



## *April 2010 Newsletter*

### *Faith and SF: Religion in SF*

#### **That's Science Fiction**

**Tuesday April 6, 2010 – 7p**

Hillsdale Public Library

*Kiki's Delivery Service* - animated

\*Dining follows the movie.

#### **Face the Fiction**

**Saturday April 10, 2010**

8 – 10 p

Borders Books & Music

235 Interstate Shopping Center

Rt. 17 South

Ramsey, NJ 07446

This month we welcome author **Jeff Somers**

#### **Suspense Central**

**Monday April 12, 2010 – 8p**

Borders /Interstate Shopping Center

Rt. 17 South Ramsey, NJ

*The Electric Church* by Jeff Somers

#### **Drawing A Crowd**

**Wednesday April 14, 2010 – 8p**

New Moon Comics

Join moderator Tim Cook as he explores the comic book universe.

For additional information click

[www.newmooncomics.com](http://www.newmooncomics.com).

#### **Fantasy Gamers Group**

**Saturday April 17, 2010 – 2:30p**

Directions available upon request/contact **Todd**

Join us for terror, monsters, madness and more as

GM BJ Pehush explores the city of Arkham MA

with our monthly Call of Cthulu (Chaosium 6th edition) game.

#### **Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group**

#### **Wednesday April 21, 2010 – 7p**

Ramsey Borders/Interstate Shopping Center

This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. Classic, current and upcoming genre and genre-related films, TV, books and media happenings are discussed. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it. \*Dining follows this event.

#### **Themes of the Fantastic**

**Tuesday March 23, 2010 – 8p**

Wayne Public Library

Aspects of religion if SF and genre

[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

#### **Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold**

**Saturday April 24 – 2p – 10p**

**Panera Restaurant Community Room**

**Ramsey, 1300 Rt. 17 North**

Welcome to the Western Nations of Temnia, a brutal and vicious tyranny ruled by the Immortal Emperor, the illustrious Naram'tzin, your boss. This game explores life in the far West, where powerful Samurai serve demon-worshipping madmen, and expediency and survival are balanced by honor and horror. A new day in the Yenxhai Dominions is dawning, and the peaceful nations of the East should beware!

#### **Modern Masters**

**Friday April 27, 2010 – 8p**

Ramsey Borders/Interstate Shopping Center

This month: *Coalescent* by Stephen Baxter.

please visit [www.sfsnnj.com](http://www.sfsnnj.com) for full details

# SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents Jeff Somers

**When:** Saturday, April 10, 2010

**Time:** 8p – 10p

**Where:** Borders Books & Music

- 235 Interstate Shopping Center
- Rt. 17 South
- Ramsey, NJ 07446, 201.760.1967

This month we welcome author Jeff Somers ([www.jeffreysomers.com](http://www.jeffreysomers.com), <http://the-electric-church.com>).

Mr. Somers is a Jersey native, born in Jersey City, NJ. In 1995, Jeff began publishing his own magazine, *The Inner Swine* ([www.innerswine.com](http://www.innerswine.com)) which he hysterically claims "has done nothing for my writing career. Except, perhaps, inhibit it." The Electric Church was inspired by a character in Douglas Adams' Dirk Gently's Holistic Agency - loosely inspired. Jeff says he took "an amusing concept and turned it into something horrifying."

I'd say we are in for one fun night!

## **March Meeting Recaps**

### **That's Science Fiction! – Tuesday March 2, 2010**

#### **Bogus – Todd Ehrenfels**

Fun film, though somewhat formulaic, it was full of stellar performances by Gerard Depardieu, Whoopie Goldberg, and Haley Joel 'I See Dead People' Osment. The crowd was nice, and the Library was, as always, lovely.

