



The Drink Tank

F-O-U-R-T-E-E-N



NEITHER WIT NOR WISDOM
WRIT AND WROUGHT BY
CHRISTOPHER J. GARCIA

After a winter of nothing but NorCal rain, I headed up to Seattle where, oddly enough, they've been having a dry winter. Somehow, and I'm not saying that it was some cosmic force that followed me home like Lassie, it started raining while I was down there.

Norwescon is a really great con. I like the DoubleTree right at the SeaTac Airport for many of the same reasons that I like the DoubleTree at San Jose's Airport. It's got comfy rooms and there's plenty of function space. It's also obvious that the hotel knows the deal and how to best work with a con. The place is much bigger than the San Jose version, with five total buildings spread through-out the complex. The party section is Wing 5, which was down a hallway from my room. Norwescon has a reputation for very entertaining parties. I'm not usually a party-goer, but I did make a couple of stops and found myself suitably impressed.

But what of the con itself?

I thought that Norwescon's strengths were in the programming and the presentation of their materials. The programme guide was brilliant, slick and shiny and beautiful. I'd seen a few of their materials before, but I don't remember them being this good. The one problem seemed to be the lack of a time-grid in the programme book itself. This only inconvenienced one person: me. You see, I may have been the only person to get a registration packet without the handy pocket guide that served as the only time grid available. Luckily, I found a posted complete list in the Green Room so I didn't miss anything.

I started off fast. Since my flight had been delayed more than an hour, I got there at the exactly the right time to start with the Science Fiction Quiz run by Ed Stiner of the Salem, Oregon Science Fiction Museum. This was a fun little quiz and I managed to get myself involved, scoring enough correct questions to get a museum T-Shirt for The Little One. While I blew a lot of questions, I did get the ones that I should have gotten: What was the first Science Fiction TV show (Captain Video), Who directed Total Recall (Paul VerHoven), What Town Did Dale Cooper Investigate Laura Palmer's Death In (Twin Peaks). I had the fifth most correct answers, but I had a lot of fun.

Ed and I then did a panel about the Science Fiction Museum, which was kinda odd since I wasn't involved with the museum until the con (and now I'm proud to say that I'm going to be very involved from this point forward) and mostly we talked about things that we wanted to see come into the museum and the ways in which we could work together. Having talked to Ed, this entire project is still years away from being completed, but once they have the space, they'll be a force to reckon with. They have a collection already that is solid, and one of the things that we talked about was how to collect in today's Ebay World. It's not like the old days when people wanted the tax write-offs more than the cash. While the Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame is shinier and will undoubtedly do the whole display thing better, there's no research arm. Ed and friends intend to build a museum with a strong research focus. What my museum is the computer field is what the Science Fiction Museum will end up being to the world of Science Fiction.



NORWESCON REVIEW



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After that fine panel, I wandered a bit and managed a snack. Lot's of good food around the hotel and I had Taco Bell. Go figure.

As a chaser to din-din, I had a panel on Practical Special Effects. This was a solid panel where I talked a lot about The Chick Magnet and shilled a whole bunch. The other folks on the panel were Seattle guys who work together on the Norwescon Film they make every year. They've done some good stuff, mostly doing cheap and easy effects. They seem to have had a lot of work in the H.P. Lovecraft film festival, which is one that I've heard of but never experienced myself.

I went to an early bed on Friday. I woke up and hit the brunch for pros and artists on Saturday morn. Good stuff. The DoubleTree idea of food is right up my alley. I got into a nice long conversation on various energy and space theories with a gentleman whose name I've forgotten. It was a great conversation, scanning the world of energy satellites, space elevators, tethers and just plain everything science-y. It made for great mental breakfast to help wash down the sausage, banana bread and juice.

Saturday was mostly a day to chat in various forms. I attended a panel that was supposed to be about Computers and Music, but ended up with no real panelists, so it was just a bunch of folks sitting around chatting. This turned out to be a fun little hour of talk and I turned folks on to the C-64 loving band 8-Bit Weapon. I followed that up with a trip to my panel on the Cartoon Guilty Pleasures. This panel was an absolute hit. The panels were a guy who wrote a tonne of old cartoons, including things like The Centurians, author Greg Cox, and me. I played wise ass and the crowd was laughing the whole way through. Really, the other two weren't exactly lighting the crowd on fire, but they did manage to get a lot of chatting and at times it seemed there was no control. Pretty much everyone I ran into later at the con said that it was their favourite panel the entire weekend. We packed the room!!!

I then sat at the fan table for San Jose's bid for the 2007 Westercon. I love Westercons. I know there's a lot of talk about them sliding away and dropping to numbers that are far below what the local cons get, but they are still the only real cons on the West Coast that manages to get folks from everywhere in the zone and a lot of folks from outside it. There's very little competition for Fourth of July weekend in fandom, so Westercon still has a sense of importance. I chatted with Michael Saladi most of the time and people watched while trying to sell folks on buying BayCon memberships or Pre-supports for Westercon60 in San Jose (which I've been calling WC60: The Gnomening). I chatted with a lot of folks and then headed for my reading.

