



Science Fiction Society of Northern New Jersey

SFSNNJ NEWSLETTER

What's Love Got To Do With It?

February 2009

| Sunday | Monday   | Tuesday  | Wednesday   | Thursday | Friday   | Saturday   |
|--------|--|--|---|----------|--|--|
| 1      | 2  | 3<br>7p <i>That's Science Fiction</i><br>Teeth (2007)<br>Hillsdale Library     | 4   | 5        | 6  | 7  |
| 8      | 9<br>8p <i>Suspense Central Heart-Shaped Box</i> by Joe Hill<br>Borders Books,<br>Garden State Plaza Mall, Paramus, NJ | 10   | 11<br>8p <i>Drawing A Crowd</i><br>New Moon Comics,<br>Little Falls, NJ                 | 12       | 13   | 14<br>7p <i>Whispers from Beyond</i><br>8p <i>Face the Fiction</i><br>Guests: Peter Gutierrez & Rob Hauschild<br>Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Ramsey, NJ |
| 15     | 16   | 17   | 18<br>8p <i>Films to Come</i><br>4 Star Film Discussion<br>Borders Books,<br>Ramsey, NJ | 19       | 20   | 21<br>2:30p <i>Fantasy Gamers Group</i><br>Reality's Edge Game Store   |
| 22     | 23   | 24<br>8p <i>Themes of the Fantastic</i><br>New Moon Comics<br>Little Falls, NJ | 25  | 26       | 27<br>8p <i>Modern Masters</i><br>Star Doc by S.L. Viehl<br>Borders Books,<br>Ramsey | 28<br>2p <i>Infinite Chaos: Temnia Campaign</i><br>Ehrensfels Manor<br>Rutherford, NJ  |
| 29     |  |  |   |          |  |  |



# February Face the Fiction

"From Fan to Pro... and Back Again"

How can simply watching too many movies as a fan lead to writing about them professionally... or starting a magazine... or a DVD label? And is there really such a big difference between the terms "fan" and "pro" as some would have us believe?

For probably longer than they care to admit, Rob Hauschild and Peter Gutiérrez have been channeling their fannish tendencies into things like journalism, writing comics, media production, and teaching. In this slideshow-based talk, they'll discuss their personal genre touchstones—not as classics deemed such by "experts" but as pop culture items that have inspired them and, in many cases, probably you as well. From the guilty pleasures of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street's grindhouses in the '70s and '80s to the even guiltier pleasures of NYC's similarly extinct art/revival house scene, the speakers will chart a past that remains too vital to them for its exploration to be called nostalgic. (*Peter Gutierrez*)

**Rob Hauschild** - Rob Hauschild is a New Jersey-based writer, editor and cult film purveyor whose genre credits include Fangoria, Total Movie and RAMP, alongside many other mags and fanzines. His three-part series, "Heavy Horrors" compiles a history of heavy metal music and themes in horror movies and currently appears in Metal Maniacs magazine. Rob also founded and published the cult genre magazine VeX (1995-2000), and is presently co-owner and producer for DVD label Wild Eye, focusing on offbeat horror and cult movies. Rob can be seen in the documentary Creature Feature: 50 Years of the Gillman, where he serves as expert on domestic and international movies that are knock-offs of the original Creature from the Black Lagoon; he is also featured/ interviewed in the upcoming Outlaw Horror Geeks: The Book and can currently be heard most Sunday nights at midnight on New Jersey freeform radio WFMU (91.1) as a guest of absurdist stunt radio host Professor Dum Dum.

**Peter Gutierrez** - Peter Gutiérrez has been a professional writer for close to twenty years. He is probably best known for his work in comics in the 1990's when he wrote the best-selling indie title SHI: THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR, eventually spending several years under contract developing a film version that was never produced. The other comics characters he was fortunate enough to write include Grifter, Daredevil, and Witchblade. As an editor, he developed the historically-minded SHI: SENRYAKU mini-series, which featured art by Jeff Smith, Joe Quesada, Marc Silvestri, and Jim Lee among others. In 1997, he was nominated for a Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for creating and writing SHI: KAIDAN, a collection of original Japanese ghost stories on which he collaborated with Michael Kaluta, David Mack, and Stan Sakai.

