYES (1955). If the distributors, etc, got all excited, only then would AIP have a script written and a film produced. Although, in this particular case, it drove AIP nuts trying to figure out how to portray a beast with a million eyes. The answer they came up with? A beast that sees through the eyes of its victims, i.e. has the potential to see through a billion eyes, eventually...

One of my favourite so-bad-its-good films was TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE from 1959 which had the shadow of a giant lobster as its monster. This film has a personal resonance for me, even now. When it came to Ottawa I begged my brother, who was seven years older, to take me to see it. No way was he going to be saddled with his kid brother. He went off with his friends. End of story.

Except that, about a week later, he told me he wasn't my brother, but a Martian who had killed my brother and was now masquerading as same. Many of the elements of the movie, such as aliens attempting to blend in with contemporary society, ray guns that reduce animals and humans to skeletons, etc, were worked into the logic of his tale. Scared the hell out of me. I would have been about eight at the time. No wonder he was able to run rings around my childish attempts to prove him wrong. Sigh.

Note, however, that throughout most of the 1950s the Monster Craze as such did not yet exist. Teenagers went to the films when they spotted the ads in the papers, sure. But there were no monster magazines to stir up anticipation, no real

sources of info on films in general, let alone genre films. Most, if not all, movie magazines were essentially Hollywood gossip zines. Other than the films themselves, there was nothing to keep the enthusiasm going between films.

And yet, and yet, there was a growing awareness of sorts, a kind of macabre consciousness spreading through the collective teenage mind, in fact a mindset awakening, an appreciation of horror as entertainment.

EC COMICS:

Blame Bill Gaines, the publisher of EC Comics (including MAD Magazine which at this time was a colour comic book satirizing contemporary media & society). Originally EC published Bible Comics and self-improvement comics, but when Bill inherited the company he wanted to do something different, and... GOOD LORD! .. (to use an expression common in his comics).. he certainly met THAT goal.

Consider just three of his numerous comics series, three CLASSIC comic series:

- TALES FROM THE CRYPT 1950 to 1955.
- THE VAULT OF HORROR 1950 to 1954.
- THE HAUNT OF FEAR 1950 to 1954.

The reason they all end in the mid fifties had to do with the imposition of the Comics Code by the Comics industry to prevent draconian legislation on the part of Senators and Congressmen who had become convinced that Comics caused juvenile delinquency. (Until Rock and Roll came along and THAT turned out to be the cause. Today, of course, now we know video games are to blame. Obviously.)

Anyway, Bill Gaines had a most unfortunate appearance before a Senate Judiciary Hearing. When asked if one of his covers (from CRIME SUSPENSTORIES) depicting a severed head was in good taste he replied:

"Yes sir, I do, for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen dripping blood from it and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody..."

For some reason this did not go down well. Hence the frantic rush by the Comics Industry to emasculate themselves before the government shut them down completely.

Another aspect of a growing interest in the macabre were the 'Sick Jokes' making the rounds in the early fifties, of which here is a famous example:

Kid on porch steps: *"Can Johnny come out to play? We gonna play baseball."*

Mom at open door: *"You know Johnny hasn't got any legs or arms."*

Kid on Porch: *"Yeah, we know. We wanna use him as home plate."*

Fortunately for civilization Bill Gaines had already begun publishing MAD Comic in 1952, and after the demise of his infamous horror comics he devoted himself to perfecting the leading edge satirical humour of MAD which remained sharp and brilliant for at least a decade. That he was able to do this involved cleverly switching to a magazine format which, of course, was not covered by the comics code.

At about the same time as the Comics Code introduction altered the Comics industry, an equally powerful Hammer blow struck the film industry. That's a pun. I'm referring to:

HAMMER FILMS:

Hammer Films studio started up in the UK circa 1935 and produced a variety of low budget comedies and mysteries with titles like WHAT THE BUTLER SAW and THE LADY IN THE FOG. Then, in 1954, they released THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT based on the BBC serial by Nigel Kneale. It received favourable reviews and broke box office records. As Studio owner James Carreras put it: "Now we'll give them a classical horror picture – a really good, juicy Gothic thriller – and see what happens!"



CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, the first of many Hammer horror films, came out in 1957 and starred Peter Cushing, the top ranking British TV star of the day. (And Christopher Lee, then a relative unknown.) It broke box office records, even though most critics loathed it. HORROR OF DRACULA, released in 1958, was an equally huge hit. Hollywood took note.

It seemed that lush, lavish colour horror genre productions were worth the expense, because they garnered huge profits. American International promptly launched a series of Poe adaptations, some comedies, others straight horror, which did very well indeed, boosting the career of Vincent Price considerably. They were: HOUSE OF USHER (1960), THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM (1961), THE PREMATURE BURIAL (1961), TALES OF TERROR (1962), THE RAVEN (1963), THE HAUNTED PALACE (1963), THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (1964), and THE TOMB OF LIGEIA (1964).

Meanwhile Hammer put out such nifty films as THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1958), THE MUMMY (1959), THE BRIDES OF DRACULA (1960), THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF (1961), THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1962), KISS OF THE VAMPIRE (1963), THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN (1964), and so on.

Many of the above films I watched in the Rialto theatre in Ottawa. Delirious fun I tell you. Good times. But what was television doing?

TELEVISION VS MOVIES:

I am a first generation television baby. Television was my primary babysitter. I was watching television before I even entered kindergarten. No doubt this subliminal indoctrination led to the well-rounded multi-interest individual I am today. Or to put it another way, blame television!

I don't actually remember much of early fifties TV, but research indicates it was very weird indeed!

For one thing, it was ALL live. Even commercials were live, conducted either by the characters/personalities of the show itself or by 'booth announcers', literally announcers sitting in a booth functioning as a mini-studio and so separate in terms of sound recording. Television was very cheap, every expense was spared, and film was deemed not worth the cost.

In 1956 video was introduced but only for commercials. Once aired several times, the tape was erased and new commercials filmed. But the shows themselves continued to be live. Cheaper that way. No money wasted on extra production facilities.

This was the era of ferocious competition between the TV & film industries. Parents preferred to stay home rather than share theatres with hordes of teenagers. In an effort to break adults of their new habit, movies went widescreen, colour films became the norm, and 3d became more and more common. The number of B movies was cut way down, since they weren't flashy enough to fill the theatres.

You'd think TV would be the natural habitat of B movies, but the film industry was convinced selling films to the networks would 'dilute' the audience, crippling the theatres even further. Their POLICY was to refuse to sell films to the networks, who in turn didn't want films anyway, being convinced the 'new kid on the block' status of TV meant their audience only wanted live shows and would consider movies and/or filmed shows to be cheating. In other words, both sides didn't want movies being broadcast on TV. Stupid, eh?

Then came rumours of an imminent switch to colour TV broadcasting. The technology existed, NBC had it, but Sarnoff sat on it for years convinced it was too risky. He was afraid the use of colour would destroy Television because competing head to head against the vivid colour of widescreen theatre films was an impossible battle to win.

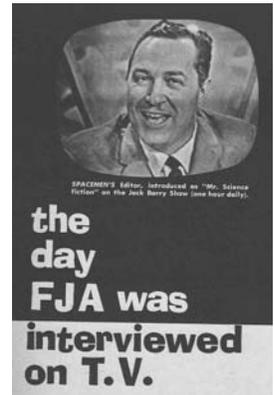
But poverty row studios like Republic and Monogram panicked. All they made were cheap B&W films the demand for which was falling day by day. And what about their huge backlog of films? Where was the market for that?

Someone figured out that the majority of independent TV stations, who broadcast network material during primetime, were desperate to fill their remaining air time yet reluctant to spend money on their own productions. So the grade z studios approached these stations one at a time and sold them 'packages' of films for a set price. This made money for the studios, and attracted advertisers to the stations, who definitely made money off the deal.

Howard Hughes, always a maverick, perpetually keen on earning profit, and owning RKO studios, jumped on the bandwagon and sold a package of 750 films, a bonanza for stations everywhere. Even more significant, one of them, the classic KING KONG (1933), when broadcast in New York city in 1956 earned an audience share of 90%. It was now obvious that broadcasting movies, in particular horror films, was a potential gold mine. Again, Hollywood took note.

Consequently an outfit called 'Screen Gems/Columbia/Universal Films' decided to prepare their own package for independent stations. Remarkably, their promotional material urged the stations to create horror personalities to host the films and offer humorous lead-ins to commercials. This in order to appeal to the macabre sensibilities of teenagers, the target audience.

Where did they get this idea? From the one and only original TV horror host. Can you name this person?



VAMPIRA:

Back in May of 1954 KABC TV in Los Angeles began broadcasting the first package of poverty row films available. It included such classics as 'DEVIL BAT'S DAUGHTER' and 'THE FLYING SERPENT'. Advertisers weren't very impressed. What could the station do to jazz things up?

Someone spotted actress Maila Nurmi winning a costume contest with an outfit based on the ADDAM'S FAMILY New Yorker cartoons character (then unnamed) of Morticia. In a fit of inspiration, she was offered the job of Horror Host, the very first such in television history.

To avoid lawsuits however, she adjusted her costume, adding elements from 'The Dragon Lady' of 'Terry & The Pirates' and 'the Evil Queen' from a Disney film, as she later explained.