The person reading before me, the lovely Miss Arrin Dembo, did an amazing job. As always, my actual ability to read was weak, and my story was no where near the level of the one that she read. So it goes. After, I had to run over to the Editing panel, but it was obvious that I wouldn't be needed, so I left and hit the Tor party. This turned out to be one of the highlights for me, as I got to chat with one of my favourite authors, Robert J. Sawyer. Bobby J was a real nice guy, as we talked about the fact that he was supposed to be Writer Guest of Honour at BayCon, where I'll be Toastmaster. We chatted about my time playing with Neanderthal Bones at the Smithsonian and after a few minutes, I had to run along and do a few things, which kinda sucked since I would have liked to have talked a bit more.

So, I headed to my room to get a few things and I found out that there was a party for the Montreal in 2009 bid. Now, I love Montreal, so I really wanted to support them. I headed over and met Rene Walling. He was a wonderful guy and after just a few minutes or so of good conversation, I became a friend of the bid. He offered me a Spruce Beer, which I hadn't had since the early 1990s. It's kinda like Vernor's Ginger Ale, but more spruce-y. It's kinda like drinkin' a pine tree. It's right up there with Moxie on my acquired tastes list. I can't wait for Montreal to get the WorldCon, since it's a great city and they're working on a fine space for their



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for their functions.

After that, I just headed back to my room and slept for a while. I was just too damn tired to do anymore hanging and banging with the party crowd. The DoubleTree's brilliant Multi-winged set-up meant that even with raging parties, I was still able to get a good night's sleep. That can be rare at a Con.

In the morning, I wandered around and hit the Dealer's Room. Same stuff at every Con, but I still managed to find a couple of books. I got Genevieve a shirt that read Piracy: Alive & Well, since she's a huge fan of pirates. I got a It Takes A Viking to Raze a Village shirt. I can't wait until I get to go see that Fanzine dealer who is always at WorldCons/NASFics. There's a lot I need to buy.

The event ended with me at the FanDance Film Festival. This was a Four-Hour stretch where a lot of films were shown. The guys who I did the Effects panel with showed a bunch of their movies, including the one they made over the weekend called CSI: Norwescon. It was pretty funny and it did all teh things a good fanfilm should do. The Chick Magnet showed and got a lot of nice praise from folks. They also showed it on the in-house TV network, which made me happy. If you haven't seen the Chick Magnet yet, go to www.redfootproductions.com and look for it!!!

I flew home on a delayed flight, exhausted but happy. Id' say that this one Norwescon was on the level of the one Philcon (2002) that I attended and right on the level of the average BayCon.

The View From Higher UP

About a year ago, I was charged to go and gather a bunch of thoughts from various science fiction authors about the ways in which the computer revolution has changed the world. I got some great writers to respond, folks like Greg Bear, Michael Swanwick and David Gerrold, and I gave them to the museum. The project never got finished and the museum said that they would try again next fiscal year. I asked if I could have them and run them here as a sort of a preview edition, without the anticipated art, and they said yes. So, here is the first installment of

TheView From Higher Up

Sean McMullen- July 9th, 2004

Look at the history and prehistory of computing, and one very curious fact emerges: hardware always trails way behind the needs of users. In the Seventeenth Century the revolutions in astronomy and mathematics generated a demand for mechanical calculation. Napier helped with his logarithmic tables in 1614, Pascal invented a mechanical adding machine in 1642, and Leibnitz conceived a mechanical multiplier in 1671 - but took 23 years to get it working. For 120 years people tried to improve on Leibnitz's multiplier, but it was just too hard to build a reliable, economic calculator until Charles Thomas's machine of 1820. Technology lagged way behind theory for Charles Babbage too. He started planning his difference engine in 1812, got a model working in 1822, but found the full-sized difference engine was a leading-edge nightmare to build. Ada Lovelace did her pioneering programming work for the Babbage analytical engine, but this device was never actually built. Lord Kelvin's differential analyser was conceived in the 1870s, but was not built until the 1930s. The first electronic computers were less than a decade away by then, but even these vastly superior machines continued to lag behind people's needs for performance. The story of computing will always be the story of hardware not meeting the needs of users, and technology lagging behind users' dreams and ideas by decades, or even centuries.



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The Bear Went Over The Mountain Reviewed

I've said it many times, but I really think that Chaz Boston Baden is one of the most important people in fandom. He maintains the pages that tell of what cities are bidding for the majour touring cons, which is highly helpful to me in my search. Possibly more importantly he maintains Hazel's Picture Gallery, which is the only way I know of to identify people from around the world by their photos. I seriously look up someone just about every day on Chaz's site. When I heard that Chaz was running for TAFF, I was very happy...until I heard who the others were and realised that this would be a year with a seriously difficult choice. Thankfully, Chaz put out a wonderful fanzine called The Bear Went Over The Mountain as a part of his TAFF bid.

