



Bill & Ted's
EXCELLENT
adventure

DRINK TANK

Classics of S-F at the Worldcon by John Hertz

We'll discuss three classics at Chicon VII, one discussion each.

Each of our three is famous, each in a different way. Each may be even more interesting now than when it was first published.

The authors were British, Czech, and American. As it happens each broke new ground in s-f.

Our working definition is, "A classic is a work that survives its own time. After the currents which might have sustained it have changed, it remains, and is seen to be worthwhile for itself." If you have a better definition, bring it.

Come to as many as you like. You'll be welcome to join in.

Mary Shelley **Frankenstein (1831)**

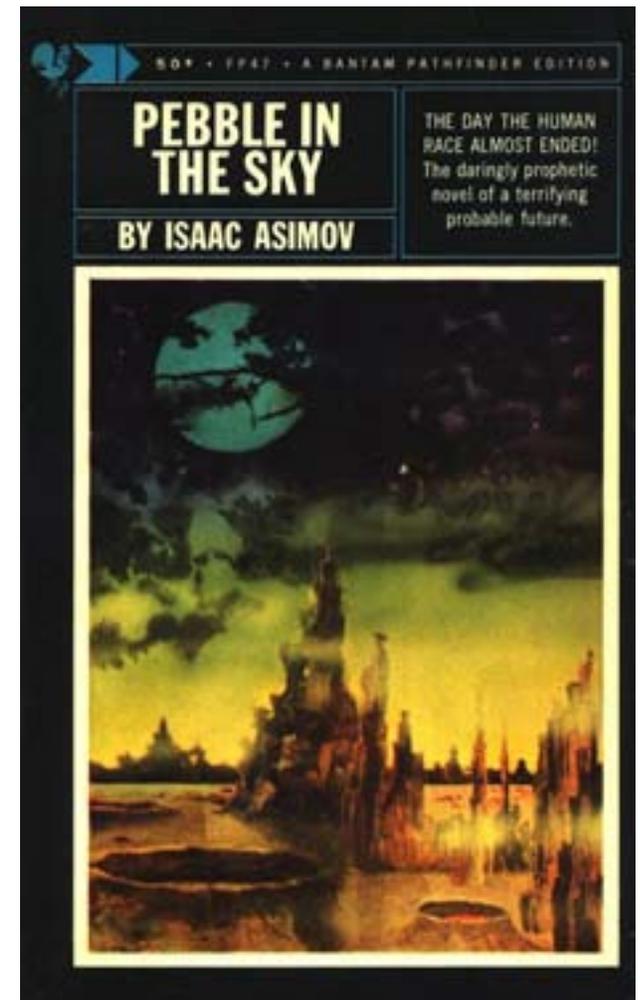
Here is one of those books everyone talks about but no one has read. It is poetic and pungent. The man runs; the monster blames; what is missing from this picture? The author puts in a blind man to make sure we see. Cries for sympathy pour from the monster's lips. Where have we heard them before?

Karel Capek **R.U.R. (1921)**

"R.U.R." is "Rossum's Universal Robots", a word introduced by this play. The author said it was a melodrama. The first New York performance was called "Murderous social satire ... hair-raising." All true. Why is there only one woman (two, actually)? Does the lust to dominate follow from the consciousness of pain?

Isaac Asimov **Pebble in the Sky (1950)**

Set in a future Chicago! How could we resist? If in the Foundation series ordinary things happen to strange people, here strange things happen to a very ordinary person. Of course the author carefully quotes, not quite as in the original, "I find no fault in this man." Of course it's a third love story and, as advertised, unlike the others.



