

# THE DRINK TANK



## ***How to Scare a Luddite: The Film SmartCard by James Oxford***

I've said it before, I'm sure I'll say it again: I hate computers, which is why I surround myself with dead ones. That's not 100% true, but it does have a ring of truth to it. I'm one of those guys who can see how computers can, and often do, damage life and limb. At work, I hear a lot of stories from people about computer uses that have seriously eroded their credit rating, as an example. These are rare, every American has about 10,000 pieces of electronic data transmission pass through various systems every year and less that one percent of one percent end up with any problem, but still, it's there. I was watching a number of shorts when one came across my desk that really got me thinking. The short was James Oxford's SmartCard.

It's a simple story set in a complex world. SmartCard is a service that helps organize one's life by making the mundane things, like addresses and when to buy gas and it even takes over driving duties. It's a highly useful thing as it prevents the many stupid things we Meat People tend to forget from being forgotten. The driver simply slides into the seat (and all the cars of the Not-So-Distant Future are really cool-lookin'!) and say where you want to go. The real story

starts when SmartCard decides to force the driver, Robert Sharpe, to stop and get gasoline for the car. It's interesting to see the SmartCard server, played by Bill A. Jones, have to cajole Robert into getting gas with phrases like 'It's better to do things now than to wait'. The car stops at the station, which looks exactly like one in Marin even though I know it's in LA, and when Robert goes in to the store to get gas, he runs into a crazy guy who is actually trying to use cash to buy stuff from the store.

This part really gets to me, because I know how strange it can be to only have cash. For about 4 years I would deal in nothing but cash. I didn't (and still don't) have a credit card or a checking account (which I do happen to have now). I would cash my check and store the cash at home in a small tin. I would once in a while be stopped and asked why I was paying by cash. I tried to buy a TV with cash and was told that for purchases over 1,000 dollars that it was against store policy to allow it. I had to convince my landlord to take cash,



which wasn't easy, but I managed. People treated me different because I was trying to spend cash, legal tender I mind you and not the stuff I printed at home. I had to get a checking account and a debit card to make myself feel like I was a part of the spending public. Cash has become the dark choice, even if retailers still prefer it



Some cities are having Downtown zones where parking can be paid by simply having the amount deducted from your car which has a chip in it. Others would not be allowed to park in the area. That's a creepy thought. I was horrified when I first heard that all cell phones would have GPS locators in them (which is why I'm glad I use an old OLD cell). It's a scary concept to think that every year we give

because of lack of fees.

In SmartCard, there's an obvious theme that once you've lost your card, you've lost your identity. Of course, Robert loses his card and has to deal with simple things not working any more. He can't get into his car because it's tuned to his SmartCard. He can't call home because his phone/PDA is in the car and even if he could get to it, he'd have to have his SmartCard because that's where the numbers are stored. The identity of Robert Sharpe is fully stored in his SmartCard and when he resorts to extreme measures, he's brought in and starts to question the common sense of the SmartCard.

I was on a panel, I believe at Philcon 2002, where we were chatting about issues like having computerized cars that worked on voice commands. Someone brought up that they seriously thought that would become a problem due to people starting to rely on machines to store simple information.

'What if it got to the point where you can't remember what your address is other than saying Home to your auto?' He said. I kinda laughed it off, but that same theme came through SmartCard.

I'm interested in seeing where SmartCard technology takes us. It's already in use in many cities as a way to pay bridge tolls. Boston, Chicago and San Francisco all have versions of it, with SF's being called FastTrak. To me, these make sense, but there are other things being thought of.

more and more over to these corporations that process our info for us and turn it into spendable currency.

But enough about that, I'm off to check my balance through Washington Mutual's website and maybe I'll transfer a few hundred to get one of those American Express Traveller's Check Cards while I'm at it.



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***I am so very pleased to introduce a new writer to The Drink Tank and our cadre of writers and funsters. Kelly Green has written this lovely long WorldCon Report and I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to run it.***



## ***My WorldCon Report: (or, what I did for summer vacation)***

***by  
Kelly Green***

### **Theme words for the weekend:**

- *Walking*
- *Health Food*
- *Mad Swede/Fin/Norwegian/Dutch (they do seem to be interchangeable though that concept could get me assassinated)*
- *Yoda*
- *Zaphod Beeblebrox rainbow bear (you don't really want to know, now, do you?)*
- *Tie dye (I do hope I shook up the amazingly conservative clothing I saw here this weekend)*
- *Three signature limit*
- *Organized. That's a word that applies.*



The nature of the armadillo/SECC/Glasgow convention center meant that the con was spread out rather than built up. Hurrah! People seemed very happy to be walking rather than climbing. I appreciated the linear nature even though I was confused by the short walk from the Hilton to the SECC (street signs? What's a street sign? Or rather, where? (hint: in the UK, street signs are on the buildings on each corner.))

