



**DRINK  
TANK**



So, I had hoped to do an issue before the con, while on the ttrain, but alas, there was no WiFi, so I had trouble getting images or writing. And at the con, when I would normally do an issue, my laptop was being used for the Writers Under Glass novel writing. It was a perfect storm to keep me from working on an issue. Go figure.

On the other hand,... **MO WON A HUGO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

You see, that's a win for the Drink Tank family, though we did not do well in the other categories (we got the most nominations in Fanzine, but we weren't even close) and Mo getting a win was somethign very very special. She's been good enough to send art our way for so long and she's such a nice lady and she's amazing and does great work and she's so wonderful and she's been so generous to not only me but so many others. I was blown away. I cried and laughed and jumped up and ran to hug her. Her winning meant more to me than me winning could mean.

And we saw what it meant to me last year, didn't we?

There were so many people I love who won. John Picacio, Charlie Jane Anders, John DeNardo (yeah, he beat us, but he's such a nice guy I can't help but feel good for him!), Locus, Ken Liu, and Jo Walton. It was freakin' awesome!

And Neil Gaiman made a joke, saying that James and I had ben reenacting the 1965 classic Who episode The Award Ceremony of the Daleks. I also got to meet Dan Harmon, the creator of Community! He was awesome. We also took the picture you see below. It was a lot of fun.

So now, some catch-up!





# Chicago by James Bacon

It's here at last, I am in Chicago and Chicon is not that far away. I am very excited, but also really pleased to be here in this City, which is fast becoming one of my favourite American places.

The people are very nice, of course and the place is strewn with trains, and there is no shortage of pop culture, although neon Budweiser signs with green shamrocks leaves a sour taste on the pallet, generally it's a pretty fantastic city.

I, of course, am on a mission, thrawling Thrift shops and garage, barn, and yard sales, picking up oddities and strange things for the Kids' programme, hareing about the city in a Ford Sherman Tank.

## **Book Alley**

I am meeting Helen Montgomery, and we are going to grab some food, which we do, in a very nice basement Pizza place in a suburb called Evanston. But it is the continual delights that unfold in Chicago's streets that impress me. Sherman Avenue is wide and American, tall-ish buildings and businesses are either side, shops fronts and restaurants, but then I am taken down a side alley, and wonder about what sort of brutality may be met out, but it is not so. There behind buildings, squeezed into another space is Book Alley.

Book man's Alley is a book and stuff shop, but it's beautiful. Half Museum, half bookshop, the layout of the shop is the a real treat. As one enters, one peers down a spacious but very long space, and then when one gets to the end, it takes a ninety degree turn and again, the business stretches away. The shop is disappointingly closing down, so has a 50% off sale, yet I find some really nice books, both cheap, and ones I cannot afford.

But it's the World War I original posters and uniforms, and the massive printing press, or glass cases full of oddities, not in any way organised, and sometimes empty, that astound.

It's a wonderful space, magnificent and feels eminently bookish. The men who tend the books, pricing at the front of the shop, have had a good innings and now these premises will be something else.

Something rubbish, but for now, for this immediate moment, they are still here, and despite not having much in the way of SF, it's so worth a visit.

1712 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201 (847) 869-6999



## ***All American Comics. Some Chomsky with that Ninjago, sir.***

Americans seem to have a complex relationship with their country, and this is something I can comprehend, like governments are generally a foul machinery, but better than most alternatives.

Still in Evanston, a town I am liking, I am taken to Comix Revolution. This is a beautifully laid out shop, very modern. This is no Android Dungeon; yes this is definitely the 'Coolsville Comics & Toys' of

the parish, and the guy behind the counter, although perhaps not as hip as Milo in the Simpsons, is still fairly cool.

The shop is really well stocked, with all the usual regular weekly comics and graphic novels, but it is the care to the layout and attention to detail which impresses me. The cleverness of the displays and the stands, the appreciation of the product that @@@@ fail to ever really grasp.

Yet, it is not just the comics that I am impressed by; a full and tidy 'Local' small press comics selection is next to an extensive and very interesting non-fiction book selection. The books, all new are an incredible introduction to politics and history, in that not just Hitler or The Civil War way, which seems to permeate history sections. Many of the titles would be considered anti-American, alternative view points, leftist, dare I say but mixed with a variety of voices and thinkings, and Chomsky, lots of Chomsky.

They have a lovely section on books about comics, something I always find interesting and spend time looking through, as well as art books and a really eclectic fiction section, but with all the great stuff, Burroughs, Ballard, Huxely, Flann O'Brien, Orwell. Helen is a little surprised by the selection, and I try to explain, as best I can that this is 'primo' stuff, really well thought out, how a shop seller can make some 14 or so book shelves really astounding, but with personal choice.