Now bear in mind her perfectly natural figure measured 38/17/36. She wore a form-fitting black rayon cocktail dress with unprecedented cleavage, sported 4 inch long black nails, and was given to (apparently) bathing naked in bubbling cauldrons. The ratings exploded. Life magazine did a four-page spread which made her a household name across the States. A huge success.

Eight months later it was all over. The station demanded she sell them the rights to her character. She refused. She was blacklisted. No more TV work. No kinescopes of her appearances survive, except for a brief promotional clip. However, you can still see her character, albeit mute and with a different name, in the brilliant classic PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE (she was desperate for work, any work, at that time), so in a sense Vampira lives on eternally.

OTHER HORROR HOSTS:

Vampira may strike you as a precursor to Elvira. Certainly Nurmi thought so. She sued Elvira for copying her character, but lost. After all, she had explained too many times where she 'stole' the concept for Vampira to begin with.

Maila Nurmi passed away about four years ago. Gone, but never forgotten by aficionados of the genre. After all, she spawned a horde of Horror Hosts once the Screen Gems/Columbia/Universal Films package took hold. This was inevitable, because publicity about Vampira familiarized the TV audience nationwide with the concept, even though most had never actually seen her in action.

Fort Worth had GORGON, New Orleans MORGUS, Chicago MARVIN, and Cleveland GOULARDI, just to name a few. But most popular of all, first in Philadelphia and then in New York, was ROLAND ZACHERLY. He not only intro'd commercials, but pioneered separate skits and the practice of inserting shots of himself in the films. Who can forget his numerous 'brain' operations (on helpless cauliflowers). I never saw the original show, but a few years back he released a video compilation of bad film segments interspersed with recreated skits. Hilarious. A blast from the past!

And what sort of Horror Host did CBC in Ottawa choose for a lead in to the Screen Gems/Columbia/ Universal Films package? None. Too cheap. The show began with a shot of a hand sinking into quicksand with a bloodcurdling scream. Never did find out who was screaming. The hand maybe. But I loved it. Loved the show.

Can you remember its name?

SHOCK THEATRE:

Began airing sometime in early 1958. At this time, most Friday evenings, my parents were off partying, square dancing, just generally whooping it up. My brother was tasked with looking after me, with putting me to bed by eight, and generally holding the fort till my parents got back. Instead he'd wait about thirty minutes, then bugger off to raise hell with his friends, not to return till one AM or so in the full knowledge our parents wouldn't return till near sunrise. In short, I had SHOCK THEATRE all to my seven year old self.

I forget when the SHOCK THEATRE twin bill came on, but after dark, late in the evening, that much I remember. I'd curl up on the couch, popcorn and cake icing (made it myself) on hand, maybe cookies and pretzels if available, and plenty of pop. I'd literally quiver in anticipation. This was the VERY FIRST TIME these films were released to television. 52 classics in all, FRANKENSTEIN and all its sequels, DRACULA and its sequels, WOLFMAN & sequels, THE MUMMY & sequels, THE INVISIBLE MAN & sequels, and so on. They weren't all classics, a few obscure stinkers like CHINATOWN SQUAD and THE PILLOW OF DEATH were included, but generally I was in for a night of terror and thrills.

I was so young and naïve I thought all the films taking place in Europe had been filmed in Europe. Most of the prominent actors were English after all, so I assumed the Universal Classics were English films! It was years before I realized they were Hollywood studio productions utilizing the 'English Colony' of actors resident in Hollywood.

SHOCK THEATRE was so successful a second package came out afterwards, including the remaining classics they had forgot to include, such as BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, as well as lesser films like THE BOOGIE MAN WILL GET YOU and CAPTIVE WILD WOMAN. Good times I tell you.

Without a doubt the advent of SHOCK THEATRE is considered the inaugural event of the MONSTER CRAZE. Monsters were now popular. Monsters were now mainstream. Monsters were in! And a certain magazine came along just in time to consolidate the phenomenon among young teenagers. Yes, I'm talking about:

FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND:

Forrest J Ackerman, a famous SF fan especially prominent in the 1930s and 40s, but who collected movie stills (thousands of them) and other film genre memorabilia, approached James Warren, the publisher of an el cheapo PLAYBOY imitation called AFTER HOURS, with the idea of putting out a sophisticated magazine devoted to science fiction/fantasy films.

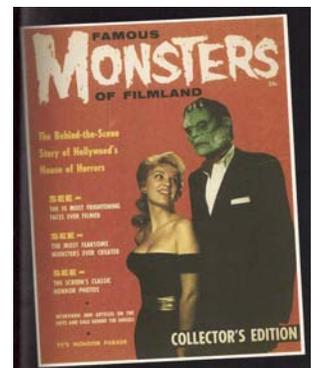
Warren took note that an issue of LIFE magazine with an 8-page spread devoted to Monster movies had sold out. He conducted a poll that concluded the only sufficiently large group of potential readers averaged 14 years of age and were almost exclusively male. As Warren put it, "too old to play cowboys and Indians, and too young to play with girls."

So he phoned Ackerman with a good news/bad news announcement: "I'm willing to publish your zine, but it will be named FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND and aimed at 14 year olds."

Ackerman was horrified, but at \$1,000 per month pay, and the opportunity to share his love of the genre with the upcoming generation, how could he resist? Ackerman edited the zine for many years, but never received a raise. In the later years he carried on purely for love of what he was doing.

Here's a picture of the first issue which came out in February 1958. 125,000 copies were printed, and sold out within a week. Warren was very pleased, and the oneshot became a six-times-a-year deal. How could it fail? It was about Monsters, FAMOUS Monsters no less, the Monsters of FILMLAND. The title says it all. No 14 year old could resist. I certainly didn't.

Mind you, I wasn't exposed to an Ackerman/Warren publication till 1961 around my tenth birthday when I purchased the first issue of SPACEMEN. I was particularly thrilled by a two page spread featuring monsters from 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH, THE CREEPING UNKNOWN and IT CONQUERED THE WORLD. I'd never seen these films, never knew they existed, but now desperately wanted to track them down.



And that's they key. SPACEMEN and FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND (& its short-lived companion magazine MONSTER WORLD) opened the door to knowledge. Every issue had fabulous stills, often produced full page or half page, not only from upcoming films but from classic films, some right back to the silent era. Articles extolled the virtues of such as Lon Chaney Sr. & Jr., Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Peter Lorre. FM, SPACEMEN and the 10 issues of MONSTER WORLD were a veritable encyclopedia of genre films, covering actors, productions, special effects, publicity gimmicks, you name it. Suddenly 14 year old kids were experts on films they had never seen, and like me, spent the rest of their lives searching them out in theatres, on TV, and later in video stores.

Forrest J Ackerman and James Warren are credited with turning an entire generation on to genre films, and indeed, credited with inspiring many a youngster to enter the film industry one way or another. Among those who acknowledge this are Joe Dante, Spielberg, John Carpenter, and Stephen King. A wonderful legacy.

Inevitably FM deteriorated, in part because Warren figured out the average 14 year old reader abandoned the zine within two years, thus ensuring a perpetual turnover in readership. Why waste money acquiring original material? Why not print reprint articles as long as they were older than two years? This made sound business sense, but turned off the uber enthusiasts like myself bent on collecting every issue. Still, it was great while it lasted. The first 30 issues are generally considered the best.

Forrest J Ackerman passed away late last year. Fondly remembered by all his fans.

It was inevitable from the very beginning that his success would spawn imitators. The first was:

CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN:



This is the first issue, actually titled JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN. It was a oneshot. Its editor, Calvin Beck, always claimed it was the first monster magazine, but it didn't appear till 1959. He later began a regular if somewhat sporadic run circa 1960/61.

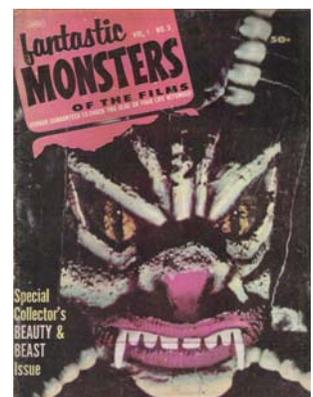
In some ways CoF was closer to what Ackerman originally envisioned, in that it was more serious, more adult. No puns! (Ackerman wrote terrible puns.) There was even the occasional spot of nudity courtesy of publicity stills from Hammer films. Beck pioneered the concept of an alphabetical listing of genre films with brief descriptions, it was ongoing issue after issue. You HAD to collect them all!

In general Castle of Frankenstein appealed to an older teenage crowd. I liked both FM and CoF.

Something I never knew existed at the time, but would love to collect now, is:

FANTASTIC MONSTERS:

Recognize the critter on the cover? This is the SHE CREATURE, the monster created for the picture of the same name by Paul Blaisdell, who built many other monsters for American International. The She Creature is mostly made out of foam painted green. With glittering Mica eyes she is quite striking in colour stills, but the film was black & white, alas, and also rather dull, double alas. To digress (again!), originally the suit had no breasts, but upon the producer insisting "It is a SHE Creature after all", Blaisdell quickly carved breasts and glued them on. No doubt muttering "Amphibians don't have breasts gosh darn it."



