

PROMETHEUS

2009 Prometheus Award finalists announced

The Libertarian Futurist Society has announced finalists for this year's Prometheus Awards, which will be presented during Anticipation, the 67th World Science Fiction Convention, August 6-10, 2009, in Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

The Prometheus finalists for Best Novel recognize pro-freedom novels published last year:

Matter, by Iain Banks (Orbit Books) - Part of Banks' series of far-future space operas about the Culture, a utopia which reflects Banks' interest in anarchism through its avoidance of the use of force except when necessary for protection and defense. The novel focuses on an agent in Special Circumstances, the Culture's special forces unit, who returns to her home planet, a "shellworld" with multiple layers of habitation, after her father has been killed in a coup.

Little Brother, by Cory Doctorow (TOR Books) - A cautionary tale about a high-school student and his friends who are rounded up in the hysteria following a terrorist attack, the novel focuses on how people find the courage to respond to oppression.

The January Dancer, by Michael Flynn (TOR Books) - The classic space opera, set in an interstellar civilization created by a wide-ranging human diaspora, revolves around how discovery of an alien relic sends agents of a multisystem federation on a quest that exposes them to political and economic institutions of many different cultures and requires them to deal with threats to freedom, from piracy to political corruption.

Saturn's Children, by Charles Stross (Ace Books) - A robot's adventures after all the humans in a society have died raises complex issues of ethics, duty, family and struggle in this Heinlenesque novel.

Opening Atlantis, by Harry Turtledove (Penguin/Roc Books) - Set in a world where medieval Europeans discover an island continent in the Atlantic Ocean, this first novel in a new alternate-history series explores the politics of colonization and the struggle for self-determination while offering parallels and contrasts with development of the Americas.

Half a Crown, by Jo Walton (TOR Books) - The sequel to Walton's Prometheus Award-winning *Halfpenny* concludes her alternative-history trilogy, set two decades after Britain reached accommodation with Hitler's Germany in the 1940s, with a chilling portrait of people all too willing to trade freedom for security.

Twelve novels were nominated this past year and read and

voted on by 10 judges selected from LFS members. The other nominees: *Truancy*, by Isamu Fukui (TOR Books); *Publicani*, by Zak Maymin (CreateSpace); *Liberation*, by Brian Francis Slattery (TOR Books); *Roswell, Texas*, a graphic novel by L. Neil Smith, L. Rex F. May, Scott Bieser, and Jennifer Zach (Big Head Press); *Anathem*, by Neal Stephenson (William Morrow); and *By Schism Rent Asunder*, by David Weber (TOR Books).

The 2009 Prometheus finalists for Best Classic Fiction (Hall of Fame) were announced earlier. This category honors novels, novellas, stories, graphic novels, anthologies, films, TV shows/series, plays, poems, music recordings and other works of fiction first published or broadcast more than five years ago. This year's nominees are:

Falling Free, a novel by Lois McMaster Bujold (1988);

Courtship Rite, a novel by Donald M. Kingsbury (1982)

"As Easy as A.B.C.," a short story by Rudyard Kipling (1912)

The Lord of the Rings, a three-volume novel by J. R. R. Tolkien (1955)

The Once and Future King, including *The Book of Merlyn*, a novel by T. H. White (1977)

The Golden Age, a novel by John C. Wright (2002).

Voting deadline for members is July 1 2009. For any questions, email ballots@lfs.org

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The newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society

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Who watches *Watchmen*

In the late hours of March 6, I found myself in line at the local megaplex, waiting to see the major studio backed movie version of *Watchmen* on IMAX. This was opening night, and I had secured tickets to the midnight show with a friend. While he is a fanatical fan of movies in general, he was unaware of the backstory, had never read the comic book. While I am no comic book aficionado, and with two small kids rarely watch movies that are not on DVD, I still remember where I bought my graphic novel version of *Watchmen*, and I have read this book multiple times. After watching the movie, I read numerous reviews, especially those by libertarians or having libertarian leanings, but also reviews by noted movie critics, as well as opinionated fans.

While I consider myself not part of any of those categories, I had long wondered how such an important comic book would transition to the big screen. The comic debuted in 1986-1987, and lingered in movie-development hell for most of the next two decades. When someone as creative as Terry Gilliam gives up on the book as unfilmable, perhaps this is a sign that Hollywood cannot reach into everything and emerge with a viable product. The fact that the movie arrived without a major star and an R-rating spelled hope for die-hard fans, but anguish for studio heads, especially those who bank their future on sequels, prequels, trilogies and multi-media franchises.

Many of the critics fell into one of two camps: director Zack Snyder copied panels into live action and thus lacked vision, or the movie failed to hew to every scene and detail and thus ended up faithless to the source. Separate the movie from the comic book, and you end up with a raw and visually stunning canvas. There are some violent scenes, minor nudity, and few one-liners. I sat immersed in the story, and despite the nearly three-hour running time and the late hour, I almost lost sense of time.

Some libertarian critics latched onto Rorschach as a sort of Objectivist character, encapsulated in his black or white sense of right and wrong. Such a reading is superficial at best. The tone of the movie taps into crucial philosophical questions—the roots of evil, means vs. ends, and absolutism vs. pragmatism. Ultimately certain non-libertarian philosophies win out, compromise and bad philosophies triumph in the name of good; the humanitarian once more wields the guillotine. Still, as Pandora discovered, there is some glimmer of hope at the end, embodied in Dr. Manhattan's statement that "nothing ever ends." Individualists who strive against messianic end of history themes find some comfort in this view.

As I drove home after 3am Saturday morning, I found myself wondering whether the visual and auditory experience of watching this movie on the big screen outweighed a wallet lighter by \$25. Perhaps it was fatigue, or adrenaline, but again and again the answer rolled around in my mind: oh, yes. The elements true to the source worked, as did most of the changes. Thankfully, they left out the *Black Freighter* sub-plot...