And then they have a really nice and smart kids section of comics. I look at the selection, as it's quite extensive, and I realise that there are so many digest sized graphic novels from DC and Marvel, but there are also the Tintin titles and comics that one would hope would excite, tying into whatever current 'thing' is on, although Lego and Star Wars seem to be strong, and they were, well our things too.

606 Davis Street, Evanston (847) 866-8659

<http://www.online-revolution.com/>

## ***Scrubs for a Buck.***

Helen had picked up medical scrubs for a dollar each, and what with these being very cheap, pointed me at the Lost Era's shop, also near Evanston. This is a prop and costume hire business, which is actually an amalgamation of four family businesses into one huge premises.

In a building shaped rather like the famous Flat Iron in New York, at the point of a corner where many roads intersect, is Lost Era's. On four full rails outside the shop are items for a dollar. Inside, well its a little bit of a crazy treasure trove.

The narrowest part of the shop is furniture, house wares, books, but this is not junk. Art



Deco styles, beautiful crockery, stylish and ornate items from decades past, looking iconic all are neatly stacked, in this very full end of the shop, which is very bright with large windows meeting. As one moves from what must have been shop to shop, the products change, first to clothing, then to party items, masks, then onto long rails of all types of costumes, grouped cleverly. I spend some time looking at the Civil War rail and the hats. They have hundreds and hundreds of hats, mostly many of the same all stacked, but the general variety is impressive.

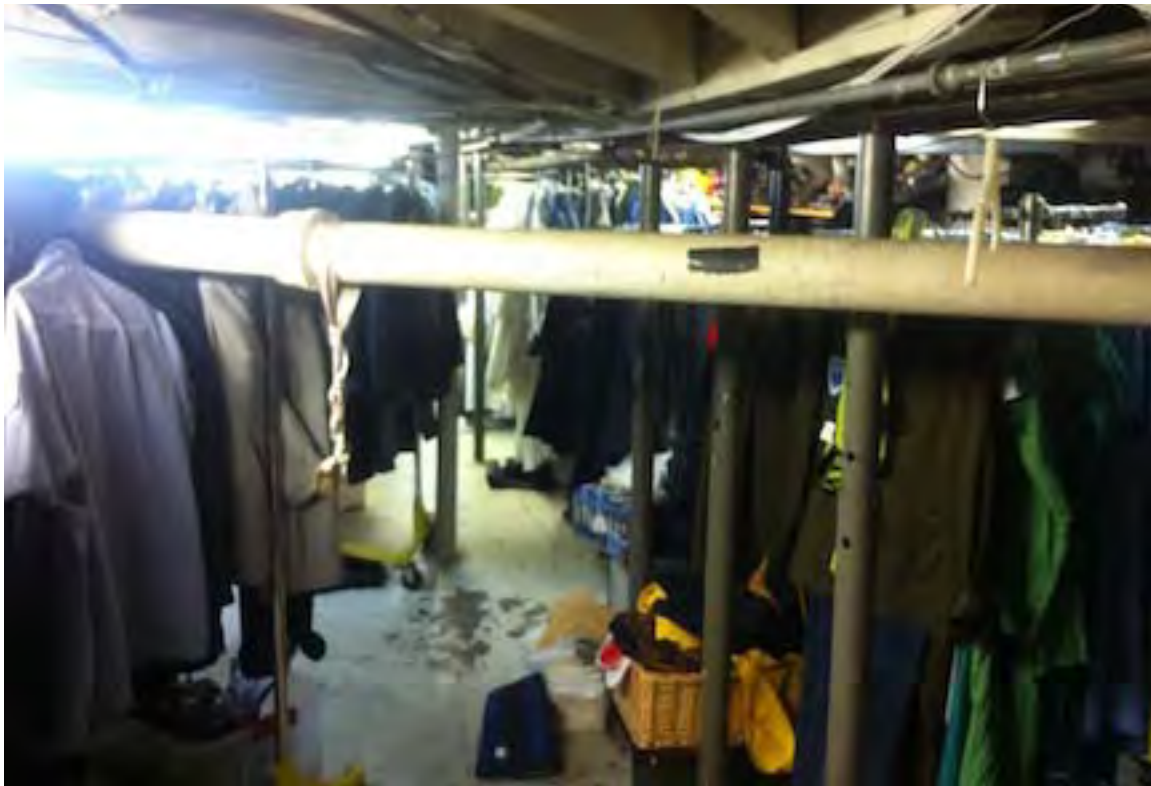
As I got some prices, the chap behind the counter pointed out more items are unpriced than priced, I soon learned they had a basement. Now this was surreal, down wooden stairs, into a vast under ground labyrinth that opened up, and I think stretched further than the actual shop, out under the pavement and street.

It again had sections, one for telephony, one for shoes, one for things, and then rails and rails of clothing. Whole rails of police, fire and postal workers shirts, military gear, old and new, stretching off in many directions.