Reviews by Chris Garcia & Diane Osborne

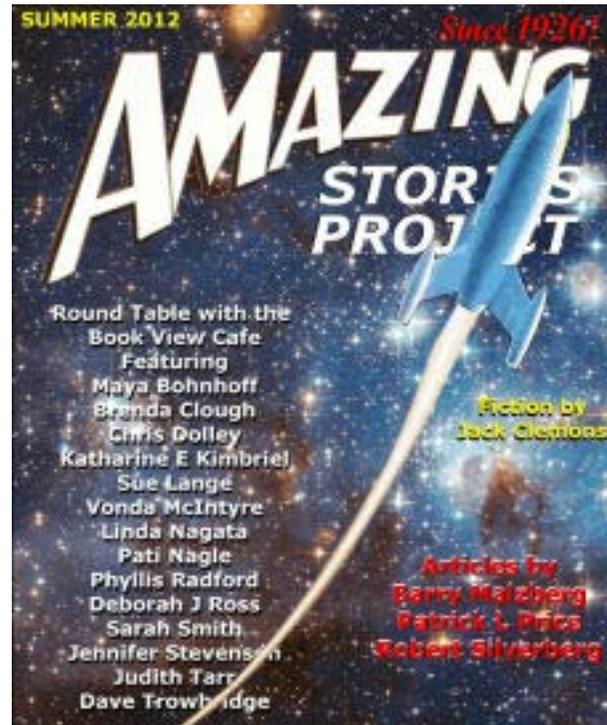
Amazing Stories Returns! A Look at the Preview Issue

Amazing Stories is the first name in science fiction magazines. It's the Granddaddy of 'em All! The recent re-launch announcement made me very happy, and the preview issue is pretty darn good.

The story of Amazing Stories, which has come and gone a couple of times over the decades, and this version is pretty solid. There's a greater amount of attention paid to the non-fiction stuff than to the fiction. In fact, there are only two stories in it and they're both written by the same guy, Jack Clemons. I really enjoyed the first one, Tool Dresser's Law, but the second one had me on the rope after only a few paragraphs. Still, I'd say that the first one worked so well that I'm willing to forgive a lesser effort in the second round. I rather enjoyed the package, a gathering of pieces to represent the field at the moment. There are three great views of the history Amazing Stories, one I especially liked from SilverBob.

One of the things I really enjoyed were the shout-outs to things like The Drink Tank (hey, that's my zine!) SF Signal and I think a couple of others. It's nice to see a connection to the community!

In fact, the first piece that came to my eyes was a wonderful view of what it means to be a film critic by the excellent Mr. Dan Kimmell. The way a critic looks at films is a difficult thing. You have to put yourself into the mind of the intended viewer/reader of the film. I could never be a critic, though I'll continue to do reviews!



because I've got to strong an attachment to the way I view film. Dan looks very wise in his advice and his opinions. I also enjoyed the fact that he confessed to giving a negative review to Bridesmaids, which is a film I enjoyed but did not love.

There's a long feature on the folks of Book View Cafe featuring some great names including Brenda Clough (who once stopped by the Museum and we both half-recognised each other), Pati Neagle, Vonda McIntyre and various others. It's a long piece, dominates the issue a bit, but makes for good reading.

Overall, it makes me look forward to the period of regularity from Amazing Stories. If there was not as great a focus on fiction in this one, I know there will be in the future, and I can't wait for it.

Vampire Empire, Kingmakers Book Three Author: Clay and Susan Griffith Publ: Pyr

Greyfriar / Gareth, Empress Adele and the standard cast of characters return in Book Three for adventures that span the globe and run the gamut of vampire - human follies.