Glasgow is a lovely town of red brick and stone beauty. On Sunday, the day of no train stop at Anderston station, I saw an art center building with blue stained glass inset door and carved gothic wording, and an interior design building with purple

heather and grass growing from the gutters two stories up. Never did see the Clyde (that big river right by the SECC) but found St. Patrick's elementary school and the local McDonald's on Finistre Street.

Fewer costumes than usual, and more disciplined fans. Not sure I'm pleased about that. Signs on doors announcing that 'These Are Not Doors' remained unmolested; flyers for parties remained properly posted on surfaces and didn't maliciously disappear due to one fan fight or another. Women (and men) wore nicely fitted, well-tailored costumes. Even the Klingons wore civilized kilts, and this is not a sight you see every day. Not even in Glasgow.\*

Frank Wu asked me to type up some notes about my experiences and here I go:

Thursday: my daughter Stephanie (my WorldCon co-pilot at the autographing table) and I woke at 3:30 am by a drunken punker girl in London; we dressed and packed and off to the bus stop to catch 7:40am EasyJet flight to Glasgow. Hurrah! Made it by the skin of our teeth, after experiencing unique Luton Airport breakfast fare of Bosley Baps.@

Made it to hotel; the Hilton let us check in! 9am, v. nice. No time to nap, unloaded luggage and grabbed autographing stuff and headed out to SECC.

How does one get to the SECC from the Hilton? One asks the friendly concierge with the brogue thick enough to cut. He waved his hand in the general direction of Anderston Train Station, added detailed (and largely incomprehensible) commentary, and we figured it out from there.

After a short discussion with the station agent and purchasing out and return tickets to the SECC we dashed down the stairs, caught a train filled with staid dressed fans, and traveled one stop to the Convention Center Station. From here we walked to the covered bridge from the train station and over the highway to the SECC grounds. This tube's floor is divided into pedestrian walkway (green) and bikeway

(red.) Far too many people never figured out how close to disaster they came as bikes swerved rather than dashing into them.

We bought breakfast at McColl's, much less expensive than hotel service and I got my Weight Watchers approved diet of cereal and milk, yogurt and fruit, enough to keep me through the day.

We set up autographing in the dealer's room (Hall 3) with a minimum of fuss.

We had the perfect situation for autographing, which I can say in all hindsight: Obvious enough to not be lost, out of the way enough to not obstruct, near bathrooms and yet with enough empty corridor space for lines of fen waiting to meet The Author.

We used purple painter's tape to set up queues and waiting areas; fen mostly respected these lines. We also, on Frank Wu's suggestion, found 8 1/2" x 11" poster stands to display each author's name; I produced display cards. As a result, the author's name was plainly displayed and not lost in the clutter of the table (pens, water, books, flyers, postcards, Yoda.)

After the last autographing session of the day, the daughter and I walked back through the covered tube to the station, caught our train to Anderston, then found our cozy beds at the Hilton. Yes, that's

right. We slept through the Thursday parties. I'm ashamed.

Friday: Up! Shower! Dash to the train and through the tube and into the SECC and along the breadth of the convention center to Exhibit Hall 3, Dealers and Art Show and Fan Gallery oh my. Plus the Autographing tables. Set up for the first

set, indoctrinate gophers (Seacrow, Anna, Dario, KJ) who stayed with us for the entire convention.

Attended the KaffeKlatch with Christopher Rowe at 5pm (and incidentally ran into an acquaintance from ConJose, a gentleman from The Netherlands who'd been traveling the world back in 2002 and had just last week returned from a month in Borneo). Christopher and his wife Gwenda Bond bought my story for their magazine 'Say...' last year. I wanted to meet the gullible editor talented writer who brought us 'The Voluntary State' last year

(anthologized in Dozois' Year's Best.)

To my dismay autographing ran without a hitch whilst I was gone. Am I not needed?

Leave hall at 6pm after gathering valuables and cleaning up tables, return to Hilton to tidy up and rest a moment before the parties.

