

Joseph M. Schenck *Presents*

Buster Keaton

in

The Drink Tank Issue 339

A First National  *Attraction*



So, there I was, just chattin' away with Salman Rushdie.

Wait, I should start at the beginning.

Cinequest was last week, and as always, it was an excellent time. I didn't take vacation, and somehow that led me to seeing more movies than any other year in recent memory. I think I've figured out why. Since I didn't have all the time in the world, I didn't just go to the VIP Lounge and hang around talking to filmmakers for 5 or 6 hours a day. Instead, I went to see the movies, and then stopped by for a drink at the Lounge, and then on to another movie. I saw so many great films that I was really happy.

I was especially happy with how our Shorts Programmes turned out.

You see, I had more input for the Shorts programmes this year than any other year I've been working on them, and it worked. The themed programs were awesome, and the unthemed programs worked out just as well. Pretty much everyone said that Shorts Program 7, one which was largely a collaboration between the head programmer, Bill Maxey and myself. It worked, went all over the place, comedy, drama, dark, light, pointedly political, sweet and fun SciFi, all of it in one program! It was good stuff.

Now, I saw a lot of great films, the best of which would be a Finnish/Norwegian romance called *Must Have Been Love*, *The Space Jockey Pursuit*, which is a comedy about a pair of brothers dealing with their respective futures, and *Safety Last with Buster Keaton's Cops*. A great twofer, and the cover is a photo from Mr. Ric Bretschneider from that night (with a minor alteration...). There was a great science fiction short film called *AutoDrive*, which was a lot of fun and if you get a chance to see it at a festival near you, GO! There's also *Beep Boop*, a LoFi short about a robot who is just going through the motions. One of my favorites was a comedy called *No Rest for the Wicked*, featuring Zachery Levy and Ray "Darth Maul" Park along with Macolm McDowell, which was a wonderful adaptation of a graphic novel.

Sparks, another graphic novel adaptation, and it was one of the highlights for the festival. It was a good movie, with only a couple of weak special effects to hold it down from the level of the kind of film you'd see in your multiplex. I got to do the Q&A after the film, featuring ACTUAL MOVIE STARS! Clancy Brown (*Rawhide* from *Buckaroo Bonzai*), Clint Howard (Ron Howard's brother), Jake Busey (*Contact*), and to me the most important, Larry Cedar of *Square One TV* and Pierce's dad on *Community*! It was awesome! Clint Howard sorta took control of the Q&A, and who was I to say otherwise? I read the Graphic Novel and the script for both was almost exactly the same, but the movie's ending made a lot more sense.

The Closing Night party started with a film, in this case *Midnight's Children*, an adaptation of Salman Rushdie's novel. He was there and did an interview at the end of the movie, and the interviewer was really long-winded. The Harrison Ford interview the Saturday before was far worse, as the interviewer had no idea how to interview someone, but Harrison was pretty cool! *Midnight's Children* was only OK. It was both too long and wrapped up too quickly. Some of the actors were good, but the transitions were rough.