— Anders Monsen

Echoes in a Shallow Bay

Dollhouse

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

The hiatus in Joss Whedon's television work over the past few years has left his fans frustrated, even though it gave us a first-rate film and some better than usual comics. It's a pleasure to see a new series from him. Like his previous series, *Dollhouse* has strong ongoing continuity between episodes, unusually good character roles (especially for women, including Whedon alumnae Amy Acker and Eliza Dushku), and a fantastic premise. *Dollhouse's* premise is a new one: A technology that allows programming human brains, somewhat as computers are programmed. Several of its characters are "dolls" or "actives" who can have any abilities, any personality, and any memories needed to support a work assignment...but whose memories are removed between assignments, so that they have none of the ongoing continuity of memory that makes up most people's personal identity. This theme raises deep questions of metaphysics, the sort that perhaps only Whedon would think of exploring on broadcast television.

One of the main practical applications of the "doll" technology seems to be an expensive and elaborate variant of prostitution. A client who can pay the fee can have the woman or man of their dreams, for a night or a weekend. And unlike real prostitutes, who are playing a role, dolls have no hidden inner self behind the mask; they really are enthusiastic about the things the client is enthusiastic about, attracted to the client as a person, and sexually passionate, but with no ongoing history. Like fictional characters, they have an imaginary backstory, but they really exist only from the start of the encounter to its end. This technology also has obvious uses in covert operations, and two of the first three episodes involve assignments of that type: hostage negotiations and bodyguard work.

The *Dollhouse* charges fees for these services, and it seems to be a private firm. In many ways it looks like a stereotypical evil big business. Its apparent CEO, Adelle DeWitt, is a model of corporate ruthlessness and focus on the bottom line; she's willing to expose the dolls to almost any risk, so long as the clients are willing to post large enough bonds to cover the possible loss. The central character, Echo, and her fellow actives (all named for letters of the NATO phonetic alphabet), really are "human resources" in the most literal sense. I'm reminded of Vernor Vinge's exploration of a somewhat similar theme in *A Deepness in the Sky*, with the mind-altering technology of the Emergents.

But at a deeper level, Whedon's premise could be taken as a critique of socialism. Many scenes have focused on Topher Brink, the brilliant programmer who creates the actives' personalities. He has a very strong sense of his own genius and the intellectual inferiority of most other employees of the *Dollhouse*, including the handlers assigned to the actives; he believes that he can design a personality for any need and that he's always aware of what's going on with a doll during an assignment. In short, he's the analog of a central planner who believes that he knows better than the market what should

be produced, and how, and for whom; he has the illusion of technocratic omniscience. But repeated scenes have shown that this *is* an illusion. Echo has come up with original solutions to problems during her assignments, which he failed to anticipate (though apparently his superior, DeWitt, recognizes this and regards it as an asset). A continuing motif is Echo's acquiring a persistent sense of self, especially through her emotional bond to her handler, Boyd Langton; and there's a recurring hint of threat, in that a previous active who regained full continuity of memory, Alpha, became a terrifyingly effective psychotic killer...and is apparently still alive somewhere. Libertarians watching this show may think of Mises's and Hayek's critiques of centrally planned economies as requiring a humanly unattainable omniscience.

Beyond this, Echo's sense of self also reflects the theme of personal identity and personal integrity as the source of resistance to authority. In a way, this show is another look at the themes of *The Prisoner*, a long-time favorite of libertarian viewers. In fact, there were episodes of *The Prisoner* that hinted at mind control technologies like an earlier generation of what the *Dollhouse* is based on.

That this show is even capable of being interpreted this way marks it as more thoughtful, with a more sophisticated premise, than is common in broadcast television. But this is typical of Whedon's work in that medium. Whether *Dollhouse* will come back for more seasons, or even make it through the first season, is uncertain: Whedon's previous luck with Fox hasn't been good, and the show's Friday night time slot isn't optimal for finding an audience. But if it fulfills the promise of the hints in the first few episodes, many of us will want to own the whole series on DVD.

Dollhouse in Hindsight

As it turned out, *Dollhouse* will be surviving for a second season, on the strength not so much of broadcast ratings, which were dismal, as of nontraditional distribution, including downloads and anticipated DVD sales. This in itself reflects the emergence of new markets for content, which can support more diversity—a good thing from a libertarian point of view. This seems like a good time to look back at the show from the perspective of the complete first (broadcast) season.

The steady decrease in audience size over that first season likely reflects the increasing focus of later episodes on what might be called *Whedonesque* themes: more of the metaphysics of personal identity and less of the straightforward action/adventure of the early shows. From one point of view, this could be considered a failure. From another, it reflects Whedon giving his core audience more of what they really wanted. And since that's the audience that will be buying the

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—*Dollhouse* review, continued from page 3

DVDs, and that has been downloading the episodes, it was a reasonable gamble. The early episodes gave Fox something that made sense as a program for the mass market; the later episodes stopped worrying about that mass market.

At the same time, the early episodes *do* make up part of a coherent design for the season. The action/adventure story of the first episode defines a paradigm: introduction of the task, imprinting of Echo with the appropriate persona, memories, and skills, overcoming of unexpected difficulties in completing the task, and final debriefing. But the next few episodes increasingly subvert that paradigm, as I noted in my original review. In the second half of the season, practically every episode is a major challenge to it, until the final two episodes threaten the very existence of the Dollhouse. Whedon managed to make the constraints Fox imposed on him provide a baseline of expectations, and then to create drama by violating those expectations.

Along the way, there's a steady stream of unexpected recognitions, as the viewer learns that one or another character is actually a doll playing an assigned role. These revelations are all well handled and dramatically surprising. And they help develop a profound sense of doubt in the audience: Do we actually know that anyone is a real person and not a doll? This sense of uncertainty increases the show's dramatic tension, especially as we look toward the second season.

