



The Drink Tank 243
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2014 S

***Another Fabulous Mo Starkey cover!
She always makes me happy!***

***This go 'round, we're talking about
Cinequest. I'll have a little talk about the
movies, but this issue is more about the
other stuff. My friend Cynthia (whose stuff
you can read at cqcentral.com) and the
infamous @Puppymeat (Jason Wiener)***

Cinequest: The Movies

by Christopher J Garcia

The best thing about film festivals has to be the movies. Well, for the most part. I saw several films, not as many as I have in years past, but enough that I felt like I had a good go at the totality of the festival. I tend to focus on genre films, and this year, there were several really good genre flicks, but there were also other films that were a bit more arty, I guess would be the best word.

The very first film I watched managed to remain my favorite. It was the first film showing on Wednesday, the day after the opening night film which I skipped. It was a Norwegian film, and Norway is known for some great filmmakers. This was obviously a popular cinema-type film from Norway, not an art flick, and it was gorgeous. It was called *Upperdog*. The story was fantastic. A pair of siblings from Vietnam are separated when they are young and when the Polish housekeeper roommate of the older sister ends up discovering that she is working for the family that took in her younger brother, the film takes off. It manages to be both touching and sexy, which is made easier by the fact that the Polish housekeeper is a cheeky little number who totally reminded me of my model friend Natasha. I loved this film, and its ending was both hopeful and ambiguous. I hope I can find it on DVD.

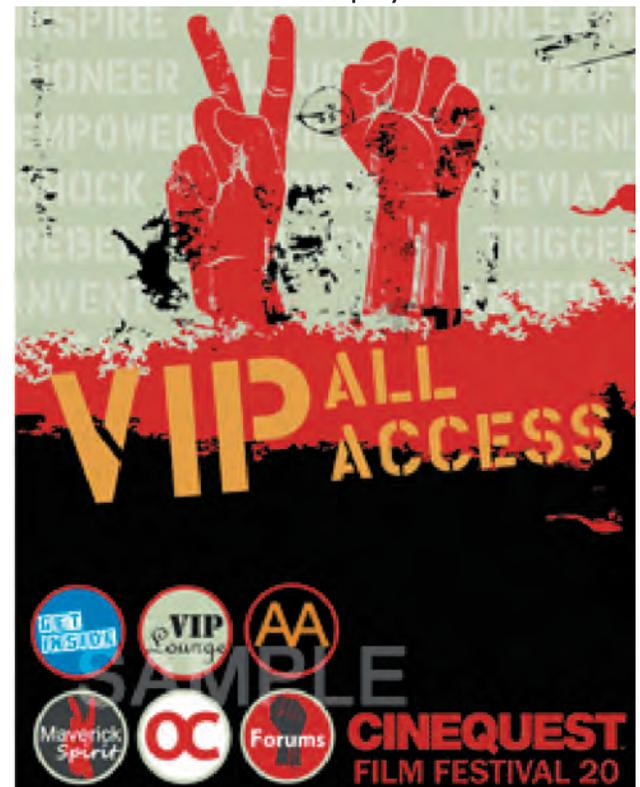
The second film I saw was recommended by my pal Charlie Cockey, former owner of Fantasy, Etc Bookstore and Cinequest's European film programmer. He's a good guy and

we always talk film whenever he's down. He brought an Estonian film called *Bank Robbery* which was a road picture. I am seldom a fan of Estonian (or Lithuanian or Latvian) films, but this one was really good. It was a comedy that was also serious. It told the story of a man just released from prison who has arranged for a bride on the outside...well, two brides, actually. He enlists the help of his young nephew to choose, and then they go on the road to meet her. Along the way, they pick up a hitchhiker, deal with the kid's abusive father, and end up robbing a bank. It turns in tone a few times, but it works so well. I was very happy at the end because while it was an up film overall, it is kinda a bummer too.

