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PERSPECTIVES

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 BCSFAzine is the club newsletter published by the West Coast Science Fiction Association (A Registered Society) *W.C.S.F.A. is also known as B.C.S.F.A. which is the social branch of the organization.*

For comments, subscriptions suggestions, and/or submissions, write to:

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 **BCSFAzine is also available as a full colour Adobe Acrobat file.**

WCSFACTIVITIES

F.R.E.D. - Every Friday

The weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in joining us for an evening of conversation and relaxation, with pool table option. At the Burrard Motor Inn opposite St. Paul's Hospital (Downtown Vancouver) 6 blocks south of Burrard Skytrain Station. 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). #22 Knight/McDonald bus along Burrard. Begins 8:00pm. On the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

Contributor's Deadline - August 20. September 17th, October 15th, November 19th, December 17th. Send your submissions/loc to John Wong at 2041 East 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5N 1X9 or E-Mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca.

BCSFAzine Pickup/Collation at FRED - October 1st, November 5th, December 3rd. Friday before the first Sunday of the month. Pick up your issue of BCSFAzine at FRED! Pristine, mint condition copies are available at FRED. Call Steve to let him know you wish to pick up your copy.

Discount Movie Nights.

\$2.00 Tuesdays are back! When? The second Tuesday of the month (Sep. 14th) at 6:30 pm. The place being New West Cinema at #229 - 555 Sixth Street, New Westminster.

Meet in front of the Box Office at the above time and we'll decide on which movie, where to do coffee and in which order.

Saturday September 18th. 7.00 pm **WCSFA Annual General Meeting and Elections. Special Time and Place.** Misty's Billiards. 341 B. North Road, Coquitlam, B.C. Three blocks south of Lougheed Mall bus loop. Be there to elect the new executive for the new Millennium! Pick a President, Vice-President, Information Officer, Treasurer, Secretary, and three Members at Large. Choose wisely. If you are willing to spend a few hours a month helping to run the club, then put your name in and challenge for a position on the exec! *Please note: In order for WCSFA to remain a society, we must have at least five different people on the executive. Otherwise, WCSFA must fold and lose its society status. Without the protection of the society's act, VCON will not take place.*

Tuesday Sept. 21st 7pm. **Night of the Writer Roasties.** Buffet World, 2555 Commercial Drive, Vancouver. Discussing Timberjac by Don DeBrandt. If Don shows up, we will pay for his meal.

Monday Sept. 27th, 7pm. **Forget Reality Enjoy Feeding Frenzies.** Purple Onion Cabaret, 15 Water Street, Vancouver

Monday Oct. th, 7pm. **FREFF.** Hon's Wonton House, 408 Sixth Street, New Westminster.

October 31st - UBC Science Fiction Society Annual Food Bank Trick or Treat. **WCSFA** is proud to join the UBCSFS in this charity event.

Keep an eye out here for future official **WCSFA** sponsored events.

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

MosCon XXI 10-12 September 1999

Where: University Inn, 1516 Pallmon Road, Moscow, Idaho, 83843

Tel: 1-800-325-8765

Guests of Honor: James P. Hogan and Tara Harper

Fan Guests: Dan and Theresa Fears

Artist Guest: TBD

Scientist Guest: TBD

Remember to RSVP for Mark's PARTY!

MosconXXI P.O. Box 9622, Moscow ID 83843

Con Spec September 17, 18 & 19, 1999

<http://www.compumart.ab.ca/clear/conspec.htm>

"breaking out of the box"

John Clute (keynote)

Michael Swanwick, Sean Stewart, Dave

Duncan, Candis Jane Dorsey, Yves

Meynard, Nalo Hopkinson & Peter Watts

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Conifur October 1-3, 1999

<http://www.conifur.org/>

HOTEL: Best Western Executive Inn

GUEST OF HONOR: Jimmy Chin

Be sure to register early for the low \$20 price before July 1st, 1999 when the price will go up to \$25, or \$30 for those that register at the door.

Only memberships postmarked before the dates will be accepted for those dates. ALL mail in memberships must be received by September 18th, 1999. Any memberships received after that date will be refunded after the event. If you don't get a confirmation card in the mail, then check with us at the door of the event itself. We keep full records on site. Payments for any of the above memberships should be sent payable to: Conifur NorthWest, 2406 SW 308TH PL, Federal Way, WA 98023. If you wish to pay by credit card, please contact us directly at: jwbirdsa@picarefy.com.

Incon October 16-17-18, 1999

Spokane Valley Red Lion, I-90 and Sullivan Road
 Author Guest of Honor - Charles De Lint, Margret Organ-Kean - Artist GoH
 24-hour gaming, including Magic, RPGs, miniature wargaming, Vampire LRP

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\$15 until May 1, 1999
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For reservations call:

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or contact:

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Other enquiries;

incongames@yahoo.com

Retreat to Risa October 22-24, 1999

at the Best Western Tsawwassen 1665,

56th Street, Tsawwassen, B.C. (Room rates - \$90/night)

Guest to be confirmed.

Tel: 1- (800) 943-8221

Memberships \$25 Canadian. Memberships limited, pre-reg only.