For me, personally, the one big failing of this interesting

and well written show is its star. The episode where Echo was imprinted with the personality and memories of a friend of the Dollhouse's chief executive, enabling her to discover who murdered the woman, fell short of convincing me: I never believed that Eliza Dushku was a woman of fifty in a much younger body, going among people she knew who didn't recognize her. Two of Dushku's co-stars, Enver Gyokai ("Victor") and Dichen Lachman ("Sierra"), both lose themselves more convincingly in the rolls they're imprinted with; this was especially evident in a scene where Victor was imprinted with the memories of a captured spy within the Dollhouse. Dushku's consistent personal style strengthens the feeling that there is an inner core of selfhood in Echo, more basic than her lost memories, but weakens the premise of the Dollhouse's power to reprogram its operative. I think, on balance, I consider that a flaw—but not one so profound as to stop me from watching the next season, or adding the collected episodes to my library of DVDs.

And there are certainly unresolved questions for the second season to address. Above all, while we've gotten to know the Dollhouse itself, we know very little about its parent firm, the Rossum Corporation (an allusion to Karel Capek's classic play "R.U.R.," which coined the word "robot" for an artificial intelligent being), or about the depth to which Rossum has penetrated the political and legal system. The final episode leaves the Dollhouse in a troubled state; this could be a starting point for larger revelations about Whedon's fictional world.

Pan's Labyrinth [El laberinto del fauno]

By Guillermo del Toro

2007

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

Pan's Labyrinth is a fantasy film, but one that owes nothing to Anglo-American genre fantasy. Rather, it looks back to the older sources of present-day fantasy in fairy tales and mythology. In the style of some recent Anglo-American fantasy, it integrates this material from older stories with a modern setting: Spain in the 1940s. The perfection with which it bonds the two together gives the film an impressive strength.

The fantastic part of the story involves a young girl, Ofelia, traveling with her mother to live with her mother's new husband, Capitan Vidal, on his house in the country. Along the way, they encounter the remains of an ancient labyrinth, and Ofelia believes she sees a fairy flying about it, like the ones in her favorite storybooks. The rest of the film shows us her further encounters with fairies and with other supernatural creatures, including a faun and a terrifying manlike creature with eyes in the palms of his hands, whose actions might have been inspired by Goya's painting of Saturn. (Pan does not appear anywhere, which may puzzle a viewer who knows only the English title; the Spanish title, "the faun's labyrinth," is more accurate.) In a classic fairy tale plot, Ofelia is given three tasks that she must complete, and prohibitions that she must observe in doing so. Like a proper fairy tale heroine, Ofelia

shows herself to be both determined and inventive in carrying out her quest. And as in the better fairy tales, her quest ultimately comes down to the necessity of moral choice.

The context of this fairy story is a realistic narrative focused on Ofelia's mother and stepfather, and on Mercedes, a servant in her new household. Capitan Vidal is shown as an authoritarian figure, obsessed with schedules and constantly consulting his watch. Over the course of the film, we see this in a wider context: The reason he's at that house is that he's been assigned by the Franco regime to hunt down and destroy the remnants of the other side in the Spanish Civil War. His methods range from rationing of food and supplies to starve the rebels out, to executions without trial, to torturing captured rebels for information. In a particularly striking bit of cinematography, we see him use almost exactly the same speeches at the opening of two different interrogations, making it clear that he's tortured enough people to have reduced it to a routine. It seems quite fitting when, at the end of the film, his outward appearance becomes monstrous; he and the government he serves are the real monsters of this story. On the other side, early in the film, Capitan Vidal reads from a captured revolutionary pamphlet that calls for "No God, no state, and no masters."

Ofelia's quest, then, is for a way out of this brutal world, recalling Tolkien's comment that one of the pleasures of fairy tales is escape and that the people who find escape most

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objectionable are jailers. Readers of Ayn Rand's literary essays may recall her comments on traditional romantic works, where the hero's pursuit of values leads to his death, because their authors didn't regard values as attainable in the real world. Del Toro gives us a story where this belief appears in an extraordinarily pure form: Ofelia's hope is not to live in this world but to escape to a magical realm that is her true home. But he also shows us that the actual obstacle to pursuing values is political authority—as it was when A. E. Housman wrote "I, a stranger and afraid/In a world I never made," referring not to some abstract metaphysical despair, but to the very real prospect of being sent to prison if he acted on his desires for other men. This film gives us a romantic idealism that hopes for a better world elsewhere, but also a romantic realism that hopes to make this a better world, through struggle against its very real monsters.

The Good Humor Man, or, Calorie 3501

By Andrew Fox

Tachyon Publications, 2009

Reviewed by Thomas E. Jackson

The cover of *The Good Humor Man* shows a person wearing boots standing next to a pile cheese snacks in the street. It looks like the cover of a contemporary fiction novel, but make no mistake, *The Good Humor Man* is science fiction, with a libertarian element.

In a few decades from the present, the government has taken the logical step in dealing with people who eat fatty foods that aren't good for them. It's instituted food Prohibition, banning fatty foods and instituting raids against stashes of fatty food. Squads of enforcers armed with flame throwers destroy contraband on the spot. (The plot resemblance to Ray Bradbury's classic *Fahrenheit 451* is not a coincidence. Bradbury is one of the writers mentioned in Fox's dedication. The title also references Bradbury, of course.)

The food Prohibition spawns behavior that readers of this newsletter will recognize as plausible. One scene is set in a speakeasy, where diners munch forbidden, smuggled pastries.

The government also is a big fan of industrial policy. When a bioengineering company named MannoSantos invents a way to grow crops that help humans burn calories, the government applies pressure to try to force the rest of the world to accept the company's products. The resulting trade war causes a second Great Depression. MannaSantos' crops begin to spread their genes into other crops, and the world is threatened with starvation, as people begin to burn calories faster than they can replace them.