These days Peter is still involved in the world of comics and graphic novels, focusing on their value to both literature and literacy. Recent speaking engagements include the '08 and '09 New York Comic Cons, SPLAT! (the graphic novel symposium), the New York City School Library Fall Conference, and Fordham University's "Graphica in Education" conference in late January [1/31/09]. On May 8 he will speak at a daylong celebration of comics and graphic novels at the combined Massachusetts Library Association and Massachusetts School Library Annual Conference. Much of his work in this area is done as an advisor to Diamond Book Distributors, to whose magazine BOOKSHELF he is a frequent contributor. He is also the graphic novel columnist for FOREWORD Magazine, and has written on the topic for GRAPHIC NOVEL REPORTER, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, and COMIPRESS.

Peter also uses comics in his teaching in the Montclair school system, where this past fall he taught "Super-Powered Comics Reading" and last winter he taught a media literacy course entitled "What Makes a Superhero Super?" He has been teaching film appreciation and media literacy since 1990, most recently last spring, with a course called "Fantasy Films, from Oz to Harry Potter." Peter has written on film for RUE MORGUE, SCREEN EDUCATION, and UGO NETWORKS in addition to small market horror publications such as SHROUD and WITHERSIN. His essay on Phil Mucci's "silent horror flick" THE LISTENING DEAD will soon appear in the companion book to that film.

For the library market Peter has authored nonfiction books on such topics as European literature and Asian culture, and has also written nonfiction and fiction for print and media publishers such as The Financial Times, Sesame Workshop, Harcourt, McGraw-Hill, and National Geographic. Peter is currently under contract to Scholastic for a book on scriptwriting in movies, comics, video games, and other media due out in the fall of 2010, the fifth book he has written for the publisher. His specialty is the use of high-interest media in the classroom and to this end has blogged on media and fandom for MIT's Project New Media Literacies. As a member of the Commission on Media of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the largest educator organization in the U. S., Peter helps organize its annual Media Gallery and is a consultant to its film festival.

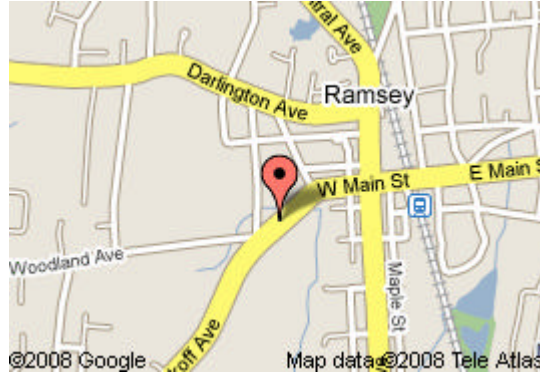
Very occasionally Peter still produces fiction; last summer two short stories of his were anthologized in DARK TERRITORIES, from GSHW, and in the third volume of READ BY DAWN, the international series affiliated with Edinburgh's Dawn by Dawn film festival. Other markets to which he has sold short genre fiction include APEX SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR DIGEST, TQR STORIES, UNICORN 8 and RENDING THE VEIL. In 2006, the editors of the online literary magazine AntiMuse selected his horror poem, "his face, a rebuttal" for "Best in Show" honors.

By day a consultant to print and media publishers such as Toon Books, Peter contributes to Firefox News in his spare time, interviewing filmmakers and writing on noir, horror and dark fantasy across media. However, the project in 2009 he is probably most excited about is writing the liner notes to a new zombie DVD from Wild Eye Releasing.

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Location: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 55 Wyckoff Avenue, Ramsey, NJ 07442, (201) 327-0148. This is the same location as our holiday meeting/dinner. Look for Ramsey Library, the Church of the Redeemer is diagonally across the street - it's the big, brick building – hard to miss. Parking is in the rear.



## January Meeting Recaps

**That's Science Fiction!** – Tuesday, January 6

Moderator: Chris Hasselkus

Title: **Street Trash**

\*\*Postponed due to inclement weather

**Face the Fiction** – Saturday, January 10

Guest: L.A. Banks

\*\*Postponed due to inclement weather. Rescheduled for March 14, 2009.

**Suspense Central** – Monday, January 12

Moderator: Aurelia Long

Title: *Book discussion*

Recap by: Ann-Marie

Suspense Centrals first meeting of 2009 was particularly fun. Unfortunately, much of that fun was had at Todd's expense.