I found a small stack of Storm Trooper Helmets, moulded at some stage and not pristine, but pretty good, it was all very phenomenal. Too much cool stuff.

<http://www.losteras.com/>

Lost Eras' retail location is 1511 W. Howard Street - Chicago, Illinois – 60626 about half a mile East of CTA's Red Line 'Howard' stop.



## **The Garage come Workshop.**

I am once again in a suburb of a City, and I am driving into the driveway of a SF fan, about to impose my crazy convention needs upon them. Last year, thanks to Spike, Rich McAllister helped out greatly, by helping me to buy PVC pipe, and chop it up into suitable lengths. He was brillio, and I also used his workshop to work on some electrical stuff.

This year, it is Mike 'Ciggy' Cyganiewicz's driveway. Again PVC pipe is on the agenda. I met Ciggy at Capri-con, and he and his wife Lisa are good people. Ciggy, from Indiana, is good for a laugh, a boiler welder by trade, he hefts heavy tools easily and is skilled with intricate detail such as soldering small electrical connections. We will be here for a number of nights, working between six and whenever, getting kit ready.

There are multiple jobs in hand, but first we all set to the spraying of Nerf Guns a matte black. This changes the nature of a nerf gun from a child's toy into something that looks very real, but it is just the base from which to embellish. These guns will be given out to kids, we have 54 guns, and they will further paint them, with metallic paints and pens and stick on gears and cogs and all types of things and make them ornate and 'punked' up.

On the second night, we are joined by James Sheilds and Leane Verhulst

Then it's to the cutting, of PVC pipe, dowels that need to be stained for wands, checking a variety of electrical equipment, and ensuring that British Trains, such as The Hogwarts Express and Thomas the Tank Engine will run on US power. Ebay, the cheap tables in railway model shops and even donations have been very good to us, and so out of five US power controllers, we get four that work really quite well, too well I suspect, two which still smell of cigarettes.

At one stage there is a stand off. I suggest I buy take out, and we eat. Lisa and Ciggy look concerned, and offer to cook. This troubles me as we are working, so further work on top, seems unfair. Lisa seems to want to offer hospitality and suggests I buy the food, and she can cook, this again seems worrisome to me, as the cost is not the issue, its the work and time, extra that will go in. Alissa is amused as she watches Irish charm and gratitude clash with Mid-western hospitality.

We agree on take out, and then late on the way home, we pass Smashburger, and I ponder it's calibre. Alissa and subsequently Ciggy confirm Smash is bloody good, and so on the following night with solvent and plastic weld in the air, we stop to eat superlative burgers. I eat there subsequently, and find their crispy chicken burger, which is awesome.

Working late into the night, each time, we achieve more than enough, but again, I am grateful to be allowed to invade the amazing 'Garage Workshops' of America. I had a garage and it never ever looked like these.



Art by Espana Sheriff

## **Renn Faire**

I was unsure what to expect, so I made an effort, Kilt, Doublet, Gillet Shirt and broad belt, I was sure it might pass muster, but as I trudged across the car park, I realised I was over dressed, people do not dress in Micky Mouse costumes when they go to Disney...

The company is always good, Leane and James have brought a truck load of worldcon goers to The Bristol Renn Faire and after a very productive morning, myself and Alissa McKersie turn up as well.

Its a fantastically well built and designed place. The buildings all look wonderful. The problem for me being, that essentially it is a shopping centre. I am unsure what I expected, but I am astounded by the variety of businesses which exist here, and then wonder about the mediocre nature of the products. I have seen better corsets and better clothing at Steampunk and SF conventions. The book shop was derisory in its blandness. The beer expensive. The dodgy leather shop, isn't that dodgy and seems to only sell sort of claw handed gauntlets.

I didn't go for the Turkey Leg, which looked very good, and instead purchased the worst meal I have ever had in the US. A Ke Bob. I think they mean Kebab. A small Hot Dog roll, with four small bits of chicken on a skewer, for \$8.00. That's more than a meal at Smashburger.

Worst ever.

The staff are great, lovely people, the performers, and I watch two stage shows, excellent at what they do, and the double entendres are very funny. I continually hear cheers, but you realise that every stage show splits the audience in two, so that both sides compete in cheering, not actually in gratitude.

I realise that, although I am enjoying the company and the wander, that the faire has lost me now. That I will not be a convert, will not be coming back, and am already cataloguing all the faults.

The girls find things they like and although occasionally I am impressed, with say Glass Blowing or some wooden constructions, it all feels too, too something. Like the fake English accent people put on. I am more impressed with the build of the entire venue, which is huge, it is a good build.

We head down to watching the Royal Joust, and as Knights charge out on Horseback, I am somewhat placated, as this looks pretty seriously good. But after only 18 minutes, most of which was banter, they charge off.