The story is of a young boy named Albert (Haley Joel Osment) growing up in Las Vegas with his single mother, Lorainne (Nancy Travis). Albert's friends consist of folks that his showgirl mother works with at the at the circus in the MGM Grand Hotel. When Albert's mother dies in a tragic car accident, her friends are at a loss as to what to do with the boy. Though they all love him very much, they are at a loss as to Albert's fate until the lawyer at the hotel discloses Lorainne's last wishes that Albert be raised by her foster sisten, Harriet Franklin (Whoopie Goldberg). During the flight to picturesque Newark, NJ, Albert makes an imaginary friend by the name of Bogus (Gerard Depardieu), and hijinx ensue as they proceed to turn Harriet's well ordered life topsy-turvy.

While this is not a movie I would want to watch multiple times, I really enjoyed this one. Depardieu's antics were fantastic, and I have to admit, I had almost forgotten how much I liked the giant Frenchman. I absolutely loved his monologue at the end of the film, where he explains the role of invisible friends in our lives, and how we need them up to a point, and then we never even say goodbye, we just move on. Kudos to Liz Belisle on a great pick for this month's film.

While I did not go to the Diner afterwards (watching other people eat is difficult for me), we did chat a bit in the parking lot. Mike Piazza observed that Nancy Travis had her own sitcom at some point, and Liz mentioned that she was pretty sure that she was on another show as well. We were all highly laudatory of the film, in spite of its obviously dated effects and appearance. One thing that I will point out: the film was released in 1996, three years before *The Sixth Sense*, and Osment was stellar, but the look of the film seemed to place it in the late 1980's as opposed to the mid-1990's.

#### **Additional comments – Chris Hasselkus**

*Bogus* (1996) starring Whoopi Goldberg, Gerard Depardieu and a very young Haley Joel Osment was shown at the Hillsdale Library on Tuesday, 3/3/2010. The story concerns a boy who loses his mom in a car crash and has to live with a guardian whom he doesn't like. He has an imaginary friend, Bogus, whom he trusts. The story unfolds as the boy and his guardian get used to each other and eventually bond. Liz Belisle had suggested it and the film was well received. Good times were continued at the Seville Diner. Quite an enjoyable evening.

### **Suspense Central – Monday March 8, 2010**

#### **An Audience for Einstein – Todd Ehrenfels**

Last night we met to discuss *An Audience for Einstein* by Mark Wakely at the Borders store in Ramsey, NJ. Sadly, we did not spend a lot of time on the book itself, as only two of the attendees had read it, but we had a great time discussing books, making recommendations for future meetings, chatting about movies and current events in Science Fiction! It was a great night all around, and continued from the store into the parking lot for nearly another full hour.

*An Audience For Einstein* is an interesting concept book which posits an amoral Doctor who performs a surgery on a 10 year old homeless boy to give him the memories and mind of a dead Nobel laureate astrophysicist at the expense of the boy's own mind (i.e. the boy would essentially become the professor). The philosophical points raised by the book were interesting and worthy of discussion, however the problem was that the character development and writing style were somewhat stunted. The book read more like a YA novel that was tackling really complex moral issues than a more polished novel, but still managed to entertain.

One interesting side conversation that we had was regarding the subject of Vanity Press releases. Barry was curious as to why we would take the chance on a vanity release like this, and I explained that Vanity does not always equal crud. I have come across a number of vanity press books that have been very good, the problem was either that the market was over-saturated by similar books that were just as good, or that the concept was too difficult for the prospective editor to market (let's face it, publishers love easily marketable books, it's how they make money). All things being equal you have a pretty decent chance of picking up a good vanity press book, so long as you do a bit of research. In this case, the novel won an Eppie Award (<http://www.epic-conference.com/index.html>), and while the book was thought provoking, it left too many things unexplained.

Anyway, I'm rambling (much like we were last night), but suffice it to say that a good time was had by all!

### **Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, March 10, 2010 – Todd Ehrenfels**

Oh what a night! Master Moderator Tim Cook started us off with a lecture about how Superheroes were getting too big for their britches and needed to be put down, and explained to us his master plan for eliminating the caped do-gooders. I demanded rulership of Australia in exchange for my assistance in bringing down the heroes, and Tim agreed (start buttering me up now Ozzies and I will be a fair ruler). Discussion then moved to Tim stating that he liked Superman a little bit better after watching Batman/Superman Public Enemies and Crisis on Two Earths, in which Supes is voiced by Mark Harmon (the image of him Gibbs-slapping Batman amused us all).

