

The Drink Tank Issue 2⁵

by Christopher J. Garcia

Why China Mieville Should Write Children's Books

China Mieville is a guy with a world of ideas that are sick, twisted, wrong, evil, and a lot of times, kinda icky. A race or insect-people who spit out processed food stuffs to make art? A drug called dreamshit? An entire city located under the towering ribs of a enormous, and thankfully long-dead, beast? These are insane notions from just ONE of his novels. And while I was reading it, I realised that he would make the perfect children's author.

I shall explain myself.

When I was in college, I was laboring under the impression that I was throwing my life away. I could have been out there doing something worthwhile, like working at a record store or majoring in film. Instead, I was a creative writing major, and easily the worst writer in the whole department. I

refused to deviate from my mantra 'write like I talk' and it cost me dearly. I couldn't get anything published in the school lit journals. I was writing awful poetry and even worse genre fiction. I read well, so I managed to do OK in various poetry slams, but other than that, I was putting crap to paper and calling it literature. After a while, I realised that there was an area that I wouldn't have as much trouble in. I started studying Children's Writing under Lisa Jaungh-Clough. She was a real inspiration and always helpful to me with all my little concepts. I went through read-

ing and writing pieces for the little ones, quickly realising that I had a little talent for it.

Now, here's where China fits in. You see, Children's Lit is all about ideas. The bigger and stranger, the better. Ideas like bug-headed women would totally fit (if he didn't attach many of the other tidbits on the package) in a world of children's lit. Hell, New Crobuzon would even work as a setting! It's hard to believe, but if you look at the basis for Perdido, The Scar and Iron Council, you can see common themes that Children's authors use.

I'm a big fan of China and can't wait to see more books from him, but I really do believe that we could have a great children's writer on our hands. I mean, Roald Dahl did it, so why couldn't another lan- other British writer whose ideas are truly out there?



See, he even LOOKS like a Children's Author

**12 Pt. Courier New
by Jay Crasdan**

Chris Garcia is a fool, once again making a recommendation that has no way of ever working. China wouldn't write a children's novel, he's got too much tied into the visceral quality of his prose. In addition, I don't see his extreme Left World View working in the arena of children's writing.

Chris, again, you're on drugs.

A Guide to Making Fun of Bad Movies

By Jay Crasdan and M Lloyd

Knowing Chris well means that at some point you're going to see a movie with him, wither in the theatre or on video. If you know him well, you'll see at least one terrible film with him. Sadly, most of the time, he won't think that the terrible film he made you endure was that bad, which it certainly was. You'll learn to hate him for these crimes of cinema attendance.

At first, you'll be angry. Hate will well up every time you close your eyes and see scenes from *Virtuosity* playing out over and over again. You're eventually come to sadness when you realize that Chris actually did say that *Ishtar* 'was really funny.' You'll want to walk away when he pops in *Hudson Hawk* for the fiftieth time. As time goes by, you'll start to forgive and figure out ways to make the time you spend forced to watch ill-conceived, badly-executed films.

The first step is to latch on to something. It can be anything. Booze is a popular crutch. I know that Jay often carries a flask of *Wild Turkey* or *Old Crow* when it's time to set down and view *Destiny Turns on The Radio*. I like to have some sort of gloppy food with me. Chinese is an easy choice, but Thai, Vietnamese and even Indian work well. If things get too bad, you can always

spill on yourself and thus have an excuse to leave *The Day The Earth Froze* in the dust. Other successful methods include bringing a significant other so you can start snogging right in the middle of a terrible film, scheduling work so they'll call you in at exactly the right moment, and carrying a vial of acid to spill on yourself. It's still better than watching *Alien* in LA.

The other method is mouthing off at the TV. You've seen *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, so you know the score. There are ideas that will keep you from annoying too many folks. First, don't over-do it. You can make a comment every couple of minutes, but a constant chatter will annoy even those who are contemplating self-mutilation. Find something to hook on to and run with that. If you are one of those types who can spot a PA's coffee mug left in a shot, be the one who points out the gaffes and blunders. If you are one of those whose power is mock-ign dialogue, just repeat terrible lines in a strange accent. Finding a hook is the best way to stay sane when you're faced with a triple feature of *Roadhouse*, *Jaws 3D* and *Pink Cadillac*.

With these tools, you can probably work for a while with Chris' selections. Here are some other things you might consider.

- Offer to go to the video store and pick-up the movie. Claim the one Chris wanted to see was gone and get something good.
- Say to Chris that you're working until midnight so that there's no way you'll do a double-feature.
- In extreme cases (such as the night he brings up the non-MST3K versions of *Manos: The Hands of Fate* and *Sidehackers*), you might get out of it by sacrificing your body for the team. Here's a hint: he likes to have his earlobe nibbled.