Anyway, Paul Blaisdell was one of the two editors and publishers of Fantastic Monsters. The other was Bill Burns, a major collector of genre film memorabilia and a former contributor to Famous Monsters. Fantastic Monsters had a very similar layout and matched FM in its mix of classic films and contemporary films. Ackerman was not pleased but he didn't have to wait long for the 'competition' to disappear. What doomed the magazine after six or so issues was limited distribution, poor quality printing, and Blaisdell turning his back on anything and everything to do with genre films (he was so disgusted at being poorly paid for the monsters he created). Nevertheless, a magazine well worth collecting if you are a fan of Paul Blaisdell.

OTHER MONSTER MAGS:

Famous Monsters of Filmland in its early days flew off the stands. Seeing opportunity for profit, many competitors sprung up and quickly died off. Magazines like: MODERN MONSTERS, MONSTER MANIA, SHRIEK, MONSTERS UNLIMITED, FAMOUS CREATURES, SCREEN CHILLS, MONSTER PARADE, WEREWOLVES & VAMPIRES, MONSTERS & THINGS, and no doubt many more. Some had great articles and stills provided by researchers like Don Glut, but most provided standard publicity stills and minimalist articles. Famous Monsters was simply the first and the best, at least for the first 30 issues or so. My opinion.

AURORA MONSTER MODELS:

Aurora was a leading manufacturer of plastic model kits. In 1962, having purchased the licensed rights from Universal Studios, they began issuing a series of classic monster kits, beginning with Frankenstein, Dracula and the Wolfman. Eventually the Creature of the Black Lagoon, the Mummy, the Phantom of the Opera, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, Godzilla, King Kong and others were added. (Not all the same scale, obviously.) The models were advertised as being '12 inches tall', but in fact were more like 9 inches. Still, if you counted the base...



Cleverly, Aurora made a deal with Famous Monsters of Filmland. Issue #27 in March 1964 had a full colour back cover announcing a contest: 'Customize an Aurora Movie Monster Model'. First prize included a free trip to Hollywood with participation in the making of a Hollywood movie. Lesser prizes included free monster models yet to be issued and 5 year subscriptions to Famous Monsters. Quite a few fans responded, with photos of their imaginative dioramas appearing within and on the cover of FM #32. Aurora and FM was a marriage made in heaven. You could even order the monsters through FM (via Warren's 'Captain Company') for a mere \$1.00 plus .35 cents handling, just in case the local hobby store was out of them.

Speaking of hobby shops, not long ago I visited Burnaby Hobbies. The older gentleman in the store (the owner?) and I got to talking. Among other things he said he started the Woodward's Department Store Hobby section long ago & ran it for many years. Said the biggest mistake of his life was when the Aurora representative came in and revealed their newest item which he promised would sell in the thousands. He then showed publicity material re their new Frankenstein model (the first in their Monsters line).

Well, the Woodward's chap looked at the promo stuff and said, "I don't know.. we sell aircraft models... tanks... ships.. I don't think the kids are interested in this old movie stuff... before their time... and adults... nah... tell you what. I'll order a dozen. Leave it at that."

"Biggest mistake of my life", he added. "But fortunately I soon realized this and ordered more. We eventually sold hundreds & hundreds."

And then he talked about a recent Halloween where he stripped out his store's window display and put in nothing but Aurora Monster reissues against a black backcloth with weird lighting. "Figured they'd sell like hot cakes. Fact is, sold not a one. Not one. Don't know why."



Well, times have changed. Point is, back in the day the Aurora monster models were fun to build, fun to paint, and fun to show off to friends. I collected as many as I could. Eventually they got trashed as the result of many moves. In recent years I've spent a small fortune collecting reissues by outfits like Polar Lights based on the original molds which have been shopped around various companies since Aurora's plastic kit division ceased production in 1977. Haven't built them yet, but I will! Feels good just looking at the box cover art. Relics of my childhood.

And significant icons of the monster craze. Every monster fan had at least one. To give you an idea of how popular they were, how much they became a universally recognized part of popular culture, here's the cover of Mad Magazine issue #89 (Sept. 1964) depicting the Frankenstein monster assembling an Alfred E. Neuman model! Everyone, being aware of the Aurora Monster models, would 'get' the cover. A model making a model. (Interesting enough,



this cover was a subtle form of advertising, in that Aurora was then tooling up a model of Alfred which started selling in 1965, but alas, not very well.)

Getting back to television...

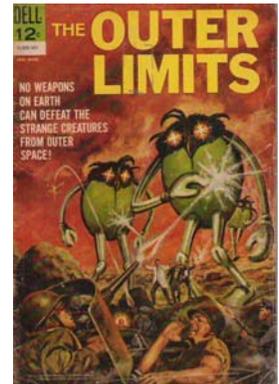
THE TWILIGHT ZONE:

Strictly speaking, Rod Serling's anthology drama series running from October 1959 to 1964 was not a monster phenomenon as such, but it included an occasional sci-fi or horror themed piece, often mixed with humour. Who can forget 'To Serve Man', 'Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up?', 'Nightmare at 20,000 feet' with William Shatner, the truly scary 'It's a Good Life' with Billy Mummy, and the most poignant and memorable of all, 'Time Enough at Last' starring Burgess Meredith?

The best of the episodes were written by Serling himself, or by Richard Matheson. Everyone watched them. Columnists commented on them. Comedians made fun of them. If you weren't aware of The Twilight Zone, you didn't watch TV or read newspapers. Twilight Zone was a mainstream phenomenon which helped boost the monster craze in as much as it kept alive a general awareness of all things SF and monstrous.

THE OUTER LIMITS:

Less popular, because more narrowly focused on genre fans, was the sci-fi series The Outer Limits (Dec 1962 to Jan 1965), which as a matter of policy contained a 'bear' in each episode, i.e. a monster or hideous threat of some sort, not necessarily evil but certainly misunderstood and perceived as malignant in intent. A classic example would be the very first episode, 'The Galaxy Being' featuring a translucent alien with black spots (quite striking looking, a negative image of a costume made of shiny black rubber with white dots randomly painted on) who'd accidentally been dragged into our world courtesy of radio wave experimentation by a mad scientist. Even my dad liked this episode. Other memorable episodes include 'The Zanti Misfits' which gave me a 40 year long phobia of insects, 'The Mice' featuring an 'astoundingly repugnant-looking alien, and 'The Invisible Enemy' which, like all invisible monsters, was quite silly looking once it became visible. Nevertheless, the overall concept of 'The Invisible Enemy', a monster coursing through the sands of Mars like a shark in an ocean, was quite powerful and scary.



To this day the original Outer Limits remains my favourite sci-fi series of all time, not least because many of its best episodes featured wonderfully horrible monsters.

But more to the point, in terms of the 'classic' monsters:

THE MUNSTERS:



Ran two seasons in 1964 and 1965. It featured versions of Dracula (Grandpa Munster), the Frankenstein Monster (Herman Munster), the Wolfman (Eddie Munster), and the Bride of Frankenstein (Lily Munster). The main gimmick of this comedy series was that the Munsters considered themselves perfectly normal but felt they had to protect their 'unusual' daughter Marilyn (unusual because she was not a monster) from the derision of outsiders. And of course there was a pet bat named Igor. And Herman drove a kick-ass dragster hearse called the Munster Koach. It was a silly show, but loads of fun. Definitely family entertainment.

And yet, and yet... a sexual milestone of sorts. Previously family sitcoms almost never showed the parent's bedroom, or if they did, the parents obviously slept in separate beds.

The Munsters was the first family sitcom to feature husband and wife sharing the same bed, albeit discussing the day's events. The contemporary censors allowed them to get away with this because the characters 'were not real'.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY:

Like Vampira, this 1964/65 comedy series was based on Charles Addams New Yorker Cartoons. A family slightly more bizarre and sinister than the Munsters consisted of husband and wife Gomez and Morticia, their children Wednesday and Pugsley, plus Granny Frump and Uncle Fester. Not to mention the giant butler named Lurch, the Thing (a disembodied hand), Aunt Bloop, Cousin Itt (very tiny and completely covered in hair sprouting from underneath a bowler hat), with occasional appearances by other cousins named Crimp, Rancid, Flub and Cringe.

Another taboo was broken, in that it was clearly implied that Gomez and Morticia had a passionate sex life, to judge from Gomez' frenzied reaction whenever Morticia spoke French. This was an aspect of marriage scrupulously avoided till then, despite the occasional chaste kiss in *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, etc. Gomez was the first to be broadcast in a 'turned on' state of mind.



In general I'd say the dialogue in this show was 'better' than that of the Munsters, more surreal and more adult. Oddly enough, Gomez and Morticia seemed more like a genuine couple than Herman and Lily, the latter sticking more closely to sitcom stereotypes, whereas the former possessed a more original approach, although not morbid enough to satisfy Charles Addams who was quite disappointed with this adaptation of his cartoons. It is nevertheless a very amusing show if you get a chance to see reruns.

SONGS, TOYS & COMICS:

Novelty songs had long been a feature of popular music, and there were those who took advantage of the Monster Craze. Horror host Zacherly released 'Dinner with Drac' for instance. Most successful of all was 'The Monster Mash' released by Bobby 'Boris' Pickett. I always thought it was written by Pickett and sung by Boris Karloff, but no, Pickett himself did the singing in a very good imitation of Karloff's voice.