Attention then turned to the missed February discussion, Black Superheroes, and Bill Wagner recommended that we combine last month and this month to do Young Black Superheroes, a move that Tim endorsed with great panache! We then round-robin around the table and made suggestions, which I should have written down. Suffice it to say that the following heroes and topics were covered:

Black Panther

Buck Rogers

Crossed

The Green Hornet

Flash Gordon

The Flash

Franklin Richards

Luke Cage

Nick Fury

The Rising Stars

Skar son of Hulk

Spaaaaaaaaace Ghooooooooooooost!

Storm

Superboy

Super Trio

Tarzan (surprise, BJ brought that up, not Bill!, though we did play six degrees of Edgar Rice Burroughs before the meeting)

The Teen Titans

Thunderbolt/ Jemaine

The Young Avengers

Conversation then turned to whether characters should be allowed to age, or should be changed from their basic original stock characters. Barry made an excellent and compelling argument that the publishers should stop monkeying around with the characters and just let their backstories change organically (Frank Castle/the Punisher should always just reference the most recent major war as the one he is a veteran of instead of them rebooting him every 10 years and making changes). Steve Ruben, BJ, Haywood, Tim and I all cited other instances on both sides of the fence, and the discussion was clearly a very interesting one, as all were making points ranging from Star Trek to Nick Fury and beyond. This is the kind of in depth discussion that makes a great meeting, and I think that we all had a good time threshing out our opinions. The real question is: what does the future hold for comics?

Join us next month as we tackle the topic of gods, religion, and faith in comics. Tim is excited about this one, and so, to be frank, am I!

Recommended Reading: The Wormwood Chronicles by Garth Ennis from Avatar Entertainment, available at New Moon Comics!

### **Face the Fiction: Jackie Kessler– Saturday, March, 2010 - Todd Ehrenfels**

First, let me apologize for the delay in getting this posted. As most, if not all, of you know, there was a major storm that hit around here on Saturday, which caused a lot of damage, and no few problems. Half of my town is without power, and though I am in the half with power, my brother and his family are not, and thus I am spending some time with my nephews, and donating my bed to my brother & sister-in-law. That being said...

Saturday was a great, fun night for those who braved the elements to chat with our dear friend Jackie. I arrived at 6:30 to find a nice assortment of friends already talking to Jackie, and I quickly seated myself in the front row. Why? Well, to suck up, of course! Seriously, though, it was because I was recording the event. That's right, stay tuned because we will now be broadcasting parts of our Face the Fiction events, much like we did when Charlaine Harris came to call! Yes, the SFSNNJ, always free, always fun, and always innovating!

OK, so what did we get to see? Well, Jackie started off with a bit of background and explained her Great American Novel, with a wry grin, and then her several attempts to break into the writing field. After scoring triple-digit rejections

on her fantasy work, she tried her hand at chick-lit with a story about working in an adult boutique. Next, she tried her hand at paranormal romance with Suspense Central favorite Hell's Belles, and hit the ball out of the park! We discussed the Hell series for a while, lingering on the most recent additions before Jackie surprised us all with two readings from the next book in the series! That's right, you saw it here first (or you will have seen it here first when I get the video downloaded and posted that is). Look for a release announcement and more information on this awesome book in June!

Conversation moved on to Black and White, another Suspense Central pick from earlier this year, and we chatted about the creative process for Jackie and co-author Caitlin Kittridge. Apparently, the two authors collaborated almost entirely by email, working two chapters at a time (a Then and a Now chapter), and playing off each other in a fairly free-form manner. This process was duplicated in Shades of Gray, which is due out on June 22, and will make a perfect gift for Todd, for those trying to get their birthday planning done early. We discussed the Icarus Project, Frostbite & Meteorite, Corp Co, and the structure of the new book at length, but the only thing I am going to tell you is: wait till 6/22!