The meeting started with Todd detailing his *Adventures in Vegas*. After hearing Todd's story, we know why "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Apparently, his trip went something like this: shooting WWII guns (including machine guns), crossing the border after rolling down the Hoover Dam in a rushed exodus after sundown, and Zoomanity. OK, I may have left out a few finer points, but we were laughing hysterically. The more Todd explained, the harder we laughed. ZII chip Todd, ZII chip.

When we finally calmed down enough to breath properly, Aurelia began the meeting officially. Newcomer Scott joined us, as we recalled the 2008 line-up of books and put them into two piles: *Trash* and *Salvage*. We had MUCH fun deciding where the books would go and why. Of course, Todd provided us grand entertainment here too, as he felt his books were unfairly criticized. We also were excited about two soon-to-be-released films, *Off Season* and *Offspring*. These movies are based on the books by Jack Ketchum (SFSNNJ member and past guest speaker). We read *Off Season* in 2008. Aurelia would like to do a tie-in with *Off Season* when the movie comes out and have a special viewing. We agreed.

Aurelia will also be doing a few other tie-ins to other meetings. In April, Suspense Central will be discussing the book *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett; this will tie-in to That's Science Fiction!'s showing of the movie *Maltese Falcon*. In June, Suspense Central will discuss *Hunt for Red October*, with a tie-in to That's Science Fiction! again.

Onto the books! I'll list the **Trash** pile first:

*Hell With the Ladies* and *Surviving Demon Island*! I know, one of us (Chris H) was shocked! He liked them...keep in mind the whole ABBA fixation though. As Aurelia put it, both books "gotta go." Liz B added that while both books were not stellar literary material, both provided an enormous amount of fun during their respective meetings. We had a lot of fun trashing those books and looking for demons - much laughter and mayhem occurred during those meetings. Our favorite 2008 moment happened during the meeting for *Surviving Demon Island* - it was agreed that Aubrey's highlights and post-its were unforgettable! Aurelia thought his enthusiasm for *Demon Island* was contagious and looks forward to more dramatic readings from Aubrey and his post-its. Also making the **Trash** list were *Vellum* and *Ink*. Words like ponderous, daunting, dense (those were the nice ones) were used. Todd, having picked the books, still defended them vehemently - we just laughed. Todd was on a roll last night. Honorable mention goes to *Bluelight* (we did not read this book, Aurelia did, and she was scarred).

Now the **Salvage** pile:

1) *Off Season* - we liked this book. It was dark, ugly, and brutal. Aurelia's only complaint, it wasn't scary enough. Can't wait for the movies.

2) *Plague Dogs*

3) *Snake Agent: A Detective Chen Novel* - we all liked this one and its sequel that was discussed in Modern Masters. The story, characters, settings, had us hooked.

## January Meeting Recaps

- 4) *Hell's Belles* - we really liked this one and we like the author, our good friend Jackie Kessler even more! We will be doing the sequel to *Hell's Belles*, *Road to Hell* later this year in Suspense Central.
- 5) *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* - what can I say, we like the sociopath.
- 6) *Way of the Wolf* - rebels fighting vampires, dark, seedy undergrounds, ubervamps and more.
- 7) *Crossover: A Cassandra Kresnov Novel* - AI, warring governments, spies, car chases, and interplanetary chaos.
- 8) *The Haunting of Alazabel Cray* - dark London, a cool Victorian setting, any monster of myth you can think of, dark magic, slayers...liked it.
- 9) *Say Goodbye*

After discussing the books of 2008, we tossed out suggestions. Aurelia would like to add an L.A. Banks book, and Todd brought several promising looking books to the table. Aurelia mentioned that Suspense Central will be at Borders, Garden State Plaza through May, and then will move back to Panera on Rt. 4 through December. In all, a fun, productive night. Join us next month for Heart-Shaped Box by Joe Hill - creepy, mean ghost.

### Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, January 14

Topic:  
Recap by:

### Films to Come – Wednesday, January 21

Moderator: Barry Weinberger  
Recap by: Ann-Marie

**Films to Come** opened 2009 with a new time and a slightly new format. Both were well received.

Our intrepid moderator started things off by giving a brief recap of Films to Come 2008. He went over the format of his handouts listing upcoming movies by month, Entertainment Weekly, and a few other pertinent details. Barry had a list of the top grossing movies of 2008. 27 releases made over \$100,000,000. After going over these items, Barry moved on to the films.