Cheap toys on a monster theme flooded the market in this period. For example, the battery-powered Frankenstein monster who drops his pants first appeared in 1964. Likewise 'The Thing' piggy bank (tied in with Addams Family TV show) where you set your coin in a slot and a tiny green hand emerged from a hatch to pull the coin down into the box. A similar contraption was the 'Monster Box' where a clawed hand came out of a hatch and pushed the tiny switch you'd just thrown back to the 'off' position. I believe all three are sometimes still available in joke shops.

Just perusing the ads in the back of Famous Monsters of Filmland was part of the fun. You could get monster themed books, 8mm films, models, makeup kits, masks, records, cards, iron-on transfers, rings, laboratory kits, photo printing sets, rubber bats, snakes and bugs, and even live Venus Fly Trap plants! Elsewhere, in drug stores, corner stores, department stores and such, you could buy monster-themed candy, wallets, lunch boxes, animated flip books, decals, candy, greeting cards, pins, games, puzzles, paper dolls, wax figurines, kites, belt buckles and much else, all highly collectible nowadays if still in good condition and especially if still in the original packaging.



And then there were the monster-themed comic books. STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES featured dinosaurs in every issue (discovered by hapless GIs on Pacific Islands). A weirdly overwritten series titled KONA OF MONSTER ISLE offered mutant monsters galore, as did the post atomic apocalypse sci-fi series MIGHTY SAMSON (I think I developed my love of ancient ruins because of this comic). TV shows such as the Outer Limits spawned comics invariably with an alien monster on the cover. There were one shots based on classic films, like THE CREATURE. Most bizarre in origin was Charleton's Comics series REPTILICUS after the movie of the same name which was swiftly re-titled REPTISAURUS when the makers of the film threatened to sue. These were just some of innumerable monster-themed comics in the early sixties.

But most influential of all were two comics first published in 1965/6 by James Warren, the publisher of Famous Monsters. They owe a lot to E.C. Comics publisher Bill Gaines methinks.

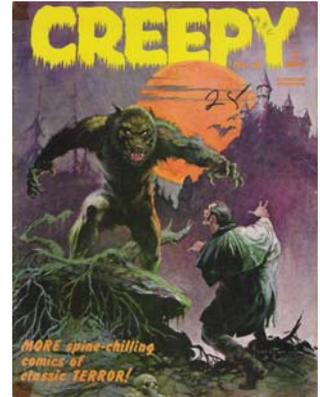
I'm talking about:

CREEPY & EERIE:

First of all, they seem derivative of the earlier EC comics VAULT OF HORROR, TALES FROM THE CRYPT. Like them his horror mags made use of 'hosts' to introduce each tale.

Secondly, like Mad magazine, they circumvented the Comics Code by virtue of being magazines, yet offered graphic tales nearly as gruesome and weird as the old E.C. horror comics. Suddenly the Comics Code was viewed as less effective, even outdated and unnecessary.

In fact, these two long-lived magazines are widely credited with destroying the Comics Code and opening the floodgates which unleashed a tsunami of underground adult comic books.



THE TIMES THEY WERE A'CHANGING:

Indeed, by 1967 the MONSTER CRAZE was thoroughly dead as a mass market popular phenomenon. Genre film lovers carried on, magazine and comic book collectors, but as a popcult appealing to the average 'mainstream' teenager and media pundit? Dead and buried.

In fact the craze peaked around late 1965 and began its slide into oblivion in 1966, plunging off the map in 1967. So what happened?

I'll give you a hint. In 1967 I was still going to genre movies and collecting Famous Monster of Filmland. But I also sported shoulder-length hair and wore gear like purple velvet bell-bottoms and knee-length orange paisley shirts. In short, THE SUMMER OF LOVE had arrived. Why be a geek in search of monsters when you could be a weekend Hippie in search of free love and recreational drugs? The former I desperately sought and never found (at least in 1967) and the latter I never touched but was frequently offered. Didn't seem fair somehow.

To put it another way, the Monster craze was born in the prosperity of the late 1950s and died with the rise of the counter-culture in the late 1960s. Nothing lasts forever. But its influence lasted with me, for which I am forever grateful.

NOTE: the above is an example of the sort of lecture you'll find at VCON. If you found this interesting, you'll be even more fascinated by the plethora of panels and lectures at VCON 36!

THE STEAMPUNKERY OF H.G. WELLS

By R. Graeme Cameron

H. G. Wells is perhaps not quite as well known as Jules Verne to the general reading public, but he was far closer to what we today term a Science Fiction writer. His SF novels were rife with speculation on the development of human society as well as technology. In that sense he was 'ahead' of Verne, whose technological gimmicks – say the flying machine Albatross in '**Robur the Conqueror**' (1886), or, most famously, the submarine Nautilus in '**Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea**' (1870) – were firmly ensconced in the society of the day. Whereas Well's books, or at least some of them, such as 'The Time Machine' and 'First Men In The Moon' dwelt at length on the future evolution of human society manifest through time or example of alien culture. You might say Wells was more 'Futuristic'.

Part of the reason may lie in one of Verne's earliest attempts at a novel, written in 1863, titled '**Paris in the Twentieth Century**'. It takes place in the 1960s and features "*vehicles that passed on paved roads and moved without horses*" as well as elevators and fax machines, and clever contraptions like "*the Bond Safe, an apparatus of virginal sensitivity; an alarm had immediately sounded and the floor opened by means of a sliding panel, while the electric lights were automatically turned on at the sound of the locking doors. The employees, wakened by powerful buzzers, rushed toward the cage which had been lowered from the ceiling.*"

Verne even described a sort of mechanical computer "*Michael turned around and discovered the calculating machine behind him... The Casmodage Bank possessed veritable masterpieces of the genre, instruments which did indeed resemble*

huge pianos: by operating a sort of keyboard, sums were instantaneously produced, remainders, products, quotients, rules of proportion, calculations of amortization and of interest compounded for infinite periods and at all possible rates...”

The book was dull, as you might surmise by the above quote. It was rejected by his publisher. It survived in handwritten manuscript form and was only rediscovered in 1989.

Fortunately for Verne, his already published **‘Five Weeks in a Balloon’** had proven immensely popular. Hetzel, his publisher offered a contract for two similar books a year, never mind the speculative rubbish, and Verne took him up on it. From now on he wrote nothing but what he himself termed ‘Voyages extraordinaires’ where the emphasis is on plot and characterization centred around a single gimmick, itself often based on a contemporary device exceedingly exaggerated in capacity, like the Nautilus (experimental submarines abounded in those days).

Wells, on the other hand, liked to come up with an impossible or highly unlikely gizmo and then wig out in all directions in terms of the implications especially in terms of a socialist viewpoint. Eventually he gave up on the ‘ripping good yarn’ adventure aspect of his fiction and concentrated on social commentary, alas. Nobody reads his later novels anymore. Nor should they. But his early stuff remains classic.

The question is, for the purposes of this article, was his ‘Steampunkery’ merely redolent of his times, or did he genuinely extrapolate alternate 19th century technology such as a modern Steampunk author might? A bit of both, actually.

‘The Time Machine’ (1898) is definitely science fiction, but the machine itself is merely hinted at. First, a ‘description’ of the model: *“You will notice that it looks singularly askew, and that there is an odd twinkle about this bar, as if it were in someway unreal... also, here is one little white lever, and here is another... Now I want you to clearly understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time traveler... The little machine suddenly swung around, became indistinct, was seen as a ghost for a second, perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone – vanished!”*

Then the Time Traveler’s friends are shown the actual machine: *“...here in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen vanish before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be.”*

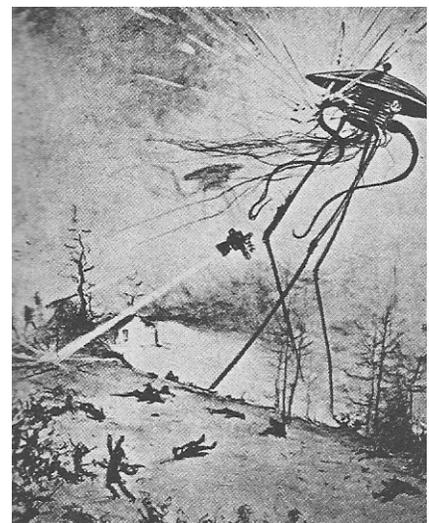
And near the end of the book, as close to a general description as Wells gives: *“There in the light of the flickering lamp was the machine sure enough, squat, ugly, and askew; a thing of brass, ebony, ivory, and translucent glimmering quartz.”*

To sum up, Wells never actually describes the time machine, merely hints at the visual impression it leaves on viewers. After all, the machine itself isn’t important to the story, merely what it does. The story is the thing, not the gimmick. So in no way can the ‘technology’ of **‘The Time Machine’** fit into the realm of Steampunkery, charming though it be.

Whereas **‘The War of the Worlds’** (1898), in envisioning the technology of the Martians, does indeed consist of a more advanced 19th century technology, or at least an alternate technology. Never mind the heat ray, which is pure speculation for the time. Consider the actual fighting machine the Martians deploy.

