



September 2010 Newsletter

History Through the Eyes Of: Real history told through the eyes of fictional characters.

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday September 7, 2010 – 7p

Hillsdale Public Library

Biggles Adventures In Time

*Dining follows the movie.

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday September 8, 2010 – 8p

New Moon Comics

Historical Comics

For additional information click

www.newmooncomics.com.

Face the Fiction

Saturday September 11, 2010 – 8p

Panera Bread Restaurant

Elizabeth Romanaux

Suspense Central

Monday September 13, 2010 – 8p

Borders /Interstate Shopping Center

Rt. 17 South, Ramsey, NJ

Years of Rice & Salt by Kim Stanley Robinson

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday September 15, 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.

Heroes & Rogues Call of Cthulu 1920's

Saturday September 18, 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)

Modern Masters

Friday September 24, 2010 – 8p

Borders Ramsey/Interstate Shopping Center

Flashman on the March by George MacDonald

Fraser

****pre-meeting dinner: Moe's***

Medium Screen Classics

Saturday September 25, 2010: 11a – 4:30p

Hillsdale Library – Hillsdale, NJ

Schlockfest! Join us for Troll/Troll 2 and MegaShark

VS. Giant Octopus.

Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday September 28, 2010 – 8p

Wayne Public Library

Real History, Fake people

www.waynepubliclibrary.org

please visit www.sfsnj.com for full details

**SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:
Elizabeth Romanau**

This month we have something a bit different, guest Elizabeth Romanau, will talk to us about museums and her work with them. Ms. Romanau is Senior Communications Consultant at Liberty Science Center and part of the NJ Association of Museums.

When: Saturday, September 11, 2010

Where: Panera Bread Restaurant

1300 Rt. 17 North

Ramsey, NJ 07446

201.236.6300

Time: 8p

***FACE THE FICTION: WHERE IMAGINATION LIVES!
ONLY AT THE SFSNNJ***

August Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – Tuesday August 3, 2010

August, Gothic Month, started off on a great note with the creepy, atmospheric, and macabre [Mr. Sardonicus](#). This 1961 film was directed and produced by [William Castle](#). Castle cited in his memoirs that it was one of his favorite films.

The story takes place in 1880 in the fictional central European country of Gorslava (as Todd noted, an interesting if not impossible potpourri of countries, but hey, we went with it). Baron Sardonicus (Guy Rolfe) has a reputation. His shadow strikes fear into the town's people...with good reason. [The Baron](#) has a problem he wants gone and will do whatever it takes to rid himself of the problem. Enter prominent London physician Sir Robert Cargrave (Ronald Lewis).

Sir Robert Cargrave is a well-respected physician. His treatments cure the incurable. His research and techniques are renowned. One fateful day a man (Krull played by [Oskar Homolka](#)) brings a letter, deliverable only to Sir Robert, with cryptic urgency. The "hunchback senior lackey" (Barry's description) totally creeps the desk nurse out. She assures the man she will put the letter in the doctor's hand herself. He begrudgingly leaves. Sir Robert opens the letter to discover it is from his old flame Maude. Maude's father forbids their union because he felt Sir Robert would 'amount to nothing' (aka her father was an opportunistic- in-debt-gambling - addicted- boob). She now reaches out to Sir Robert with a desperate plea that her 'well-being' is dependent on him. He clears his schedule and goes off to Gorslava (if only he'd known).

When Sir Robert arrives, he quickly realizes something isn't quite right in Mr. Sardonicus' neck of the woods. Townspeople are in fear and things don't get better when he reaches the Baron's castle. Upon entering, the first thing he finds is a maid tied to a chair being tortured with leeches. Lackey Krull explains it away by calling it 'research'. Maude is happy to see him but acts skittish and tense. Bet she wishes she had told dear-old-dad to stuff it all those years ago right about now! The castle is on edge. Sir Robert is getting to pack up and go home when he finally gets to meet the Baron...