It's been raining most of the day, and of course, the idea of an indoor pub or bar in an anethama here, so its basically a series of food courts, with open seating, with sun shades, rather than rain covers, and although I like the rain, and revel in it, it's not the best for drinking in.

I have too much to do to waste time on something that is this disappointing, so I head off to work on stuff in my own time, assured in the knowledge, that my \$20 for four hours 'entertainment' is shoddy value compared to \$200 for a full weekend of continuous activities that makes a Worldcon, and am grateful for others probably also working on 'something' that will make next weekend so awesome.

Friendly.

I need to go to the toilet. So we stop at a McDonald's. As I walk in, it reminds me of places of England, as the whole venue swings round to look at the stranger, but folks are friendly, and after asking for the Toilet twice, someone says 'you mean the rest room' and so, amongst much nodding of heads and knowing looks, I go for my pee. As I walk into this toilet, and let's be clear here, there is no chair, or bed or any other place to 'rest' there is a porcelain bowl known as a Toilet, Jesus, well anyhow, it seems like a pretty dodgy toilet. Not exactly trainspotting standards, but you know.

I wonder where the hourly 'cleaned' documentation is, and decide that I better wash my hands after I wash my hands. I learn that this is Englewood and think that rings a bell, but the folks are nice, and I curse McDonald's for not making more of a fucking effort. Bet you the local Smashburger has a nice toilet. Rest Room. Whatever. I thank as I leave and I get many waves and smiles.

## **Trainspotting.**

The choice is dump James at Leane's, and leave him there or do something. I worry about leaving James Shields. He may wander round the back of Leane's garden, and you know, could be reported as a loiterer or such, and that could lead to the Police, and you know, I worry, as I can see him saying 'It's OK, I am from Ir...' and then the cops saying, well I thought he said Iran. Or was going to, legitimate target. It's just too big a risk. Although, I have found 'A touch of Ireland' shop, which smelt odd, and had over priced flour and Wateford crystal, but rugby shirts on sale and Mass cards. So at least if he is shot, I can tell his mammy that I have a mass card.

We drive down the road to the railway tracks. I like America, as there is no fence, it is a form or Darwinism that I can approve of, wander onto the tracks and you is dead. In the UK every mile is fenced both sides.

So we go down to the train station and wander up. The platform is the same level as the tracks, and we work out that trains are a coming. So standing as we are, we expect a Metra, a commuter service, using Amtrack stock, pulled or pushed by a bigish diesel Loco, to come along. But no, it is huge Freight train, pulled by BNSF Locos, three of them, charging through, and then the freight cars, or goods wagons as I prefer, that go on and on, and it speeds up, 40 I would say, and its about a foot away from us.

Then another one, with two Locos, a Sante Fe, and BNSF, although I know it's one and the same. It must be luck, two such trains in minutes, and we drop James back to his place, safe in the knowledge that he won't get shot, and I think that's a pretty good excuse to go trainspotting.



## **Streamlined.**

I am very disappointed. I would have loved to do that across America on a train thing that Chris is doing. I have too much to do here. The thrift shops are not as thrifty in Chicago as they were in San Francisco, and this is making my job of work harder.

Chicago is famous for introducing the Zephyr, a streamlined, stainless steel, very comfortable train, that had shorter carriages that were articulated. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad captured the imagination of the whole country, when a Denver to Chicago run took 13 hours and 4 minutes.

Zephyrs went through their own history, initially being three car, self powered diesel units, but later with stainless steel beautiful Locomotives and trains with Dome Cars. Apparently, the best known Zephyr, or so I am told, was the California Zephyr, Chicago to Oakland. The route I imagine Chris is on.

There is also much talk about the Pennsylvania Railroad GG-1. This is a serious beast of a machine, and looks superb with its four bogies and ten wheels. Although, once we start talking about beastly engines, and I look at a photo of Union Pacific, in a beautiful yellow, a DDA40X, a 6600 HP locomotive built in the early 1970's, at ninety eight feet long, an incredible beast. I am assured, although, I buy a postcard of a 'Big Blow' the 1959 designed and built GE Gas Turbine Locomotive. This Locomotive has three sections, with a power output of 10,000. The first, with the cab, has a smaller diesel engine to get things going, or move slowly, the second section is a Gas Turbine and the third is an old steam engine tender converted to carry fuel for the turbine. At one hundred and sixty six feet in length, they are awesome.

In some of the model railroad shops that we call into, I learn that Chicago had an electrical multiple unit that was streamlined and known as the 'Electroliner'. This operated on the Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee railroads, and was a four carriage train, with a 'Tavern' car serving such delicacies as 'Electroburgers'. They ran around the 'loop' and up north. A lovely looking piece of machinery.