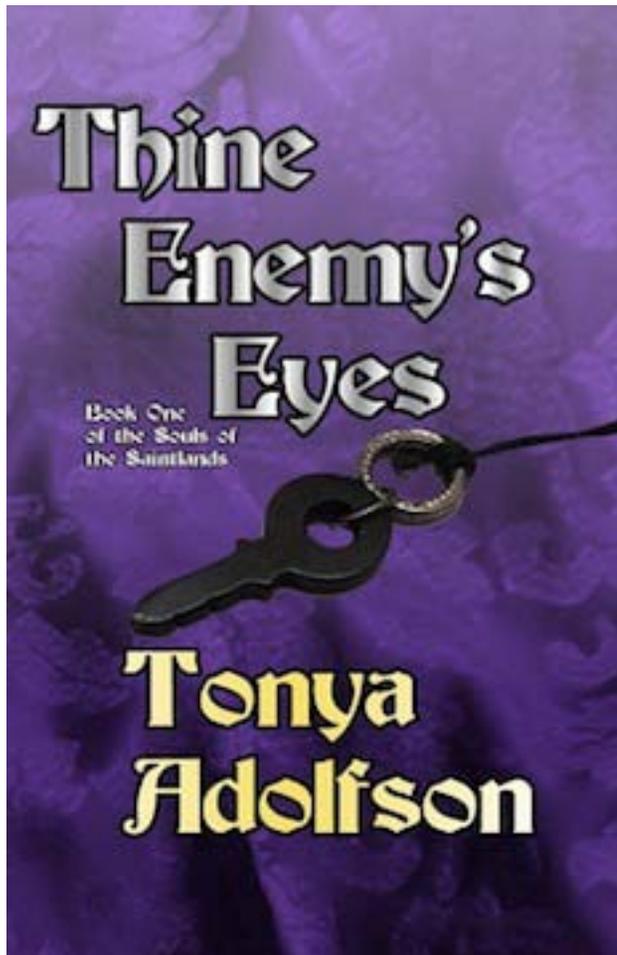
If you liked books One and Two, Three is more of the same. The imagery is incredible. The battles are bloody exhilarating. Plots thicken, thin, are spiced up, go haywire and come together again. Clay and Susan Griffith's writing is like a dance number choreographed by Bob Fosse: See how it's done? Isn't this easy? So easy, so effortless - and you know they spent countless hours pounding out the details. They pulled it off. I enjoyed the latest installation in just WTF are they going to do now, and look forward to seeing what happens next.

Worth full price admission and reservations.
regards,
Diane O.



Thine Enemy's Eyes **By Tonya Adolfson**

I am not an epic fantasy guy. I think that's obvious from most of my reviews over the years. I've found a few that I enjoy, but when you add a strong romance element, it becomes less and less likely that I'll get into it. One of the most surprising books I've read recently was Thine Enemy's Eyes by Tonya Adolfson. It was the kind of novel that just kept me reading despite the



fact that if you described it to me, I'd likely have passed without a second thought.

The story is that of Catriona Moriarty, a powerful creature of sword and with an ultra-Holmesian form of perception. It's her superpower, pretty much. She is kidnapped by Myrigin (who I'm convinced is Merlin!) and given an ultimatum: kill King Charles or she'll never see her son and dear friend again. Of course, it's not quite that simple, and that forms the chunk of the novel. There's romance, and Catriona, the way Tonya has written her, is an object of pure desire that draws almost every major character of the story into her. That sense of everyone falling in love with her does pull a bit hard on the plot, but it works.

Thine Enemy's Eyes is light reading, but it's also rich and intelligent, kept me reading while I made my way through. That is a good thing, especially considering that this is not my usual genre. I really found myself tying in with particular characters, one or two of which were presented in a way that made me question what I usually think about Fantasy.

This one also showed that you can enhance the impact of a novel with the use of good design. The way that this piece was laid out, from the font choice to the chapter breaks, as I read it on the screen, I was drawn into a feeling of a book I would hold in my hands. It's a beautiful thing to be able to give the feeling of interacting with a physical book when you're reading a virtual novel.

All in all, well worth the read! You can find it on Amazon and at <http://www.tangled-websonline.com/thine-enemys-eyes.html>. The sequel is An Unpolished Gem, out now!

The Devoured Earth **By Sean Williams**

I haven't read the first three Books of the Cataclysm, so jumping in on book four from Pyr. It's hard to dive in on some of these, like when I tried to start with Dances with Dragons, but here, it didn't seem nearly as difficult.

The story I picked up from the prior novels was pretty quick - Reality is twisted and strange. This is a story that feels like what happens when you write SciFi and Fantasy at the same time.

And the sad thing is, I think I read it wrong.

The prose is great, it's compelling, dark enough to have gravitas, and light enough to not trip me up in Lovecraftian knots, but at the same time, it plays the words in a way that should be long-chewed, something that I did not manage to give it. I powered through and I am the worse for it. In particular, I found myself tangling in with the characters who felt not only fully-fleshed, but so deeply tied to a universe that you could not imagine them existing anywhere else. I particularly enjoyed the character of Shilly. With one passage, she took over the novel from my point of view. While it's obvious that Williams has a great eye for character, I am betting Shilly has a special place in his writer's heart.