With this new information, perhaps we can all survive the cinematic apocolype to come. Now, we're off to watch *RoboCop 2*.



Ishtar is a damn funny film

The Undeniable Power of Mickey Spillane's Genius Comic Book Series Mike Danger!

I started reading comics as a kid. I've always loved superheroes, but once I reached College, I figured if I was going to keep reading them, I may as well start reading other, different comics. This brought me to a purchasing a whole bunch of indy titles that I never should have bought. There was one title that jumped out at me: Mickey Spillane's Mike Danger.

I read a lot of Mike Hammer stuff back in the day. I think I was turned on to Spillane from his Miller Light commercials. I had probably read five or six books while I was in high school and they were all great, just the kind of stuff that I read Detective novels for. Originally, Mike Hammer was supposed to be Mike Danger, and originally was intended to be a comic book. Spillane wrote a lot of comics (including having a lot to do with Captain America and Captain Marvel) and it makes sense that he wanted to do Hammer as a comic. But the code being what it was and the bottom falling out of post-war comics, it wasn't meant to be. Years went by and supposedly there were a few attempts made at Mike Danger, but it wasn't until 1995 that Mike Danger became a real

splash.

The premise of the Techno Comix release was that Mike Danger, a crusty PI, had somehow ended up in the future. This led to many seriously tragic misunderstandings, mostly due to the fact that Danger smoked, drank, liked meat and other fun little problems. He almost immediately started to look into things that he shouldn't have been looking into and pissing people off.

The genius of the comic isn't the character Mike Danger, though he's tough, extreme and awesome, but it's the setting of the series. The world portrayed is so very modern America, only dressed up in shinier clothes. Smoking is banned, something that is creeping up on us slowly via law after law regulating where people can smoke. There was a New England town that tried to ban selling meat. All the films had to use CGIed actors because acting was considered a form of mental disease. And there were cameras everywhere! It looked far more like post-9/11 America than I would have expected.

The combo of Spillane and SF made me smile, and I still think well on the comics, unlike most from that period.

A Very Short Story

Wandering down sidestreets, avoiding those strange alleyways preferred by the criminal element, Mr. Hazard went from Narrowside to Ainsbury without a soul sighting him. The wind rolled and whistled through the alleys in a tune that resembled John Cage's strangest morning thoughts. Mr. Hazard arrived at teh shoppe just a few minutes after ten, a few seconds before he had expected hmself there.

Opening the door, a new blast of wind carried in a few pieces of paper, one an old receipt he had dropped not twenty minutes before.

"You're early." Mr. Hazard said.

"I know." Responded Mr. Hazard.

"Well, get to cleaning the back room." Mr. Hazard ordered as Mr. M Hazard gathered his apron and broom.

Mr. Hazard wondered if it would have just been easier to marry soem poor Downsider lady than to go through the process of making five Mr. Hazards.

It's getting to the point where drive space is almost Cheap as Free. I've been a huge fan of using up lots of drive space, as is evident by the fact that I keep pumping out this electronic dog's dish every 4 or 5 days. With things being so cheap and huge, it's interesting what new things will come about because of it.

The piece at the right is called Delete Me by Ethelind. It's a stunning piece to my eyes for a number of reasons. First, unless I miss my guess, that drive first sold for more than 500 dollars around ten years ago. Not, someone can just afford to take it out, cover it in magazine clips and stickers and call it an art piece. I love that. The other thing that strikes me about it is the choice of the media imagery. They're almost all womanly images. Now, I happen to know that the artist is a woman, but still, there's a comment here that can be read one of several ways. Some suggest that up to 10% of all drive space is taken up by pictures of women, mostly in Porn but also in pin-up and other forms. That's one rather simple take. The other that came to mind was the level of women in the world of computing. There are many great female programmers, but still, it's mostly a Man's World. By shoving these images of women onto the single sexiest part of a computer (you can argue the CPU, but few drool over GHz as much as they do GB), there is a statement that there are women at the core of the entire matter. Now, I'm not sure the artist had this sort of understanding, but the first mass-produced memories were in fact called Core Memories. These were wildly used in many of the most important machines of the 1950s and 60s and they were almost entirely wired by women. For many years, even into the 1980s, women's role in computing was seen to fall in the Data Entry area. Perhaps this is a statement that there are thousands of drives just chock full of female-entered data from the past that the rest of the computing world feeds off of.



That's a very likely concept.