# Poutine!!!!!!!

I was so unsure. But yes, poutine, or darkly cooked chips, with cheese curds and gravy is just stunning. Although the welcome was even better. Bad Happy on Orleans street, is a stunning eatery. Laid out in a bar like fashion, I meet Jerry and Helen there, and wonder why Jerry didn't bring Liz, as I may suffer a heart attack with this food. I get the triple burger with poutine on the side, and it's incredible.

But first, unbeknown to me, I meet the owner, I thought he was a fan, he had that type of disposition, and after sharing some of how whiskey, and of course a kiss, he departed, and I learned he was not actually with the party, but the owner!

The milkshakes, were a mixture of desirable flavours, all really very good, and came with flaming marshmallows on top.

This place was stunning, with free parking if you follow the rules, and a bring your own booze policy, it was a great night out, followed by some beers at a nice bar.



939 N. Orleans St. Chicago, IL 60610  
Tuesday-Thursday noon - 10:00 pm  
Friday - Saturday noon - 2:00 am  
Sunday Brunch noon - 4:00 pm  
<http://www.badhappypoutineshop.com>

# Be My Enemy by Ian McDonald Reviewed by Diane Osborne

Publ: Pyr

Everett Singh and the crew of the Everness are back on the scene with more thrills, chills and spills that you could imagine!

Ian McDonald scores another home run with the second installment in the Planesrunner series. If there is such a thing as literary steroids, McDonald must be popping them. Rather than blather on about how much I enjoyed this book, let's cut to the chase:

## READ THIS BOOK.

It is fun. It makes me want to inhale a helium balloon and soar off into the skies in search of the alternate universes.

Instead, I am tossing this book in the old kit bag and high-tailing it to Chicon 7. Will McDonald be there? I don't know. If he is, I will discreetly track him down, thank him for writing these books and ask for more. Until I find the Everness, I will be glad for SMOFs and revel in the world of fandom.

TTFN!

regards,

Diane O.

IAN McDONALD

BE MY ENEMY

★ "Smart, clever, and abundantly original." ★  
KIRKUS REVIEWS  
Starred Review

# Chris Barkley's Rather Annoying Column of Commentary by Chris M. Barkley

## **Episode Two - The Chicon 7 Vote on the YA Hugo**

Astute readers of Drink Tank may remember a column I wrote back here in April on the prospects of getting a proposal for a Young Adult Book Hugo Award over its first hurdle, passage at the Chicon 7 Business Meeting.

In the last paragraph of that piece, I wrote the following, "If the proposal is voted down again at Chicon 7, it will be at the Business Meeting in San Antonio next year and in London in 2014 and beyond, if necessary..."

Well, friends and neighbors, it's going to be necessary; the proposal was intensely debated and then defeated, but not by much.

Immediately afterwards, I was surrounded by supporters who were asking what the hell happens next. Well, I told them, when you lose by 17 votes, you don't give up.

For those of you who may have forgotten, the proposed text was as follows:

- a) A young adult science fiction or fantasy book of any length published in the previous calendar year.
- b) Any work nominated in this category may not be simultaneously considered, if eligible, in any other fiction category.
- c) Two years after being implemented, this Constitutional Amendment may be repealed by a simple majority vote at the subsequent Main Business Meeting.

### Explanatory Rider

A young adult book is defined as one in which the author(s) and/or the publisher specifically targeted a potential nominee to this intended audience. In the event of any confusion on the issue, the Hugo Administrator may inquire with the author(s) of potential nominated work for clarification.

Co-Sponsors: Chris M. Barkley, Juli Hanslip, Lou Berger, Dan Kimmel, Stu Segal, Bobbi DuFault.

Now, if you're brave enough, you can watch raw footage of what unfolded during the debate at the Business Meeting this YouTube link, (courtesy of uber-fan Kevin Standlee, BTW):

<http://youtu.be/0sx5XY3naMQ>

I was a bit nervous while making my pitch to win over voters but as you can see, things unraveled a bit as the debate progressed. Someone got up to suggest a name change to widen the scope the amendment to include children's books (which was soundly voted down, much to my relief), the two bite of the apple portion was stripped away after a plea by Colin Harris, who said that it would present a 'nightmare situation' for Hugo Award administrators (which I disagreed with but decided to let go) and finally, Kevin Stanlee proposed extending the trial period to 2017 to allow a proper test period collect tracking data and a rewording of the final clause to allow an active vote of the Business Meeting to repeal the amendment upon reaching the end of the trial period (which passed by majority vote as well).

Towards the end, there was the deplorable incident during the comments of Dr. Harry Kloor, who was heckled and booed by audience members who did not like him invoking the memory of the late Neil Armstrong (whom he knew quite well, by all accounts) and thought it was in bad taste for him to do so.

The final tally was 68 against and 51 for, a difference of 17 votes.