Next we discussed a project which Jackie was incredibly passionate about, Hunger. This novel, due out in October of this year, is Jackie's first foray into the YA genre. Having learned from the inestimable example of Judy Bloom's Wifey, Jackie wanted to use a nom-de-plume for her YA books, lest teenagers start wandering into the racier Hell novels, so these books are published under the name Jackie Morse Kessler. The book itself revolves around several important issues among teenagers: body image and eating disorders. Jackie, who struggled with these issues herself, wanted to write a book that tackled these issues in a manner that would not preach or condescend, but rather enlighten. How did she manage this herculean task? By making sure that she wrote an absolutely amazing story! Jackie read two chapters from the book, and all I can say about them is "WOW!" I was floored, and am eagerly waiting to read this one. Hunger deals with an anorexic teenager named Lisa, who, after a failed attempt at suicide, finds that she has become the avatar of Famine. Yes, capital F, as in Horseman of the Apocalypse Famine! Jackie also discussed the sequel, Rage, about a young girl who self-injures and becomes the avatar of War. Plans are already in the works for Pestilence and Death avatar books. Tackling issues like these is what makes authors great, and I think that we would all agree that Jackie is a great author, a class act, and a fantastic guest!

Afterward, we all slogged our way to the Kingsbridge Diner, where I watched everyone else enjoy their meals... not that I am jealous, or planning on becoming the avatar of Famine or anything...

### **Films to Come – Wednesday, March 17, 2010**

#### **AM**

Our Master of All Things Entertainment and Moderator extraordinaire, Barry, led a varied and fun discussion that ranged from Oscar winners to recommendations from attendees.

Barry started the meeting with an Oscar discussion. The winners, the losers, the surprises and compared them to the predictions made at last month's meeting.

Prepared with the list of current and upcoming films (January, March, April), Barry asked for feedback. What movies had been seen, would you recommend the film and if not, why?

- *Alice in Wonderland* had been seen by the majority and was recommended.
- Another popular movie was *Avatar* - almost everyone had seen *Avatar* and gave it a thumbs up.
- *Shutter Island* was a movie Barry had seen - he described it as strange to watch and even more strange to describe, but felt it worthwhile (even with the glitches incurred during the viewing).

A listing of the *Big Screen Classics* movies was provided along with corresponding information on director, Maltin rating, and other films with a star rating from the same director.

Barry then challenged the group to answer how many films to date in 2010 had broken the \$100,000,000 mark. I guessed 5 - I was close, it was three. Rounding out the list was *Avatar* which released in late 2009.

- *Avatar*: \$730,942,185
- *Alice in Wonderland*: \$215,393,542
- *Valentine's Day*: \$108,892,926

- *Shutter Island*: \$108,809,206

Barry wrapped up the meeting by asking for recommendations from the group. Moshe recommended *Immortal*, a 2004 CG film set in the year 2095 in New York City. The ancient gods of Egypt are housed in a pyramid floating above the city. They are here to pass judgment...uh oh! Barry recommended *MR. Sardonicus* a 1961 film he remembered having watched some time ago. Premise: Sardonicus has a problem with his face - it is grossly disfigured and frozen into an evil grimace. He got this lovely facade when he had to search for a winning lottery ticket that was buried with his father. Sardonicus digs up dear-old-dad, screams when he opens the coffin, and those taunting words from everyone's mother from childhood came back to haunt him: your face will freeze that way! Enter eminent surgeon Sir Cargrave who happens to have been working on a technique for muscle relaxation. Does it work? Does Sardonicus deserve help? Twisted little flick...twisted recommendation;)

Excellent meeting, excellent moderator. We continued the evening over food.

### **Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, March 23, 2010**

#### **Write-up by Steve Spinosa**

The Themes group met last night at the Uno Chicago Grill in Wayne, NJ to discuss Children in SF/Fantasy/Horror. Pre-meeting discussion centered on Steve Rubin's experience with the film Avatar (He hated it).

