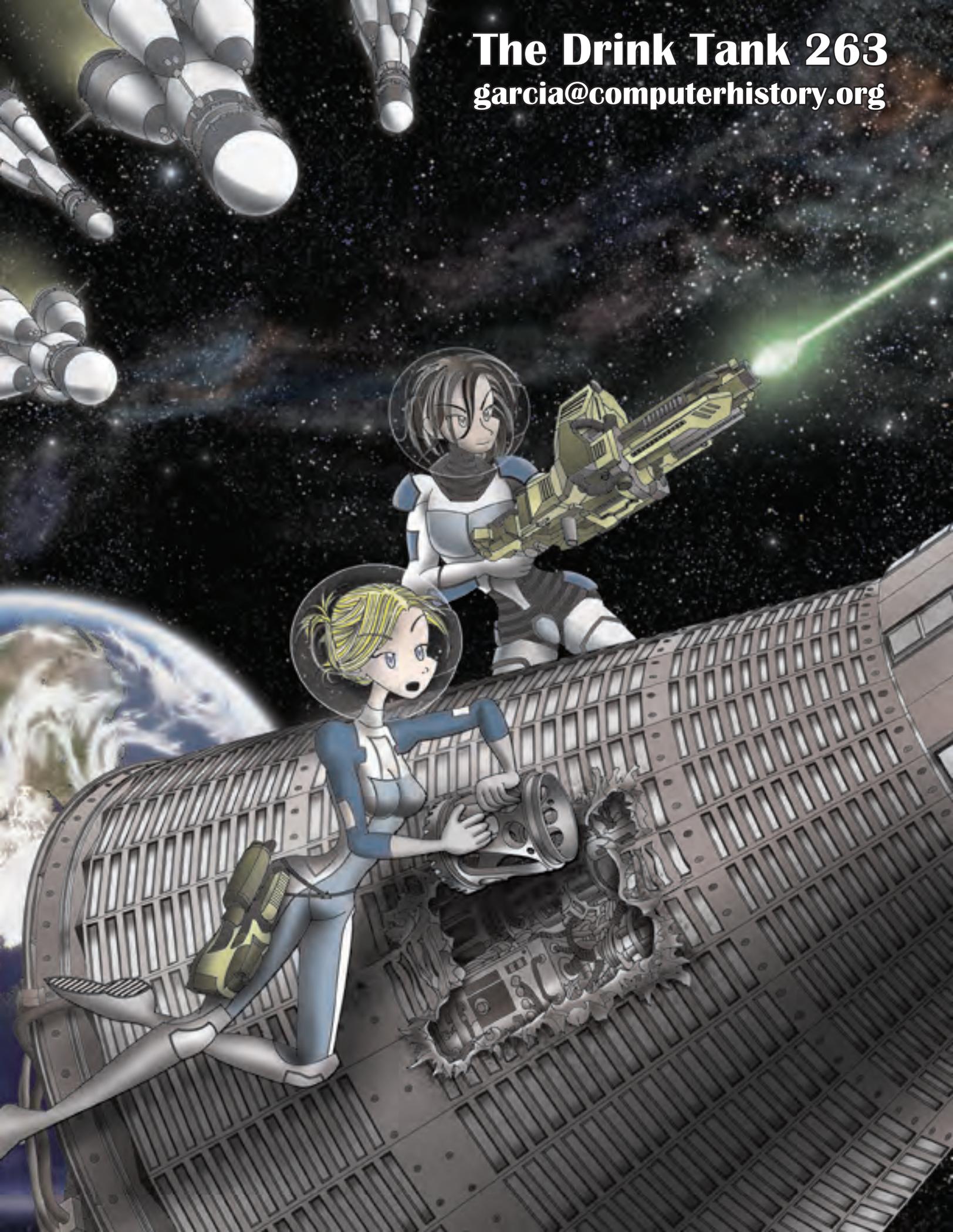


The Drink Tank 263

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That's the second of three Brianna SpaceKat Wu covers! I like them a lot!

This issue is strange. I've got job stuff of late, and thus, as I always seem to be saying, I've had to run things back. And since I'm doing far less of the stuff that I love during work, I'm slowly picking up projects to keep myself happy and slappy. The first have been the Drink Tank Review of Books, which are YouTube reviews of books I've read. You can find them at <http://www.youtube.com/user/johnnyeponymous>. It's been a lot of fun doing them, they typically take about an hour to put together, but it allows me to have a lot of fun. They were made possible because 1) I'm reading a lot more, averaging about a book a week, and 2) I got that camera for doing the Cinequest thing for Zer01. It's worked out nicely. So far, I've reviewed Blameless by Gail Carriger, Dreadnought by Cherie Priest, and China Mieville's Kraken. Next week, it's The Half-Made World by Felix Gilman. Who knows what after that?