Still, I'm going back to the first of the series, reading all the way up and then returning to The Devoured Earth, which I am betting will reward even more than it did on the first reading.

The Interstate of the Mind

Taral Wayne

A little while ago, I consummated the deal of a lifetime. Those of you who pay attention will remember that I collect 1/18 scale diecast metal cars. These are large, heavy objects, often nearly a foot long. They come preassembled and prepainted, and so represent the pinnacle of instant gratification. The better-made diecasts have almost as many working features as any car you'll find whizzing down the street with a driver behind the wheel. I'm talking opening hood and an engine detailed all the way down to spark plug wires, battery leads, oil stick, and 10W40 sticker on the oil filter. Of course, the more detail and the better fit the parts have, the more expensive the model.

Entry-level brands include Maisto, Jada and Motor Max. Among these cheapie-makers, details are often crude and minimal. Lately, they have even resorted to engines that are a single molded panel, with perhaps two or three parts glued to it. Increasingly, too, the entry level diecasts are marketed toward the 14-to-18 year-old male adolescent who thinks the height of sophistication for a real car is a low-rider that bounces up and down when you flip a switch, and with two-inch-thick ribbons of rubber around 26-inch chromed hubs. Front and rear ends should be as blunt as a caboose, and there should never be more than a six-inch slots that pass as windows to peer through while driving. "Cool" is all that matters, and whether such a vehicle could ever actually go anywhere or be a pleasure to drive is apparently immaterial.

To get back to the subject of authentic models of real cars ... the best brands are Au-

toArt, GMP, Highway 61, Exoto, Biante, and a few others. There are quite a lot of these high-end makers, actually, whose production runs are small and whose prices range from extortionate to unconscionable. No toy car should cost over \$300! At the "low end of the high end" is Sunstar, whose Platinum Series, at around \$75, are arguably the best value for the money. They are also nearly unique for including a reproduction of a genuine sales booklet for each real car.

For the last few years, I have shopped from an online dealer called "Kevin's Hobbies." They have one of the largest selections of diecasts, and among the lowest prices. An additional bonus is that Kevin's operates from Vancouver, B.C., so my shipping costs are lower also.

To my shock and dismay, the last time I went to their website to idly browse through their new stock, I found an announcement that they were closing the business! There were still a number of diecast cars I longed for, but in normal circumstances I wouldn't expect to order more than one, two or perhaps three at a time – I get a better break on shipping for multiple orders, when I can afford them. But now, suddenly, I was out of time! The store would be closed before I could save up for everything I wanted!

Even worse, Kevin's was also offering enormous discounts – up to 30% and 40% – to clear out their enormous stock. How could I just sit idly by and let this opportunity slip through my fingers?

The radical solution I came up with was to arrange a three-way deal with one of my friends

and customers. For future art of his choosing, he would foot the bill with Kevin's. It came to a hefty figure, but even so, the normal price of the cars was almost twice as hefty. I wrote to Walt to explain the situation, and he agreed.

Sifting through hundreds of diecast models offered by the website, I narrowed my interests down to an even dozen. Walt sent in the order in the next night, and the cars arrived about ten days later ... which happened to be Monday last. It was like Christmas, only twice as good! Since Monday, I've been unpacking boxes, inspecting the goods, caressing metaflake paint jobs and real pile carpets, admiring dashboard dials and salivating on working suspension members. Lined up in ranks of three, there is almost enough 1/18 scale vehicular traffic on my living room table to constitute an interstate traffic jam! Darn good thing I had sold a lot of unwanted junk in previous months, because I needed every inch of space for the new junk.

Of course, the drawback of this gloat-worthy bargain is that I'll be illustrating for Walt until my brain melts and liquefied neurons dribble from my ears. But at least this work should be a welcome change of pace, since Walt seems to have enough nekkid bunnies for the time being. He has written a pulp sci-fi/adventure in homage to Edgar Rice Burroughs, titled "A Barnstormer on Mars," that he wants illustrated with four-armed green Tharks, buxom princesses and zooming P-38 fighters. At this low point in my checkered career as an illustrator, better a P-38 than another nekkid bunny any day.