Party report: Had promised to help





The Half-Time of the Masquerade featured Ready, Steady, Sew, which Kelly Admits She did not Attend

with Broad Universe/Sime-Gen/EPIC party at the Hilton on Friday, so I brought my mad organizational skillz to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor (the hidden, super-secret parties were all on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor) and moved furniture for a more soothing feng shui. After nearly falling asleep mid-sentence felt I should move around a bit. Have to say that Jean Lorrah of Sime-Gen and Kaires Tevescu put on a mean party! Thanks, ladies.

Discovered the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the main parties. LACon IV and NIPPON shared a suite and served sake and red food. Yes, I went to other parties. I didn't stay long; mostly just put in an appearance. Headed for room and blacked out until

Saturday: Up! Shower! Dash to the train and through the tube and into the SECC and along the breadth of the convention center to Exhibit Hall 3, Dealers and Art Show and Fan Gallery oh my. Plus the Autographing tables. Set up for the first set then relaxed.

Masquerade: Yes, there was one. No, I didn't go. Very few pretty costumes made it to the Hilton parties that evening

though one or two adorable children in fairy costumes ran in the halls whilst adults partied around them.

To sleep, perchance to dream (why was there a dead man in my bathroom? At least he didn't say anything to me.) then

Sunday: Up! Shower! Dash to the train and remembered that the train doesn't run on Sunday. OH heck. Let's see, cross the street, follow the path, after some heel and toe found a McDonald's with a friendly and thickly-brogued counter girl who pointed me the right way. Crossed a street, then discovered the SECC parking lot! Hurrah, lost no more! Walked sedately along the breadth of the convention center to Exhibit Hall 3, Dealers and Art Show and Fan Gallery oh my. Plus the Autographing tables. Set up for the first set. OMG! Autographing doesn't start til 11am! I'm here a whole hour early. Rushed for nothing! Argh. And then I was alone for the first hour and a half of programming while authors and signature seekers came and went. The gopher (not one of my regulars) who'd signed up for that time





period 'forgot' to show up. No harm, no foul, just wish I'd slept in.

Went to 5 pm Kaffeeklatch with Ralan Conley. That's Ralan of ralan.com and his Webstravaganza, perhaps the best genre market listing out there. He's quite a gentleman and a good speaker. Ralan and I and a group of other graduates of the James Gunn online writers' workshop have an email critique group and now I've volunteered to read his novel. When will I manage to forget this word 'volunteer'?

The Hugos: Didn't go. Don't tell Frank. Waited at Hilton in my second- best party outfit (plum velvet and silk) and threw melted fudge on hapless pedestrians below. Actually, that was an accident and if it was you then a. I apologize and b. disavow all knowledge.

Another night of great parties and people and drunken fen. Though perhaps not so drunken. The Anti-Christ-ian party raised some eyebrows at its suggestive

door sign (Private Party! Enter and drop your drawers! Virgins Only!) I would have expected it to be poorly-attended due to the entry qualifications but opening doors revealed a happening party.

Off to bed rather late, turned on tv and found 'Aliens' playing. Glasgow is trying to become my home away

from home.#

Monday: Autographing starts at 11am again, with Terry Pratchett headlining the slate, but I have a reading at 11am and must leave the battleground prepared so instead of sleeping in, dash to the Hilton via the familiar train route with rather daffy daughter in tow. She sings, she dances, she tries everything but self-mutilation to keep herself awake since she'd played 'Werewolf' (LARP, not the Jack Nicholson movie) all night. Hot chocolate later she was almost awake enough to function. Happily my dedicated gophers arrived to assist her. Later I heard stories of how cute she looked sleeping with her mouth open.

Dashed to reading at Moat House hotel, my first excursion to that section of the convention. Signed in at Green Room (v. nice, open air area above the hotel restaurant), ordered a Guinness as my complimentary drink, rounded up the women for our reading and proceeded. Had forgotten my hugs n kisses (Hershey's candy, and keep your mind out of the gutter, please) but Sue Burke brought a supply of chocolate as our standard bribe to audiences. Reading went well with a special appearance by Eileen Gunn, reading from her book, 'Stable Strategies.' My story of course was the best one read (ok, perhaps not truly, but I'm writing this article and the other ladies can argue the point on their own blogs.)

Far too short a time later (11: 50am) gophers kicked us out of the room.

Humiliating. I went to the Green Room to finish my Guinness and found my gopher KJ ordering tea for Terry Pratchett.

"He's still signing?" I said stupidly. He was done at noon.

"Yes, he wants to keep going as long as there are fans."

I tell you these authors are great.