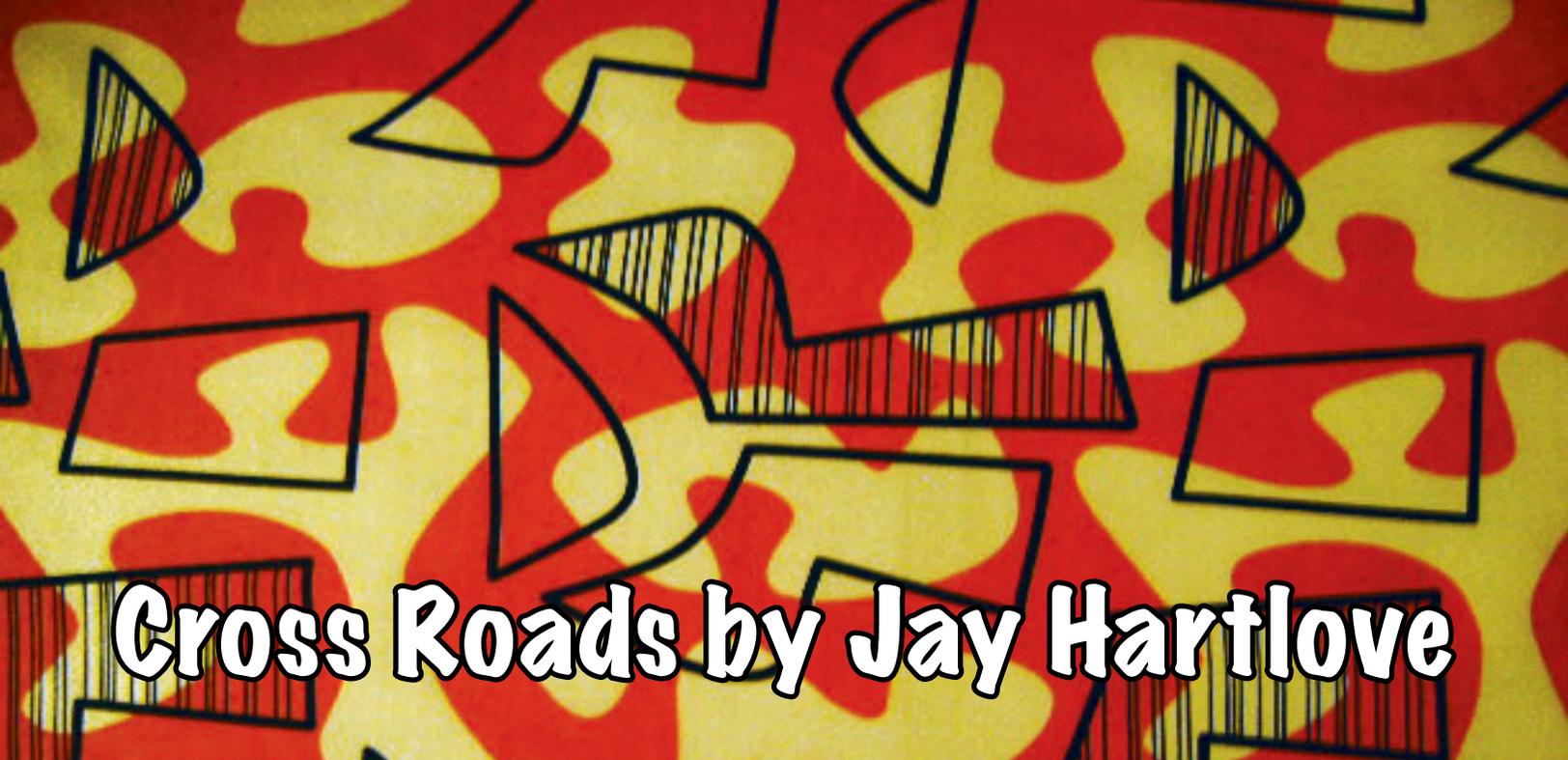
Afterwards, we all went over to the Tech Museum for the party, and while there wasn't nearly enough food, and the lines for the beverages were too long, but there was Salman Rushdie, and I went up to shake his hand and talk. I asked him about Philip K. Dick and we had a fine conversation on that matter...

...but that's another article for another zine!

Oh yeah, that cover, and a bunch of the images in this issue, are all from Cinequest Ric's a good friend and the Moral Compass for Fanboyplanet.com's Fanboy Planet PodCast, which Linda and I are on our way to hear recorded!

This issue has a story from Jay Hartlove. He's amazing, his book *The Chosen* is awesome, and I'm so happy he gave this to me to run!

The logo for Cinequest, featuring the word "CINEQUEST" in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. A small "TM" trademark symbol is located at the bottom right of the word. The text is set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent circles in shades of pink, purple, and red, creating a bokeh effect.



Cross Roads by Jay Hartlove

“So what was wrong with the street lights you guys just put in last month?”

The construction worker looked up out of the freshly dug four foot deep hole he was standing in and said with a wry smile, “They gave us plans for a completely different site.”

I looked at the dozen twenty-foot tall light standards they had just pulled out, lying in a stack at the road siding, and then up at the flatbed truck loaded with a very similar looking set of new poles.

The worker saw what I was thinking. “Oh, they’ll get used somewhere else, you can be sure.”

I shrugged my eyebrows. “Well, I hope they pay you for the extra work.”

The guy in the hole laughed. “Don’t worry about that.”

“Have fun,” I said as I turned and continued walking toward my car.

My parking space is four blocks from my office. When they built my office building in the 1970s, they only paved a lot for 300 parking spaces. Since the personal computer revolution, the office space has been divided into densely packed cubicles, and now over 800 people work in the building. In that same 30 years, the neighborhood filled in around the building and rose in value. So there is no way my company could expand the lot or build a structure. So most of us park in nearby, or not so nearby lots with available space.