Chair: Frank Skinner: (604) 524-6590 or skinnerman@home.com

Vice Chair: Craig Maclachlan, (604)

531-4384 (11am to 11pm only) or cme4aweb@email.com

Terracon II, October 29-31 1999

Best Western Executive Inn, Fife, WA

Author Guest of Honor:

Dave Duncan

Media Guest of Honor: TBA

Special Media Guest:

Chris McDonell

Toastmaster: David Tackett

Registration: \$20 through 10/15/99

\$30 at door

OryCon 21 November 12-14, 1999

Columbia River DoubleTree Inn,

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OryCon 21 will be a weaponless

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Nene Thomas

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Science Guest of Honor:

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For more information:

OryCon 21

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Viking Con 17 August 18-20, 2000

Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington. Viking Union 202 Box V-1 Bellingham, WA 98225

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Freeman Dyson

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Art Guest Of Honour

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Special Guest Of Honour

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Fan Guest Of Honour

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Julie McGalliard

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\$20 CAN) until 12/31/1999

GARTH SPENCER IS 1999 CANADIAN UNITY FAN FUND WINNER

1998 CUFF winners Lloyd and Yvonne Penney have declared Garth Spencer to be the 1999 CUFF winner.

Garth was the only candidate to throw his hat in the ring for the CUFF race this year, and he received a total of ten nominations from across the country.

Garth will be the CUFF delegate at and a guest at CanVention 19/inConsequential II, the 1999 CanVention or Canadian National Science Fiction Convention, at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in Fredericton, New Brunswick October 15 to 17, 1999.

Garth's nominees were Randy Barnhart, R. Graeme Cameron, David Malinski, Andrew Murdoch, Doug Finnerty and Clint Budd from the Western half of Canada, and Murray Moore, Simon Parkinson, Brian Davis and Will Straw from the Eastern half.

BCSFAZINE

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It is easy to change your subscription to this format. Go to the Adobe web site and download the free Acrobat Reader for you computer's operating system. (Make sure you get version 3 or higher).

Then e-mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca and let me know that you want to switch your subscription over. You will then receive the next zine in your e-mail.

A sample copy of the Acrobat BCSFAzine is available on our website.

<http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/dh2/bcsfa>



LETTERS OF LISA

Dear John,

I'm sitting here the night before your deadline, wondering what I want to say to Lisa Gemino's article in the last BCSFAzine. I have trouble finding anything wrong with any single point she made, it's just the final impression, that worthwhile people in fandom are vanishingly rare, that I can't quite take.

What are the facts? These days, let's face it, science fiction fandom is a leisure interest group. (No, not even that – more like a clutch of separate leisure interest groups, each sticking together and not really communicating much with the others, if we're honest about it. But that's a whole 'nother story.) And, I suppose like any small interest group, fandom gets its share of people who are a bit challenged when it comes to behaving like fully qualified human beings.

Maybe there's a tendency in this sort of small interest group to tolerate socially inept behaviour far too much, and far too long. Maybe fandom gets more than its share of the socially challenged. But are these established facts? Lisa is claiming that *in her experience* there is more inexcusable social ineptitude among fans than any other group. This is one of those your-mileage-may-vary situations – nobody experiences the same fandom, even in the same time and place – but I take that to mean, maybe she has encountered a reality, and I haven't.

Lisa is hardly alone in encountering the fuggheads. Ron Gillies, who moved to B.C. from Calgary convention fandom, wrote to BCSFAzine some years ago describing the need to clean up our conventions, particularly in regard to the fugghead factor. (Where is Ron now, by the way? Did anyone take his point?)

The reason I'm having a problem here has to do with what I expected in fandom. What I expected ran sort of crosswise to the kind of fandom I found, or that Lisa found. I expected rather more than a leisure interest group; I expected, reasonably I think, a sort of geographically-distributed community. There are grown adults who still seriously describe fandom as a family of choice. Apparently this is what fandom was, at least in some times and places, for some people. But that wasn't quite my experience. I have run across my share of fuggheads; and Lisa's experience of fandom in the 90s seems to have run even more to fuggheads.

I came into fandom looking, reasonably I think, for a community of active minds. What I have found is ... well, I describe BCSFA sometimes (FRED, particularly) by saying "all the fans who were going somewhere with their lives got up and went." I'm sorry to say this, but I have *not* generally found active minds, or mental stimulation, or much fun and interest at FRED. I recall a veteran of fabulous 1970s Edmonton fandom, who re-

marked to me on the number of fans she saw who had *one* neat experience – with costuming or filking or comics fandom or whatever – and wanted that same trip over and over again, nothing else. Does this sound like anyone you know? I've had more fun and more stimulating conversation with the newer members in the coffee group than at FRED. Does this tell you anything?

Lisa is within her rights to say that she's fed up with fandom. There's no law saying that she should try out different fan groups, in town or out of town. But there's also no law saying we can't take a long hard look at ourselves, and what we're doing *instead* of something fun, active, stimulating and interesting.

What we're doing, I think, is falling into a least-common-denominator mode. A low-entropy mode. A rut in which we put up with fuggheads too long, put up with the socially challenged among us too much, and don't try out new things or keep up interesting activities. It doesn't have to be that way. But if we let things go on his way, what does this say about what we really want?