Upon first sighting one of the machines during a thunderstorm: *“And this thing I saw? How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking-stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? That was the impression those instant flashes gave. But instead of a milking-stool imagine it a great body of machinery on a tripod stand.”*

“Seen nearer, the thing was incredibly strange, for it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long flexible glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its roads as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the

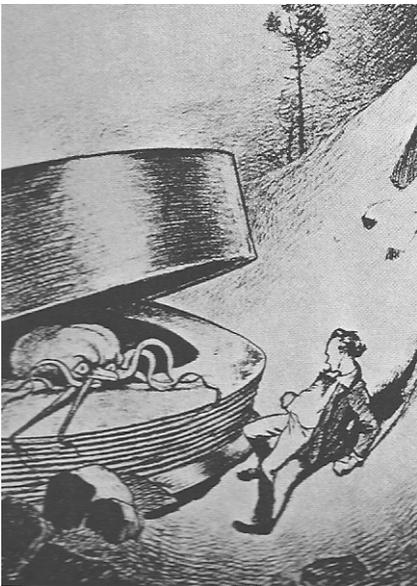


inevitable suggestion of a head looking about it. Behind the main body was a huge thing of white metal like a gigantic fisherman's basket, and puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the limbs as the monster swept by me. And in an instant it was gone."

Now, this description implies the machine is itself possessed of an intelligence, or perhaps is a Waldo-like device directed by one of the Martians. Indeed, Wells's narrator speculates on this: *"I began to ask myself what they could be. Were they intelligent mechanisms? Such a thing I felt was impossible. Or did a Martian sit within each, ruling, directing, using, much as a man's brain sits and rules in his body? I began to compare the things to human machines, to ask myself for the first time in my life how an ironclad or a steam-engine would seem to an intelligent lower animal."*

This is groundbreaking stuff, and eerily prescient of the kind of technology we are rather foolishly rushing headlong to develop today. By no means necessarily a good thing.

But the most striking thing about this Martian technology is the fact that it truly is an alternate technology, something totally alien. One scene has always stuck in my head since I first read it: *"I fell helplessly, in full sight of the Martians, upon the broad, bare gravelly spit that runs down to mark the angle of the Wey and Thames. I expected death... I have a dim memory of the foot of a Martian coming down within a score of yards from my head, driving straight into the loose soil, whirling it this way and that, and lifting again..."*



Precisely how was this mechanism articulated? The main character explains later: *"And of their appliances, perhaps nothing is more wonderful to a man than the curious fact that what is the dominant feature of almost all human devices in mechanisms is absent – the WHEEL is absent; amongst all the things they brought to Earth there is no trace or suggestion of their use of wheels. One would at least have expected it in locomotion. And in this connection it is curious to remark that even on this Earth Nature has never hit upon the wheel, or has preferred other expedients to their development. And not only did the Martians either not know of (which is incredible) or abstain from the wheel, but in their apparatus singularly little use is made of the fixed pivot, or relatively fixed pivot, with circular motions thereabout confined to one plane. Almost all the joints of the machinery present a complicated system of sliding parts moving over small, but beautifully curved friction bearings."*

Now this is a phenomenal concept; mechanisms without wheels, not even toothed gears. I defy any Steampunk enthusiast to design a machine of this nature! It would be very cool!

Wells also describes an aspect of Martian technology which remains unique, even to this day, as far as I am aware: *"...the long leverages of their machines are in most cases actuated by a sort of sham musculature of discs in an elastic sheath; these discs are become polarized and drawn closely and powerfully together when traversed by a current of electricity. In this way the curious parallelism to animal motions, which was so striking and disturbing to the human beholder, was attained. Such quasi-muscles abounded in the crab-like Handling Machine which I watched unpacking the cylinder... It seemed infinitely more alive than the actual Martians lying beyond it in the sunset light, panting, stirring ineffectual tentacles, and moving feebly, after their vast journey across space."*

But the general concept of machines more lively, in some ways seeming more alive, than their creators, we have already achieved. This does not bode well for our future, methinks.

Let me turn to one of Wells' short stories for an example of extrapolated contemporary technology. In **'The Land Ironclads'** (1903) he anticipates the modern tank, but in a slightly silly way:

"It might have been from eighty to a hundred feet long... its vertical side was ten feet high or so, smooth for that height, and then with a complex patterning under the eaves of its flattish turtle cover. This patterning was a close interlacing of port-holes, rifle barrels, and telescope tubes – sham and real – indistinguishable from one another. The thing had come into such a position as to enfilade the trench..."

In other words, massive as this machine was, it was armed with nothing but rifles. It does not seem to have occurred to Wells to equip it with light artillery or Maxim guns, the machine guns of the day. Still, tactically, it enable riflemen to dominate a trench filled with enemy soldiers and either kill them or drive them off, so useful enough.

As to its method of locomotion: *“The monster had moved. It continued to move regardless of the hail that splashed its skin with bright new specks of lead. It was singing a mechanical little ditty to itself, ‘Tuf-tuf, tuf-tuf, tuf-tuf,’ and squirting out little jets of steam behind. It had humped itself up, as a limpet does before it crawls, it had lifted its skirt and displayed along the length of it – FEET! They were thick, stumpy feet, between knobs and buttons in shape – flat, broad things, reminding one of the feet of elephants or the legs of caterpillars; and then, as the skirt rose higher, the war correspondent, scrutinizing the thing through his glasses again, saw these feet hung, as it were, on the rims of wheels.”*

“Mr Diplock,” he said, “and he called them Pedrails... Fancy meeting you here!”

In other words, Wells had taken a well known experimental device invented by a certain Mr. Diplock (I’ve seen photographs of his contraption) and extrapolated it into a slow but fearsome fighting machine.

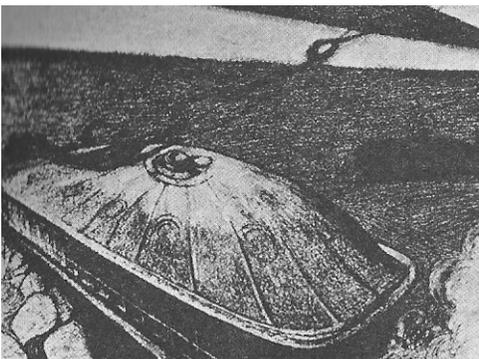
But why arm it with just rifles? I suspect because Wells got carried away with working out the details for their employment, details which, while needlessly complicated, are a marvelous alternate technology that almost makes sense:

“The riflemen each occupied a small cabin of peculiar construction, and these cabins were slung along the sides of and before and behind the great main framework, in a manner suggestive of an Irish jaunting-car. Their rifles, however, were very different pieces of apparatus from the simple mechanisms of their adversaries.”

“They were in the first place automatic, ejected their cartridges and loaded them again from a magazine each time they fired, until the ammunition store was at an end, and they had the most remarkable sights imaginable, sights which threw a bright little camera-obscura picture into the light tight box in which the rifleman sat below. This camera-obscura picture was marked with two crossed lines, and whatever was covered by the intersection of those two lines, that the rifle hit.”

“The sighting was ingeniously contrived. The rifleman stood at the table with a thing like an elaboration of a draughtsman’s dividers in his hand, and he opened and closed these dividers, so that they were always at the apparent height – if it was an ordinary sized man – of the man he wanted to kill. A little twisted strand of wire like an electric light wire ran from this implement up to the gun, and as the dividers opened and shut the sights went up or down. Changes in the clearness of the atmosphere, due to changes of moisture, were met by an ingenious use of that meteorologically sensitive substance, catgut, and when the land ironclad moved forward the sights got a compensatory deflection in the direction of its motion.”

“The rifleman stood up in his pitch dark chamber and watched the little picture before him. One hand held the dividers for judging distance, and the other grasped a big knob like a door-handle. As he pushed this knob about the rifle above swung to correspond, and the picture passed to and fro like an agitated panorama. When he saw a man he wanted to shoot he brought him up to the cross hairs, and then pressed a finger upon a little push like an electric bell-push, conveniently placed in the centre of the knob. Then the man was shot. If by any chance the rifleman missed his target he moved the knob a trifle, or readjusted his dividers, pressed the push, and got him the second time.”



While technologically suspect – I still don’t have a clear idea how the damn thing actually works despite the lengthy description – this vision of a weapon remotely controlled by an operator in utter safety (in this case protected by 12 inches of iron plating) meticulously picking off his enemies is frighteningly familiar in this modern era of remote-controlled armed drones and what-not. Substitute a computer screen for the camera-obscura and a joystick for the ‘dividers’ and ‘big knob’ and you have the very essence, the very indifference, of modern warfare. Wells was way ahead of his time, in sensibility, if not in technology.

And still I am left with the annoying impression that, if technical conundrums were resolved, the gizmo described by Wells might well have been possible and put in use in some kind of alternate world.

Though in reality, had such a massive, armoured self-propelled vehicle been invented at the time, to save money and prevent endless breakdowns of complicated mechanism the British army would simply have left slits in the side and told their riflemen to fire through them as best they could. After all, plenty more riflemen available if need be. No need for any camera-obscura contraptions. Today the opposite point of view seems to have taken hold of military planners. The goal is to remove the soldier entirely from the battlefield. Scary.

Let me conclude with one last bit of charming technological extrapolation by Wells, namely the first use of an atomic bomb in literature, albeit one that seems more Steampunk (in the preponderant significance of the human element) in nature than modern push-button warfare.