It is an interesting walk. My parking lot is on the other side of a light rail transit station. Passing through the flow of people coming and going to the trains has always provided good people watching opportunities.

During the last year, the walk has been even more, well, entertaining. The transit authority ripped out their secondary parking lot and built a gigantic seven-story, block-long parking structure. I dubbed it the “Death Star,” since I am quite sure the giant weapons station from the Star Wars movies would have been built mostly from poured concrete brought up from pillaged planets. The steel reinforcement “rebar” alone in this structure must have weighed hundreds of tons.

After six months, I had gotten used to my path around the construction of the Death Star. Then the activity shifted, and I had to find another path around the construction of the new work-live village they are building where the main parking lot used to be. The smell of cut lumber was more palatable than the concrete dust I had to breathe before. Of course, now it was even noisier with all those saws and hammers. I figured this would take at least another year, maybe longer if they had to keep doing jobs over again like the street lights.

As I walked, I glanced over at the condos that surround the transit station and wondered what the residents must think of all the construction noise. Granted, the trucks and jack hammers went quiet by 4 in the afternoon. But they started at 6 a.m. It was noon, as I was going to run an errand on my lunch hour.

I crossed the street and started to enter the train station when I stopped cold. Sitting in the torn up street next to the sidewalk was an enormous, bizarrely shaped piece of concrete. It stood at least 12 feet high and was almost as wide, and was punched through with various size round holes, from six inches to three feet wide. It had obviously been pulled up out of the ground, since it was still covered in dirt. I stepped around it, trying to trace the holes through it. I guessed it was some kind of sewer junction. The sheer size and complexity of the thing arrested my attention. I couldn't even estimate how much it must have weighed. I looked around, and no one was paying any attention to it. Clearly it had been in the way of some digging, and it must not have been connected to anything any longer, because out it came.

I shook my head and marveled at how the walk to my car just kept getting more and more interesting.

My path through the transit station takes me past the large bank of transformers that electrify the elevated train rails overhead. You can't see the transformers, of course, with them boxed up in steel and concrete and cordoned off with chain link fence. But you can see the massive conduits out the top that lead up to the tracks. I think I saw a sign somewhere that said 6000 volts. My path takes me down an alley between the electrical box and the side of the Death Star. I often catch a whiff of ozone from the box as I walk by, and today the smell was stronger than usual. Must be the summer heat, I thought.

I noticed absently a new batch of squiggly surveyors marks spray painted on the sidewalk of the alley in neon orange and purple. I was not surprised that I could not decipher their meanings.

I looked up and saw a crowd of people spilling out of the station from a train that must have just stopped. This train system runs over a wide metropolitan area, with several micro-climates. So I always find it amusing to guess where people have come from by how warmly they are dressed. Folks from inland were in short sleeves, like me. Folks from the coast stepped off the air conditioned train cars and took off their jackets and rolled up their sleeves in the midday heat.

And then there was the girl in the long, orange silk dress. Once the color caught my eye, I couldn't help but focus on the details. Now, as much as I like people watching, I am not in the habit of scrutinizing people's clothes, and I certainly don't undress women in my mind. But something about this girl's dress struck me as out of place. The cut was flowing, like something from a resort on a Greek isle, but the decorations were more African, with little mirrors embroidered all down the front. The overall impact was something out of a science fiction movie. Greek? African? Star Trek?

So was the girl. As I passed her I realized the reason she had caught my eye. She was olive skinned, but with African features, and her hair, although it looked brown at a distance, up close was in fact purple. She caught me looking and I quickly turned my glance away so as to not offend her.

To my surprise she stopped and turned to face me with a smile. "Karim?" she asked, as if she recognized me.

I chuckled nervously. "No. I think you have me confused with someone else. My name is Mike."

She cocked her head and frowned without losing the smile. "I'm sorry. It's just your colors..." she trailed off and then caught herself. "Sorry. I'm Ruva," she said holding out her hand.

I shook it and tried to give her an out. "I get mistaken for other people all the time. I guess I have a common look about me."

Her frown returned. "Well, that's just what I was about to say. You and Karim are the only two people I have ever met who have black hair and blue eyes."

That's when I noticed her eyes were also purple. Clearly the colored contacts were part of her whole cultivated exotic look. "Well, if you don't mind my saying so, you're the only person I've ever met with purple hair and eyes. Mind you, I think it's a great look you've got going."