We started with the December releases. Barry read the movies and asked attendees who had seen the film and asked for input/opinions/recommendations/warnings. First up was *Revolutionary Road*. Barry described this "good but not great" film as, "Mad Men meets Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Chris enjoyed it.

*Marley and Me* - thank you Craig for telling us the ending. ;)

*Doubt* - this one led to a discussion on Catholic schools. Gene assures us of the accuracy - he survived Catholic school - barely.

*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* - those who had seen the movie seemed to agree that the film had the feel of a reread of *Forest Gump*. Todd had read the F. Scott Fitzgerald short story the movie was based on. Barry offered that it had "a touch of pretension."

*Twilight* - the 7th highest grossing film of 2008. Our moderator's explanation of the movie? "It's a vampire thing."

*Frost/Nixon* - Mike saw a preview. Todd heard Reel Time. Barry thought it was one of the year's best.

*The Spirit* - Barry fell asleep. He felt the movie was hard to watch with a "weird pacing." Chris felt ripped-off. This did lead to an engaging discussion of Frank Miller.

*Changeling and Gran Torino* - both Clint Eastwood films were discussed. Unfortunately, Todd heard a comment Gene said incorrectly, leading us off into a strange tangent. Gene remarked that we should see these films so we can "support Clint in his retirement." Todd, who knows why, thought he said "support Clinton in his retirement." Barry had a moment and couldn't remember how to do his Clinton impersonation. Mark told him to, "channel your inner Bubba." It worked...

*Punisher: War Zones* - Mark's "almost rises to great trash, but not quite" seemed to hit the nail on the head with this one. Todd responded with, "it's a violent A-Team episode." Gene thought it was OK - he figured "it was what it was."

Other films rounding out the December list: *Waltz With Bashir*, *Valkyrie*, *The Reader*, *The Wrestler* (Chris thought Mickey Rourke was superb). We wrapped up the December 2008 list and moved on to a slightly new addition - *First Look 2009*, a list of upcoming films for 2009 (not listed by specific month, but a general overview).

*First Look 2009* was a list of films slated for release in 2009. It was interesting to see what people were waiting for, not thrilled about and what we had to look forward to. Movies we'll be discussing at future Films to Come: *Watchmen*, *Land of the Lost*, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, *Terminator Salvation*, *Harry Potter, Up*, *Angels & Demons* (will the hair return?) and *Year One*. Those of us present really liked this new list. It was fun to get a glimpse and toss out what we expected from the film. *Wolverine* seems to

## January Meeting Recaps

have generated some interest. Will *Land of the Lost* have the same amazingly astounding special effects (aka you can see the hand holding the plastic dinosaur)? Todd was also very confused about the T-Rex that had no teeth! How can it be a T-Rex if had no teeth? He'll probably be outside theaters protesting - "no teeth, no T-Rex!"

At this point, Todd and Craig were throwing themselves on the floor in hungry protest. Barry, taking pity (it was after 9:30 after all), showed us a few books he thought might be of interest. He quickly revoked his interest in a Stephen King book he brought over (*Stephen King Goes to the Movies*) when he found out it simply was Stephen King revisiting five of his favorite short stories that have been turned into films. We cleaned up and headed over to Macaroni Grill for more conversation, food and an overall good time. Good job Barry for a successful transition to a new time, and for a great meeting.

### **Modern Masters** - Friday, January 23

Moderator: Todd Ehrenfels

Title: *Wolfsbane & Mistletoe* edited by Charlaire Harris

Recap by: Ann-Marie

The night started off at Mahwah Pizza & Pasta for a very nice dinner. Barry felt that since the meeting was about "some book," that dinner would be a Films to Come sequel. Conversation ranged from movies to TV (S-U-P-E-R-N-A-T-U-R-A-L) to the evening's book, *Wolfsbane & Mistletoe*. We settled up the tab and headed over to Borders where we were met by several people already set up at and raring to go.