The proposal, in its original or an amended form, will be re-introduced at the LoneStarCon 3 and Loncon 3 Business Meetings. Right after the Business Meeting, I emailed both convention committees to ask them to consider adding a YA Book category under the World Science Fiction Society Constitution's section 3.3.16: Additional Category, which reads:

Not more than one special category may be created by the current Worldcon Committee with nomination and voting to be the same as for the permanent categories. The Worldcon Committee is not required to

create any such category; such action by a Worldcon Committee should be under exceptional circumstances only; and the special category created by one Worldcon Committee shall not be binding on following Committees. Awards created under this paragraph shall be considered to be Hugo Awards.

In the meantime, the Facebook page for the discussion of a YA Hugo award will remain open for business: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Discussion-Page-for-the-Young-Adult-Book-Hugo-Award-Proposal/187492394596256?ref=hl>

There are only two rules on this site; stay on topic AND keep the tone civil.

The aftermath of the Chicon 7 Business Meeting vote has created a tsunami of interest in establishing, or opposing, a Young Adult fiction category. The closeness of the vote certainly indicates, at least to me, that some sort of action is warranted.

As for the naysayers, the arguments consisting of it YA books don't matter, we honor YA stories already or that Hugo nominators can't get a handle on what to do, won't hold water anymore.

Where, oh where, is the downside of trying this? The answer, as far as I can see, is that there are none. This, if it succeeds, will be good for fandom, authors, editors, publishers, parents and kids, teachers and librarians and the Hugo Awards.

The purpose of creating a YA Hugo is to honor deserving works that engage and capture the imagination of younger readers right NOW! In turn, we hope that future fandom will be inspired to continue the traditions of reading, writing, drawing, editing, and publishing. We need to take this opportunity to guarantee that the future of fandom has the best foundation that we can possibly provide.

***Editor's Note - We're happy to host this discussion, even if we have some reservations on the actual topic of the award. One thing I'm very much in favor of is getting one of the seated WorldCons to use their discretionary Hugo to give it a go and then take it to the Business Meeting if it works.***

***More on this as it develops!***



Only known photo of Chris Garcia and Chris Barkley together. Look at how young I looked during Con Jose?  
Photo by Laurie Mann!

# The Ennui of We - FAJournal 198

## Taral Wayne

Are you bored?

I am. I've been a member of an artists' site called FurAffinity for about 4 ½ years. I've downloaded thousands of images and viewed many thousands more. To be honest, I've been a lot less conscientious about reading files that members have posted. It only takes a second to look at an amateurishly rendered drawing, but minutes to hours to read amateurishly written prose, and I just don't have the time – not to mention the patience. These are picture oriented people, for the most part.

Lately I don't seem to be making any new discoveries in the pages of FurAffinity. Fewer new artists draw themselves to my attention, which is only to be expected since the number of FurAffinity members is finite (i.e. fewer than 10 to the 4th power). Still, there are many thousands of members whose work I have never seen. What hasn't been in such abundance as before are artists with a distinctively new style. It sometimes seems I've seen 'em all.

75% of the images here are porn, to one degree or another. Of that 75%, most seems to boil down to cocks in pussies, cocks in mouths and cocks in bums. I was never a great fan of staring at cocks, yet I see them by the thousands on FurAffinity. If I never see any of this sort of thing again, it'll be too soon.

Of the 75% that is porn, a minority of the artists seem to be discreet about it. Embraces that hide the operating parts are welcome, as are simple pin-up poses. But the sheer volume and sameness of most of the rest renders it incapable of arousing interest.

What of the 25% of FurAffinity that isn't porn? A good deal of it is humorous material – I can cite several artists whose contributions to FurAffinity make it a site for sore eyes. Agouti-Rex, Mike Kazaleh, Marc Schirmeister, Heywulf (who is Ken Fletcher) and others still crack me up. Other artists just have interesting styles – Egypturnash is very modern and graphic, while Soyorrel captures the essence of old children's illustrators like Arthur Rackham. Rockabillyfurs sometimes reminds me of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, whose monster hotrod T-shirt art made a big impression on me when I was 12. Tegerio just tells a damn good story. I like looking at Yellow07's model aircraft. My interest in none of these people has ever failed... I'm just not finding very many new artists with their unique qualities.

I almost hate to admit it, but I've also stopped reading everyone's journals – with only one or two exceptions. The more I seem to complain about people using their journals on FurAffinity to announce new art for sale, or desperate fire sales to replace their broken computers, the faster the percentage seems to rise. For variety, now and then someone writes that they're going to ThisFur con or ThatFur con, and will have a ton of new shit to sell there... Or they just came back from TheOtherFur con and they're dog-tired, so to speak. All I can say to that is, "Ruf."

There may be a lesson in all this. But I'm too jaded to learn anything from it.