After that, I took a day off and then came back to watch what was one of the most fun films of the entire festival: *The Boneman*. It was an Austrian film. I haven't seen a lot of Austrian films, but this one interested me because 1) it was a detective movie and 2) it was based on a best-selling series of detective novels. Watching it, I felt like it was a *Hard Case Crime* book, and a damn good one. The story opened a series of mysteries and then took its time solving them. America has always done the best detective films (and the worst as well) but this came close. It combined the best parts of *Insomnia* (the original Swedish version with Stellan Skarsgård) with the detective (former police detective now a Repo Man) holed up in a small town inn, and mashed up with a bit of *Sam Spade*. It was impressive, and the film did go to extremes, with finger-chopping, full frontal reveals and a dance party where they had a character dressed up like Duffman from *The*

Simpsons. It was pretty awesome.

The best crime film of the festival had to be *Babnik*. Alejandro Adams, whose film *Canary* was in the fest last year and I had slightly more than misgivings about it, directed a film in Russian. He does not speak Russian, and there was a scene in *Canary* where there were characters speaking Russian without subtitles. This time, there were subtitles almost the whole way through. The story was about the sex trade, after a fashion, and there was no sex in it. In fact, the closest thing to sex was the scene where two of the women were watching porn and talking about the fine points of various positions. It was a movie which worked not only because of the acting (and with so much of the film shot in close-ups, you have to have



good acting) but because it told the story with a sense of dread. It was a very powerful telling of a story that took advantage of the Avant Garde styling of the director. In addition, there was something wonderful about how the characters took advantage of the setting. There was a claustrophobia to the proceedings that made the story of people trapped, either knowingly or otherwise, into something emotionally powerful. You could see elements of *The Godfather* and *Trafficking in Souls* in it. Even after a couple of weeks, I am still processing some of it. I've called it a Near Masterpiece, and I stand by that.

The Road Trip picture has done well on the festival circuit, and this year there were a couple of them. The one that I saw was *Passenger Side*, a fun film about that looked at two brothers who go on a trip. Of course, the brothers are somewhat estranged, one of them being a junky. The film is full of great dialogue and so much darkness that it really rides the spine of drama and comedy. Add to that a great cameo from Robin Tunney and some strange pushes into the soul of Los Angeles and I think it worked.

I followed that up with *Friction*, a film

by my buddy Cullen Hoback that tested the line between fiction and non-fiction in a fictional film...I think. I mean, it's a mindbender, and part of the perfection of the film was the incredible way Cullen played the audience against the plot. There is a difficulty in films like this. You have to give in to it, but the film itself goes outside of itself so much that it won't let you until the point where there's no way it could blur the line anymore. Then you're inside the film, you're almost of the film, and it's harder to figure out what your take of the whole thing is. All of this happens inside a film that is entertaining. It's a remarkable piece of work, well-made and I am still figuring it out.

We followed that with *Hell Is Other People*, Jarrod Whaley's film about a serious loser who can not manage to come into the light. There's more to it, a lot more, and the way they shot this thing makes it even more gringeworthy. The characters are hard to figure, the cinematography is rough in a way that makes you pull the characters in to yourself. It's good stuff.

I watched part of *Ka Shen's Journey*, a documentary about Nancy Kwan, but I didn't

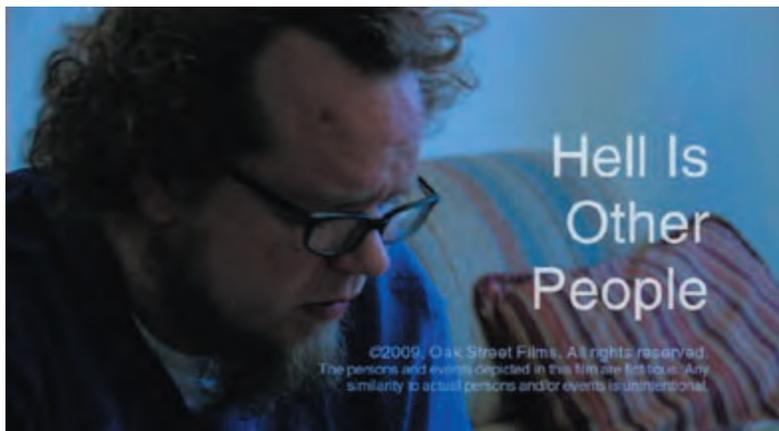
think it was great. Linda and I watched a short program, and then we watched the Hockey comedy *Puck Hogs*. This was along the lines of *There's Something About Mary* with gross-out humor and all sorts of funkiness. I was most pleased and I've seldom laughed so hard at a festival film. It was straight hilarity and it was totally Canadian. I was so pleased with it.