So that's one project, but one that doesn't eat up a lot of time, so I've started another zine-thing. This time, it's a film journal that I'm calling Klaus At Gunpoint, a reference to Klaus Kinski being forced to act at the end of Werner Herzog's pistol. It's a myth, but it persists. It's going to be a film journal that actually focuses on the film experience more than traditional reviews, feature article and academic studies. I'm hoping to get some support from the local film organizations and the first couple of discussions have been very good. It's going to be more personal, which is something I think all writing should be. Reviews should be about the reviewer's personal experience of the film/book/other. That is not the traditional concept, but I think it works.

Add to that the fact that I've started working on another short. It's based on a story I wrote for Nth Degree back in 2002. Really, it's an excuse to get to make

a movie with my Cinequest friends who I've always been looking for an excuse to work with. It's a Steampunkish story of San Jose in 1916, and it means I get to produce and not direct, which makes me happy. I'm hoping that it turns out good. I'd love to have a short to send around to various cons and festivals, and this one would have to include some good effects to make it really stay together. It's also the first film I've tried to get off the ground which requires older actors, not just folks in their 20s and 30s like we usually work with. I actually have an actress in mind for the lead, though I'm not sure she'd do it. Such problems us producers have.

So, this issue is partly a filler as I've got an article from Taral, a piece that takes on aspects of the Chilean Miner Rescue. They made a joke about the miners on the live 30 Rock, which got some very negative reactions on the web, for some reason. There's that Mo Starkey art, that one above. I love the stuff she sends my way.

I'm also happy to have a piece from Mr. Frank Wu on the adaptation of Guidolon: The Giant Space Chicken into a comic book (I refuse the term Graphic Novel). As you well know I am the voice of Guidolon in the short film version that's out there. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MteAVvr_wrU which I know you've already seen.

And so, away we go!

Better Believe It **Taral Wayne**

Inspiring as it was to see the 33 miners being lifted out of that copper mine in Chile, there's been one discordant note. It's best summed up by an "interview" I saw on the news with a mother whose son had just been brought out. She "knew" it was a miracle, and the first thing she was going to do, when she was allowed to be with her son, was give him the rosary she was wearing.

Pardon me? A miracle? A miracle is supposed to be an inexplicable event; one that defies all prediction or explanation. You saw every step of your son's rescue, fat old cow, and here you are lavishing your gratitude on an imaginary God that you plainly owed to the mine engineers! Was it God who drilled the hole? Did God develop the rescue capsule in record time? Did God operate it with such professional skill? Fuck no. Assuming he existed at all, *God watched from the sidelines*. And as usual, in religiously saturated societies, *He* reaped the credit anyway. This is rank ingratitude to those who *deserved* the thanks.

Imagine that I gave you a \$100 bill and you burst out in joy, thanking *God* rather than me for your good fortune. *My goodness, wherever did this \$100 come from? One moment it was not in my hand, and the next moment it was! It could only be a gift from the magic genie I began seeing after that blow to my head yesterday! By the way, who are you, stranger, and why were you standing in front of me while this Holy Miracle unfolded?*

One of the things they sent down to the miners was bibles. Not chocolate. Not playing cards. Not even MP3 players and the Top 50. Bibles. Wow. If I was stuck in a mine for months and worried about whether I'd be rescued or not, I know *I'd* want to read about a gruesome crucifixion, the indiscriminate destruction of Jericho, disrespectful children being torn apart by lions or bears, or King David's goofy dance steps. What could *possibly* be more comforting?

Actually, a bottle of Kahlua every other day would hit the spot for me.

I couldn't live in a place where everyone acted and talked as though make-believe beings were around them at all times. I'd start talking to make-believe magic beings myself – but not Christ or God, like *unimaginative* people. As make-believe friends and protectors, *they* make pretty dull company. For *my* imaginary friend, maybe I'd pick Mr. Spock, Gandalf the Wizard, or – best of all – *Superman*. Wouldn't you rather talk with Superman than

Jesus? All that Savior guy can talk about is God, which is to say, about *himself*. Superman can tell you about Krypton, criminal masterminds, supervillains, Mr. Mxyzptlk, the Justice League, futuristic inventions, the Bizzaro World and newspaper reporting.

Best of all, God might take months to rescue me from a mine, but Superman would have me out of there in a wink! You better believe it!