I've been in fandom for over twenty years, and in Vancouver fandom since 1987. We stopped holding Rain, a relaxicon, as well as VCon in 1984 or so. BCAPA disappeared in 1988 or '89. I've seen the Ether Patrol radio show drift out of the hands of founding BCSFAns, mainly due to apathy, and it finally went off the air within the past year. What does all this mean to you?

We can, if we choose, do a lot more fun and interesting things. We can, if we choose, kick out the fuggheads, or teach the socially challenged how to behave like people. (Not your party, I understand, but I think it would be a better thing.) We can, if we choose, initiate some very creative projects on the Internet, starting from but by no means limited to the BCSFA Web page.

But everything depends on our motivation. What really motivates us? I don't think you know.



Garth Spencer

When it rains...

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

In her #314 article Lisa Gemino writes: "I'm not going to accept criticism from people who do nothing for WCSFA about my involvement." I'm not quite sure what she means, but I assume my 15 years in BCSFA — including six years as BCSFAzine editor — entitle me to make a few comments of my own.

She states: "I hear a lot of back-patting in fandom: fans are smarter than average; fans are more open-minded; fans are more liberal; fans are more tolerant...Bullshit." True enough. The above are fannish myths. For example, the idea that fans are more intelligent (hence the ancient cry: "Fans are Slans!") dates back to the early forties when Jack Speer gave the George Washington University mental alertness test to a dozen or so fans and concluded that the average fan was in the top tenth of the population. Back then this might even have been true, for the few hundred people involved in fandom (a few clubs and numerous shortlived personal newsletters) were for the most part isolated teenagers who liked to read and write, oddball activities which, in the dim and distant past, were considered intellectual pursuits. Indeed, it has been said that so little SF was published in the first two decades of fandom that virtually every fan had read and was prepared to discuss the entire literature, hence the commonality of interest, the sense of cohesion, of community. Nowadays, with the explosion of multiple genre interests under the 'um-



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brella' of SF, huge numbers of people with diverse interests are involved with this and that aspect of fandom. This is especially apparent at conventions. And frankly, I think that's part of the attraction modern fandom offers. There is no longer one community in fandom, but many communities.

And by the way — just as an aside — let us remember that the vast majority of people who support the multi-billion dollar SF book and movie industries with their money are not fans. They are just people who happen to like SF as personal entertainment but don't have the time or inclination to pursue it as a hobby. And that's what we SF fans are — SF hobbyists.

However, Lisa doesn't appear to be mourning fandom's disintegration as a close-knit community (which happened decades ago) so much as revealing her sense of betrayal at fandom's failure to live up to her first impressions. I'm a little upset with her sub-heading: "Fans disgust me." I would much rather have read: "Some fans disgust me." But her choice of wording appears to be deliberate, for she goes on to say: "Fans are, as a group, the rudest, most ignorant, most inescapably uncaring people I have ever met in my life." And "I have never, EVER encountered" [outside of fandom] "anything even remotely like the following situations, all of which were perpetrated by fans and happened...."

After the above buildup I expected to read about nothing less than incidents of rapine and pillage, but was instead treated to a short list of rude and annoying behaviour of a minor and really quite insignificant nature. For such as this Lisa is ready to condemn fans as a group for being the "rudest, most ignorant" people she has ever met? Well, that may be true in her case, but let me tell you about some of the people I'VE met in the so-called real world:

- the neo-nazi construction engineer who always voted for the NDP on the assumption that, as they are 'opposed' to big banks and big business, the NDP must be as anti-semitic as he is. (Which says a lot about some of his other assumptions.)
- the machine operator whose social life consisted of going to bars on weekends and beating the crap out of guys drunker than him.
- the drunk who took one look at me as I came walking innocently along Broadway one fine summer evening and lunged at me shouting he was going to kill me (but fortunately his equally drunken friends grabbed him and led him away).
- the animal rights activist who threatened to beat up my mother because she was wearing a fur coat. (It was fake fur.)
- the two merrily drunk native indian lads who grabbed my arms, twisted them behind my back, and slammed me into the window of a Granville mall store shouting "You're under arrest! RCMP!" Then, laughing and giggling, they slammed me into the window a-second time and watched me crumple to the pavement at their feet.
- the mean-looking drunk at the bar muttering he wanted to "Kill somebody. Anybody." while his girlfriend tried to argue him out of it.
- the avid amateur baseball player who boasted he never washed his bed sheets. Whenever he had a girlfriend over he rubbed the sheets with one of those 'static-cling-free' cloths to give them that 'fresh' smell.
- the manager of a federal department office who boasted she hadn't read a book since highschool and intended to go to her grave with her 'record' intact.
- the rich lawyer who always ditched his latest girlfriend at the end of the month because he figured relationships would begin to cost him too much money if they lasted longer than three or four weeks.
- the radio station manager whose subtle method of informing employees they were fired was to replace their office furniture with

kindergarten furniture.

And so on and so on. Yes, fandom is full of fuggheads, people I avoid and turn away from because they don't share my interests or meet my standards or basically just because I find them extremely annoying, BUT I have yet to meet anyone in fandom who, for sheer viciousness, cruelty, sadism, or devotion to ignorance can match some of the bastards and morons running around in the mundane world.

(Oh, and let me mention that in proper fannish usage the term 'mundane' is strictly neutral. It just means 'non-fannish'. To employ it as an insult, as if to imply that fans are superior to non-fans, is improper.)