The book discussed, *Wolfsbane & Mistletoe*, was edited by Charlaire Harris and Toni L.P. Kelner. It's a collection of short stories about werewolves. Some of our favorite authors (Simon R. Green, Charlaire Harris, Ron Thurman, Kat Richardson) contributed stories. They were funny, gory, creepy, but all well written. Not one dud in the bunch.

I must write that *moderator did not read the book* - Aurelia said so and made Todd bow his head in shame.

We started off by asking attendees what their favorite story was. Liz and Kathleen both chose *Gift Wrap* by Charlaire Harris. The main character in the tale was a figure that has become familiar to many because of Charlaire's HBO series *Trueblood*, Suki Stackhouse. Suki receives a very special gift from her great-grandfather on Christmas Eve in the form of a rather hunky lycanthrope with some excess energy to burn...Happy Holidays Suki.

Moira had a tie for her favorite category. She chose *Werewolf Before Christmas* by Kat Richardson and *SA* by J.A. Konrath. Moira felt *Werewolf Before Christmas* was creative from beginning to end and she loved the twists. What impressed her about *SA* was the use of dialog and the fully developed characters.

To give an example of why she loved the dialog, Moira and Todd gave us *Modern Masters-In-The-Round Dinner Theater* and read a particularly funny scene between the main character and a call-in phone operator working a "crisis" line for lycanthropes. It turned out that Todd's character was the Naperville Ripper! Poor guy had been going on killing sprees and didn't even know it. He calls the hot line for help when he discovers some hilarious evidence leading to the possibility that he may indeed turn into a wolf. The operator he gets, played by Moira with droll perfection, talks him through his ordeal. When Todd explains that all of the people he killed were "bad people," we lost it. Moira's operator tells him to get to an SA Meeting pronto - SA being Shapeshifters Anonymous. The secret password to get in? TALBOT. This was a delightful story with many funny little trivia-type names and detail. We had fun recalling what werewolf movie the various names had come from and found it even more amusing to talk about the different types of 'shifters' in the story. Were-tortoise, were-coral and Moira's operator was a were-squirrel! When she shifts, she stays full-sized! Can you imagine a squirrel over 5' tall running around?!

This led to my story about a visit to the Bronx Zoo where I left with a souvenir I could have left without - a black-eye from a nut that a squirrel had dropped from a tree. Barry very thoughtfully informed me that the squirrel had briefly been a NY Yankee. Ha Ha, very funny. It was...OK, it was, even at my expense. Big Thanks to Kathleen for reminding me of the incident. It was something to see and had us not only laughing, but also getting into the story. It was a nice touch too for those who hadn't read the story.

Aurelia liked *The Night Things Changed* by Dana Cameron. This one combined werewolves and vampires.

Todd then read two stories (as punishment for not reading the book before the meeting). He read *Lucy At Christmastime* by Simon R. Green and *Haire of the Beast* by Donna Andrews. Two very different stories, with very feels.

*Lucy At Christmastime* is about Leo Morn, a character from Green's *Nightside*, talking about his first love Lucy. The end provides an unexpected twist a rather dark twist. *Haire of the Beast*, on the other hand, was light and funny. Think scorned ex-girlfriend, a

## January Meeting Recaps

grimoire, a spell and a were-Lhasa Apso. Do not eat the brownies!!

We finished up by discussing books we've read and would recommend. Moira jotted down several names and was eager to find more Kat Richardson. We had read Richardson's first book, *Greywalker*, for Suspense Central and highly recommended her work. We closed the store at 11:00p. Next month's selection is *Star Doc* by S.L. Viehl.

### Themes Of The Fantastic - Tuesday, January 27

Moderators: Bill Wagner & Steve Spinosa

Topic: Worst of Round-Up SFS style

Recap by: Steve Spinosa, Todd, Ann-Marie

Our first Themes meeting of 2009 was a fun and entertaining meeting in which everyone in the room (including store owner Rob) chose three scrabble letters each to use as the basis for their answers (the idea came from club member Steve Rubin. Topic categories were thrown in by Ann-Marie who thoughtfully created the letters).

There were five Go-rounds plus a lightning round near the end of the night. First Go-Round Answers: -The Man with The X-Ray Eyes (Steve S.), V (TV series-Gene), Zorro, the Gay Blade (Bill), Heaven's Gate (a non-genre pick from Chris), Re-Animator (Josephine), It! The Terror From Outer Space (the basis for Alien -Chuck G), Troll (Todd), Fanny & Alexander (another non-genre pick from Jim), Stargate: Atlantis (Barry), & Mirrors (Ann-Marie).