The novel also obsesses over Elvis Presley as the quintessential American, a man who combined America's puritan and hedonistic impulses. The hero of *The Good Humor Man* is a plastic surgeon, Louis Shmalzberg, whose father, also a surgeon, accidentally killed Elvis in a botched liposuction operation.

(In the world of the novel, the operation is covered up, and the King's 1977 death is blamed on other causes.)

Fat from Elvis is kept as a family heirloom until Louis sells it to pay for cancer treatments for his wife. The plot is driven by Louis' efforts to recover "the Elvis," and by several other groups who also are attempting to recover the Elvis relic.

I read rather more about liposuction and human fat than I wanted to know, but Fox skillfully weaves the various elements of the plot together into a fast-moving, and very unusual book. Fox is a writer who is new to me, but I doubt this is the last that will be heard from him.

By the Sword

By F. Paul Wilson

Gauntlet/Forge 2008

Reviewed by Anders Monsen

By the Sword is the 12th novel in F. Paul Wilson's Repairman Jack series. Wilson has stated that he's writing only two more books in the series, so this is the ante-penultimate book. You can almost sense the pace quickening. And yet, like a snowball rolling downhill, the RJ story absorbs other Wilsonian tales along the way, including intersecting events and characters from *Black Wind*. What started as two separate timelines in *The Tomb* and *The Keep*, have since merged into a larger epic cycle that originally went until the aegis of the Adversary Cycle, but since has moved across a multitude of novels to become the Secret History of the World. Readers familiar with the story know that it all ends with the already published novel, *Nightworld*, although this book has been heavily revised since its initial release. If you have held back from reading the updated version, like myself, the end of the world as we know it still looms a few books away. In the meantime, Jack's enemies have grown in strength and number.

The novel opens with Jack still trying to recover from the events in *Bloodline*, in which he lost his unborn daughter when the forces that oppose the Adversary continued to fashion Jack into a spear against their enemy. As a spear can have no branches, Jack has lost in painful succession his sister, father, brother, and then the daughter that the love of his life Gia was carrying. And yet Jack continues to find a reason for living, as Gia and her daughter Vicky remain alive in a bargain that Jack fashioned with the forces who recruit him. Seeking an outlet for his rage, Jack trolls the mugger locales of New York City, extracting cash from erstwhile muggers, which he then will donate to local Little Leaguers.

Here Jack encounters an old man, who goes by the name of Glenn Veilleur, but is in fact Glaeken, the eternal warrior who first encountered the Adversary's Rasalom back in the short story, "Demonsong" (1979). Glaeken is testing Jack, seeking out the prime candidate to replace him in the war against Rasalom. Although Glaeken steps out of the watchful shadows, he reveals little to Jack, mainly confirming a few

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House of Dr.acula

By Brad Linaweaver

(There was an old Universal horror film in the 1940s called *House of Dracula*. Forrest J Ackerman is the only performer to play Count Dracula as well as his own creation of Dr.acula in Hollywood films.)

My previous article in *Prometheus* was about the importance of Forrest J Ackerman to the development of science fiction and horror in the entertainment industry. We were friends. He had a remarkable life that ended in November, 2008 at the age of 92. His influence will never end.

As promised last issue, this piece will be about my professional involvement with Forry. Over the years he not only helped my career but I watched him do a lot to help the careers of friends and associates. I specifically promoted writers, artists and actresses to Forry. He helped them all and I hope in time they will tell their stories. There can never be too many articles and books about this man.

My story begins as one of the many fans he taught to have a Sense of Wonder. We learned the battle cry: “Gosh Wow!” As a teenager I sent a letter to *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and was thrilled when he published it in 1970, issue #64.

Little did I know that a year later Forry would be introducing me to Robert Bloch at the first science fiction convention I ever attended on the alien planet of Dallas, Texas. That ultimately led to my favorite of eighty short story sales, “Clutter,” appearing in Bloch’s 1991 anthology, *Psycho-Paths* (Tor Books) about a fan who represents all of us who grew up as sci-fi children of the Ackermmonster.

Over the years, Forry influenced other stories that I wrote. “The Lon Chaney Factory” was dedicated to him and appeared in the anthology, *When the Black Lotus Blooms* (Unnameable Press). Forry reprinted it in his magazine, *Monsterama* as the cover feature.

When I wrote a story about H.G. Wells for E.J. Gold’s *Galaxy*, I couldn’t think of a good title. Forry came up with, “Wells of Wisdom,” and promoted the story that not only was published but also made it on to the Nebula Preliminary Ballot—although it wasn’t a Finalist like “Moon of Ice”—and also received a dramatic audio reading by actress Catherine Oxenberg.

But wait, there’s more! I sold two stories to the FJA anthology, *Rainbow Fantasia*, published by Sense of Wonder Press (also the publisher of Prometheus Award-nominated *Anarquia* that I co-wrote with J. Kent Hastings). I made Forry the monster expert in the third Doom novel, *Infernal Sky*, part of the best-selling series I did with Dafydd ab Hugh for Pocket Books. Why, that’s the one where the heroic spacemen and spacewomen are passing around a book by Ludwig von Mises.

Right after I finished working on the manuscript, Forry invited me to his house to be part of a BBC documentary on *Frankenstein*, “Building the Perfect Beast.” That’s almost as unbelievable as the fact Forry also appears in the novel version of *Moon of Ice* that won an award.

When J. Neil Schulman created Pulpless.Com he brought



Brad Linaweaver with actress Leslie Culton at the Ackermansion. She is in costume as Forry’s creation, Vampirella, for a video production that was not released commercially.

out books in the Forrest J Ackerman series. Those were great days when Samuel Edward Konkin III, Kent Hastings, John DeChancie and Yours Truly burned the midnight oil to publish cool stuff that New York didn’t want. There was a bit of libertarianism here and there.