We started officially around 8:00 p.m. and my opening example was the 1963 film Village of the Damned (which was also Bill & Topher's 1<sup>st</sup> choice of examples). Chuck G. then suggested Alice in Wonderland and explained that Alice is usually set between the ages of 7 and 12, while half of the adults in the story are bad, the other half good, and the Mad Hatter being borderline. Steve Rubin chose the new series Caprica, and Bill W. followed with Battlestar Galatica (and tied in the book of Exodus from the Bible). Topher mentioned Thomas Tryon's book The Other, and Steve Rubin cited Robocop 3, where the drug-lord kingpin is only nine years old. Barry cited Lost in Space with Will Robinson (not to mention Penny) and Next Generation's Wesley Crusher (you could have also included the kids controlled by the Gorgan in Original Star Trek, too). Bill then went on an extended riff on the Heinlein juvenile short stories, including the Rolling Stones and Starship Troopers, among others, and Chuck mentioned Henry Kuttner's works along with Jerome Bixby's short story "It's a Good Life" which was made into a classic Twilight Zone with young Billy Mumy. Topher cited E.T., the Poltergeist & Harry Potter series of films, as well as The Day The Earth Stood Still, with Billy Gray (pre-Father Knows Best) as a boy who befriends Mr. Klattu. Chuck admonished us not to forget Dorothy of the Wizard of Oz story, and Topher countered with Children of the Corn. I mentioned two other Twilight Zone stories involving children: "I Sing The Body Electric" by Ray Bradbury & Earl Hamner's "The Bewitchin' Pool", and Chuck cited a version of The Pied Piper of Hamelin. Topher cited Son of Frankenstein, and Barry added two more Bradbury stories from the film the Illustrated Man ("The Veldt" and "The End of The World"). Todd Dubiak mentioned Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card, and Topher mentioned the film Bogus (a recent TSF selection) as well as The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T, and Chuck added The Phantom Tollbooth.

Barry wrapped up the discussion with a Bradbury story, "All Summer in a Day" and did a monologue on various Simpsons episodes before the bill came. We parted company shortly afterwards.

Join us next time when we'll be back at the Wayne Public Library for another stimulating discussion!! !

### **Modern Masters – Friday, March, 2010**

#### **Write-up by Todd Ehrenfels**

Greetings bibliophiles, and welcome to another exciting adventure in literature. This past Friday we journeyed through space to the world of Cyteen to explore the classic Hugo Award winning novel by master writer C.J. Cherryh. While this one was a very challenging read, we managed to have a great time, and even stay on the subject of the book for the better part of two and a half hours!

The evening started, and ended, with Kathleen and I trying to summarize the book. Yes, the book is long, though it is likely a lot shorter than its size suggests (large type and margins make the book seem more daunting). The reason that the book required so much summarizing? There is simply a lot going on, packed into an interesting world that we are learning about page by page. At any rate, the novel takes place on another planet, the planet Cyteen, where the Resune Corporation is run by Ariane Emory making its profits through the sale of azi (genetically engineered clones) and rejuvenating drugs (drugs that keep people young and extend life). The book opens up with elderly Ariane Emory slowly dying of cancer, a by-product of exposure to the hostile environment of the planet, when she is assassinated. The rest of the book follows Ariane II, a direct clone of the original Ariane Emory, who is being raised in exactly the same manner and style as her predecessor in a Boys From Brazil style experiment. In the midst of this drama, you have adults and children maneuvering each other like chess pieces and working each other with clever psychology and manipulations, all

while trying to figure out who killed the original Ariane Emory and whether Ari II is in any danger.

One thing that kept the discussion moving along was a thorough examination of who the major players were. Understanding the personalities involved in the story was a fun exercise, and Aurelia and Chris had a lot of great questions for Kathleen and I regarding who was who and what they were all doing. A great discussion of the Justin/Jordan relationship, and its dysfunctions took up a lot of attention as well.

In addition to the characters, we discussed a number of really affecting scenes. One was an early birthday party for Ari II, where she discovers that her 'friends' all really hate her and are only there because if they are not friends with her, their parents will be exiled to distant parts of the company. Another great scene that we discussed was the escape of Justin and Grant from Resune, and its parallels to Huck Finn and Jim on the Mississippi.