Second Go-Round: Easy Come, Easy Go (an Elvis picture from Steve S.), Last Action Hero (Gene), Watchmen (Barry says will be Rated R when released-good or bad?), Q: *The Winged Serpent* (film choice by Bill), Jackass the Movie (Chris), Goblin (under the category Worst Ever/Ann-Marie), Indiana Jones 4 (Josephine), Superman 4 (Chuck), The Abyss (Todd) - which prompted a discussion on whether it was the original theatrical cut or the director's cut between Rob & Todd), Popeye with Robin Williams (a high concept movie that failed, according to Jim).

Third Go-Round: the sci-fi channel movie Bats (Steve S), Star Trek The Motion Picture (Gene), Aquaman (Barry - he first said anything to do with the character, then modified it to the TV show pilot), Demon Seed (film based on Dean R. Koontz's book-Bill), The 1976 film of King Kong (Chris), The films Orca & Orphanage (Ann-Marie), Surviving Demon Island (under the category Bad Book-Josephine), Erihba (i.e. Godzilla vs. The Sea Monster-Chuck), The Star Crystal (Worst-ever film according to Todd) Airport'75(Jim) & Android(from Rob).

The fourth go-round started with Steve S. mentioning Ang Lee's version of THE HULK, followed by Power Rangers by Gene. Chris ranted against Tarentino's film Reservoir Dogs and Josephine suggested the cult film Howard The Duck. Todd did a hilarious imitation of a drunken Kevin Sorbo to justify his pick of Hercules: The Legendary Journeys, and Jim mentioned a philosophical point to justify Reality Bites. Steve Spinosa picked Journey To The Center of Time as his free letter to kick-off round five, while Bill cited a much-mutilated TV Version of The Wild Bunch as Bad SF (which he said meant "Bad Sam Peckinpah"). Chris picked Hudson Hawk, and Ann-Marie picked From Dusk to Dawn & Yor. Todd took Mary Worth under the category Bad Comic before the Lightning round began.

Highlights of the Lightning Round: Bill took Star Wars parts 1-3, while Chris chose Under The Rainbow, a backstage look at filming The Wizard Of Oz. Ann-Marie's choices were Willow or The Wraith, and Jo took The Never-Ending Story 3. Todd chose Richard Fawkes the author for Bad Author before heading out to Newark Airport, Jim chose Reptilicus, and Chuck took the last choice with Abbott & Costello Go To Mars. Steve had no closing remarks, so Bill closed the meeting at 10:00 p.m. And a good time was had by all!!! **(Steve)**

This was possibly the best, and most fun meeting we have ever had. Steve R's game made this not just a challenge, but a really exciting brain teaser! Kudos to you for forming order from chaos and keeping the discussion moving. For those who missed this one: we absolutely have to do this again! We were trotting out things that half of us had never seen or heard of and would never have gotten mentioned at a meeting otherwise. I think that we should also do up our own Trivial Pursuit Cards and test each other's SF Fan Cred! **(Todd)**

I have to agree with Todd. Themes was a lot of fun. We had a great time challenging ourselves to come up with answers based on the letters we chose. Some people got creative, some (don't want to mention names, Barry) had doohickey's for help. Chris, Jo and I switched letters with each other when no one was looking ;). Poor Chris was greatly ridiculed for picking *Reservoir Dogs* - he was told to turn his chair around and face the wall. *Ebbie* he likes, but pans *Reservoir Dogs*! I think a lynch-mob may have been waiting in the parking lot for him.

## January Meeting Recaps

Bill's "oooooh, that's a good bad movie!" about Jo's *Howard the Duck* was funny. He looked like he wanted to steal her answer.

Chuck came up with a movie we hadn't heard of - good recall Chuck (Erihba).

Gene entertained us by spelling out words with his letters.

Barry took some creative license with the game and got really creative at some points. He even brought up a movie not yet released! *Watchmen*. His curve? He used the hook that it would be R-rated and then turned it to the group to "discuss." Hmm, very clever Holmes, very clever.