TBWOTM is exactly what I hoped Chaz would do with his fanzine. It's chock full of fantastic photos from cons and other events with some nice writing attached. In fact, I'd say that it's a better source than File 770 ever was since it has so many great photos. Then again, that's just me. Getting to put the names to the faces is one thing that I've always turned to Chaz's work for, and I am fairly certain that The Bear Went Over The Mountain will be one of those fanzines that I return to over and over again.

My favourite part of TBWOTM had to be the short segment where he talked about introducing himself to Ed Meskeys. He introduced himself and guided Ed's hands over his trademark bear ears so that Ed could get to enjoy Chaz's 'signature headgear.'

The Bear Went Over The Mountain is well worth your time and I'm hoping that he'll keep it up and put out more issues over the coming years.

What's Next From Christopher J. Garcia and how can you get in on it?

As many of my readers are aware, I'm doing two print-only projects in the near future. The first, which is almost ready to hit the streets by the time this is up on eFanzines.com, is called Claims Department. It's a gimmick zine which will be sorta a trip report mixed in with a trio of reviews (CD, DVD/Movie, Book). It's slightly weirder than that, but that's the basics. Sadly, the first issue will be full colour, though printed on only one side each page. The Colour Laser Printer I'm using smudged even dry ink when I tried to double-side it, so until I find a free Colour Copier, this will have to do.

The second is The Drink Tank Special Edition #1. That's going to be my big Chess Issue with art by Frank Wu and Brad W. Foster. This will be print only and will probably be 20 or so pages. This one will be interesting.

If you are interested in receiving either of these fine...OK, acceptable, publications all you have to do is send me your address. I'm willing to do about 50 issues of Claims Department and about the same for TDT:SE#1, though if I get a deluge of folks writing in for them, I'll go higher. Drop me an email with your address and I'll send you a copy. Easy-peasy.

I'm hoping that Claims Department will be a monthly and TDT:SEs will come out quarterly or so.

A Very Short Story

Special Guest Fictionalist: M Lloyd

Show me the face you wore before you were born called a shadow in the back of the mind of the writer as he pounded out words and phrases and clauses into round balls of ego-shatter. Happy news felt granular on the keys as ash dripped like ichor or wimsy. He stared at the letters, hammering truth onto the screen's scree, the pebbles and pound-Earth powder that enveloped him like a mountain climbers body left to dry on Everest.

Odd, he thought, that all the that above would come from the work of a kid writing an LOC.



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COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS
SENT TO GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG
BY MY GENTLE READERS

Eric Mayer-

Hi,

I really enjoyed the article on Mr Excelsior. With all the details and quotes it sounded absolutely authentic but absurd. It reminded me of some of the ridiculous superheroes invented by small press comics folks in the 80s.

Dishman was a fine example. He was a mild mannered fellow who, one day, confronted with a sinkful of dirty dishes, discovered he had the power to...well...essentially to tidy-up. Presto and the dishes were sparkling clean, or the all the clothes were not only whisked off the bedroom floor but neatly pressed and put away. There were quite a few digest-size issues in which he decided he had to use this power to do good, got himself a costume and finally ventured out to...do...exactly what? He wasn't sure and maybe the writer wasn't either because so far as I know the series ended without any resolution.

Then there was the mini-comic hero Elastic Worm who was a worm who could stretch, kind of like Mr Fantastic. Not very exciting, except for the artist looking for something easy to draw. (It was funny though and I believe the worm wore tights and had an E on its chest. Well, not that worms have chests exactly...)

A small press comics hero who defied the copyright laws was The Quaker Oats Man whose sidekick was a roll of Charmin toilet tissue. (The latter had maybe turned to crime fighting after his family had got squeezed) TQOM said stuff like "Stop thy fighting or I shall crush thee!"

Then there is The DT Flash. He has the power to keep up with Drink Tank.

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Eric

Blog:<http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer>

I am remembering each and every one of those for future articles on the history of strange comic book characters. I'd love to read a Giant-sized Annual of Dishman completely dedicated to the cleaning of a college dorm room.

And as far as DTFlash Goes, I doubt that he's any match for my hyper-production!!!

M Lloyd- Geelong AU (currently staying in Chicago)

So, I read your last couple of issues while flying over and I have to say that the Comic story and that silly little screenplay were a lot of fun. You should do more of those.

I'm writing an article for you that I'm sure you'll enjoy all about your first ten issues. I call it 'Never too soon for a retrospective'

M

Damn, you beat me to the punch on the retro-article. You've powers, young lady. Dark, evil twisted powers.

The Drink Tank is Edited and Directed by Christopher J. Garcia and posted to eFanzines.com by Bill Burns: The Patron Saint of eZinery!

If you have comments or just want to tangle with Chris, feel free to drop a line to garcia@computerhistory.org or 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd, Mt. View CA 94043. If you want to get onto the mailing list for Claims Department or The Drink Tank Special Edition, send a note to either address and I'll be sure to add you. Anyone know of a good APA I might join?