Of course, none of this fulfilled my childhood dream of writing for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. That came true in the mid-90s when I contributed to the Dynacomm *FM*. I did a feature on Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski’s *Dinosaur Island* and memorial pieces on Vincent Price and Robert Bloch. I even persuaded William F. Buckley, Jr. to make a contribution!

But I only contributed to the magazine when Forry was editor. After his falling out with publisher Ray Ferry, I testified in court on Forry’s behalf when he was defending his intellectual property rights. As a result, the Dynacomm publisher

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—*House of Dr. Acula*, continued from previous page

attacked me in his book *Life Is But A Scream!* Forry won his case and his attorney said that I helped. That is one of the proudest moments of my life. Since then I have learned that you only know your true friends when your back is to the wall.

After the *FM* debacle, the good guys at the magazine *Cult Movies* agreed we should do something on behalf of Forry. Buddy Barnett, Mike Copner and I (as Rocket Engineer on the editorial credits) brought back *Spacemen* as part of a number of special *Cult Movies/Spacemen* double issues. Forry loved the rebirth of his science fiction movie magazine.

I did a piece for *Spacemen* on my favorite film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in which I answered criticisms of the seminal pic from my friends Forry and Ray Bradbury. Both of them respected my critique. Later I received a letter from Arthur C. Clarke himself in which he wrote, "Your article brilliant!" He also asked me to pass on his regards to 4E. That was a fan wet dream come true.

In the end, Forry taught all of us to trust the creative geniuses who inspired us to enter the world of science fiction in the first place. Ah, nostalgia.

The greatest honor Forry ever gave me was an invitation to co-author *Worlds of Tomorrow: The Amazing Universe of Science Fiction Art* for Collectors Press. Gosh Wow, indeed! We did a signing at the San Diego Comicon in 2004 and signed our names so many times that we needed Asimovian positronic hand replacements.

My final magazine work with Forry was in collaboration with Jessie Lilley. She and I do a pop culture magazine called *Mondo Cult* and Forry contributed a really nice piece on the lost spider sequence from the original *King Kong*. He also appears as Dr. Acula in photographs provided by Irena Belle Films. Which brings us to the subject of Dr. Acula!

Long before *Famous Monsters*, FJA developed this idea, combining the mad scientist with the vampire. He came up with this notion before World War II, during which this kind of horror movie plot started bearing a resemblance to a dread reality.

In the Fifties, Forry was the agent of oddball film director Ed Wood who spawned those final Bela Lugosi movies we love so much. There was a possibility of a TV series of Bela doing the Dr. Acula character, but it never came off. Forry is the only person to have played this particular role. One of the times he appeared as Dr. Acula was on NPR as the host of Berl Boykin's *Horror House* series in which I adapted two Edgar Allan Poe stories as one of the episodes.

His last speaking role in a film is as Dr. Acula, the host of *The Boneyard Collection*, a film anthology by Ed Plumb and L.J. Dopp. The longest episode he introduces is my story, "Her Morbid Desires," available in the *Clownface* collection at Pulpless.Com!

The reader will not be surprised that these weird credits never end. Earlier I appeared as a werewolf in a Plumb production where Forry is the enemy of Dracula in the *Vampire Hunters Club*.

What is really perfect is that Forry also played Count Dracula, wearing Lugosi's cape and ring in Fred Olen Ray's

Attack of the 60 Foot Centerfold in which your humble correspondent appears as Running Guy.

Amazing!

On March 8, 2009, I was privileged to be one of the speakers honoring Forry's memory at a memorial event at the Egyptian in Hollywood, attended by over 500 invaders from the infinite. FJA's long time friend, Ray Bradbury, was the first speaker of many. In the company of film directors such as John Landis, Joe Dante, Guillermo del Toro and other luminaries, the Tingle in my spinal cord started to grow, warning me not to screw up. I relied heavily on the piece I had just done for *Prometheus*, "The Freedom To Remember." The line about Forry Ackerman being the Walt Disney of science fiction was greatly appreciated.

We were influenced in our childhoods more than we will ever know.

(NOTE: In 2003, Brad and Ed Kramer created a Dragoncon award inspired by Forry to honor science fiction and fantasy, the Futura award, a pewter sculpture made by L.J. Dopp based on Maria, the female robot from Forry's all time favorite movie, *Metropolis*. Maybe Dr. Frankenstein can bring this award back to life in the future.)

This is the second part of a two-part essay in memory of Forrest J Ackerman, by Prometheus Award-winning author Brad Linaweaver. Part one appeared in the Volume 27, Number 2, Winter 2009 issue of Prometheus.

Last of the Free

"Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*

Libertarian filmmaker Michael Ozias achieves in one single movie trailer what few directors manage with two plus hours of live action. *Last of the Free* showcases his vision for a science fiction/fantasy film that is suffused throughout with ideas of liberty, the power and hopes of innovation, and the ills of oppression. Ozias has previously worked as editor on several prime-time TV shows, and currently is seeking investors.

Based on the trailer ones hopes those investors embrace Ozias' script and hire him to helm the project. The movie is titled *Last of the Free*, and is the story of two kids on a quest to escape their dystopian world. In the few minutes of a trailer that uses stills and a chilling narration, *Last of the Free* alludes in part to Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. The young protagonists embody the spirit of awakening and rebellion, love and faithful devotion.

View the trailer at <<http://www.lastofthefree.com/>>, and read more about the ideas behind the screenplay, which recently gained recognition as a finalist in the Poppy Jasper Film Festival, now in its 6th year and taking place November 13-15, 2009 in Morgan Hills, California.

Worldcon and Burning Man—commonalities and differences

By Fred Curtis Moulton

This article will likely annoy many people who say that it is not totally accurate and over simplifies topic X or even ignores topic Y and the way it handles topic Z is scandalous. And they will be correct. This article is not totally accurate, it over simplifies, it does not cover everything. The intent of this article to give some minimal background and to quickly highlight some similarities and differences. So please realize the limits of this article and before using it as a basis for a decision or analysis please consult more complete sources.