She averted her eyes and smiled shyly. "Now you're flirting with me."

I held up my left hand to show her my simple gold wedding band, and said, "Not intentionally."

My gesture gave her pause. I noticed she was wearing a very similar ring on her left hand as well.

I tried to cover the awkward moment. "Well, I am glad you mistook me for your friend. It was very nice meeting you."

She hesitated. Her tone quieted from cheery to almost melancholy. "It was nice. I don't want to appear forward, but I hope we cross paths again. Do you stop at this station often?"

I wasn't sure what to make of the question. Her sudden quiet told me this wasn't just a pick up line. Besides, I'm 45 and she couldn't have been over 25. I was clearly white bread suburbia and she was way inner city chic. And we had just established we were both married. "Actually, I don't use the train." I pointed down the alley behind me and said, "I work three blocks over that way." Then pointing the other way, I said, "And I park a block over there. So I just walk through here to get to my car. My office has a shortage of parking spaces."

She brightened a bit. "How lucky, then." Then she added genuinely, "Have a great day, Mike."

"You too, Ruva."

As we walked away from one another, I still wasn't sure I understood what had happened. I wrote it off as a misunderstanding between strangers from two different cultural worlds.

Since it takes me over ten minutes to walk to my car, I rarely go out at lunch. Ten minutes to the car, plus ten minutes back to the office means I only get 40 minutes to do whatever errand and to eat lunch. So I usually just bring my lunch and eat it in the lunchroom or the patio of my building.

So two weeks went by before I had something I needed to do at lunch that involved driving. I was having a very busy day at work, with lots of questions and approvals flying through my email inbox. I only got to go out at lunch because I had recently been given a Blackberry. The Electronic Handcuff was annoying, but it also granted me a certain level of mobility.

I was typing into the Blackberry when I walked into the station, so I wasn't looking where I was going. I only barely noticed the construction crew outside at the curb that was hooking up a crane to the giant concrete pipe valve thing.

I was about to send my message when all the signal bars went to zero.

"Mike!" called a young female voice.

It was her. This time she was wearing a silver jumpsuit number that was even more sci-fi than the last one. Yet, it was somehow just as pretty. "Hi, Ruva!" As we stepped closer I had the momentary thought that she was stalking me. Only half jokingly, I said, "What are the chances of us meeting like this again?"

"Well, I come to work over here everyday at about noon."

I absently looked at my watch, and realized it had been noon when we had met the first time. I chuckled in relief and to cover my uneasiness. "Of course. And I don't go out to my car everyday at lunchtime." Feeling guilty for having thought the worst, I figured I owed her at least polite conversation. "So you work nearby?"

"Well, not that nearby. I catch a bus over to the mall."

"You mean Countrywood?"

She frowned at the reference. "No, Sun Valley."

"Oh, you're right, that isn't very close. Wouldn't it be easier if you got off at the Concord station?"

She actually recoiled in surprise, then answered with some care. "I don't think the buses run that way."

I got the feeling we were headed for another of our awkward misunderstandings. I tried to cover. "So you work in retail?"

"Yeah. Build a Bear Workshop."

I started to object, but caught myself with my mouth open. I knew there was a Build a Bear in Broadway Plaza, but there wasn't one in Sun Valley. I decided to drop it, lest she think I was going to be negative about everything she said. "Great. Is it fun working with the kids? They get so excited in places like that."

She sighed and nodded. "It can get pretty loud at times. But yeah, the party atmosphere can be a lot of fun. Probably more upbeat than working in an office," she said pointing to the Blackberry in my hand.

I held it up in agreement. "That's for sure. Well, I'll let you catch your bus then. I don't want to make you late for work. It



was great to bump into you again.”

She smiled that sincere purple eye-contact smile of hers. “It was indeed. We should make a point of meeting sometime instead of just leaving it to chance.”

Now I was sure we were headed for another misunderstanding. I avoided answering her directly. “Take care.”

As we stepped past one another, the magazine she had under her arm slipped to the ground. I scooped it up and handed it to her.

“Oh, you can keep it. I finished reading it on the train. Bye.” Before I could insist, she walked away.

I slipped the Blackberry into my pocket, at least until I walked to where there was some signal, and started to continue to my car, when I looked at the magazine I had inherited.