The simple truth is, in every sphere of human activity, some of the people involved are assholes. I have found this to be true in every organization and business I have ever been a part of. So I am not surprised fandom is no different.

Lisa writes: "By nurturing the incapable and unteachable, by allowing people to believe that their disgusting childish behaviour is acceptable, fandom is choking itself. People who no longer wish to put up with this crap flee fandom screaming..."

Well, in the first place, the first sentence would appear to suggest that fandom IS more tolerant than the norm, but let that pass. The most important point of disagreement between Lisa and I is the extent to which fandom is chock full of unspeakable fuggheads. I say no more or less than it has ever been, and certainly not as much as the 'real' world.

Secondly, people only get out of fandom what they put into it. Often, for any number of reasons, people 'burn out' and GAFIate (get away from it all) because what had been challenging and exciting is now felt to be an intolerable burden. And yes, sometimes the fuggheads are the final straw. But it's all a matter of perception. I cope by accepting the inevitable, the presence of people I don't like, and by seeking out those I do like. As a consequence fandom is still fun for me.

Lisa concludes: "I'm not going to forgive, with pity, willful ignorance by grown-ups who should know better." This is, of course, a good description of how much of the human race operates. Lisa would make it easier on herself if she would at least learn to ignore people she doesn't like. Responding to their presence in a negative manner is a waste of energy. People are what they are. You can't change them. So don't bother trying. Fandom, and conventions in particular, are a smorgasboard of potential human relations. Just pick and choose those you want and ignore the ones you reject. What could be simpler?

After all, the 'purpose' of ANY group of people (not just fans) is not to measure up to your standards (which is impossible), but to offer the possibility of meeting at least some like-minded people. To insist that EVERYONE must fit into that category strikes me as a tad elitist, unrealistic, and self-defeating. So my advice to Lisa is.... lighten up already!

I know Lisa, consider her a friend, admire her energy and enthusiasm, and am thankful for all the hard work she has done for WCSFA/BCSFA and VCON. My article is in no way to be construed as an attack on her, it is rather an attempt to argue her out of her current somewhat grim view of fandom in the hope that she will enjoy it more. For fandom DOES have much to offer; this I still believe.

I will close with a comment by Aileen Forman, a Las Vegas fan, made to me at the recent Westercon 52: "I'll tell you what I like about fandom. I used to wear extremely sexy costumes to conventions, yet I always felt safe. If I had worn them anywhere else I know men would have come up to me and asked, 'How much do you charge?'"



R. Graeme Cameron.

P E R S P E C T I V E S

I've been having lots of odd thoughts about emotion lately, stemming from a personal crisis o'the soul. "Course, I get one of those 'bout every three month each with its own special flavor o'pain.

But outside of that I worry about my emotional life. Specifically, I worry that I've gotten so shut off from my emotions that only the most intense and violent aspects can get through.

When this particular problem comes up, I like to re-read some of my favorite books, the ones that really get me worked up emotionally. The cathartic effect of weeping over *The Return of the King* or laughing out loud over chunks of *Lois McMaster Bujold's Memory* or the sense of accomplishment twined with grief that comes with *Watership Down* or the triumph and vindication of *Richard Sharpe* in any of his eponymous books or ... you get the picture.

I expect that's why I've always been more drawn to the melodramatic aspects of Speculative fiction: I read more fantasy than SF; the SF I do read is very seldom the "hard" science of Asimov and Bear. I respect both of them as writers but I find their work desiccated and boring ... no, boring's the wrong word. Un-emotional to the point of no return.

I'm going off on a tangent now; it will all link up later. Kinda.

Actually, I've spent most of the last few years (when I've been most active in fandom; go figure), reading out of genre. History, other non-fiction generally; but since I despise modern "serious writers" I worked in a bookstore for seven years; I've seen Booker Prize winners and number one bestsellers come and go in droves. I've yet to see any that could match the quality of Hemingway or Jones) virtually all the fiction I read is Spec Fic. It's

just that I hardly read any fiction at all.

Now, when it comes to other media (TV, movies, computer games), in that area I'm kinda exclusive. Most of what I enjoy is Science Fiction or Fantasy related. And I'm beginning to believe that Speculative fiction is more suited to visual media than books.

Let me discuss that for a minute.

I do not mean that speculative fiction literature isn't worthwhile. A very great deal of it is powerful and interesting stuff. What I would argue is that very little of it is profound. Very little spec fic of any kind reaches the heights of pure meaning contained in even the simplest Hemingway story or unequalled use of language in the lightest Shakespeare comedy.

Of course, it could be argued that Shakespeare was a fantasy writer. Save, perhaps, for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* the supernatural are plot devices, pawns used to move people from one, spot to another. This is not, precisely, the structure of a fantasy story.

Fantasy contains supernatural or super-normal creatures and things as reason for existence; properly, remove the fantastic elements and the plot structure should fall. Here's a hint: don't use the word "geostationary".

Science Fiction, as it exists today, has a similar mandate. In this case, a science fiction story should contain some extension or expansion on a scientific principle, sometimes plausible or sometimes not. Without that science, it should collapse.