The history of Worldcon (World Science Fiction Convention) is long and relatively well documented. The more than six decades of Worldcons is fine history considering it is put on by volunteer organizations. And let us not forget that we are 2/3 of the way to the Worldcon centenary. There are several projects to document the history of SF fandom and many of these have information on the web. Since I assume that most readers of this article will be more familiar with Worldcon I will provide a slightly longer background about Burning Man.

Burning Man has a slightly shorter history beginning in the mid 1980s when Larry Harvey and friends had a fire ceremony at Baker Beach in San Francisco. The history and growth of Burning Man is documented at Burningman.com and other websites as well as in videos and various books including the book, *This is Burning Man*, by Brian Doherty.

The authorities came to take a dim view of large fires on the beach and eventually the event was moved to the Black Rock desert area in Nevada, northeast of Reno. This area is a large dried lake bed and can be described as a very flat playa. In the summer it begins to dry out from the snow and rain that has accumulated. It is a high desert environment and by the end of August the playa is hot during the day and cold at night particularly when the wind blows. And subject to incredible dust storms that can cause white outs.

This is one of the main differences between Burning Man and Worldcon; the physical location. Worldcon moves each year to a different location; often but not always in North America. As long as Burning Man can keep the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) who controls the area happy then Burning Man will likely stay at the playa although it shifts a short ways on the playa each year to avoid environment damage. Currently there are about 50,000 people who show up to create Black Rock City (BRC) for Labor Day and the week preceding. But before they arrive there is a crew which works for weeks to create Center Camp, lay out the street grid, build the Man and organize the large number of porta-potties. This is one of the major differences between Worldcon and Burning Man; Worldcon uses the hotels, restaurants, convention center and other resources found in major metropolitan areas; the facilities for Burning Man are not as plush.

Burning Man and Worldcon both have a corporate umbrella although different in structure. Worldcon is a totally volunteer effort while Burning Man organization has full

time paid staff. At both there is a strong volunteer spirit that gets things done.

Both Worldcon and Burning Man have a sense of being a unique place. A fan might refer to the “mundane world” in much the same way as a Burner will refer to the “default world” particularly if the Burner is at BRC at the moment. When a burner arrives at BRC the typical greeting is “Welcome Home” which conveys a similar sense of a tribal or family gathering that many people feel about Worldcon. Also common to each is the sense that there are no spectators; everyone is a participant.

This brings us to one of the harsh differences between Worldcon and Burning Man. You need to pay much more attention to preparing for Burning Man than you do for Worldcon. There are no stores to wander over to for picking up another pair of socks. At Burning Man Center Camp they sell only coffee, tea, lemonade, electrolyte drink and Ice. That is all you can buy at Burning Man; no other commerce is allowed. All the rest is a gift economy. So you need to bring your own water, food, water, shelter, water, sunscreen, water, health and other needs.

Did I mention water? If you need something and you did not bring it then you will need to ask; fortunately there is usually someone with what you need and usually they are willing to share.

There is no Dealers Room at Burning Man. This is a major difference since historically (particularly before on-line commerce) visiting the Dealers Room at Worldcon was a good way to get SF materials. So a trip to Worldcon might mean returning with books, DVDs, CDs, new garments. However when you leave BRC to head to the default world you take memories and also your trash. Burning Man is a “leave no trace” event. This means that if a button pops off your shirt you pick it up. There are no community trash bins. Except for things which are burned; if you bring it in then you take it out.

The harshness of the environment is also a major difference. Burning Man has a advisory which reminds you that

—Continued next page

Classifieds

The (Libertarian) Connection, open-forum since 1968. Subscribers may insert four pages/issue free, unedited. **Factsheet Five** said, “Lively interchange of point, counterpoint and comments”. Eight/year, \$10. Strauss, 10 Hill #22-LP, Newark NJ 07102.

—*Worldcon & Burning Man, continued from previous page*

you are voluntary going to an event where you could be killed or injured. However death and injury are relatively rare. And there are people who have attended Burning Man with various physical challenges such as Multiple Sclerosis. It takes a lot of planning but it can be done.

One thing you will not see at Burning Man is long lines of people waiting to get to the parties because the elevators are overloaded; with a few exceptions Burning Man is a ground level event. The simplest way to think of it is that Burning Man takes place in circular area about a mile in radius. So there is a lot of walking or bicycle riding involved since you cannot drive your vehicle once you have arrived. However this is not much different from a Worldcon where hotels and convention centers are spread out often in a similar sized space. One difference is that at Burning Man the Art, the costumes, and the events are all around you in a more immediate way as you move around. Burning Man really is an immersive event.

At Worldcon nudity is not a costume. At Burning Man nudity is no big deal. At Burning Man some people cover up to avoid the sun and others do not. It is not uncommon to see someone walking along the street in just hiking boots, sun glasses and a hat. There are some clothing choices such as a large man wearing a yellow sun dress which are more likely seen at Burning Man than Worldcon. But Burning Man is not totally without rules. In addition to the BRC Rangers, the Federal and local law enforcement patrol Burning Man and there are a few rules which are strictly enforced such as; no firearms; no illegal substances; no theft; no violence. At Worldcon they also have similar policies and bond the swords.

The typical Worldcon will have youth programming and many have child care arrangements. Burning Man is not as child friendly as Worldcon although there is a family oriented section of BRC away from the more loud and risqué camps. However there are families with children who attend Burning Man. I saw a mother and father with a still-nursing one year old toddler who were part of a camp and all seemed to have a great time. The little one seemed to be having a grand time and was almost never fussy and had an instant supply of “aunts and uncles” since they were part of a hundred person theme camp. One of the “aunts” enjoyed holding the toddler while the mother did an impromptu fire twirling performance. So even though the physical environment of the two events are incredibly different the response of watching after children and helping where needed is common.