52 Weeks to Science Fiction Film Literacy Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure

Ah, the teen films of the 1980s. They ranged far and wide, from tough teen dramas like *The Breakfast Club*, to light and delightful comedies like *Sixteen Candles*. It was a heady time to be young and awkward. The teen film would not again have as much traction until the late 1990s. There was a need, then, for a smattering of other genre films in the Teen Movie arena. While we've already talked about *Weird Science* (directed by the King of Teen Screen, John Hughes), we now go in a somewhat different direction.

Directly to *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*.

So, let's get the story out of the way so

we can get into the weird film theory stuff. Bill & Ted are a pair of slackers. Ted's Dad is a cop who is ready to send Ted to military school in Alaska if he doesn't pass history. They've got a presentation due, so like all smart students looking for insight, the two of them go to the Circle K. While there, they run into Rufus, a time-traveler from the future who has been sent to make sure that Bill and Ted get together and form Wyld Stallyns, the band that will bring peace and unity to the world. They go with him and take a look at earlier times, even running into two hot princesses. They eventually go back and gather a number of historical figures together for their presentation. They lose the historical figures, who go on a bit

of a rampage, and end up having to bust them out of jail. In the end, they pass History, Rufus gives them guitars, and that's that.

SO, the cast, that's a key part of the whole thing. The first is Bill and Ted themselves. The famous one there is a guy named Keanu Reeves. Keanu as Ted was perfect. His turn in a movie called *Parenthood* was awesome where he was playing a very similar sort of slacker character who had a much deeper side to him. Interestingly, *Bill & Ted's* had been shot prior to *Parenthood*. He imbues his performance as Ted with a charm and simplicity that is exceptional. I've always had a certain respect for Keanu's performances. He may not be the brightest bulb on the strand,

and his interviews pretty much prove that, but he can play a role, especially if he gets to play a slacker or emotionless pawn. He was perfect for the role of Neo in *The Matrix*, which I'll be talking about later in *52 Weeks*. His performance as Ted transitions smartly from clueless slacker, to clueful slacker with barely seam. There are also a lot of great moments where Keanu just fits perfectly. When he's thrown through a wall in *The Old West* during a bar fight and ends up looking right into the Green Room for the ladies of the evening. Billy the Kid pulls him out, and Ted then sticks his head back in. It's a sweet touch and the way he does it makes it even better.

Bill is no worse.

Alex Winter had been a bit performer in a bunch of films up to that point, including sharing the screen with me in *The Lost Boys*. OK, we weren't in the same scene, nor did I see him on the set, but as an extra, I played as significant a role as he did with his lines and screen time. He's a funny guy, has some talent, and after Bill & Ted's did a couple of movies and an MTV show that I never saw but heard that it was awesome. His Bill is slack-jawed, and a bit over-affected, but at the same time, he works in a way that is hard to dispute as effective to the story. The audience gets a sense of wonder off of Bill that doesn't emanate from Ted nearly as well. Ted = charm. Bill = awe. You need both of them to make the



entire premise work. When he thinks that Ted has been killed and say "Don't be dead, dude" over Ted's supposed body, there's actual emotion that feels real. He manages to stay in character and this actual feeling doesn't feel out of place. That is a hard line to walk. When Bill charges a Medieval Knight screaming "You killed Ted, you Medieval dickweed!", there is anger that feels like it comes deeper than any other feeling you'll ever see in a slacker-like character. It's his

breaking point when he believes that his one true bro has been killed.

Rufus is played admirably by George Carlin. He is the heart of the film. He plays Rufus as intensely enlightened, and enviably loose. He's the best part of the film for many, and I understand why people would attach to him. He's George Carlin, and he's playing in a realm that was not seen as his bag. He was so thoroughly impressive here, especially in regards to the way he presented the attitude of the Future that was based on the works of Wyld Stallyns. This was also a triumph of costuming. If you look at the outfit that Rufus is wearing, a long leather coat, sunglasses and a sharp, sharp suit, you can see that this is what the 1980s thought of the Not-So-Distant Future, even though it's supposed to be 500 years in the future. You can practically see the Nagle paintings the future would be based on!