Peepers was a Canadian film, Montreal-based actually, and it was another really good comedy. It was the story of Peeping Toms and the code under which they live. An academic (Associate Professor of Voyueristic Studies) infiltrates the group and things roll out from there. This was a series of interlocked stories that just felt so smart. There was the story of the guy on a cold streak, the new-comer who wins everyone but the lovable loser's heart, the guy who is pushed out and finds new avenues, it's got it all. I thought it was a wonderfully fun little film.

The single best acted film I saw all year, festival or otherwise, was *Applause*. It was Paprika Steen acting the hell out of a script about a woman who is an alcoholic. She's also a famous actress. She lost her custody in the divorce and is trying to rebuild trust and trying to stay off the sauce. It's a powerful performance, reminding me of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Carl Theodor Dreyer's legendary film shot almost entirely in close-up. This was a highlight of the festival, and it ended up winning the Maverick Spirit Award, the highest honor of the film festival.

The only really bad film I saw at the festival was the final film. *Solitary* was a supernatural thriller. It was also so predictable that it hurt. Also, terrible dialogue, despite a good performance from the lead actress. The entire film was jumbled, hard to figure, and when things finally do settle down, they don't quite satisfy.

All in all, it was a pretty darn good year for films. And while films are the main focus, there's much more to a film festival. Let us now look at the Pre-show entertainment!



Cinequest pre-show on-screen entertainment

by Jason Wiener

For all the movies I saw at Cinequest, in fact the ones I saw most often weren't even in the program. I'm talking about the pre-show filmed entertainment/information reel, which I saw 40-something times, enough to pick out some interesting quirks.

If you were there early enough (~10-15 minutes before showtime), there were trailers of other Cinequest movies. I was rarely there early enough, usually chatting with friends or drinking at a VIP Soiree or Maverick Meetup. But I did once catch a trailer for HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE (which I didn't review at Cinequest because I had seen and reviewed a screener earlier).

So I'll start with what I saw a lot of--sponsor commercials. Especially Intel, Cinequest's biggest sponsor. There are three I clearly remember. In the first one, an engineer is in front of a wall of equations. He changes a - to a +, and waits for his colleague to show up. His colleague appears, looks at the equations, and says, "Oh, very funny" while the first engineer cracks up. The punchline is 'Our jokes are not like your jokes.' At first glimpse, this might seem like the least accessible/effective commercial. It's unrealistic at first blush, and potentially could badly screw up their calculations. It might even be more malicious than playful. But on further review, it was my favorite, in no small part because I've done just that sort of thing (on a much smaller scale) in college. It's not malicious, and in fact shows

great faith in his colleague by assuming he'll catch the joke. And that faith is proven correct immediately. After watching it a couple dozen times, this was my favorite.

The second one shows a pair of geeky boys oohing over Space Invaders in the 70's, then later e-mail, etc. and finally Intel's (their employer's) new chip that automatically boosts speed. Pretty funny, especially when you realize in each scene there's a girl walking behind them. I liked this commercial the first time, and it neither grew nor tired on me. I suppose you could pick out some sexism, as the boys are always the techies in the foreground and the girls are ignored in the background. But the point is more that the boys are such nerds that they don't notice the girls, and in the final scene the girl is a colleague at Intel, so girls can be techie geeks, too.

In the third Intel commercial, workers are at the cafeteria eating lunch while one guy is raving about the new power-boosting chip is "the greatest thing Intel has ever created." Unbeknownst to him, an Intel robot is wheeling up behind them carrying a tray to join them at lunch. He hears the raving for the chip, gets offended, drops the tray and sulks off. This ad bugged me at first and bugged me more the more I saw it. First, if you're

a sulky, wussy robot you're *not* the greatest thing Intel has ever created. Second, even if you're offended man up and at least don't drop the tray. Someone has to clean that up! Third, the robot didn't have a mouth or need food, so what the heck was he doing with a cafeteria tray in the first place? This ad was just ridiculous and doesn't hold up to even the barest scrutiny.