DON'T AVERT YOUR EYES – IT MAY TAKE OTHER FORMS! OR: GUIDOLON AS GRAPHIC NOVEL

Attentive long-time Drink Tank readers may recall that I've spilled much ink here discussing my Guidolon project – in issues 55, 60, 76, 80, 81, 87, 102, 116 and 131. It's been three years now, and it's time for an update on the giant space chicken!

As a wind-up to the pitch, let me recap the main events.

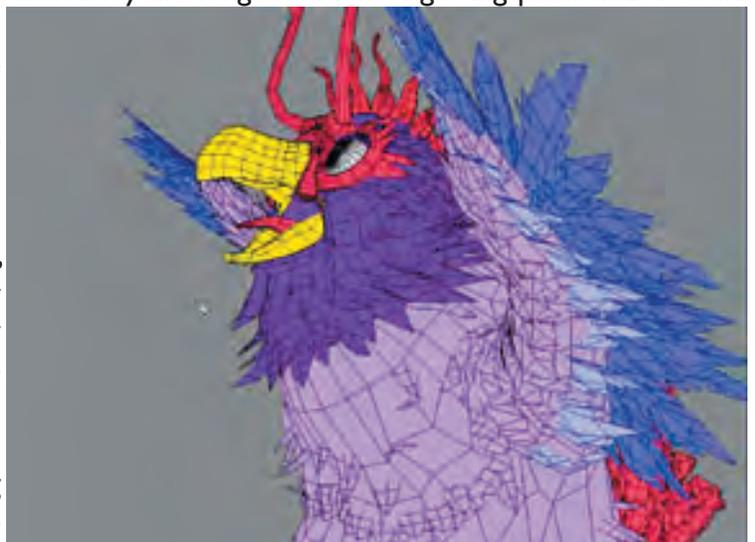
Back in 2003, Gary Shockley mentioned to me a new anthology called “Daikaiju! Giant Monster Tales,” which was looking for stories. I wanted to write about a giant space chicken making a movie about a giant space chicken. It would be very meta, very odd. And rather personal – the summation of all my fears and desires. The phrase “giant space chicken” represents what we hope to become (giant), and what we fear we are (chicken) and that amorphous place where we float trying to get a handhold (space). I wrote the thing in the form of a screenplay, and it told of Guidolon's struggles with creative angst, and introduced Trisuron, his girlfriend and giant space Triceratops, Jerora the giant space jellyfish and the world's laziest production manager, and Octuron the giant space octopus and scriptwriter. Plus Fribugus, the giant space pangolin and movie studio lackey, and Number One, the giant robot chicken that runs the studio.

The story was accepted by the anthology. I'd fulfilled my life-long ambition of getting published! I could die a happy man!

Then a reviewer, Tansy Rayner Roberts in the website “AS if” liked the piece so much that she said it was a “moral imperative” to make film from the project.

So I made a film. A short, ten-minute animated film. The Chris Garcia as the voice of Guidolon, with some of Todd Tennant's character designs for Guidolon, Jerora and Number One, and animation by BenniD and Jonah Gray, and storyboards by Suzanne Rachel Forbes. And excellent music and sound production by Dave Fleminger.

A year later, I tweaked the short film, adding a couple scenes and loads of shots here and there to





beef up the proceedings and improve the sound to produce a director's cut. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MteAVvr_wrU

The short film was pretty successful. We (meaning: me and my ego, plus everyone I could drag around) showed it at various film festivals, where we got a few awards. The video at YouTube rang up 18,000 hits. Not bad.

I tried to sell it as a pilot for a TV show or for a movie deal, but that didn't happen, which was, of course, disappointing.

Then I took a break and worked on a couple other things.

But I couldn't stop thinking about Guidolon. Couldn't resist continuing to play with the project. I'd learned a lot. I learned that you can't sell a short. Perhaps it can be a pilot, or lead to more shorts, like "Dr. Tran." Or be used like a calling card to get film deals, like "George Lucas In Love." Or be a summary of a film, like "9" (the yarn puppet movie). Or be an isolated snippet, like "Saw".

I wanted Guidolon to be like a summary, introducing the characters rapid-fire. But it was too quick, too brief, too jerky. Gary Westfahl noted that it was "oddly fragmentary, inspiring the feeling that one is watching brief excerpts from a longer film

that would more fully and more coherently tell the story."

I wanted to make a feature-length movie. Something marketable.

So we re-grouped and in March 2008, we made the announcement on boingboing.net that the feature length movie was aiming for a three-year completion (March 2011).