Rufus comes from the Future, sent by a group of future rulers, and the way the future looks is awesome. The leader of the future is led by the legendary saxophonist Clarence 'He Who Knows All' Clemons. He was best known for playing sax in the E Street Band, but he always had a certain forward-looking image that you can only find in the 1980s. Think of some of the most significant forward-looking images of the 1980s and you'll see something that may have started with Andy Warhol's Factory in the 1960s but came to bloom in the 1980s with characters like John Sex and Grace Jones in NYC, the New Breed in LA, various groups in San Francisco. He lends just the right amount here. I love that guy, and since he passed earlier this year, I've missed him.

This does bring up a fundamental problem with time travel films that are based on setting right the past so the future happens. If the future didn't happen, then the people sent to the past to make the future happen would never have happened, thus there would be no way to send people from the future to make it happen. Now, the film where a villain goes back to change history and there's a good guy who is sent to set it right, that works, to a degree, but still, it's best not to think of these things and just roll with it.

The rest of the cast is very cool. There's Lincoln, who is played by a guy who had few credits and was best known for producing American versions of Japanimation (the OFFICIAL term for Anime in The Drink Tank) including Robotech where he was the voice of Lisa Hayes father. See, it ties in nicely with the last issue, no? He looks more alike Lincoln than any other actor who has ever played him. OK, there's also Beethoven, who I consider to give the greatest performance. They have him wailing on some synths at one point and it's an awesome performance as I could see a mid-period Ludwig totally rocking out with a bunch of synths! The guy who plays him is also the guy who originated the role of Edward Rutledge on Broadway in 1776. He totally has the look. Joan of Arc (and how hard was it for me not to write Joan Van Ark) was played by the exceptional Jane Wiedlin. She was great, though she said almost nothing. She has that elven quality that plays so sweetly. I met her at Wondercon two years ago and we reveled in the fact that the two of us shared a

thing - we'd both bombed at our Writers with Drinks readings. Go figure. When she goes in for Jazzercise (or it's generic equivalent), she really gives it her all. The guy who plays Freud is fun, but it's Ghengis Khan who is really the star. I recognized him from Big Trouble in Little China. He's a really great martial artist and as Ghengis (or is it Chinggis?) he's awesome. His rampage through a sporting goods store is the peak of the fun in the movie!

In fact, when they all run wild all over San Dimas Mall, it's a TON of fun. It also captures the concept of the late 1980s Mall and the 1980s water park revolution. Watching Napoleon take to the slides of Waterloo (which is actually Raging Waters in San Dimas), we are actually seeing one of the few records of a day at a water park. While it's a brief segment, we get to see why these parks were like. A lot of them are now gone, which is a shame. There used to be 5 of them in the Bay Area, now there are 2.5, with word that one will be closing in the year. The scene in the Mall shows a time when it was typical to hang out in a Mall. This exists to a lesser extent today, of course, but it was a major feature of being a high schooler in the 1980s. This



shows wonderfully in the Mall scene as you can see all the different things that a California teen would have had to choose from.

There's also a view of a presentation which could have come today from a supporter of Occupy Wall Street where a young lady rails on about the rich having much and the poor having little. The closing line "Marie Antoinette, instead of saying "let them eat cake." might have said "let them eat fast food!"

In the end, you realize that the first scenes of Bill & Ted at Ted's house are actually the denouement of the film. In order for the rest of the movie to work, the stuff that happened at the start has to have happened at the end of the events. If you had to map out the flow of events in the film, those events are the end. It's weird.

When Bill and Ted figure out that they can manipulate the present by going back into the past and changing the future, that's where the actual characters are fleshed out. This is easily the most dangerous concept. There are millions, no, TRILLIONS, of possible ways to game the system and come up with ways to make huge gains in their situations. They could easily have gone back in time, found Bill's Stepmom, Missy, and stopped her from marrying his Dad and gotten her together with Bill. Or they could have robbed a bank, brought back jewels from various places, even just put themselves into the role of power using future technologies.

But they didn't.