## 52 Weeks To Science Fiction Film Literacy - Jurassic Park

There are few films since the silent era that have done what Spielberg managed to pull off in Jurassic Park. To me, it was a revelation, like the entirety of my time as fan of film had been missing something and this was finally it. The closest I can come up with is how the fans of the early trick films and Melies work would have felt. This was next level type stuff, far beyond anything we had ever seen.

Jurassic Park is, of course, ultimately about hubris. It's the oldest story there is: Man should not play God! It's so simple, and so effective, but it wasn't the story that had people going. It was the effects, but also the idea that this could happen. At once, we all felt like there was a possibility. I'll get to that in a moment.

Let us start with the book. Michael Crichton was one of the truly great Mainstream SF writers of the 1970s, 80s and 90s. He knew how to hook an audience. You could argue that everything he wrote was techno-thriller, the kind that came out of the world of James Bond novels and films like Counterstrike. The Andromeda Strain was a great book about microbe that came from space. They made it into a movie directed by Robert Wise. Crichton also wrote and directed Coma, which is a film that I think is far better than many give it credit for. He also wrote a number of mysteries, including Grave Descend as John Lange, which was reprinted as a Hard Case Crime novel. It's really super. His novel of Jurassic Park was a huge hit, one of the better novels of its kind. It took the science of the day (As I understand it, he was up on cutting edge paleontology and was working off some brand new theories) and mixed it with the techno-thriller concept beautifully. Looking at another of his novels, Congo, it is so much more believable, but it's also far less scary.

Or more scary, it depends on what sort of world you think we live in. In Congo, it is THIS world, where diseases like ebola can run rampant and we were seeing deadly outbreaks all the time. In Jurassic Park, it's a world where the megarich are able to create terrifying visions and industrial espionage is par for the course and will end up killing us all! I tend to think that last world doesn't exist except in the minds of the Ultrarich, but maybe I'm wrong.

The story so so simple, it can be boiled down way too easily. A billionaire creates a theme park out of the eye of the world. His scientists have created living dinosaurs from DNA found in mosquitos captured in amber. These dinosaurs are engineered to be all females, but to fill in the gaps, they used frog DNA, which conveniently allows them to change sex and reproduce. On top of all that, there's a mole who turns on the billionaire and while a group of scientists are there, the dinosaurs go on a rampage. It's just that simple.



But it's also the product of a century of film from a filmmaker who knows that history very very well. First, the basic idea is so decidedly Frankenstein derived, like so much of science fiction. In fact, it's also got a flavor of Rappucini's Daughter to it. This story is old, science allows us to make wonderful things possible, but these things are either misunderstood or downright dangerous. Dinosaurs are dangerous, and the addition of chaos theory to the mix makes it even more impressive. It's the kind of story that we

love to read, partly because we WANT to believe that these things are possible, and science is showing that some of them are. In the late 1980s, there was no cloned mammal, something which wouldn't happen until 1996, but attempts were well underway. The science of all of this seemed so plausible, and that made it feel like it could be real. Spielberg borrows from all over the map. The battle between a T-Rex and a pack of Velociraptors could have come straight out of Wallis O'Brien's workshop or a pack of 1960s Topps trading cards. There's a wonderful segment where the entire process of building the dinosaurs is explained by a cartoon in almost the exact same way that they use one in Destination Moon. There are nods to filmmakers like Robert Wise, George Lucas, Akira Kurasawa, and perhaps most importantly, to Spielberg's earlier works, specifically Close Encounters. It's fascinating to look at it and see where he picked things up from. It doesn't really become apparent until you've seen it a couple of times and the initial awe has worn off.

The film came about in the best way possible. Starting with casting, Spielberg got himself a heckuva cast starting with the perfect person to play Dr. Ian Malcolm - Jeff Goldblum. The guy had been around Hollywood for more than twenty years, my favorite of his early turns coming in the film Nashville, and here as the chaotician he's pretty fantastic. He combines a playful exuberance with a wonderful sardonic streak. He sees the angles, the unfolding doom at the end of the path of natural progression, but it's too late and it feels like he knows it all along. The second perfect bit of casting is Sir Richard Attenborough as John Hammond. He's better known as a director of films like Gandhi than as an actor, but here, playing the billionaire who built Jurassic Park, he provides a sort of playful gravitas that you need for a role like this. What's impressive is the way he adds touches of humanity to a character in the book that is more or less Mitt Romney-level money grubbing. He has that mischievous twinkle in his eye. It's a great part and is the one I think of when I think of Sir Richard.

The role of Laura Dern as Ellie Sattler, a paleobotanist, is interesting as she's supposed to be the love interest of Dr. Grant, played by Sam Neil, but she has some wonderfully flirty scenes with Ian Malcolm. She's got a good role, but as an action heroine, she's no great shakes.