One criticism of the book was that many of the conversations seemed to make sense, until the end of the conversation, when you realized that most of what the characters were discussing was lies and half-truths, and the rest was sheer manipulation. Another issue was that the third-person tight view structure meant that you had no real idea what most of the characters were thinking or what they knew. It was pointed out that it seemed like everyone in the book knew stuff that we, the readers, never become privy to.

In the end, we wrapped up discussion with only 15 minutes to closing, and the consensus amongst those of us who read the book was that it was a great novel, though frustrating at times. Join us next month as we explore Stephen Baxter's Coalescent, where past, present, and future collide with religion and genetics! I just finished this book myself, and all I can say is WOW! I cannot wait to discuss this one!

### **Special Activity – Lunacon, March 19-21, 2010**

#### **William Wagner**

Attended the annual Lunarians science fiction convention-Lunacon- at the Rye Town Hilton this weekend. Just a short trip over the Tappan Zee from New Jersey or up the Hutch for me from NYC, it was a mostly fun filled weekend. There was the usual dealers room, art show, panels, presentations, discussions, film screenings and demonstrations.

Our friend Susan Palermo (of vodkapasha and susan1136 yahoo group postings) was part of the programming--along with co-star Edward X. Young and several other members of the cast and crew of the short Zombies Are Everywhere, which was screened on Friday and Saturday nights. Susan co wrote and recorded the opening and closing screen credit theme song. The full length The Green Monster, starring Ed, was shown at 1:00 AM Sunday morning.

Other panels attended included one on surviving the Zombie Apocalypse with Ed, Susan, Jonathan Mayberry and others. Another on movies sequels and remakes.

Sunday was lunch with friends Randy and Jennifer Lagana at the P F Changs in the West Chester Mall before heading to the con where Randy had to pick up his pieces in the art show. Randy works in several styles and every time I see a display there is something new and surprising.

His website: <http://www.randylagana.net/>

Also spent some time with Hugo Winning Best Artist Bob Eggelton and his wife Marianne. Always friendly with a big hello, he has done some really nice endpaper drawings for my Burroughs books (Bob, there are no dinosaurs in Jungle Tales of Tarzan--"yes Bill, but I like dinosaurs" was his reply)

<http://bobsartdujour.blogspot.com/>

<http://musedujour.blogspot.com/>

Over the course of the weekend also ran into Barry, Taras, James LeBarre, Sharon, John Upton, Paul Dellechiaie, Kate, Deb, Andy Porter, Joe Siclari, Edi Stern and other famous--and infamous--acquaintances

## **SFSNNJ Member Movie Reviews**

### **Alice in Wonderland – Chris Hasselkus**

The Lafayette in Suffern just installed their new Real 3D system. So Friday night, 3/5/2010, I went to see the film. I had seen some reviews that were only fair (2 stars and C). I really thought it was a 3, B+. The original Alice and Through the Looking Glass that I had just read for a book group didn't really have a plot, per se. Lewis Carroll was just having fun with words and puns and the like. Tim Burton made the film a kind of sequel; Alice was 7 and 7 1/2 in the stories - here she is 19. The plot really comes down to the White Queen (Anne Hathaway) and the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter), sisters fighting for rule. Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter certainly added to the proceedings well, as did Danny Elfman's score. Definitely a worthwhile viewing.

## **Upcoming Conventions**

### ***Boston Comic Con – Comic Book Convention***

The largest comic book convention in New England  
4/10/10 – 4/11/10  
<http://www.scifiontherock.com/>

### ***The Maryland Regional Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention***

Memorial Day Weekend  
May 28 – 31, 2010  
Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn  
Baltimore, MD

Balticon 44  
<http://www.balticon.org/>

Albacon 2010  
<http://www.albacon.org/>

## **SUPERNATURAL**

### **PARSIPPANY, NJ**

Fri., Sat. & Sun.  
July 9-11, 2010  
Hilton Parsippany Hotel/Creation Entertainment's East Coast - Supernatural Convention



### **PARSIPPANY, NJ**

Fri., Sat. & Sun.  
August 13-15, 2010  
August 20-22, 2010