Thanks to Jim for playing the awesome game-show assistant and handing out the letters.

Thanks to Steve and Bill for moderating the mayhem. We laughed as much as we provided answers. We'll definitely do this again - with doohickey's banned... just saying **(AM)**

### Medium Screen Classics – Saturday, January 3, 2009

On Saturday a select group of SFSNNJ members met at the Hillsdale Library to enjoy our third year of Medium Screen Classics. This group continues its proud and fun tradition of offering film-festival style all-day programming to showcase things we might not otherwise have ever seen on the Big Screen. This month we dedicated the day to showing premiers of TV shows from the past few years that you might otherwise have missed. The original line-up had to be scrapped due to the fact that the DVD collection for one of the shows had still yet to be delivered to Todd, in spite of an early December order date.

The day started off with a showing of the premiere of *Farscape*. *Farscape*, a Buck Rogers-esque fish out of water story, premiered almost a decade ago, in 1999, on the SciFi Channel. The program was a collaborative effort between SciFi, Hallmark Entertainment, and Jim Henson Studios, and featured an impressive cast of humans and puppets. The premiere tells the story of John Crichton (Ben Browder), an IASA Astronaut who gets caught in a wormhole and ends up flung all the way to the other end of the universe. Upon arrival, Crichton stumbles upon a battle between small fighter-craft (one of which bumps into him and is destroyed) and an enormous spaceship. The spaceship, *Moya*, is a prison ship, whose occupants are attempting to flee their persecutors, a race of people known as The Peacekeepers. John is imprisoned by the escapees along with Peacekeeper Aeryn Sun (Claudia Black), as the other aliens assume that Crichton is also a Peacekeeper. The ship's pilot, simply referred to as Pilot (voice of Lani Tupu), indicates that the ship requires some supplies in order to complete their escape, and so Ka D'Argo (Anthony Simcoe), Pa'u Zahn (Virginia Hey), and Dominar Rigel XVI (a puppet voiced by Jonathan Hardy) go down to a nearby planet. Unsuspecting that they would draw the ire of the leader of the Peacekeepers in the sector, the escaped prisoners conduct their business while Captain Bialar Kraiss (Lani Tupu in the flesh) tracks them down to avenge himself upon Crichton for the death of his brother (the pilot who accidentally bumped Crichton during the battle). Hijinx ensue. This was a fun and exciting show, with a really wonderful opening. The production was rich in tone and texture, and even the obvious puppets could be forgiven their gawkiness.

Next on the docket was *Total Recall 2070*. The premiere of this show (entitled *Machine Dreams*) first aired, like *Farscape*, in 1999 on Showtime Network and featured a future, which encompassed both the *Total Recall* and *Bladerunner* franchises. The show follows the exploits of David Hume (Michael Easton) and his new partner, Ian Farve (Karl Pruner) as they investigate a series of crimes committed by Beta level androids (not quite replicants) against the ReKall Corporation. The pilot details the machinations of James Callay of the Assessors Office (a government agency that is supposed to police corporate excesses) in his quest to topple Mr. Collector (Nick Mancuso), the security exec at ReKall. The story is a byzantine tale of kidnapping, murder, corporate espionage, and betrayal set in a somewhat grim future. The production was very unique, and elicited a great deal of comment from all concerned (some positive, some negative). Unfortunately, Todd lied and there was both nudity and cussing (sorry).

Lastly was originally supposed to be the premiere of the show *First Wave* from the SciFi Channel (sadly it has not yet been delivered and was therefore unavailable to show), however the ever-resourceful Chris Hasselkus had copies of *Firefly* on hand to show. *Firefly* follows the crew of the tramp freighter *Serenity* through their first voyage together with several passengers who become part of the crew. Captain Malcom Reynolds (Nathan Fillion) operates just on the edge of the law with his crew comprised of eccentric and colorful characters. These folks live and die on the strength of their salvaged cargoes and whatever coin they can get from paying passengers. The story of the crew shows a group of criminals with a strong moral backbone... well, except for Jane (Adam Baldwin)... trying to scrape by in a universe where any misstep could mean prison or worse. This was a great series, and a deal was said about Fox's lack of support for the show.



## January Meeting Recaps

Afterwards, we all retired to the Ridge Diner in Park Ridge for an early supper.