Of course, she could have just been decorating and making it look all pretty, which she managed to do quite well with the piece.

We see a lot of these nowadays, with people using old computers to make art pieces and the like, instead of donating them to our museum! I'm fond of those folks who bought the old DEC Vax machines and turned them into bar cabinets. When you could buy old original Macs for less than 20 dollars, people began to turn them into fish-tanks. We've got two in the collection that were painted and made into candy holders. I've seen people buy old Minuteman Missile Guidance Computers and turn them into coffee tables. All of these show that computing isn't only about madly crunching numbers: it's also about finding the coolest way to dispose of your empties!

Who Should it be?

A look at The Best Novel Hugo

I'm going to be writing up all of the Hugo races over the next few weeks. This is the big one, the one that most folks remember is the winner of Best Novel. This year's crop is interesting, though I have to say that I had a lot of trouble with finishing a couple of them and two I had to give up on. Still, here's what I see as the potential of each novel winning.

- Chucky Stross' Iron Sunrise. I wasn't a big fan of this one, there's just something about Stross that rubs me rough. I have to say that he builds a scene better than most. In fact, that's his strong suit. I didn't like Singularity Sky, though I appreciated this one slightly more. It took me a long time to get into it and I managed to finish it in less time than it took to get through any of the others, mostly due to a free weekend to spend reading. I still don't buy into the whole AI stance that Stross takes, and I still prefer his shorter works, but I'd say this has about a 1 in 10 chance of winning.

- Iain M. Banks' The Algebraist. I really had to rethink my position on this one. I liked it, though I couldn't finish it in my first try. It was a good novel, but the density of the prose held me back a bit. I took a pause and when I finally finished it, I thought it was very very good. At times, I thought this was the best book I read this year, but at others, I was stymied. I do have to say that the central premise, a far future scattered mankind, is very strong and enough to carry me for a fair amount of the way. Still, I don't see it getting enough support considering what it's up against. 8:1

- Ian McDonald's River of Gods. I couldn't finish it. I tried and I tried, but there was too much to follow and I just couldn't do it.

Still, I could see why this appeals to some. 6 to 1.

- Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell by Susanna Clarke. Alright, this is what I'm talking about. This is a long book that I felt I could gobble up in an afternoon...if I could read that fast. There were some great characters, especially John the theoretician who made me smile. 2 to 1.

- China Mieville's Iron Council. I'm a huge China mark (as the lead story of this issue should point out) and this is a great book that I couldn't finish. Seriously, I loved every minute of it, but it was so densely written that I just couldn't keep going. I loved it, easily on par with Perdido Street Station (which was robbed of a Hugo in my eyes), and I am going to give it another try shortly. I think that China's popularity, combined with the fact that he's a three-time nominee, will put him over the top. 3:2

Programming Notes

The Chess issue is going to be delayed, probably until September or October. Too many articles are missing from folks and I'm not going to push anyone too hard to do the work they're doing as a favor for me.

Replacing the Chess issue for the time being will be The Steampunk Issue! I've had a lot of material written up for a while and I found some other folks who have great work and they've happily agreed to go along for the ride. This will be an issue of exultant joy.

And other than that, all is well. Dad's doing OK, and the treatments are keeping him up and around. He's worried about turning fifty. He's also managed to keep his hair, which was his biggest concern.

Emailed Words of Comment

Sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my gentle readers

Let's start with Canada's Answer to Lloyd Penney, Mr. Lloyd Penney!

Dear Chris:

It's catch up time again! I've got three issues of The Drink Tank to respond to, issues 26, 27 and 28, and I will make what comments I can. It's a hot day today, and I'd rather sit inside and sweat.

If I remember my last visit, it was a 103 degrees (f) with humidity to match!

26...I've been to a few convention panels that discussed Joseph Campbell, and I think most of them were panels on Star Wars. There is a reason why some people won't be caught dead near the panel rooms; the discussions are usually about nothing they're interested in, and other panels stray so far off topic, no one knows what they were supposed to be talking about. I rarely do panels now; the panel often outnumbers the audience.

I still love doing panels. It's a part of what makes me love cons so much. There are people who will listen to your wildest ravings! Of late, panel numbers have been increasing at most cons I've been to. When I started in 2000, I would be lucky if there were 20 people in the room, and that number has now grown to nearly 40 on average.

Those fezzes look great! They must be hot, though. I don't look good in any kind of hat, although I do have my favorite cap to keep the bald spot from frying in this summer sun.

I have a giant head, so I can't wear many hats, but man do I love that fez.