All the Intel ads ended with a diverse array of employees doing the signature "Bong! Ba ba ba bumm!" Intel tone. At first this was cool, but quickly became creepy, as all these people were mimicking an electronic tone, in perfect synchrony. No wonder Intel robots think they're people, apparently Intel people think they're robots.

Okay, so now let's over-analyze the 60 second short contest. Actually, I'll say nothing about the shorts. Cinequest and Sandisk sponsored a 60 second phone short contest



which you can see at <http://youtube.com/sandisk>

Instead, I'll review the on-screen intro to the top 4 shorts that played all through the festival. A beautiful woman in a theatre introduces the concept, plugs for Sandisk, and makes comments throughout the theater (i.e., "this isn't real butter [on this popcorn]"). She then pulls out a phone, and plays a video on it of herself, introducing the 60 second shorts and telling you how to vote. There's some clever stuff playing with the conundrum of telling you to vote by cellphone while you should also keep your cellphone off in the theater. But what I really want to harp on is one throwaway moment when people are filing in to the theater and she hands out tissue while saying "you'll need this, she dies at the end." C'mon, that's a spoiler! Even if it's for a non-existent movie, that's still not cool! And why do I need a tissue? She dies, so you figure I'll want to masturbate right there in the theater? I have more class than that!

Okay, let's get off (no pun intended) that topic quickly. Next pre-show on-screen entertainment is a reel of Cinequest staffers relating information (i.e., what the different cow icons in the guide mean, how to find out about the Maverick meetups, filling out the ballots, etc.) Each brings their own style, and they're all pretty cool. It's easy to like Chris "Electrify" Garcia, and I also like Vincent's goofy cool coke bottle glasses and 'active' eyebrows. But for my money, after watching it over and over again, my favorite is Cat (Kat? I don't actually know how she spells it). I can't even remember what she was saying there are two ways to do, but

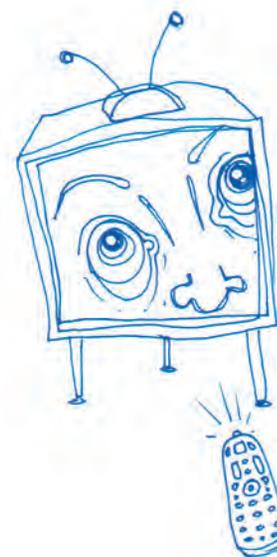
she does a cool thing with her hands doing two fingers up and then smoothly transitions to a thumbs up that I like for no good reason. BTW, her cool, hip intros at the California were also my favorite (I could do another piece on the introducers. Maybe next year).

Finally, I want to talk about this year's trailer, aka The Best CQ Trailer Ever! An animated cow herd, with one cow left behind. Up comes the definition of Maverick, and that lone cow stands up and starts having adventures--driving a tractor, tipping cows, running a marathon, standing on the Olympic podium with a hoof raised in the air, tearing down the Berlin Wall, standing up to a tank in Tianamen Square, dunking, showing her udders at Mardi Gras (odd, because up to that point he/she didn't have any), and finally parachuting in front of the California to attend Cinequest. Awesome, but here's a few things you notice after seeing it 50 times: in the marathon and on the Olympic podium her number is 408. That's the area code for San Jose. But even harder to catch is when she's tipping the cow, the tipped cow has the initials KJP. She played coy when I asked her, but I have it on semi-reliable authority that that's a reference to Cinequest co-founder and board member Kathleen J Powell.

Oh, and one final thought. The symbol for 20 this year was a peace sign (i.e. 2 fingers) plus a raised fist (0 fingers). Love the duality, I thought it was so perfect I raised my 2 and 0 fingers along with the trailer many times. But it just begs the question, what will we do for 21? I can think of some rather uncouth options, but I recommend we take a page from Cat and do

2 fingers and a thumbs up. You know how I hate to be vulgar.

There was much more onscreen entertainment, I didn't even get to Inside Cinequest, which is a whole story in itself. But I think I'll leave it there.