The Baron arrives at dinner wearing a creepy plastic mask that made Jason's hockey-mask look amateur. The only openings are the eyes so that when he speaks you don't see his mouth move but only the mask moving in tandem with the motion of his lips. It's unsettling. As things progress it is discovered that the Baron suffers from a deformity by his own doing. He wants Sir Robert to cure him or else!

Torture, family secrets, creepy lackey guy, the mask - it all adds up to a Gothic good time. The ending is particularly fun and the perfect Gothic ending.

Following the film, Barry provided background about the film and offered his memories of the film. He read a piece about Mr. Sardonicus being incorporated into a story arc on the TV series [Wiseguy](#). In the episode a character is fixated on the film and identifies with Sardonicus, going so far as to have comparable emotional issues.

The phrase *Mr. Sardonicus* has entered lexicon meaning a person who smiles stiffly and unnaturally.

In all, perfect choice to kick off Gothic month. If you haven't seen this one, go find it.

Suspense Central – Monday August 9, 2010

A hot wind blew across the heath as the sundry members of Suspense Central gathered in the cyclopean vastness of [Borders Books and Music](#) at the Ramsey Interstate Shopping Center. Well met, they were, with wisdom and learning beyond the ways of science, to discuss the first book of the Parasol [Protectorate](#) series by [Gail Carriger](#). Let us see now what they spoke of...

Sadly, I missed the first 15 minutes of the discussion as I was racing to get to Borders after being detained by my late-arriving parents. I had been left to dog-sit the massive wolf-like monster that is our [family dog](#), Beaux, and prevent him from eating any yard animals, neighborhood pets, small children, or the like. Arriving scant moments before I was destined to leave for the meeting for the simple expedient of delaying my departure, my mother commanded me to bring in the luggage and listen to her wild tales of lawless [Atlantic City](#) shenanigans. Luckily, I was able to break free of the morass of reminiscing by sic-ing Beaux on the recalcitrant matriarch. That'll teach her to force me into tarrying over-long with tales of breakfast buffets!

At any rate, I arrived at 8:15 (hardly late at all by many standards) to find the conversation in full swing, with Aurelia showing off copies of *Soulless* and *Changeless*, the two novels in the Parasol Protectorate series that have been released to date, as well as *Flight of the Eisenstein* by James Swallow (this month's Modern Masters selection), *Years of Rice and Salt* by Kim Stanley Robinson (next month's Suspense Central selection), and *Flashman on the March* by George Macdonald Fraser (September's Modern Masters pick). We quickly discussed those works and I pointed out that the *Flashman* book was being chosen specifically for Bill Wagner, who is a huge fan of the series (mostly to make up for me teasing him about ERB).

Launching into the discussion of the book (surprisingly in three paragraphs I have yet to mention the worthy volume), we immediately began to laugh and animatedly speak about *Soulless*. The book itself takes place in an alternate Victorian England, wherein Werewolves, Vampires, and Ghosts are part of English society. Regulated by Lord Macoon of the Bureau of Unnatural Registry, or BUR, the 'Evening Set' of society is experiencing some strange times. Enter *Alexia* Tarrabotti, Preternatural. Preternaturals are the polar opposite of supernatural creatures, and suffer from a complete lack of any soul, which allows them the ability to turn the powers of supernatural creatures off in a manner similar to a light switch when they touch (the unnatural creatures' powers return immediately upon loss of physical contact). This adaptation was apparently intended to help humans fight off the depredations of supernatural creatures, and allow ordinary humans to be protected from the more aggressive of the creatures. The story, which starts off with the death of both a treacle tart and a vampire, quickly picks up and moves quickly at a gallop.

Liz, Chris, Aurelia, Josephine, Ann Marie, and I talked at length, recounting scenes and discussing dialog to the rapt amusement of Remi, Colleen, and Ardeena. Soaring like eagles on the updrafts of conversation, we swooped hither and yon to touch upon steam-powered tea services, dirigibles, awful hats, scientific mummery, *social graces*, and the fact that the author scandalously has her pinky tucked under in the picture of her on the back of the book. Aurelia also noted that the picture on the cover was not a good representation of *Alexia*, being too thin, too pale, and not possessed of a sufficiently noble proboscis.