The diet! Now have lost 11 pounds, and everything fits better. The worst thing is, just give me a decent con suite, and I'll gain it all back in an hour. This is the first diet that's really worked for me, so I hope I can keep going with it. If I can get below 200 pounds, I will be pleased. 211 and dropping...

Keep at it Lloyd! I've been on a roller coaster of late (up to 250 in 2001, down to 220 in 2003, and now around 235). 200's a weight I don't think would look good on my structure.

Now I can spill the beans on Ad Astra 2006, the 25th Ad Astra...guests are Terry Brooks, Peter David, Betsy Mitchell, Ray Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury via satellite, Rowena Morrill, and our local Fan GoH, David Warren. And, according to the co-chairs, we're not done in the GoH department.

Great line-up! I love Peter David and Harryhausen is a legend. I hope there'll be a screening of some of his classics.

27...I can't say anything about the Hugos this year because for the first time in some years, I'm not a member of the Worldcon. The best of the bunch should win, yet, I hope there's some different names on those rockets. A whole lot of feelgood comes with those rockets (so I've heard, anyway), and I'd like to see it spread about a little.

Knowing a few different people who have won Hugos, I know that it's one of those life-defining moments for some, just another day at the office for others. Still, I want one (and I'm betting you'll know the weight of the rocket before you're done, Lloyd).

I read M Lloyd's piece on a little forbidden fruit, and its aftereffects. There's a local female fan who's put the moves on me a couple of times, and I have been tempted. But, I guess I have the years to look at what could happen after any little get-together, and have decided that a few moments of pleasure is not worth the guilt, the broken marriages, the broken friendships and the pain, for all that would happen if ever I were to say yes. So, I say no, and I am lucky in that she has remained a friend, mostly because we have defined our boundaries.

One of the first conversations M and I ever had went something like this: M- You ever cheated on a girlfriend? Me- Yeah. M- You're a bad person, you know. Me- In fact, I do. M- It's OK, we'll smoke a turd in Hell together.

28...It's been well-known that Kathryn Mulgrew does a great Katherine Hepburn, to the point where I saw some fan art with Mulgrew/Hepburn is on the bridge of the Voyager, and Spencer Tracy in a StarFleet uniform walks onto the bridge...

I must find a copy of said piece!

Chris Garcia is the Devil!, says Harlan Ellison! Hey, I'd put that on a t-shirt. The Angry Old Fart still has a few sparks, I guess. I don't need a Harlan Ellison story of my own. All the others are so entertaining.

I'd totally have that put on a shirt if 1) I didn't know Harlan's lawyer, and 2) I didn't know he'd sue me.

Kate Kelton is from Etobicoke? Tell her I live on the West Mall, on Eva Road, between Bloor St. and Burhamthorpe Road, just south of the Etobicoke Civic Centre. She will know exactly where I am.

Fandom As A Whole knows about our tacky shirts. Woah... Or, you've seen these floating pieces of ugliness at a few Worldcons. I often top the Hawaiian shirt with a Hawaiian vest. I've never done the Hawaiian bellbottoms thing myself. I think Yvonne would divorce

me if I ever asked.

There are a number of us known for our Hawaiian shirts (Me, Jay Lake, others) and I'm desperately looking for a Hawaiian Tux. I need something to wear when I finally get my Hugo!

And, the hopper is empty, which means I've chewed through each issue! Now it's time to say goodbye, to all our company...M-I-C, see you real soon! K-E-Y, Why? Damned if I know! M-O-U-S-E.... Thanks, Chris, and see you nextish.

It's always good to hear from the good folks who haven't abandoned the Great White North for Florida.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

And now let's give a great big The Drink Tank welcome to Helen Spiral!!!

Hi Chris,

My fandom has fezzes...

One of the heroes in the 1967 Doctor Who story "The Evil of the Daleks" is the proudly befezzed Kemel (played by Sonny Caldinez). He teams up with the Doctor's companion Jamie. A man wearing a fez and a man in a kilt IN THE SAME SCENE !! With Daleks! *Fangirl joy* And the Doctor actually, really and truly, greets the Emperor Dalek with the words, "We meet at last." Superb! In the end Kemel *spoiler deleted*.

Doctor Who... pro-fez since 1967,

Feztastic!

Helen

Perhaps you shall be made the UK correspondant for the Loyal Order of the Blinking Purple Fez. Only time will tell.

We also heard from Earl 'eI' Kemp on the Winchester Mystery House issue, M Lloyd on my butchering of her story for issue 27, A Claims Department LoC from Lloyd 'You can just amke out the Harry Warner Jr. Award Certificate to Me Now' Penney and a nice note from my Uncle Wayne.