Art by Genevieve

That's Jason, a helluva writer, whose stuff you can find at jasonwatchesmovies.blogspot.com

And what can follow that other than a look at the non-movie side of Cinequest?

Cinequest: The Non-Movies by Cynthia Corral

Halfdan Hussey and Kathleen Powell have been steadily building up their Cinequest Film Festival over the years, but in 2009 they took some really huge steps in growth. Although every Cinequest attendee ends up in conversation with a stranger on the stairs of the Camera Theaters at one point or another, the last two seasons have done everything possible to make the festival a social event. Instead of going to the festival just to see films, now people are returning each day to see their old friends and to make new ones. When asked to write an article about my favorite non-film portion of Cinequest it was easy for me to choose. I now think of Cinequest as the place where I can find all my best friends and family.

In the film TRUE ROMANCE the character Alabama says she loves to watch a movie and then discuss it over pie. And who doesn't? Going to see a movie is a very social activity and gives you a piece of pop culture to share with others. Going to a film festival is different; it is more likely that your neighbors and/or coworkers have not seen the outstanding film that you just saw at Cinequest so you have no one with whom to share your experience. The one place where everyone has

always made friends at Cinequest is standing in line on the stairs of the Camera Theaters for the next film. Strangers standing with you want to know what films you have seen, what films you have liked or disliked, what you are looking forward to, what you think about the film you are about to see, and they want to tell you about the films they have seen. Suddenly you are standing in line with a group of friends, the same friends you will see over and over in line and in the theaters throughout the festival. Attending year after year I often see the same faces in line and consider most of these people my friends even though I've never learned their names – or spoken with them outside of the Camera Theater stairs.

2009 was the first year I noticed Cinequest holding VIP soirees and Maverick Meet-ups which have now become integral social features of the film festival.

Where else can you meet and converse with others who love film as much as you do? Filmmakers often attend these social events and are only too happy to discuss their film with you. I have even written bad reviews of some films and later became friends with the filmmakers after meeting them and discussing my thoughts. One of the

first “strangers” with whom I ever started up a conversation was Halfdan Hussey at a Meet-up one year. Halfdan always loves to discuss his festival with any happy or disgruntled patron, and what I thought would be an intimidating hand shake ended up being a very pleasant conversation. Co-founder Kathleen Powell is just as approachable at the parties and loves to have as much fun as the festival goes do. At what other company party can you rub elbows and share drinks with the top CEOs?

Cinequest has expanded its social network into FaceBook and Twitter, but last year it also expanded its face to face networking by holding bi-weekly Happy Hours at various downtown establishments. Best idea ever. This, for me, was where I met and became fast friends with many in the Cinequest organization and with other festival attendees.



I looked forward to every Happy Hour that was scheduled, even if I was only drinking water. The Happy Hour groups became a large circle of friends with whom I shared a great deal in common, and for once our conversations were never interrupted by the dimming of lights and the start of a film. We spent many happy times through the Spring and Summer playing games, entering drawings, and voting on our favorite past films. We all met new people and solidified acquaintances that we had made during previous festivals, becoming close friends with all. By the time Cinequest 2010 began those of us who attended the Happy Hours had become a very tight group of friends. We hung out, went to the soirees and parties, attended films together, and celebrated our love of films and each other.

This year the Opening Party was held at E&O Trading Company, and while some have complained that it was too crowded, it really was a much larger space than many previous Opening Parties. Opening Parties are usually my least favorite because the room is filled with filmmakers and film fans who you will come to meet in the coming days, but who are strangers at that moment. This year, as usual, it was very loud, alcohol was flowing freely, and food was plentiful. The big different was that I had become good friends with many in attendance

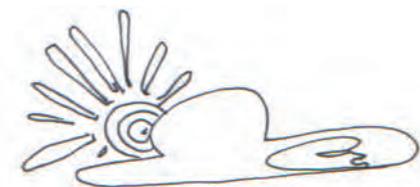
through past festivals and the Happy Hours. In every direction I turned I could see a friend to talk to or hang out with. A few of us left the party early but happily, knowing we had to get some sleep in preparation for the next twelve days.