All in all, the consensus was that this was a great fun read. We all had a great time, and the folks who had not read the book were willing to put down their current reading materials and pick up Gail's laudable and laughable series! We continued talking at length in the parking lot well after the poor folks at Borders chased us out, and the topics ranged from the upcoming King of Games Day fun to how many arrests Deena has for solicitation and/or pimping.

If this sounds like fun, then you don't know the half of it. I am already looking forward to next month!

Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, August 11, 2010

Drawing A Crowd provided much entertainment last night. Not only were Gothic comics discussed, but new releases, old favorites, collectibles and more. We ran the gamut until 10:30p!

The theme was Gothic comics. First up was good old-fashioned Pulp. Pulp is defined as: *A form of literature that originated in 1930's magazines. It features relatively simplistic and often lurid tales, with much action and psychological thrills.* Haywood added that Gothic would imply night action, dark alleys and seedy elements and many comics fit the bill.

The Shadow, The Phantom, Doc Savage, Green Hornet & Kato, and The Spirit - these took center stage and a large portion of discussion. Not only were these classic comics but also some have been revamped and some will soon be revamped and coming to a movie theater near you.

The Quentin Tarantino film *Kill Bill* is an example of pulp writing in movie form. What has that got to do with Gothic comics you ask? There's a rumor that Tarantino might be attached to a rewrite/direct of *The Shadow*. He can do pulp. There's even a rumor that *Year One* actor, David Pasquesi, is up for *The Shadow* role. Barry does want it on record that he sees *Adrian Brody* for the role. Hear that Mr. Tarantino?

Of course, there has already been a movie *The Shadow*, starring *Alec Baldwin*. Didn't do well. Haywood pointed out that he did like *the look* of the movie and *the look* of the character.

Haywood brought up the *Green Hornet & Kato* remake slated for upcoming release. He wasn't too sure about *Seth Rogen* as the *Green Hornet*, but he's willing to wait and see :) Haywood did feel that the *Green Hornet* fit the Gothic bill well.

"Before Superman, Spider-Man, and Batman, there was The Phantom, the greatest legend in the annals of 20th century comic-book crime fighting. Now, the immortal superhero returns to strike terror in the hearts of villains around

the world - and to inspire a new generation to believe in the Ghost Who Walks." This was an excerpt from the syfy press release for the recent The Phantom remake they aired. Both Barry and Haywood agreed The Phantom fit Gothic in style and feel.

Haywood pointed out some works that were Gothic in the style of their art: Spawn, Frank Miller's Batman & Daredevil, The Spirit (the comic NOT the movie), and a Golden Age character The Terror. His criteria were that they contained the darker, grittier feel of Gothic with night action, dark alleyways and dark characters. Barry added to this with Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series, *House of Secrets* done by artist Bernie Wrightson (did an awesome Frankenstein documentary), the Captain America series, The Avengers and Dr. Strange. Ana added Gaiman's *Coraline*.

We took a slight detour over to new releases and Barry recommended the new *Captain America Allies* series by Roger Stern. Stern has done Spiderman, Avengers, Captain America and Dr. Strange. On shelves this week! Barry provided handouts, 42 pages! on The Greatest Roger Stern Stories Ever Told! Aurelia had great fun with the handouts and couldn't wait to get home to go online to the site (she even took some home with her). I will be trying to figure out a way to get my hands on Doctor Strange, Avengers #251-254 *Absolute Vision*. Be warned I did see Mission Impossible...I can and will drop from a ceiling.

More big news in comics is the return of John Byrne's *Next Men*.

I stepped away from the table for a few seconds and returned to find the discussion centered on Santa Claus. I'm still not sure why even though an attempt at an explanation was made. Here's what I heard - Barry telling Deena that Santa has a very good PR department so Deena trying to get the big guy taken away for breaking and entering won't fly. He added, "besides, he's been around longer than the concept of B&E so he's grandfathered in."