Horror, the third of the spec fic trinity, should contain some deadly and frightening menace, not necessarily supernatural but more often so than not. Fear and death, potential or actual, are the hooks that horror hangs from; without them the fiction has no power.

Within each of the above are subcategories. Science Fiction literature is the most bastardized these days. "Cool" tech and "look at the neat alien culture" travelogues have replaced the "hard" SF writing of old.

I don't think this

is a bad thing, necessarily.

Tying back to what I was talking about earlier, it is the emotional complexity of speculative fiction that is its true draw. Never a big fan of the old school writers (Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke), I was drawn despite myself to the story "Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed", by Bradbury. Though the structure of the story would fall without the tech (it involves earth colonists on Mars) its force lay in the description of one man's slowly dissolving willpower as he fights to escape the change occurring to the other colonists.

That question (will he escape before it overtakes him) is fascinating. Almost as fascinating is the central dilemma of the TV series "Buffy the Vampire Slayer": when it is your destiny to kill Vampires, what do you do when the only man you can love is one?

And yet...

Yet, for all the interest and mystery and power of these concepts, they seem well ... they seem hollow at the core.

Vampires don't exist.

When we finally do reach Mars, we won't start turning into aliens (probably; anyhow, the point's moot for the moment).

I love the rich textures of worlds created by speculative fiction authors. I love neat details and moments of desperate choice. I can't write about people saving the world or saving their souls in any other genre without forcing the point more than I'd like.

But when I'm not looking for the vicarious thrill of magic or future tech when I'm looking for actual substance, for power, for words of meaning that speak to the soul I generally don't go look in the Science Fiction and Fantasy section of the bookstore. These days, I don't go to a bookstore at all,

I go to my shelves and boxes of books, piling up over the years as my collection grows, and pull down *Thin Red Line*. Or *Sharpe's Waterloo*. Or *Birth of the Modern*. Maybe, depending on the mood, I might go for a *Lois McMaster Bujold* or *Robert Adams*.

But these new authors, the ones who stuff the shelves in every section, why should I want to read them for insight into life? Most of them have never done anything,

Neither have I really.

And it saddens me to think: Well, that's why I write Science Fiction.



Lisa Gemino

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THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

Superficially, the plot sounds like some slasher B-movie: a small group of film students go out into the woods, run afoul of something and are never seen again. From that, it almost writes itself. All you need is a blonde willing to take her top off, some stage blood and a chainsaw. Or you could make a very different kind of movie.

The Blair Witch Project intrigued me ever since I saw the now famous “eyeball-shot” on TV, earlier this year. It was being shown at a film festival, and I thought it would never get a major release. It would go direct to video, garner a small cult audience and that would be it. Instead, it became the surprise box office hit and a triumph of indie filmmaking, particularly in a summer full of bloated, unsatisfactory megamovies (e.g. my last column).

Horror movies make a point out of manipulating the audience’s emotions and perceptions. This movie plays with the audience’s perceptions skillfully and creatively. You can see the genius of this movie in what it doesn’t do. There’s no violence, no special effects of any kind, only one restrained piece of gore, and an incredible amount of tension. Every shot is from one of the two cameras carried by the film students, giving an unsettling sense of realism and also constantly making us wonder what the camera isn’t capturing. The staple shot of horror movies, when we see the future victims from the monster’s point of view, never occurs. The audience never gets a chance to feel distanced from or superior to the protagonists. Instead, we’re with them, in the woods, feeling more and more desperate. The forest setting which seems beautiful at first becomes hostile.

The filmmakers are hounded by someone or something out in those woods, but is it angry rednecks, or the Blair Witch, or some forest animals and their own paranoia? Is one of their own party manipulating them? We don’t even know *why* this is happening. Have the trio has strayed where they shouldn’t have gone? Are they on the verge of uncovering some secret? Or are they just in the wrong place at the wrong time?

Conventional horror takes place in a highly moralistic universe. Bad things happen to people because of some transgression: they built their house on an Indian burial ground, they ignore an ancestral curse, they try to raise the dead or they have the wrong kind of sex (or have sex at all). The carnage that ensues is punishment for this sin. As excessive as the horror may be, it makes sense to people. Once you figure out the rules of scary movies, you can

smugly say, “Well, I know better than to go into the basement alone.” And the horror film becomes a goofy exercise in gross-outs.

The Blair Witch Project belongs to a smaller, divergent school of horror that is harder for the audience to understand and master. The classic example of this genre is the **Night of the Living Dead** movies, in which the dead

rise and start eating the living, and no solid explanation for this is ever given. Underlying the familiar gross-outs of cannibal zombies is the far more unsettling horror of a world in which bad things happen to everybody regardless of what they do, a world that doesn’t make sense.

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We, the audience, are just as baffled by these events as the film students, and like them, we grasp at straws trying to restore some order to the world. This justifies the premise of the film. Keeping the cameras rolling throughout this ordeal gives them a sense of control and understanding of what’s happening; at the same time, it allows them some feeling of distance and detachment. “If it’s on film, it can’t hurt me, and I will understand it.” However, those feelings of control and distance prove to be illusions.