I think that this was a really great, fun selection of shows, and I want to thank everyone who was there for making this not only a great viewing, but also a really fun discussion.

Next month we are anticipating doing another set of TV premieres that you never saw with offerings from First Wave, Odyssey 5, and much more.

# Genre News

## **Peter Gutierrez**

Peter's work is always available for viewing at Firefox! To view all of Peter's articles:  
<http://firefox.org/news/authors/14/Peter-Guti%E9rrez>.

Peter has also contributed to Rue Morgue: <http://www.rue-morgue.com/>

## **Aubrey Ward**

Don't forget to check in and see what new articles/reviews Aubrey has: <http://firefox.org/news/authors/158/Aubrey-Ward-III>.

Log on and check out his review of Slumdog-Millionaire: <http://firefox.org/news/articles/2371/1/Movie-Review-Slumdog-Millionaire-2008/Page1.html>

## **Film Reviews**

### **Frost/Nixon by Steve Spinosa**

Jim and I went to the Garden State Plaza AMC 16 in Paramus to see the movie "Frost/Nixon". This tells the behind-the-scenes story of how the famous interview series were set up and recorded between March and May of 1977. Frank Langella did a great job portraying former President Nixon in the film. It depicts how Frost put most of his fortune on the line to finance the series, only to receive sarcasm from his director & his researchers over his soft line of questioning. Nixon, in turn, wanted the opportunity to rehabilitate himself in grand fashion. Frost toughens up his questions and in the end became the only interviewer in history to get an admission of regret, if not guilt, from Nixon for his mistakes. Nixon however refuses to grovel in front of the world (and the hated liberal media). A very good depiction of a history-making event. A+.

### **Wrestlemaniac (DVD) by Steve Spinosa**

This is a review of a film on DVD that I got at our holiday party last month courtesy of Peter Gutierrez. Thank you, Peter! (I hope your kids are enjoying the Tennessee Tuxedo DVD that I donated). "Wrestlemaniac" is a low budget horror film about a coke-snorting Porno director named Alphonse (who looks a lot like Shawn Michaels in disguise) his two assistants, and three luscious ladies, who are driving around in a van in Mexico looking for a place to shoot their film. At a gas station a middle-age gentleman warns them that the town up ahead is haunted by El Mascalero, a legendary masked Mexican wrestler who literally rips the faces off his victims after beating them up. Naturally Alphonse ignores the warning & heads toward the town. During filming, one of the girls gets sick and wanders off, only to become El Mascalero's first victim. The others try to find her and are eventually killed by El Mascalero, who drives off in the van in the end. A bloody gory mess that has very little to do with wrestling per se.

The most interesting thing is the actor who plays "El Mascalero" is listed in the credits as "Rey Misterio". I should point out that this is NOT the Rey Misterio that

currently wrestles in WWE (the wrestler who is using that name in WWE is Oscar Gutierrez, Jr. [any relation, Peter?]) I believe that this maybe Oscar Gutierrez Senior that is acting in this film under that name.

### **Movies Galore by Chris Hasselkus**

Barry and I went on a movie binge. The 4 are:

- (1) The Spirit. Disappointing to say the least. The only thing saving it from an "F" is it's look. Rating: "D".
- (2) The Reader. I had read both books being made into films with Kate Winslet - this one and Revolutionary Road. Deals with a love affair, then the Holocaust. Ambiguous to some degree, but well acted throughout. Rating: "B".
- (3) Gran Tarino. How can you go wrong with ole Clint Eastwood? Criticism of the young actors unfounded. Rating: "B+".
- (4) Doubt. Starring Meryl Sreep (quite different than in Mamma Mia!) and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Based on a play. Well acted, but even more ambiguous than The Reader. Rating: "B".

### **Slumdog- Millionaire**

After seeing this win Best Drama Film as well as Best Director at the Golden Globes, I went to see it. Very well-made film. The lead female actress, Freida Pinto, is truly beautiful. Grade:A

### **The Wrestler**

For those who may be interested, The Wrestler opened at Edgewater and Montclair this week. Hopefully it will open wider tomorrow. The film wasn't great but rather good. Mickey Rourke, however, was as great as everyone has said.

### **Slumdog Millionaire by Gene McGrath**

May I echo those words.... Great film.