Instead, they used their powers to make their specific problem go away. This may seem short-sighted, but it's obvious that they understand the power they

wield, they use it perfectly to get the historical personages out of the clink, but they stop there. They only go as far as they have to, no further. This is wisdom. With great power, or time travel capabilities, comes great responsibility. They limit themselves, and for that, they succeed in changing their fate, and ONLY their fates. This idea is significant, and often missed. If I had a time machine, with my situational ethics and lack of moral fibre, I'd go out and make a fortune watching roulette outcomes then going back and playing the right numbers. Of course, my betting on them might alter the timeline, but I'd probably get at least one hit, right?

Bill & Ted's is an excellent example of what a silly idea can do when it's allowed to play out in a serious way. It's also an excellent way to show how far computer animation had come up to this point. There is the Circuits of History segments which show tubes and electricity flowing. I totally remember being blown away by the graphics when I saw it at the Cinema 150 when it came out in 1989. I was a freshman in High School and there was nothing I loved more than Computer Graphics. This was a period where it was still VERY expensive to do even these short segments, which many films peppered around it. While films like T2 and Jurassic Park were right around the corner, opening up the world to films that would be largely driven by graphics, you could see many films that had computer graphicized segments. Here, especially when you look at the scene on the big screen, you can see what turned audiences on at the time.

The real reason to watch Bill & Ted's is a matter of penetration. It shows how important SF was to the world of film at the time. If you

were creating a new segment of film, you had to put a SF spin on it. They did it with Weird Science, and when there was a second wave of teen films (mostly leaving Molly Ringwald behind and not being as powerful a force as it had been in 1985), they had to bring a science fiction film in the genre. We saw it in the 1990s following Scream and Can't Hardly Wait. There was Wing Commander (one of the worst movies ever, though Saffron Burroughs is HAWT!) and then films like Dude, Where's My Car (a film I must write more about!) happened. You can see that the characters of the time were not as smart as they were in the hot John Hughes times. The Geeks of Weird Science are not as impressively naive (fine, dumb!) as Bill & Ted are, which shows what audiences were looking for. You can see tendrils radiating out from them, into films like Romy & Michelle and Dude, Where's My Car?.

People complain about the dumbing down of characters in film, and it's true, it's there, but the reason is that there's an audience for it. If you want movies with intelligent characters, you've got to get people to buy tickets to them. You can see some increase in smart movies, and the folks who were influenced by the films like Bill & Ted's include some excellent filmmakers and writers, like the wonderful Diablo Cody. These movies might not be the most intelligent, but the folks who are pulled in by them will go on and make amazing movies. Like the folks who turned to filmmaking after The Keystone Cops, or the generation after which was turned on by The Three Stooges, it's these movies that pull folks in and move the world of movies forward.

Or at least that's what it looks like from the future of the past...





Letter Graded Mail Sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org

Here we go with Mr. Steve Davidson!
Chris,

I had a couple of minutes whilst trying to construct a banner ad for Drink Tank (for the Relaunch Prelaunch issue of Amazing Stories) from your various issues and read a bit of Bacon's piece that mentioned the UK Battle of the Planets cartoon.

I vaguely remembered the show and did a quick search, discovering that someone has put at least 70 episodes of the show up on Vimeo (if folks are interested, they should visit now as who knows how long they'll be up there - just search by the name of the show).

I started to watch an episode to remind myself what it was all about and was blown away by the opening titles.

I disagree with James. Anime did not get its start with Saturday morning cartoons. It got its start during women's Olympic figure skating (which as a sport is more of an excuse for lech-

erous old men to legitimately look up little girls' skirts than sport)*. Apparently once every four years is not enough.

You'll see why I make such a claim and I'm pretty sure no additional explanation will be



"...Waiting...watching
against surprise attacks by
alien galaxies beyond space"

Battle of the Planets

Uh huh. THAT'S what they were doing...sure.

needed when you take a look at the attached screen capture from the show's intro.

Keep up the good work!

Steve Davidson
Amazing Stories

*Widely held view of women's sports not endorsed by Amazing Stories except where humorous

I, for one, LOVE women's volleyball and, especailly, boxing. In recent years, the world of heavyweight men's boxing has faltered, but the women have improved and make for exciting sport. I also very much enjoy figure skating!

I remember enjoying Battle of the Planets, but I haven't seen it since I was a kid.