We squint at the dark, jerky footage trying to see some clue to what is going on. There are suggestions that the filmmakers have disturbed something, but there are no hard facts to show how and why this is happening. The ancillary materials (the website and the “Curse of the Blair Witch” mock-documentary) provide more tantalizing clues, but final understanding eludes us. Instead of explanations from a Van Helsing-like character, we get incomplete narratives from a local folklorist, a 70s hippie-witch, an anthropologist, a 1940s newsreel, the diary of one of the filmmakers, and more. The audience struggles to piece all these fragments into a coherent narrative, in vain; we’re out in the

woods with the students, alone, frightened, confused and wanting desperately to go home.

The meat of this film is in watching the three characters interact. The opening scenes of this movie made me feel like I was watching people I knew goof around in the woods. After they get lost, the isolation, hunger, cold, exhaustion and mounting fear makes them fray around

the edges, becoming bitchy and almost violent. Heather, the control-freak leader of this expedition, has the worst of it, refusing even to admit that they’re lost at first, struggling to maintain her authority, then making a pitiable, point-blank confession of her guilt to her video camera. Watching those people go to pieces, from the vantagepoint of being inside the tent with them, was the most gripping thing I’ve seen in a while. When one of them vanishes, the other two bond together in an unexpectedly touching way, showing that ordinary people are capable of grace under incredible pressure.

In fact, it was the performances that stayed with me, more than the innovative cinematography. You might think this is a one-trick movie, put together around the video verité concept by two film students who got a lucky break, and that the acting would be amateurish, subservient to the technique or both. Instead, **The Blair Witch Project** is well-crafted movie, both in concept and in details; Eduardo Sanchez and Dan Myrick the joint writers and directors, have a definite gift. Their movie is the most innovative and intelligent horror movie made in a long time, possibly the best movie ever made for \$25,000 US, and my new favorite scary movie.



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compiled by Garth Spencer (for his June 1999 Web page update)

Continued from last issue...

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Robyn Gryffon, editor; gryffon@excite.com

Meant to be published every 5-6 weeks, but has been suspended due to money problems and lack of quality submissions.

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Continued Next Issue

Hitching gives Graeme visions of God-Emperorhood.

R. Graeme Cameron, former God-Editor of BCSFAzine, in the interest of reigniting his campaign to become first God-Emperor of Canada, hereby formally announces his intention to run for the position of BCSFA/WCSFA President in the upcoming club elections.

The God-Emperor wannabee, also known as 'Killer Cam', has no intentions or plans whatsoever and thus expects to appeal to the widest possible spectrum of the electorate. Anyone interested in arguing every conceivable minutiae of Robert's Rules of Order, keenly desirous of constitutional wrangling, or absolutely obsessed with placing an activities straitjacket on the club will be invited to join a special boredom subcommittee to be held daily in Squamish. The rest of us will be invited to contribute neat and nifty ideas to make the club a fun celebration of our common interest in the sense of wonder SF&F offers. Be warned that as President Killer Cam will not wield the traditional call to order hammer but a sword. Anyone devoting more than a couple of minutes to boring twaddle will be beheaded. Club meetings should not be a burden, but rather something to look forward to. (HHmmm, it has been pointed out that execution may be a trifle excessive. Perhaps insisting that anyone indulging in political gabbling must do so in the nude would some what reduce the level of boredom. Hmm...)

Vote for Killer Cam, the dictator of fun!

P.S. His Imperial Dementia, R. Graeme Cameron, did recently propose to Her Wildness Alyxandra Shaw, and received an enthusiastic 'Yes!' for an answer. Both tentatively plan to attend appropriate ceremonies in September of 2000. By that time it is hoped the delirious couple will be sharing quarters of sufficiently large size to function as both a meeting place and party centre for the club, with the club archives readily available for member's perusal. A Slan shack in the making! Alyx would become 'First Lady' of the club as God-Empress (if Cameron was elected and had not yet been run out of town by infuriated members.)

P.P.S. In addition to becoming Prez, Killer Cam hopes to continue as club archivist. Cheers All!

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By Palle Hoffstein

First, more news on Warner Bros.' Mars project. The film is now being called Red Planet, probably to prevent confusion with Disney's Mission To Mars. The great Gary Oldman and Tom Sizemore have been added to the existing cast of Val Kilmer and Carrie-Anne Moss. Most of the film is to be set on Mars, with a few scenes on Earth's bleak city wastelands. The production and costume designers who did such an outstanding job on The Matrix have been brought on board for this picture (which may mean that they won't be available for Matrix 2). Disney's Mars project, currently being filmed in Vancouver, is being rushed to beat Red Planet to the screens. Yet another Mars project: James Cameron is putting together a TV mini-series based on Kim Stanley Robinson's award-winning Mars Trilogy. I'll pass on news on that as I can find it.