This is from his novel *'The World Set Free'* (1914):

"And presently over the cloud banks that lay above Westphalia and Saxony the swift aeroplane, with its atomic engine as noiseless as a dancing sunbeam and its phosphorescent gyroscopic compass, flew like an arrow to the heart of the Central European hosts..."

"The face of the adventurer at the steering wheel, darkly visible ever and again by the oval greenish glow of the compass face, had something of that firm beauty which all concentrated purpose gives, and something of the happiness of an idiot child that has at last got hold of the matches. His companion, a less imaginative type, sat with his legs spread wide over the long coffin-shaped box which contained in its compartments the three atomic bombs, the new bombs that would continue to explode indefinitely, and which no one so far had ever seen in action.."

"...The gaunt face hardened to grimness, and with both hands the bomb-thrower lifted the big atomic bomb from the box and steadied it against the side. It was a black sphere two feet in diameter. Between its handles was a little celluloid stud, and to this he bent his head until his lips touched it. Then he had to bite in order to let the air in upon the inducive. Sure of its accessibility, he craned his neck over the side of the aeroplane and judged his pace and distance. Then very quickly he bent forward, bit the stud and hoisted the bomb over the side."

"'Round,' he whispered inaudibly."

"The bomb flashed blinding scarlet in mid-air and fell, a descending column of blaze eddying spirally in the midst of a whirlwind... It was looking down upon the crater of a small volcano. In the open garden before the Imperial castle a shuddering star of evil splendour spurted and poured up smoke and flame towards them like an accusation. They were too high to distinguish people clearly, or mark the bomb's effect upon the building until suddenly the façade tottered and crumbled before the flare as sugar dissolves in water..."

In other words, Wells envisioned an atomic explosion as a **continuous** chain reaction, dissolving the local landscape like an ever widening volcano, though eventually winding down because *"every seventeen days its power is halved, though constantly it diminishes toward the imperceptible, is never entirely exhausted, and to this day the battlefields and bomb fields of that frantic time in human history are sprinkled with radiant matter and so centres of inconvenient rays..."*

I imagine one must wear special leather gloves to pick up an atomic bomb and throw it over the side of an aeroplane cockpit. Special goggles too. And such bomb throwers would no doubt be considered members of an elite fraternity. Or perhaps they would be shunned, as a sort of modern untouchable?

At any rate, there's definitely a whiff of Steampunkery about Wells' concept of an atomic bomb. Indeed, about many of his concepts. I declare he qualifies.

H. G. Wells is definitely a Steampunk kind of guy in my books.

SUPER SCIENCE STUFF



ASK MR. SCIENCE!

(As submitted by Al Betz, Corresponding Secretary for Mr. Science.)

Ms. KFM-F, of Edmonton, Alberta, asks:

WHY IS THE SKY OF MARS SO ORANGE?

MR. SCIENCE: Mars is, of course, a colder world than ours, and no longer has any surface water. What water there is in the surface of Mars exists as very small wind polished crystals of ice at an altitude of 5000 to 8000 meters, where these crystals act as a gigantic diffuse mirror, reflecting the colour of the red iron oxide Martian surface.

Mr. TH, also of Edmonton, Alberta, asks:

WHAT IS SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION?

MR. SCIENCE – This rare phenomenon is the result of the ignition of carbon monoxide gas exhaled by persons with certain metabolic disorders. Amazingly, it has actually been captured on film. In the 1937 motion picture “Way, Way Out West” the right thumb of co-star S. Laurel can be seen bursting into flames no less than three times! Luckily for Mr. Laurel, as well as those who appreciate the remainder of his film career, he sustained no serious injury.



ASK MR. GUESS-IT-ALL!

(As submitted by R. Graeme Cameron, official spin-doctor for Mr. Guess-It-All)

Mr. BK, of Osoyoos, B.C., asks:

ARE BIRDS DESCENDED FROM DINOSAURS?

Mr. GUESS-IT-ALL: No. Birds are descended from cats. We know this because A) cats are forever climbing trees yet lack the ability to climb down, and B) cats frequently try to eat birds. ‘A’ obviously means modern cats are descendents of cats who wanted to fly yet were too chicken to make the attempt, whereas birds are descended from cats who evolved wide forelimbs with stringy hair who were able to launch themselves safely from the treetops. And as for ‘B’, well, to this day cats are extremely jealous of their more successful relatives. In fact this accounts for their ‘pissed off’ attitude in general. To be fair, however, this is in part due to the birds’ tendency to mock cats with constant chattering from the safety of perches among the branches. Birds possess the trait of arrogance which is yet more proof of their close family relationship with their cat brethren (as if any more proof were needed).

Ms. PL, a fugitive in Sicamous, B.C., asks:

DID OUR HOMINOID ANCESTORS SAIL THE SEAS ON RAFTS AND/OR DUGOUT CANOES?

MR. GUESS-IT-ALL: Absolutely not, they used dug-out submarines. We know this because wooden rafts and canoes float and eventually are washed ashore, yet no one has ever found remains of any such conveyance dating to hominoid times on a beach anywhere, which proves they never existed in the first place. Whereas dug-out submarines, being heavily weighted down with hominoid excrement, tended to sink when their hominoid crews, forgetting they were beneath the ocean surface, absentmindedly opened the hatch to get a breath of fresh air. Eventually the wood of the sunken hulks rotted, leaving only the hardier form of cargo intact as evidence. This is the single most logical explanation for the presence of 130,000 year old stone axes recently discovered scattered across the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea.

FANDOM NEWS & NOTES

AUORORA NOMINATIONS OPEN!

One Form Does It All:

- [Register](#) for membership [One-time, free, CSFFA registration on the Aurora site will enable nomination and voting for the Auroras for this and future years.]
- Verify your registration
- Use your new membership id# to [Nominate](#)

You may nominate via our easy to use online system or by manually filling in our [down-loadable nomination form](#) and mailing it in to us.

Who can join CSFFA?

Membership in CSFFA is free of charge, and is open to all Canadians, whether citizens or Permanent Residents, and whether living in Canada or abroad. Membership in CSFFA will be available via online registration on the Aurora website at [Register/Nominate](#)

We need you. Please help spread the word.

We need your nominations and votes to make sure that the best of Canadian Fan and Professional activity gets the acknowledgment it deserves.

- ❖ Updated Aurora category definitions and rules are now available at the [Prix Aurora Web site](#).
- ❖ Lists of eligible works are available (and can be added to) on the wiki site [Canadian SF Works Database](#) and (in a few weeks) on the [Prix Aurora Web site](#) under “Eligibility”.

What are the Prix Aurora Awards?

The Prix Aurora Awards are Canada’s National Science Fiction & Fantasy Awards. They are Canadian Fans' way of recognizing the best in genre creativity and activity of the previous calendar year (January 1st to December 31st 2010).

This year, the Aurora Awards will be given across a broad range of professional and fan categories: Novel, Short Fiction, Poetry/Lyrics, Graphic Novel, Critical Works, Art, Fan Filk, Fanzine, Fan Organize, and Fan Other. Canadian fans, through the Aurora Awards, have been promoting the best Canadian professional and amateur (fan) achievements for the past 30 years, since the first presentation in 1980.

The Aurora awards are administered by the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (CSFFA), a federally registered non-profit society

Editor’s Note: There are three NEW awards this year:

- * Best Fan Filk
- * Best Graphic Novel
- * Best Poetry/Lyrics

C.U.F.F. NOMINATIONS OPEN!

Last year's CUFF winner Diane Lacey announces:

Canadian Unity Fan Fund provides for an Eastern Canadian or a Western Canadian science fiction enthusiast to attend CanVention. CanVention is the annual convention of the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association. Traditionally, the location of CanVention alternates between Eastern and Western Canada. This year CanVention will be held at SFContario in Toronto on November 18-20th. The CUFF delegate will be chosen from nominees residing in the Western region of Canada, defined as Manitoba and parts west. We are looking for a fan from Western Canada to come attend SFContario as the CUFF delegate. The delegate is welcome, even encouraged, to stay longer than just the convention and hang out with the local fans. In fact our Third Monday pubnight, a regular gathering of local fans happens to fall on the Monday immediately following the convention.

In order to be nominated for the CUFF this year an application must be submitted by March 31, 2011 to d.lacey@gmail.com. The application must have a minimum of three references from people in the east and three from the west. It should contain a letter describing who you are, why this would be beneficial for you and your community. Voting will be open April 5 and close May 31st. This will allow the successful candidate enough time to work with SFContario programming and to schedule their visit.

2011 FAAN AWARDS BALLOT

The Fan Activity Achievement Awards Ballot for Corflu 28, voting Deadline February 4th, is now available on the Corflu website: < <http://corflu.org/FaanBallot2011.pdf> >

Announcement of winners. The 2011 Fan Activity Achievement (FAAn) Awards will be announced on Sunday February 13, 2011 at CorFlu 28 (www.corflu.org).

Deadline for voting is 08:00 PST (8 a.m. in California) on Friday February 4th 2011 – no voting during Corflu this year.

Submitting your ballot. You may submit your vote in either of two ways:

- send email to: < [Egoboo28\[at\]corflu.org](mailto:Egoboo28[at]corflu.org). > *You are not required to submit the ballot, only your choices;*
- by real mail: Spike, #110, 530 Showers Dr Suite 7, Mountain View, CA 94040 USA

Voting. You are voting on work made public in 2010. You may make between zero and five choices in each category. Votes for yourself will not be counted. Each first-place vote scores five points, each second-place vote four points, and so on.