I wander back to



The Pratchett Line

autographing where the Terry Pratchett line extends back twenty yards (30 people?) and even Christopher Priest, the last scheduled autographer of the convention, has a decent line. Daughter is toast. Gophers admit to messing with her head during the last hour and feel shame at shooting such an easy target. I tell her to go back to the room for a nap. Of course she doesn't. In fact I have a difficult time getting rid of my gophers even when Terry Pratchett and Christopher Priest leave. No one wants the party to be over.

Closing ceremonies and bagpipes and hey where is the Wu going? Bet there will be more parties tonight before we all say, 'See you next year, in LA.'

\*=Stolen from newsletter comment attributed to Jane Yolen.

@=Bosley Baps consist of large whitebread roll and four sausages. No sauce or butter or aught else.

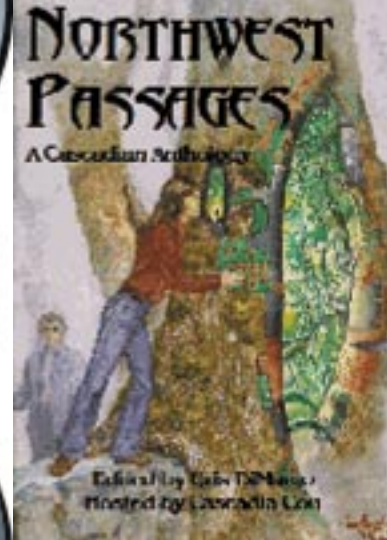
#='Alien' and 'Aliens' are my two favorite movies. Deal with it.

the first chance I've had to go to a major, international-level convention since 2002's ConJose. I love WorldCons, and NASFiCs are as close as I'm going to come to getting to one until LACon arrives a few blocks from my favourite roller coaster.

There are some nice touches this year. Chase Masterson was added to the special guests, which means I can go and see her and say 'Hey, we were guests together at BayCon' and she'll have no memory of it at all. Harry Harrison will also be there, and hopefully I can get a chance to meet him as I really have so many things to ask. There are a lot of voice actors going to be there, mostly because of the 20th anniversary of Robotech. I'm not a big fan of Robotech, so it means little to me.

In addition to all of this, I've never actually been to Seattle proper, and with the whole Gen and Evelyn thing, I'll finally get a chance (and my favourite uncle, Wayne, will be taking us out to dinner before he heads off on his cruise). I may make it to the Science Fiction Museum yet!

CascadiaCon also put out an anthology, which I've already ordered.



I actually wrote something that I meant to submit, but then the whole 'No More Fiction' thing happened and it has sat on my computer ever since. There are some really impressive writers included.

The Guests are awesome. My pal Kevin Standlee is the Fan Guest of Honour. Fred Saberhagen had to drop out due to his cancer, but they've added so many other great folks, it makes up for it. One person who will be there is Dennis Avner, aka Stalking Cat. He's the guy who is slowly transforming himself into a cat. He may look weird, but I've talked to the guy many times and he's brilliant!



### ***The Other Sorta-WorldCon NASFiC in Seattle***

The first NASFiC (or Rump WorldCon) was my first convention, so I'm excited to be returning to one this year. CascadiaCon is



***Emailed Words of Comment  
Sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org  
By My Gentle Readers***

Making his Drink Tank Premiere is Peter Sullivan!!!

Hi Chris. An overdue LoC for The Drink Tank.

I think it's fair to say that British attitudes to sex and violence in the media is pretty much the flipside to the American attitude. Brits = sex good, violence bad. Yanks = sex bad, violence good. I must have been (mumble, mumble) quite young when I first became aware of this, when in the mid-1970s, the BBC announced that they were postponing the episode of Starskey and Hutch where Hutch got shot to give them time to re-edit it to tone down some of the violence.

***Wrestling is regularly re-edited when it's shown in the UK. There's always a report in the Wrestling Observer Newsletter that tells what they cut out from the show. It's usually the fun bits.***

For what it's worth, I think the British attitude is the right way around. Statistically speaking, most people probably have sex far more times than they see people being shot, even in the more dangerous parts of the inner cities (whether American or British). But you'd never have guessed that from watching most American TV.

***I go the other way, since most folks aren't going to get to see ACTUAL violence, it's up to the Media to provide those images!***

Of course, this is a risky subject to write about, since a little judicious editing on your part can turn this letter into "Sullivan demands more smut," which isn't the point at all. And I do feel obliged to defend my fellow countrymen by pointing out that we got tired of Benny Hill long before you did...