Fox's X-Men, currently undergoing pre-production in Toronto seems to have an ever-changing budget. The latest is \$75 million, down from an earlier report of \$110 million. The current release date is now July 2000, switching dates with Spielberg's Minority Report which Fox has now slated for Christmas 2000. Toronto will be used as New York City; a replica of the Statue of Liberty is being built on the film set. X-Men's director, Bryan Singer, admits to never having read a comic before he took on this project. Singer was chosen by X-Men creator Stan Lee based on his work on The Usual Suspects and

Apt Pupil. He'll have his work cut for him to get this project in the can by next July. John Ottman, who worked with Singer on those two films, has been brought on to compose the score. Bruce Davison is now confirmed in the role of Senator Kelly, Famke Janssen has the Jean Grey part and Ray Park is The Toad! It's amazing to see just how in-demand Park (Darth Maul) has become, especially based on a small role with little dialogue (spoken by another actor). Also, Jim Czieviel, long rumoured as Cyclops is now officially out of the running and Cyclops remains the project's last big casting hurdle. Joss Whedon (The man behind Buffy The Vampire Slayer) has been brought in for an eleventh hour rewrite of the script. The movie story will cover how the X-Men become a team, especially the joining and emergence of Wolverine, and the conflict between Xavier and Magneto. Don't expect to see Beast, Gambit or the Sentinels in this movie, however talks about a second movie involving the Sentinels are already being made. Check out www.yoyo.cc.monash.edu.au/~topcow/wolverine14/434.html for a section of the script with some of Whedon's work and www.x-menmovie.com is now up and running.

"BY YOUR COMMAND!" As promised, I have news on the new Battlestar Galactica (BG) movie. You had to see this coming; the first Battlestar Galactica was rapidly produced to cash in the Star

Wars hype. Now with The Phantom Menace passing the \$400 million dollar mark (as of this writing) it's time to cash in again.

I've been trying to sort out news on this film for a while now. The problem is that there are two BG projects battling it out. A feature has been announced by Glen A. Larson (who produced the original film and series) and producer Todd Moyer (Wing Commander) with writer Mike Finch (Wing Commander). Larson's story will centre around Commander Cain (a minor character from the original series played by Lloyd Bridges) and the Battlestar Pegasus and their search for the Galactica fleet, not knowing if they ever made it to Earth. The other project, which original series actor Richard Hatch has been trying to put together for some time, is conceived as a feature, with possibly a new TV series or mini-series with tie-ins with video games, using as many of the original characters as possible.

Actually, rumours about a BG project being in development first appeared back in 1996. FX house Foundation Imaging has been creating small amounts of test and design work for BG since late 1997, although it is not clear whether this has been for Universal's or Hatch's project. Hatch has, in fact been doing the SF convention circuit for the last few years trying to build some grassroots excitement for his project (Hatch, by the way, also works as a motivational speaker). His biggest obstacle has been that Larson owns the rights to the show's minor charac-

President's Message

Our club needs more events and house parties... Even if we do manage to get house parties happening monthly, I think club meetings should stay at the Vancouver Public Library Branch (of our choice) on Saturday afternoons. Even though "club meeting" has traditionally been a code word for "house party" in this club, I would prefer that serious club business is more likely to be accomplished in a meeting room (such as the library provides) than in someone's house because:

- Benign stimulants such as alcohol and tobacco are not allowed in libraries. Anyone caught consuming such substances will be ejected from the premises.

- While most living rooms easily accommodate around twenty standing individuals (especially if

they're circulating from room to room) trying to seat more than five people in these places results in cramped hell. Amazingly enough, most library meeting rooms are no bigger than an average living room, but are able to seat twenty people with ease.

- Does anyone really have the patience to endure more than fifteen minutes of official club business when all they really want to do is party? I don't think I that kind of patience anymore. Unfortunately, it takes more than fifteen minutes to sort out the club affairs on a month to month basis. When we book two hour time slots at the library, we end up using most of that time.

Anyway, those are my feelings on why house parties and club meetings don't mix. If you have

strong feelings on this issue, I would encourage you to run for BCSFA executive. I regret that I will not be running for President again, due to the strong possibility that my current (or a future) employer might put me on a weekend work schedule.

On the other hand, I've been taking note of the superior facilities offered at "Misty's" (where September's elections and AGM will be) and am wondering if this is the place where a happy medium between "club meeting" and "house party" can be reached. But that's something for the next executive to decide.



Doug Finnerty

ters and ships (but none that appeared in the first movie) and Universal owns the rights to the show's name, major ships and major characters while Hatch owns nothing. Actually, Larson and Universal are themselves in dispute over who actually owns what; Larson claiming to have any new film rights. Hatch has been successful in spurring the re-release of BG toys and models which have shown real popularity. Most notably, out of his own pocket Hatch has made a short promotional movie to promote his BG project with the help of donated time from FX houses and actor friends; this being possibly what Foundation Imaging was working on. In doing so, he would have been violating copyright, but apparently this short movie has been shown to Universal bigwigs. This promo movie was shown at this year's DragonCon and San Diego Comic Con to rave reviews from the attendees.

The announcement that a BG feature was a go came from Moyer and Larson this past March and Universal quickly responded that they had not greenlighted that project. In fact, they might now be favouring Hatch for his efforts. It's worth considering that Larson's story synopsis heavily emphasises those elements of the show that he owns, rather than Universal's property. With a project like this it's the

merchandising and toy rights that make the biggest dollars, and these sorts of rights will ultimately determine what the final film is like. Also, having Moyer of Wing Commander fame as a partner is not going to impress many people. (Both Larson's and Hatch's projects, by the way, assume that "Battlestar 1980" never happened.) Hatch has stated that he would like as many characters from the first series as possible and to have a real continuity in place. Hatch claims to have the backing in place to make the feature for \$50 to \$60 million; all he needs are the rights. He'll make it for Universal, with Universal or he has offered to buy the rights outright.