This brings us to another area of commonality; that of a community of people who are generally helpful, sharing and resourceful. Burner culture overlaps with and has links with events and groups such as Maker Faire and the tech community. SF Fandom and Worldcon also draw from and influence a variety of communities including the tech community. Burner culture and fannish culture both generally value innovation and originality.

Both Burning Man and Worldcon have major events. At Worldcon many people look forward to the Hugo Award Ceremony and the Masquerade; at Burning Man the big events

for most people are when the Man burns on Saturday night and the Temple Burn on Sunday night. A discussion of the symbolism, meaning and emotions associated with these two burns are beyond the scope of this article.

But as someone once pointed out it is usually about the people. Both the Worldcon and Burning Man attract some interesting and enjoyable people. There is overlap of the two communities with some persons attending both events whenever possible. For example this is why I pre-support Worldcon bids which are bidding for dates which do not conflict with Burning Man. So will there ever be a combined Worldcon and Burning Man event? Not likely. But it might be possible in theory. And there have already been fans throwing parties with that theme.

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Star Trek

Directed by J. J. Abrams

Reviewed by William H. Stoddard

The announcement that J. J. Abrams was filming a new *Star Trek* movie was ground for dread as well as hope. In the forty-plus years since the original show went off the air, it's inspired the creation of some unworthy successors. No doubt there are some fans who like every version of *Star Trek*; for example, I liked *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* for its lyrical eroticization of technology, which seems to be a minority opinion. But not many of the recent versions have inspired general praise or enthusiasm.

Abrams made one big right decision about this film: starting it before the original series, making it in effect a new origin story for the Enterprise of that series. The weight of previous continuity burdened both the later films about the original crew, and the later series in the same franchise. Abrams' story starts out before any of that history. And as the viewer discovers, he doesn't feel bound to retell it. This new film offers what comics fans call "retcon" (for retroactive continuity): it says that certain things we all know about from earlier stories never actually happened. This is a science fiction film, so Abrams provides a science-fictional explanation of why this is so, and in fact makes it a key to his plot—but the freedom to envision things differently would have helped this film even without a justification of that sort. The very choice of title—not *Star Trek: Descriptive Phrase* but just *Star Trek*—conveys that Abrams is out to create a new starting point, not just a continuation of what has gone before.

Similarly, the characters are nearly all changed, though in different ways and to different degrees—James T. Kirk, the central figure, more than any other. Rather than older versions of the central characters, at later stages in their careers, and

played by the same, but now older actors, we get an entirely new cast. This worked a lot better than I anticipated; what the actors and writers gave us was new interpretations of the same people, not just entirely different people who happened to have the same names. I was especially impressed by Zachary Quinto's ability to hint at what was going on below Spock's surface, which made it subtler than the sharp duality of reason and emotion in the original series, so that he came through as a Spock whose depths were more visible. On the other hand, this film's Kirk is a more overtly and somewhat disturbingly different character—but for reasons that make sense in the context of the story.

The story itself seems to have a lot more action that classic treatments did; sometimes it seemed that the film was a constant rush from one fast-paced conflict to another. I'm not sure that was a good choice, at least for fans of the older films and television series, though it may have been well planned to draw in a new generation of younger fans. The original series was a balance of action, characterization, and sense of wonder, and of these, in some ways the action was the least important. The more relentless action of this film sometimes seemed inadequately motivated, especially the scenes of Kirk struggling to survive in a glacial wilderness. The characterization was sound, but I could have used a little more sense of wonder.

An interesting aspect of the action, and one relevant to libertarian concerns, was the nature of the antagonist. Traditional *Star Trek* stories tended to be about military conflicts between Starfleet and aggressive alien societies, or about diplomatic crises and alien customs. This film's antagonist, Nero, despite being a Romulan, is not acting as a soldier, or as a representative of his race. Rather, he's a private citizen obsessed with revenge. Conceivably his name, one letter away from "Nemo," could be a hint at this. But confronting the Enterprise with this kind of antagonist turns this, on one hand, into a classic pulp or superhero story with a mad, obsessed supervillain, and on the other, into a story about terrorism. In a way, Abrams is exploring the same theme Vernor Vinge examined in *Rainbows End*, whose heroes have to deal with a world where a small, sufficiently angry private group can destroy a city—but in Abrams's future, such a villain can threaten entire planets. How to maintain a free society, or any kind of civilization, when initiation of force on that scale is possible, is an unsolved problem, one that the developed world is struggling with already. So this *Star Trek* is as much a project of the issues of our time as the original was of the issues of the 1960s.

I can think of points to criticize in this film; to name just one, I was taken aback when I saw footage in the previews of Kirk riding a motorcycle past a half-constructed starship. What kind of fool, I thought, would build that sort of structure in a one-g field? But when you come right down to it, none of these things prevented my enjoying the film . . . more than I've enjoyed any version of *Star Trek* for quite a while. This film actually made me look forward to a possible sequel, rather than dreading that the creators would go on dragging out a failed enterprise that was ready to be scrapped. It's not flawless, but its flaws are small and its merits considerably larger.

Prometheus Submission Guidelines

Prometheus seeks reviews, interview, essays, articles, and columns of interest to libertarian science fiction fans.

As the newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society, *Prometheus* focuses on Prometheus Award-nominated works, but also publishes reviews and articles beyond the Prometheus Award candidates.

Letter of comment also are welcome, whether about the reviews, or any questions about LFS, the nominating and voting process. In this digital age the printed press continues to matter, but we need your help to sustain this newsletter.

Contact the editor for more details via email at: editor@lfs.org

LETTERS

Forrest J Ackerman

Dear Anders,

The tributes to Forrest J Ackerman in the latest issue of *Prometheus* brought back many memories of the great man and his legacy to the world of imagination. The news of Forry's passing are sad tidings for SF fans of all stripes and wings. As you allude to in your introduction—the great age of 20th century science fiction is all but gone. You and contributors Linaweaver, Koman, and Wilson did fine personal tributes to him.