Sure enough, twelve days later we were all trudging merrily over to South First Billiards for the Closing Party. Had it been a whole twelve days? I was not sure if it had flown by or taken forever. As tired as we all were, as conflicted about whether we wanted the festival to be over and done or to continue on for another twelve days, we were thrilled to be at the party with our friends. South First Billiards is a huge venue yet it was still packed with happy and exhausted attendees. There was a very loud DJ, pool tables everywhere, free flowing Stella Artois and Cape Cods, and plenty of rooms for hanging out and talking. My small group of Cinequest friends had grown to a rather large group this year and we took up a table in the quietest (meaning “less loud”) rooms we could find, and sat drinking, eating and laughing until they kicked us out at 2am. Last year at Closing I did not want the party to ever end, I definitely did not want to leave my newly made friends for an entire year! This year no one in my group wanted it to end, and as SoFa Billiards pushed us towards the door

we were already planning when our first Happy Hour of the year would be.

In short, I have made friends through Cinequest that are going to last me for many years if not a lifetime. I have become good friends with filmmakers who now return to the festival even when they have no film to screen. I have finally found people with whom I feel comfortable, who share things in common with me, who have the same twisted sense of humor. And of course, festival friends are also the smartest and best looking. Film festivals bring people together who never would have dreamed they had things in common with each other. Teenage volunteers and retired donors, filmmakers, actors and writers, students and millionaires, if they are at the film festival they are a potential friend. We have all met each other before on the stairs of the Camera Theaters, but now, thanks to the new vision of a social festival, we meet and talk to each other every day.

Cynthia's awesome, and you can see her stuff on Cinequest at cqcentral.com. It's well-worth a visit!



Art by Genevieve

Basketball and Brotherly Love by Warren Buff

In case anyone didn't know, I'm from Raleigh. While most of the South treats football as a religion, we've got a different god here in the Triangle – college basketball. Between the three major universities of the Triangle (NC State, Duke, and UNC – listed in that order because the Triangle is usually described as “Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill”, their respective locations), there are ten NCAA basketball championships. The only metro area that can top that is LA, and that's all on the strength of one program (and note that it was NC State who defeated UCLA in the Final Four in 1974 to end their seven year-run of championships). To boost our own claim to greatness, note that Triangle schools have won the tournament in five different decades, while UCLA has only won in three of them.

And while all that's noteworthy, it doesn't explain why I care about basketball. I could, like some of my friends (even some of them from around here), shrug and note that it doesn't really matter to me. My grandfather went to NC State in the age of Everett Case, who brought Indiana's passion for hoops to Raleigh. With Case as head coach, State won quite a few Southern Conference and ACC titles, and made a good showing in a few of the early NCAA tournaments. While grandpa didn't stick around college for all that long, he did stay there long enough to catch the rivalry with UNC (who he heard to taunt State as a “poor cow college” after a football game). And then, his brother went to UNC.

The family divide had begun – a divide we're still seeing today. After growing up a devoted Wolfpack fan, my father went to UNC, where he met my mother. His younger sister went to State (she even had some professors who were still around when I got there), and married a fellow State grad. Their brother, somehow, escaped from the Triangle and went to Appalachian State (the first and third vowel sounds are the same, by the way).

I was born in the year of the Cardiac Pack. Jim Valvano led a Wolfpack team which finished disappointingly low in the ACC standings to an ACC tournament victory, with a few near-losses along the way. This meant a berth in the NCAA tournament, where State won a double-overtime game in the first round, then proceeded to make its way to the championship game on a string of single-digit wins. In the finals, against Houston, the Wolfpack pulled off a miraculous upset, winning on a buzzer-beater against a team immortalized

as Phi Slama Jama by a score of 54-52. But I was born to two UNC grads (the previous year, the Tarheels, led by Michael Jordan, had won a title of their own).