Eligibility. You do not have to be a member of CorFlu 28 in order to vote. Anyone with the necessary knowledge of the people and their work is eligible. If you think you may be unknown to the Administrator (Spike), please cite a fan (include contact details, e.g. email address) who can confirm your credentials. Your name & contact info is required.

Voting Categories:

- Best Fan Writer
- Best Fan Artist
- Best Fanzine
- Harry Warner Jr Award for Best Fan Correspondent
- Best Fan Website

The FAAn Awards Ballot for Corflu 28, voting Deadline February 4th, is now available on the Corflu website:

<http://corflu.org/FaanBallot2011.pdf>

T.A.F.F. NOMINATIONS OPEN!

2011 TAFF Ballot Europe to North America

You can download the Ballot/Registration form from:

[TAFF Home](#) • [Printable Word version](#) • [PDF](#)

Or: < <http://taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2011.html> >

What is TAFF? The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. It exists solely through the support of fandom. Interested fans all over the world vote on the candidates, each vote being accompanied by a donation of not less than UK£2 or US\$3. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

Who may vote? Voting in the 2011 race is open to anyone active in fandom prior to April 2009, and who donates at least UK£2.00 or US\$3.00 to TAFF. Larger contributions will be gratefully accepted. Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot. You may change your vote any time prior to the deadline.

Deadline: Votes in this race must reach the administrators by **midnight GMT, 12 March 2011 (7pm EST; 4pm PST)**.

Voting details: TAFF uses a preferential ballot system which guarantees automatic runoffs until a majority is obtained. You rank the candidates in the exact order of your preference for them. If the leading first-place candidate does not get a majority, the first-place votes for the lowest-ranking candidate are dropped, and the second-place votes on those ballots are counted as first-place votes. This process repeats itself until one candidate has a majority. Your votes for second and third place are important, but you may give your candidate only one ranking on your ballot. In order to win, a candidate must receive at least 20% of the first-ballot first-place votes on either side of the Atlantic. Any candidate failing to receive this minimum percentage on either side will be dropped, and the second-place votes on their ballots counted as first-place votes in the next ballot count. Candidates and their supporters will thus need to canvass fans on both sides of the Pond. You may send your ballot to either administrator, but it will be tabulated with the other votes from the side of the ocean where you reside. Votes from fans not resident in either Europe or North America will not count towards either 20% minimum, but are important to the outcome of the race.

Hold Over Funds: This choice, like "No Award" in Hugo balloting, gives you the chance to vote for no TAFF trip this year, should you feel none of the candidates deserve your support. Hold Over Funds may be voted for in any position, and is exempt from the 20% requirement; thus, if it receives a majority of the votes on the final ballot, no trip will be held this year regardless of how many votes that option received on the first ballot.

No Preference: For voters who prefer not to choose between candidates, but don't want the trip held over.

Donations: TAFF gratefully accepts your freely given money and material for auction; such generosity has sustained the Fund for more than 50 years. TAFF is fandom's longest-running travel fund, and one of its worthiest causes -- give early and often! Please contact your nearest administrator for details.

Candidates: Each candidate has posted a bond, promising – barring "acts of God" – to travel, if elected, to the 2011 Worldcon (Renovation, 17-21 August 2011). They have also provided signed nominations and a **platform**. Please read both sides of the ballot before voting. Send entire sheet as your vote.

(We need your full contact details. TAFF may need to contact you regarding your ballot or to send out newsletters. We do not publish this data or pass it to any other organisation.)

We are currently setting up PayPal accounts. If you prefer to use PayPal, please check the TAFF website for details. If you think your name may not be known to the administrators, please provide the name and contact details of an active fan who is known to them and is willing to vouch for you (not a fan group, a candidate, or one of their nominators).

2011 TAFF Candidates:

Graham Charnock: "Vote for me. If you know me, you know why you should. If you don't know me visit my website www.cartiledgeworld.co.uk for biographical details and access to other craziness, which should persuade you. If I am elected I promise I will cut a swathe across North America like a rabid shrew released from a trap. I will party until my balls drop off and then glue them back on and party some more, and I will then report home in full widescreen hi-def detail. That is my solemn promise. Hey, it's what you want and it's what I do."

Nominated by Harry Bell, Sandra Bond, Rich Coad, Mike Meara, Robert Lichtman

John Coxon: "My name is John Coxon, and I got into fandom through being secretary of ZZ9 before editing a fanzine (Procrastinations). As well as winning "Best New Fan" FAAn Award, I edited Eastercon LX's newsletter, and my experience and enthusiasm will translate into my report and administration. Additionally, I'd like to experiment with other methods of reporting on my adventure. I'd love to show North America what makes British fandom brilliant and I think I'm the right person for the job! (As a bonus, I also promise to staple (hard copies of) my trip report, if someone will lend me a stapler.)"

Nominated by James Bacon, Claire Brialey, Chris Garcia, Dave Langford, Steve Stiles

Liam Proven: "I'm Liam – no badge name. I've been an active fan since Conspiracy '87. I'm not partisan; I'm not a gamer, but I've been known to play. Not a fanzine fan, but pubbed a couple of ishes. Not a costumer, but dress up sometimes. Get on with almost everyone. Do the odd panel, moderate 'em even, and volunteer at cons. I write for a living, so I promise an entertaining and prompt conrep. Finally, since I'm self-employed in a hostile financial climate, this is the only way I'll ever get to an American con – but I can take a long vacation!"

Nominated by Bridget Bradshaw, Lilian Edwards, Nic Farey, Lloyd Penney, James Shields

Paul Treadaway: "I'm probably best known in fandom as a conrunner, due to my work with the two Glasgow Worldcons. The pattern was probably set at my first convention, Conspiracy, where I walked through the door and was instantly recruited to sell raffle tickets for Fans Across the World. In fact, if elected, this will be the first Worldcon since then where I haven't either been on a Worldcon committee or helping to sell a Worldcon bid! I look forward to the chance to meet a wide range of fans, and of course renew my acquaintance with the friends I've already made."

Nominated by Vincent Docherty, Fran Dowd, Mike Glycer, Tim Illingworth, Maureen Kincaid Speller

You can download the Ballot/Registration form from:

[TAFF Home](#) • [Printable Word version](#) • [PDF](#)

Or: < <http://taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2011.html> >

LETTERS OF COMMENT

(Comments by the editor are in this colour.)

From: DAVE HAREN, March 13th, 2008

Hi Graeme,

Glad to see a new WCSFA come out.

I borrowed a movie from one of the kids. We have a new candidate for the Golden Turkey, maybe even an Elron.

2012 sets a new standard for failure to notice science when making a movie. It is a beautiful tour de force of Computer graphics, homely philosophies, and superhuman hero outrunning things in an impossible manner. As lovely a slice of

Limburger ever seen. This movie makes Marvel Comics put on the screen seem real by comparison. Every fan who loves bad movies needs a copy of this one.

NASA recently declared 2012 to be the most scientifically ignorant and inaccurate film of all time. While possibly true, it overlooks the fact that the movie is loads of fun, an attitude which NASA desperately needs to incorporate into its program if it wants to expand public support, or even just keep what little it already has. I sense an Elron coming on, and not for the movie...

World at War magazine from Decision Games seems to have become the place for exploring alternative history in the context of WW2. Hard to say if this will pan out any new insights, but at least there is an opening for discussion.

WW2 remains a fertile subject for alternate history. What's-his-name, the former Republican Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich (?), wrote '1942', a perfectly adequate thriller about German Commandos attacking the Manhattan Project. Savaged by critics though. Pity he never wrote his projected sequel (which I believe was going to be called '1943'?)

Warm Regards, Dave

From: LLOYD PENNEY, March 16, 2010

Dear Graeme:

Welcome back to the fanzine factory, and welcome back to WCSFAzine, issue 20. An Aurora nomination is as good a reason as any to relaunch the zine with something new. Good luck to all of us on the ballot. That's a heckuva party going on the front cover. I never find out about the really good get-togethers.

VCon 35...that means that it was ten years ago that Yvonne and I gusted at VCon 25. Where has the time flown... Steampunk is a popular theme at many cons these days. SteamCon II is coming up in Seattle, and this past weekend was the big Nova Albion Steampunk Exposition in Emeryville, California. I am a member of the Toronto Steampunk Society, and I am in touch with Steampunk Vancouver, and Steampunk Canada. (I gather Palle Hoffstein is a big steampunk fan, too.) Ad Astra will have some steampunk programming, and Polaris' secondary programming theme this year will be steampunk. Google provides about 2.8 million hits for the word. Also, Heather Dale will be performing at Ad Astra this year, too.

You and Yvonne were great guests at VCON 25. If any convention committees out there are looking for Fan Guests of Honour, you come highly recommended.

VCon 34...some very good choices as guests. Both Tanya and Lar are friends, and give good con. Lar's a sick puppy. I read his webcomic...

Those of us who are experienced readers will have seen that out of all the first conventions listed, two of them were chaired by John Mansfield. I know that John was also instrumental in starting many of the country's long-time SF clubs. An article on John and his lengthy fannish career would be a worthwhile article to be researched.