I feel sorry for F. Paul Wilson for never having met him. Even though I live on the opposite coast I was lucky enough to have met him at several WorldCons and once I even got a tour of the Ackermansion. A memory I will cherish forever.

I know that Victor Koman and daughter Vanessa made numerous treks to the Ackermansion over the years—lucky ones! I was surprised that Victor did not mention that pictures of his actress daughter were featured several times in Forry's magazines. He ran a picture of her dressed as an Addams Family kid in one issue (on the same page as a childhood photo of director Fred Olen Ray dressed as Dracula). Could this connection be what prompted Ray to cast her and Forry soon afterward in his *Attack of the 60 Foot Centerfold*? Forry even ran a picture of her in the new version of *Spacemen*. Finally, Victor's parental modesty prevented him from pointing out that she was in one of Ackerman's last film appearances: Brad Linaweaver's "Her Morbid Desires" segment of *The Boneyard Collection*. But I have no such modesty. I worked briefly with Vanessa after she starred in *Little Miss Magic* when she came to DragonCon several years ago and acted with the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company—she was a delight to direct.

Brad Linaweaver's piece was a heart-felt tribute to Forry's impact on SF and the world. Unfortunately he did not in-

clude his personal reminiscences—but the "to be continued" tag at the end hints at more. I look forward to more Forry stories—since I have so few of mine own.

Forry, have you finally met Jules Verne?

PS. About your tribute to Patrick McGoochan.

Yes, *The Prisoner*, is a seminal work of individualism that should be dear to the heart of all libertarian SF fans. It is, in fact, my favorite TV show. But there was another TV appearance of Patrick McGoochan that was of interest to libertarians. It was not science fiction—but instead historical fiction!

The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh, which ran as a three part serial on the Disneyland show in 1963, was a very early influence on my philosophical life. In it McGoochan plays Dr. Syn, a kindly vicar at a small town on the coast of England. By night he is the fearsome and unforgiving Scarecrow, who leads a band of smugglers evading the British import duties and restrictions. What is amazing—what riveted my attention in 1963 (when I was 10) was the Dr. Syn/The Scarecrow was the hero—he was the good guy. The agents of the crown were the bad guys. Smuggling good. Tax collecting bad. On national TV. On Disney!!!! WOW.

I could go on for pages—and maybe someday I will. I just recently saw this again for the first time in 20-something years and it is just as brilliant as I recall. Thanks to the Walt Disney Company for re-releasing the restored WIDESCREEN version of this as part of their silver-boxed DVD treasury series. To give you an idea of the pent-up demand for this masterpiece the DVDs—it sold out within a week and is now only available at collectors' prices.

Sincerely
William Alan Ritch

William Alan Ritch is a former editor of Prometheus. He is currently the president of the Atlanta Radio Theatre Company (www.artc.org).

2009 Prometheus Award Hall of Fame Finalists

Falling Free, a novel by Lois McMaster Bujold (1988)

Courtship Rite, a novel by Donald M. Kingsbury (1982)

"As Easy as A.B.C.," a short story by Rudyard Kipling (1912)

The Lord of the Rings, a three-volume novel by J. R. R. Tolkien (1955)

The Once and Future King, including ***The Book of Merlyn***, a novel by T. H. White (1977)

The Golden Age, a novel by John C. Wright (2002)

—*By the Sword* review, continued from page 5

theories, but promising more information soon.

On the surface these two men pose little threat to the various elements of their enemy. They are few against many, yet the many groups they oppose have their own agendas. These include the plans of Hank Thompson, who leads a cult-like group calling themselves Kickers. Hank bears a personal vendetta against Jack from the events in *Bloodline*. He lives with his followers in the Septimus Lodge, and he strives to carry out the plans of his father, who once served Rasalom, yet thought he could replace the powerful entity. When he dreams of a strangely marked Japanese sword, Hank sets his Kickers in motion to find the sword, with just as much energy as trying to find the girl he and his brother impregnated, and who now finds herself the ward of Rasalom himself. What, one wonders, is the destiny of her unborn child?

Others also seek the sword, from the powerful Kaze Group, in all appearance a Yakuza-connected business group from Japan, but with far deeper reaches. Kaze Group has appeared in other Wilson novels, and as news of the special sword's re-appearance filters back to them, they send agents to America to retrieve the sword. Curiously, they send only a handful of men, either thinking the task too easy, or as an act of hubris. Jack also is hired to locate the sword, though such a task is far from his speciality. And strangest of all are the malformed monks, a group whose individuals slice off limbs in an effort

to reach nirvana, and who seek vengeance for events that took place in *Black Wind* during WWII.

The action moves swiftly. The series nears completion, with only a couple of new books remaining. Many future events remain open, and with new actors that appear here to stay, I'm starting to wonder how Wilson will wrap up all the events and when Jack will actually gain the powers for which the members of the so-called good guys have been grooming him. *By the Sword* managed to restore some of my faith in the storyline after the previous book had caused some emotional anguish, yet the odds seem stacked against Jack and the rest of the human race. I am fairly glad that I remember few details from *Nightworld*, and since the book has been heavily revised I plan to wait until after the last new book before even trying to buy *Nightworld* to see how the story ends.

There are few of the trademark Repairman Jack fixes in this novel, yet time and time again he proves he's one resourceful person, not to mention somewhat lucky in fights and engagements. We even get more of Glaeken's backstory, a little bit of *Highlander*-like allusions, and a sword vs. gun scene that I had to re-read a couple of times from the impressive way Wilson dealt with such an issue, especially when the sword contains strange time and space-bending abilities. The Repairman Jack series may well go down as one of the most memorial fiction series, blending various elements of thriller, horror, mystery, and the firm conviction and individualism of its protagonist. Enjoy it while it lasts.



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