So I grew up a Tarheels fan (I even learned when to shout “Go to Hell, State!” in the fight song). My little brother, always the contrarian, decided that he would root for the Duke Blue Devils, who, by the late eighties when we started caring about

these things, had become the main threat to the Tarheels for ACC and national dominance (and ESPN ranked their rivalry as the best of the last decade – in any sport, period). Our younger siblings went with the flow and just rooted for UNC. And mind you, those were the glory days of UNC and Duke. From 1988 to 1995, either Duke, UNC, or both made the Final Four. They then took a year off before running another streak until 2001. And since 1980, more than two thirds of all Final Fours have involved at least one team from the Triangle. In those days, it was hard to say which was the better team – while Duke won one more NCAA championship in the 88-95 run, UNC won one more ACC tournament, while the two programs tied for ACC regular season championships.

And then, I started looking at my options for college, and realized that if I wanted to study computer science, I probably wanted to go to State (this choice remained valid when

I added physics as an interest, and even after I dropped computer science, it still seemed good). So I started to change my colors from blue to red, and it wasn't a bad time to do so. Dean Smith retired, and with him went quite a bit of UNC's success. State wasn't reaching the Final Four again, but we did enjoy a consistently strong period under Herb Sendek (whose only sin was failure to beat Duke and UNC). Meanwhile,



my brother was waking up to economic realities, and came to understand that while he would be wearing blue in college, it would be of the lighter shades found in Chapel Hill. As this generation of the family fell into place, we sent two of our number to State and three to UNC. My brothers are both dating women who also went to UNC, so there's a fair chance the family will continue along the lines of its rivalries. Just to make sure that my Uncle's tradition wasn't forgotten, one of the cousins chose a third option, going to East Carolina (which has grown into something of a secondary rival for NC State, at least in football).

So, as I write this, my poor Wolfpack has had another mediocre season under Sidney Lowe. We made it to the semifinals of the ACC tournament, barely escaping with a winning record – and a losing one in the conference. But there's a consolation: UNC's season was even worse. They wound up as the only team not to pull an upset in the first

round of the tournament, and thus have a 16-16 record. Both the Wolfpack and the Tarheels have made the NIT, though, which will begin tonight. We're in the same bracket, so a third match-up could be in store if both teams win their first two games – and it would let us have a shot at beating them (their only consolation: they beat us twice – but we beat *Duke*). Duke,

meanwhile, is #3 in the country, and has a #1 seed for the NCAA tournament. And although we've converted in our adult years, I suspect my brother will pull for the Blue Devils in their tournament, just as I'll pull for the Tarheels (except when we're playing them!) in the NIT. Heck, they have to win at least two for us to beat them.



Fast on the Draw

Taral Wayne

If it wasn't so damn infuriating, it would be quite droll.

It illustrates well, too, that old saying about a prophet being without honour in his own home.

About a year ago I began hearing talk around town about a new SF con. The old one was still held, but it had lost touch with the hard core of SF fandom and grown too much like the multi-media con in Toronto. Some people thought it was time to start a con that stuck closer to the written word.

The new con is called SFContario, and it released its first flyer at the Worldcon last August.

Now, here are a few pertinent facts to consider about Contario.

It is a Toronto SF Con.

I am the best known SF fanzine artist in Toronto.

I was the Fan GoH at Anticipation, where Contario was announced.

Some of the committee for Contario worked on Anticipation.

I am an eight time Hugo nominee in my category.

Who did the flyer? Some guy in Texas.

Tell me what's wrong with this picture.

"Some guy in Texas" is Brad Foster, who has his own share of Hugo nominations, and a few wins too. I was told that he may have presented the concom with a finished flyer

— fait accompli — which leads you to wonder if Brad doesn't read Locus and on-line news sites to find out how many new cons have appeared every month, and bombard them *all* with finished art before it can occur to them to use anything else. This may not be all that farfetched an idea.

Whatever the truth, I registered a mild note of protest with a couple of people I know on the concom. I pointed out that it seemed incongruous to pass over the obvious talent in the con's own back yard.

During our conversation, the idea came up that I might do a t-shirt for Contario. Catherine said she will make a proposal to the committee at the next meeting. That's better than a throw-away flyer any day, you have to admit.

But it goes to show that you just can't rest on your laurels in the cut-throat business of being a Big Name Fan artist. They come a-callin' yew out, all the way from Texas.