***That is true, as he was playing on***

***Channel 2 out here well into the 1990s. But in our defence, SULLIVAN DEMANDS MORE SMUT!!!***

Frank Wu appears to have gotten to grips with Scottish bank notes quicker than most English people(!), but, as always, the situation is even more complicated than he might imagine.

Firstly, some shops south of the border \*will\* take them, although this tends to vary depending how close to the border you are. Someone once joked that Scottish bank notes only existed "to start fights in pubs in the Kings' Cross area" (The main Scotland - London trains terminate at Kings' Cross.) However, the Metro Centre, the big shopping mall near me (and only just over an hour's drive from the border) will willingly accept Scottish money from the many coach trips that come down.

***The only comparable thing in the States to Scottish money issue is the paper money that is printed by the Disney Republic. It's only good in the Disney parks and not even everywhere in them!***

Also, technically, even shops in Scotland do not \*have\* to accept Scottish notes, as they are not legal tender even in Scotland. Of course, given the rarity of Bank of England notes north of the border, they'd be shooting themselves in the foot not to do so, especially since their own bank will happily let them deposit it. But technically only Bank of England notes are actually legal tender, both in England and Scotland. But legal tender only really applies as a concept in relation to court-related debts. So if I sue someone and they try to pay the damages in Scottish notes, I can refuse, whichever side of the border we are on. If it's Bank of England notes, I can't.

I believe that the Jack Nicklaus



note he refers to was a one-off special printing for the Old Man's last visit to St. Andrews for the Open golf championship. Given that most notes only last a few months before being recycled, Frank might like to hold on to his as a potential rarity (although probably never worth as much as that copy of Radioactive Man #1...).

**Man, what I wouldn't give for Radioactive Man #1, or the issue where he and Fallout Boy die on every page. The bills may well become valuable like Emperor Norton money in a hundred or so years. I'm still looking for some of that myself.**

If I had known that there was going to be an International Battle of the Biscuits at Worldcon, I might have gone! At least it wasn't an Battle of the Candy/Sweets. All you Americans would have had to do to carry the day would have been to bring some Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. I mean, I'm not exactly Kate Moss anyway, but if I lived on the same continent as these I would undoubtedly end up as a full-on ol' lard-belly.

**You picked my greatest chocolate weakness. I'm not a big chocolate fan, but when you mix it with Peanut Butter, oh Sweet Mother of Mercy, that's good eatin'!**

**And now, Frank Wu has a few notes**  
CORRECTIONS AND TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS

This is now issue number 39 that Chris has released over the last 7 months months, in addition to output in the form of The Pork Authority, Claims Department, various one-offs and his production of LOCs.

How does he do it?

I know his secret. It is this. All the issues of Drink Tank, in addition to the next 237, have already been written; they were generated over the span of 17.9 years. He

has been holding them back, partly out of the understanding that a single-ish fanzine the size of the L.A. phone book would be indigestible. Also, parsing them out in weekly 5-10 page chunks feeds his constant need for attention.

I know this because I have seen the words; I have seen the future of this fanzine.

But, because Chris and I value factual and historical correctness more highly than political correctness, I must point out some errors in these upcoming issues:

**Issue 74, page 6:** Contrary to Chris' implication, it is verboten to take photographs of the bejeweled Rolls Royce in the Liberace museum.

**Issue 153, page 2:** Former Fleetwood Mac guitarist Lindsay Buckingham was the 51st U.S. president, not the 52nd.

**Issue 244, page 3, line 17:** Chris quotes the 1969 movie entitled "Krakatoa, East of Java," but fails to point out that Krakatoa is actually west of Java.

In addition, in issue 41, page 3, the dinosaurs which decorate the logos for the Jurassic Park films are not actually from the Jurassic Period, but from the Cretaceous, so the films should really be entitled "Cretaceous Park."

Chris should know better than to try to learn his geography and paleontology from movie titles.

Thank you for your attention.

**I've fixed a couple of these errors, though I stand by my numbering of the Presidents. Even though she never took office, I still count Stevie Nicks as President Number 47 even though she was burned at the stake as a Witch by the Christian Right shortly after she won election.**

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The Drink Tank Issue 39 was a bold experiment edited by Christopher J. Garcia. If you are reading this in the far future, then mission accomplished. Articles were written by Christopher J. Garcia and Kelly Green. Gotta Thank Frank Wu for getting Kelly to write that fine article for me. Comments? Questions? [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org) or 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd. Mt. View, CA 94043. To answer a mailed question, the Commodore 64 is probably worth about 100 bucks to the serious collector. eBay is your best bet.