Will the BG feature be made? I'm pretty sure of it. Should we care? After all, the original film is not really that good; it doesn't stand up very well today, nor does the series. But the original film and series do have their own charms. The Cylons were great! The spaceships and the space battles might have been cheap copies of Star Wars but the feel of the series was quite unique and it had some good ideas. But my main excitement for a BG project is Richard Hatch. He's shown the kind of enthusiasm and drive that you want behind an SF picture. Hell, he's devoted the last three years of his life trying to make it happen and the promotional trailer he made

drew raves from everyone who's seen it. It's probably up to Universal to say yes or no, they don't have to do any work, they just have to decide if the project is worth their financial while. The wildcard is the Larson/Moyer project, which I hope dies; neither producer impresses me much and they showed no interest in a BG film until Hatch started raising some eyebrows. Hatch has recently stated that he'd like to see both projects get made, while Larson and Moyer have been quite hostile to Hatch.

I haven't seen Hatch's trailer but I'm trying to locate a copy. Check out www.richardhatch.com, Richard Hatch's official website, www.battlestarmovie.com, Glen A. Larson and Todd Moyer's Galactica site or www.battlestargalactica.com, which is Hatch's and should be running by the time you read this.

With Mystery Men out and X-Men in production Misfit-Action-Hero-Group flicks seem to be the latest thing. Here's another one I've just heard about that may have already finished primary shooting. The Specials, written by James Gunn and directed by RocketMan writer Craig Mazin, about some unpopular super-heroes out to make an impression. Foundation Imaging are behind the special effects. The cast: Jaime Kennedy as Amok, Rob Lowe as The Weevil, Melissa Joan Hart as Sunlight Grrrl (rumour only), Paget Brewster as Ms. Indestructible, Thomas Haden Church as The Strobe, Jordan Ladd as Nightbird, Kelly Coffield as Power Chick, Barry Del Sherman as Zip Boy, Judy Greer as Deadly Girl, writer James Gunn as Minute Man, punker John Doe as Eight #1, Mike Schwartz as U.S. Bill, Jim Zulevic as Mr. Smart, and Sean Gunn as Alien Orphan. I haven't seen word on this feature anywhere other than a mention at Corona.ca and some pictures on the Foundation Imaging web page (which look pretty cool). I guess the question is, is this a film from people cashing in on the latest trend, or a film from people who happen to share similar inspiration with the Mystery Men creators? I like their poster slogan: "Not as good as other superheros... but a little bit better than you." Comparisons to Mystery Men will be inevitable and hard to live up to: I thought Mystery Men was great fun and extremely well-cast.

That's it for this month. I'm expecting the Lord Of The Rings and Minority Report cast lists to be complete by next month, I'm hoping for more info on Cameron's Mars TV series and Disney's Tron 2 project. If you're looking for more detailed movie info check out www.corona.bc.ca, the best movie info site on the web and my most common starting off point, or sci-fi.com, a glossy page which emphasises big-budget and big-name features but doesn't always separate news from rumors. The pages for the CG production houses are becoming a good source for news, as are many actor's fan-run pages.

LETTER OF COMMENT

Dear John/Ken:

I have here a hard copy of issue 315 of BCSFAzine. I am trying desperately to catch up with the large stack of zines I have in my IN box, so here goes with a probable sub-standard letter of comment.

Five vacancies on the executive...I hope there are enough people willing to step forward to fill all those positions. Graeme Cameron says he is interested in the presidency...I'm not a member, but he'd get my vote.

Palle Hoffstein, Graeme Cameron and others, including Harry Warner, would be interested in an article that appeared in the Toronto Star on July 31. The headline says "Sci-fi's days of boldy [sic] going...are gone", and its subheadline says "Post-Star Trek TV series seem to be heading into a creative black hole". It incorporates interviews with Harlan Ellison, Tim Brooks of the Sci-Fi Channel, Rockne S. O'Bannon, J. Michael Straczynski, Majel Barrett Roddenberry and Rick Berman, who all seem to say that television SF will degenerate into further schlock unless new ideas can crack the thick skulls of TV executives who trust tired old formulas about SF on TV.

Toronto's pub nights have suffered their first loss...the Foxes Den, site of the first modern era pub night here, has, for some reason, changed its private dining room in the back into a gaming room, so First Thursday must change its location. August has the Hothouse Restaurant as the First Thursday location, but we must look for a new location ASAP.

Patricia Tallman and Ray Park represent something Hollywood hasn't seen in decades...stuntmen who also act. I gather that both started as stuntmen, but branched out into acting. After the production of Babylon 5 ended, I gather Pat Tallman has gone right back to stunt work. The two together might provide a good guest list for a small media convention.

I had asked about Doctor Who in a previous letter, and true to the BBC's form, the word is no firm word at all. With some luck, something firm may come up soon, but unless outside interests pony up cash, the BBC will be content to dither.

I hope to make some announcements on CUFF soon...a Western fan has stepped forward to announce his interest, and is now looking for nominations. We have decided to make the deadline for nominations a little flexible so that this fan can get his nominations in, and we can carry on with CUFF for another year. More to come shortly, I hope.

That's all for now...take care, and see you next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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