Neil, as Dr. Grant, is impressive. He plays Grant as sort of a half-way romantic hero, with skepticism snaking in from the corners. It's a good role for him, and while we're given some of the awe from Dern, which is probably what she's there for, we're presented with both awe and sense from Neil.

We can identify with the situation because we ARE Dr. Grant. We can see the danger, it's so obvious, but at the same time, we can't turn away from the grandeur! It's an impressive bit of work, and Neil is just the man to do it! Social Network, but still. They basically provided the kid in trouble motif that so many films bank on. They were fine for what they were asked to do, though sadly I thought Arianna Richards had a good career ahead of her. I hear she's a painter in Oregon now...



Let's talk a bit about the effects. There were two distinct kinds of effects used: digital and practical. This was the first time that I can point to where the digital effects were more believable than the practicals. For example, the Triceratops. The digital version is beautiful and completely believable. The practical version, done by Stan Winston, arguably the greatest film model maker of all time.

Well, you could argue it. You'd be wrong, but you could...

Anyhow, the animatronic tritop looks great, but the movement of the digital, the detail you get, it's amazing. The uncanny valley doesn't apply to animals we have never encountered, so here it is perfect to use digital effects. The T-Rex as a practical looks good, about the same as the digital version, but the practical Velociraptors are awful. You can tell when they're the Winstonbots, but they are gorgeous pieces of digital art. I love the look of them, and many of the other digital creations. Diplodocus, which is actually brontosaurus (the denial of it is a conspiracy!) looks best in close-up instead of distant views, which shows the kind of attention to detail that ILM put into making the film. Up-close isn't easy, never is, but they made it look easy.

Looking at Jurassic Park in comparison to Terminator 2, you can see that there's a lot more to Jurassic Park than to T2. The story is fuller, the acting is more fully developed, the cinematography is great, though I'd say that the shooting in T2 might have the edge. The biggest difference is that Jurassic Park is much more steeped in film history, with Spielberg obviously having fun with the film. The script, initially written by Michael Crichton, was solid, and while the book may have been a bit cleaner, it certainly took everything it needed in order to make a fine film.

The science in Jurassic Park isn't perfect, the computer use isn't great, but it's better than most representations you'll see. The worm, as presented in the film, seemed a bit childish, but an audience could understand it, which makes OK I guess.

The best part for me though is an understanding that the film has. It's pretty simple, really. It understands that it's a theme park ride. Watch the way that the film unfolds, or simply in the cartoon of Mr. DNA. The cartoon plays explaining the basic premise of how the dinosaurs were created, then the theatre moves and you see the actual work being done. It's the perfect metaphor for the film. Completely! There's the movie, and after you've had the set-up, been told what's what, then you go rocketing off on the ride. This is the basic story of the action blockbuster, but it's so perfect. The elements of so many classic adventure tales are there with the science fiction elements right alongside! There is no doubt that this had to become a theme park ride (and a real fun one at Universal Studios!) because it was already a theme park ride!





The 2015 bid season has gotten more crowded. Helsinki has thrown its hat in the ring, which is a good idea as it adds a layer putting an international site in the mix. I think this might help Orlando, with the SMOFish vote going to Helsinki and the "I Can Get There!" vote going to Orlando. The split might help with Spokane, but I'm still not convinced that it's the kind of site for a WorldCon.

So, you might have heard about the plans of several of us to bring organized fandom to the fan-deprived city of Boston with the 2020 Boston Christmas WorldCon Bid. As I understand it, Boston was brought brick-by-brick from its original site in England. While New Zealand is looking into doing a more traditional WorldCon in 2020, I do believe that New Zealand will put on a helluva WorldCon (and the bid started as a moment at a BASFA meeting!) and it will be a good idea to get things going.

I think we've both been shanghaied by Warren Buff, that mad genius from the South, who has officially decided to bring a WorldCon bid to another location where you won't find fans: Los Angeles! He's started the lovely LA Easter WorldCon Bid!

Now, as I understand it, the plans for the con are pretty simple - while Boston will be using dorm rooms left empty as students from the West Coast return to a climate fit for humans to live in, the LA bid will use all the hotels of the 1920s and 30s in Downtown that were abandoned shortly after the stars realised that places like Palm Springs and Santa Barbara were within driving distance and the bums,, pimps and CHUDs moved in. I believe they quoted a 5 dollar a night room rate which includes a sixteenth-ounce of your choice!

The other bid that I heard tell of for 2020 is the Toronto Thanksgiving WorldCon bid, which is to take place during the period of American Thanksgiving, therefore keeping as many Canadians confused as possible, which is obviously the goal of all these bids (just ask any Boston fan in relationship to the Boston bid!)

So, we've got battles, and it's going to be fun.

# Pickman's Model