Well, I can tell you now that that's not gonna happen.

We got pretty far, though.

I'd decided that hand-drawing the characters was insane. Between them, they had dozens or tentacles and hundreds of feathers. Impossible to draw frame after frame after frame.

So we sculpted and animated computer-generated 3D models of all them, which is, of course, a huge amount of work. We also completed principal voice recording of all the main characters.

Yes, we got pretty far. But then I got laid off in the current economic downturn, and moving across the country from California to Boston threw a monkey wrench into the proceedings. But production soldiered on, with more 3D work being done, and more backgrounds being made.

A key moment in movie production happened in January of this year.

I assembled a sampler video/progress report. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6BKKXimnJo It showed





off the rough animations of various characters and spaceships, as worked on by Jonah Gray and Shon Mitchell and Sergio Sykes and Terry Rosen. And it was set to the bouncing surf guitar versions of “The Chicken Dance” created by Dave Fleming for the original short.

It was pretty successful. It was cross-posted at boingboing.net, and one reader wrote, “You had me at ‘Giant Space Pangolin!’” Another wrote, “Love it. Very 8 1/2.” (I was glad he got the reference.) The sampler video got over 8000 hits.

But, still...

It was a little of a disappointment. There was one particular hater who wrote “this looks terrible.” He thought the premise was “thinner than Howard the Duck” and that the project was too ambitious for our limited resources and “almost certainly doomed.”

Not everyone will love everything, of course. Even though “Star Wars” is a great film, and has a 8.8 out of 10 overall rating at imdb.com, 2.7% of raters (1 in 40) gave it the lowest score possible.

Not everyone will love

Guidolon. It is designed to be a cult project, a labor of love. Not something that will appeal to the masses.

And yet that one hater’s comments stung. “almost... certainly ... doomed.”

He actually made me re-think the whole project.

Maybe it was too much for half a dozen people, with limited funds. Maybe it was time for the Guidolon project...

To assume a new form!

This time Guidolon would be re-born as a graphic novel!

After all, a necessary step in making the film was to do all the backgrounds and storyboard everything. I once saw a book of frame stills from Miyazaki’s “Spirited Away.” They made the film and published a book of stills. We’d be doing the opposite.

Yes! We could make the graphic novel and sell it on iPhone and iPads across the country, using our connections at boingboing.net and other popular sites for publicity! Maybe we could get the graphic novel published somewhere, maybe pick up some Eisner awards?

And then, when it was done, we could try to sell it as a film project. Yes!

So now Guidolon’s going to be, for the time being, a graphic novel.

When I was writing a couple of (eventually published) short stories a couple years ago, I read as many short stories as I could, rapid-fire. I’m doing that with comics now – reading Brianna’s X-Men and Danger Girl,

plus old favorites like Dr. Strange and Hulk and Silver Surfer. Plus graphic novels like 300.

I'm learning a lot from Shaun Tan's "The Arrival." Shaun came to his first graphic novel as I am coming to mine – from the perspective of an illustrator, not a comics artist.

There are a lot of the mechanics of comics that we both had to figure out.

How many panels do you put on a page? What shape panels?

How do you do transitions? (Not just word, but color transitions.)

Shaun resolved the panel number issue by only doing square panels.

He resolved the color transition issue by limiting his palette to earthtones. (This is still an issue I struggle with. If one page is mostly browns and greens, can I follow it with a page of blues and purples without burning out the reader's retinas?)

Shaun resolved issues of dialog by... not having any dialog at all. (This, of course, raised all sorts of other issues in clarifying storytelling.)

There are a million things that comics creators need to worry about (how to do communicate the idea that a scene is a flashback?). Things that readers don't even think about.

But here I am.

Shaun said it took a week to do each page. His work has 120 pages total, and the whole thing took four years (which is actually more like two weeks a page). At the current rate, that means I'll be done by Christmas 2013. That's a long time.

A really long time to be working on the same project.

But, well, sometimes it takes a while to change from one form to another.



THE CITY OF THE FUTURE IS NOW: 1977 TOKYO!
HOLOGRAPHIC DISCO LIGHTS, ROBOTIC BELL
BOTTOMS, AND SPACE PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER.

BEHOLD, THE PINNACLE OF JAPANESE AUTOMOTIVE
ENGINEERING, COMPLETE WITH SHARK FINS AND
UNNECESSARY SWOOPINESS...

SPARKLE!



THE DATSUN 990ZX!

OBLITERATED IN A BLINK
OF AN EYE, BY A GIANT
MONSTER'S FOOT!