I didn’t walk far. It was Vogue, but over half the women in the ads had purple eyes and brown hair with that curious purple sheen. I looked up at Ruva’s back as she turned toward the bus stop driveway. I flipped through the pages to verify that I wasn’t in some ad section that was using these colors for a promotion, and I came across an ad that gave me even more pause.

It was for a wedding dress maker. But it wasn’t the flamboyantly styled dress that caught my attention. It was the headline. “Before you give your ring to the one you love, give yourself the dress you’ve always dreamed of.” I read it again. “Give your ring.” I looked closer and saw the model was taking a plain gold ring off her left hand. Since when do single people give...?

My thought was jarringly interrupted by the earth shaking sound of the giant concrete pipe junction being dragged across the sidewalk on the other side of the electrical box as it was lifted up by the crane. At the same time, a huge spark flared inside the electrical box and smoke billowed out through the chain link fence. A couple of guys yelled “Fire!” and started running for the station agent before I could react.

I ran, as much away from the shorted out transformers as toward the bus stop. When I got there Ruva was nowhere to be seen. I ran from bus to bus, looking in, but she wasn’t there. Maybe her bus had already left.

Then I glanced down at the magazine. It was still Vogue, but now all the women had normal coloring. I flipped to the wedding dress ad. It was still there, but now the headline said, “Before you put on the ring you will always wear, put on the dress you will always remember.” And the model was holding up her hand admiring the diamond engagement ring she was wearing.

I went back to the station the next day. The valve thing was gone. The electrical box had been fixed. Ruva was not there. I waited for half an hour. No show. Nor the next day. Nor the next.

To this day, I’m not sure what I had seen, or who Ruva was, or how she could work in a store that didn’t exist in the mall that wasn’t in the place it should have been. Or what role the valve thing and the high tension electrical box and the alley next to all that concrete and steel rebar in the Death Star had played in her appearance. I can say I never walked through that alley again without looking carefully at each person I passed.





Yellowjackets by Chris Garcia Art from Ditmar

I got new windows last fall. Atlantis Property Management came in and replaced all my windows (which instantly led me to understand that my rent would be going up, which it did) and the new ones were really nice. Sliding with heavily-insulated frames. When they're closed, the outside world is gone and even at the volumes I listen to my DVDs at, you can't hear a thing outside. It also keeps the climate of the apartment nice and even. It was a good upgrade, almost worth the extra 75 bucks a month!

Now, with my old windows, when spring started to roll around, I could expect to find two or three dead Yellowjackets in the sliding window wells. I tended to keep my blinds closed, they'd be trapped in there and they'd eventually just die. It was a sad situation, but when you gonna do. Now, with the new windows, I expected this to change, and it did. I haven't seen a single Yellowjacket in the well of the kitchen window or the livingroom or the bedroom.

And until Saturday, none in the bathroom ever.

Linda was staying the night and she walked out of the bathroom.

"Chris, there's a giant Yellowjacket on the edge of the bathtub, but I think it's too cold for him to do anything."

I investigated and found that yes, there was a Yellowjacket, easily the biggest one I'd ever seen that close, and it was just minding its own business, not doin' anything to anybody. I looked at the window and saw that there was a larger gap between the frame and the window than there used to be, and far bigger than the new ones in the other windows. This could easily allow a Yellowjacket in, even if they had nothing but a little extra warmth on their minds.

Still, I know I had to extract him.

I chose a very simple method: first acquire a dry washcloth, in this case the yellow one was chosen in the name of colour consistency. I then grabbed a dry cup from the livingroom. I placed the washcloth right in front of him and sorta pushed it against him. After a few swishes, he clung on and I lifted the cloth and put it into the cup. After that, it was off to the outside, where I removed the cloth from the cup, placed it on the ground and waited until the bug walked off. After that, I grabbed the set-up and placed it in the kitchen.

The next mornign saw nothing unusual, we headed off to Cinequest, had a good time hangin' with Salman Rushdie (did I mention that? 'cause I totally did hang with Salman Rushdie!) and then when I came home, I found a convention going on.

And convention of Yellowjackets.

Well, there were 7 or 8 of 'em, so I started the process, one at a time,, using the washcloth and the cup to remove them and take them outside. It took a good fifteen minutes, but they were all displaced, put outside, safe and sound. This must be how Moses felt!

Now, I filled that gap with aluminium foil, and placed a mint tea bag, both of which seem to be working just as well as the Anti-Tiger rock I have next to my front door.