If I had the material. Alas, the assorted archives I maintain are by no means complete. John, himself, would be the ultimate source on his fannish career. I should very much like to read (and would be willing to publish) an article by him recounting his experiences over the years.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

From: DIANE LACEY, March 23rd, 2010.

Hi Graeme

Thank you for sending me WCFAzine #20 and for including the CUFF ballot. Your help is much appreciated. I write this a couple of days after the announcement that I've won the CUFF race. I'd like to thank LeAmber Kensley, last year's CUFF delegate, for administering the fund. I'd also like to thank Rob Uhrig for making this a race and for being so gracious. His congratulations were in my inbox before I'd even had a chance to open LeAmber's email announcing the results.

While I don't know the numbers as of this writing I'm told that the race was close and that there were 40 votes cast. The

number of votes seems low, and I hope to be able to promote the fund in an effort to increase interest over the next year. The good news is many of those voting donated more than the minimum amount, so the fund itself is in good shape, and I'm making plans to maintain that. I will, of course, be attending Keycon this year and I intend to stay on in Winnipeg for a few days hanging out with local fans. I've already received donations of several items for a CUFF auction at Keycon and I'm planning another auction at SFContario in November. I encourage any of your readers attending Keycon to please come up and introduce themselves.

Finally, I'd like to thank you personally for nominating me. You note that your name was inadvertently left off the ballot, and that is true for the initial release of the pdf ballot, and its omission was entirely my doing. I was able to rectify it for the later ballot that was linked to from the online voting page, as well as for the nominators list on the page itself. Again, I apologize for it initially being left off, and want to reiterate that the oversight was my fault and had nothing to do with either LeAmber or with Colin Hinz, who put the ballot together.

Thank you for correcting the record, but it is a minor matter. What's really important is...have you written your trip report yet? I'd love to read it and add it to the CUFF file in the BCSFA/WCSFA archive!

Best regards, Diane Lacey

COLOPHON

WCSFAzine Issue # 21, Jan 2011, Volume 5, Number 1, Whole number 21, is the E-zine of the West Coast Science Fiction Association (founded 1993), a registered society with the general mandate of promoting Science Fiction and the specific focus of sponsoring the annual VCON Science Fiction Convention (founded 1971).

Anyone who is a paid member of VCON 34 or who has paid a membership fee of \$5.00 to WCSFA is a member of WCSFA till noon, Friday, October 1st 2011 (when VCON 35 registration opens). No other criteria applies. Said membership involves voting privileges at WCSFA meetings.

Current Executive of WCSFA (effective 2010 Annual General Meeting):

PRESIDENT: *Keith Lim.*
VICE PRESIDENT: *Michael Walsh.*
TREASURER: *Kathleen Moore-Freeman*
SECRETARY: *Pending.*
VCON 35 CHAIR: *Danielle Stephens.*
VCON 36 CHAIR: *Keith Lim.*
ARCHIVIST: *R. Graeme Cameron.*
MEMBER-AT-LARGE: *Chilam.*
MEMBER-AT-LARGE: *Danielle Stephens.*

Since anyone can download WCSFAzine, the act of reading WCSFAzine does not constitute membership in WCSFA or grant voting privileges in WCSFA. Therefore you don't have to worry about WCSFA policies, debates, finances, decisions, etc. Unless you want to. Active members always welcome. Currently, easiest way to join WCSFA is to attend VCON 35. See info page

WCSFA Website: < <http://www.user.dccnet.com/clintbudd/WCSFA/> >

You can download past issues (and future issues when they're posted) of WCSFAzine from < <http://efanzines.com> > or contact the Editor at: < rgraeme [at] shaw.ca > and ask me to email you a PDF version.

Anyone (even non-members) may submit short articles, mini-essays, letters of comment, art fillers (small pieces of art) and/or cover art to the Editor at:

R.G. Cameron, Apt 72G – 13315 104th Ave, Surrey, B.C., V3T 1V5.

Or: < rgraeme [at] shaw.ca >

VCON 36 DETAILED INFORMATION:

For most complete and latest info go to: < <http://www.vcon.ca> >

DATES: Friday Sept 30th, Saturday Oct 1st & Sunday Oct 2nd 2011.

These are confirmed dates. They will not be moved.

VCON THEME: VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: IMAGINING TOMORROW FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT.

THINGS TO DO AT VCON: Attend panels, lectures, workshops & demonstrations, watch or take part in the Masquerade, go to the DJ'd dance, sing along at Filk sessions, mingle with fellow fans in hospitality, meet the guests of honour, visit room parties, go to the Book Launch, take part in the Writers Workshops (advance participant acceptance required), swim in the pool, laugh at the antics in the turkey readings, laugh & cringe at the Elron awards, shop for nifty stuff in the dealers room, peruse the art in the art exhibit & place bids on items for sale, compete at the art auction & the charity auction, try out some of the ongoing gaming, talk to artists in the artist alley, participate in assorted events hosted by various local fan groups, volunteer to help run the convention (checking badges, etc) for an hour or two, and keep an eye out for all the other things I haven't mentioned (probably because they're still in the planning stages).

Above all have a heck of a good time participating in events and meeting fellow fans.

Don't be shy. Plunge into interesting conversations. Introduce yourself to people. You have as much right to be there as any other member. You're SUPPOSED to have fun. Remember that!

GUESTS OF HONOUR:

Author GoH: Pending, not yet confirmed.

Artist GoH: Jean-Pierre Normand: (Illustrator of many book & magazine covers. Multiple Aurora Award winner.)

Media GoH: Lissa Lasseck: (Film editor & Producer – Firefly, Serenity, Buffy The Vampire Slayer, etc.)

VENUE: The Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Hwy, Richmond, B.C., Canada V6X 1A3.

HOTEL CONTACT INFO: Phone: (604) 273-7878

HOTEL RATES: \$117 nightly for a single (King size) or double (queen size) bed room. \$147 a night for a Junior Executive Suite. To get these special reduced rates you must tell them you are attending the VCON 36 Convention. Don't forget because if you don't tell them you'll be charged the full rate!

HOTEL FEATURES:

- Heated outdoor swimming pool with hot tub.
- 1st class health centre with flat screen TVs attached to every work-out station.
- Multiple alcoves and dozens of lounge chairs in every nook and cranny.
- No key card required anywhere. Easy access to all convention functions.

CONVENTION RATES ANNOUNCED:

Individual Rate:

\$35.00 to Feb 15
\$40.00 to Apr 15
\$45.00 to Jun 15
\$50.00 to Aug 15
\$55.00 to Sep 15
\$60.00 at Door

Youth rate:

\$17.50 to Feb 15
\$20.00 to Apr 15
\$22.50 to Jun 15
\$25.00 to Aug 15
\$27.50 to Sep 15
\$30.00 at door

Student, Senior & 'Games & Exhibits' Rates:

\$26.25 to Feb 15
\$30.00 to Apr 15
\$33.75 to Jun 15
\$37.50 to Aug 15
\$41.25 to Sep 15
\$45.00 at door

EXPLANATION OF RATE CATAGORIES:

YOUTH = 7 to 12 (a child below 7 is free). A youth ticket must be purchased in combination with at least one adult, student, senior or games & exhibits membership. The above rates are for a full weekend membership.

STUDENT = Highschool or greater (University, College, etc.). A student photo ID is required at the on-site registration desk in order to confirm you are eligible for the student rate. The above rates are for a full weekend membership.

SENIOR = 65 or older. Photo ID is required at the on-site registration desk in order to confirm you are eligible for the senior rate. The above rates are for a full weekend membership.

GAME & EXHIBITION = Gamers. This category of membership grants access only to the gaming room and the exhibit rooms (dealers room, artists alley, art gallery & fan club tables). It is designed for those who intend to spend most of their time in the gaming room but who might, for example, want to visit the dealer's room but don't have any interest in attending programming sessions or events.

Pre-Registration at discounted rates ends on 15 September. After this date, there is only on-site registration. One-day rates are available only at the door.

HOW TO BUY A MEMBERSHIP:

VCON 36 will be accepting payment by cheque or by Paypal.

To pay on-line (and for further details and registration forms) go to: < vcon36.eventbrite.com >

Once you have registered, the system will email you an e-ticket which you should print out and bring with you to the convention in order to speed up the check in process, reducing line up wait times at the registration desk and letting everyone get to the programs that much faster!

To pay by cheque, go to the above site, download a registration form and follow instructions.

WRITERS WORKSHOP INFORMATION:

VCON 36 (2011) Writers Workshop Now Open for Submissions!

- **WHO:** Anyone who is a paid up member of VCON.
- **WHAT:** Submit a short science fiction or fantasy story 5,000 words or less in length, or the first 5,000 words of the opening chapter of a science fiction or fantasy novel. Work must not have been professionally published. NO fan-fiction. Original fiction only.
- **WHERE:** the Richmond B Boardroom at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel.
- **WHEN:** Submit by September 1st 2011 (earlier if at all possible). Prefer ASAP.
- **HOW:** Send as a PDF file attachment AND as a Microsoft word document attachment via email to < archive [at] vcon.ca >
- **COST:** Nothing. Participants are expected to print out their own paper copies. (Professionals will receive paper copies from moderator if required.)

For more information, to ask questions, or to contact the moderator, visit the

[VCON Writers Workshop Forum](#) and be sure to read the VCON 36 Writers Workshop FAQ for additional details!