We realized it was close to 10:30 and begrudgingly let our gracious host, Rob, go home. Very good time and an excellent meeting. Join us next month when we discuss History Through The Eyes Of: history told through the eyes of fictional characters.

Face the Fiction: King of Games Day – Saturday, August 14, 2010

As always, I would like to thank our hosts for providing a great venue, and being just all-around terrific guys. Manuel Rivera and Jeff Hering of Fantasy Games and Hobbies, we salute you! I would also like to give a big "thank you" to all the store regulars who put up with our little invasion, as well as great sports like 11 year old Stephen Hering who helped me out immeasurably with both the AT-43 demo and the Warhammer 40K Kill Teams demo. Thanks for all your efforts guys!

Now, on with the show!

The day started with Thom Purdy, Stephen and Todd Ehrenfels demonstrating AT-43 (<http://games.rackhame.com/en/at-43>). Stephen played the part of the heroic forces of the United Nations of Ava (UNA) under the command of the ultimate Tank commander, Captain Newton, while Thom got a chance to test his mettle as the revolutionary forces of the Red Blok under the command of Captain Pavel Vrakov. Todd, as demonstrator extraordinaire, got to challenge the humans with the vicious Therians under the command of Wraith Golgoth Gamma. The battle started with the humans taking pot-shots at each other while evading fire from Golgoth Gamma. Thom's Red Blok Dragonov Troopers used their sniper fire to knock out several of Stephen's advancing Wing Trooper Medics, while Steve's Fire Toad tanks rocked Golgoth Gamma, weakening it enough that Thom could finish it off with Rocket fire from Vrakov's enormous Krasnye Soldaty squad. Suddenly, however, the Therians were reinforced with two squads of Storm Golems under the command of Overseer Alphas, who in turn resurrected the destroyed Golgoth Gamma! Caught between the Red Blok Troopers and the UNA's elite forces, the Therians were quick to hunker down, however Thom used his Nakovalny Scout Striders to run down the hapless Therians before they could regroup to strike. The battle quickly went downhill for the Therians, however the Dragonovs continued to whittle away at both the Wing Troopers and Shock Troopers who had moved too far out of position to easily support one another. The Battle ended on Turn 4 for a devastating victory for the Revolutionary Forces of the Red Blok, with the UNA hanging on to finish off the last of the Therians and sweep up into second. The Therians lost yet another important battle, but it's OK, they're Therians. The post game wrap-up saw Stephen excitedly showing off his surviving UNA troops to his proud father and explaining the rules of the game like an old hand! Easy to learn and fun to play, AT-43 remains one of my favorite tabletop war games for a reason, and seeing the fun being had by all involved I was happy as a clam. The only problem is that Captain Pavel Vrakov, clone medic extraordinaire is just too darned good, as the evidence will show... VRAAAAAAKOV!

Meanwhile, at the next table, the Remi, Chris, Deena, and Haywood were chugging along at a hard pace and vying for supremacy at Trivial Pursuit. The 1981 version of the game had a lot of questions that most of us quirked eyebrows at (being way before our time), and we all enjoyed kibitzing and dropping broad hints, much like Barry does during Films to Come. I laughed heartily when the question of "Who Directed Spartacus?" came up and I hinted that I was pretty sure that the director also did 2001 a blank Odyssey, and Remi said, "Oh, you mean Mel Brooks." Chris reigned victorious with good grace, managing to get the victory on a fun film question. I suspect that the Red Blok had a hand in this... VRAAAAAAKOV!!!!

At another table, Barry and Ann-Marie were playing a confusing game of Grue the Card Game, followed by an even more confusing game of Cosmic Wimp-Out, a dice game from the late 1970's. Barry had initially wanted to play Space Hulk, thinking that it had to do with the Marvel Comics character of the same name, but realized that some dolt had forgot to put the rule and scenario books back in the box. The dolt in question offered to set it up and show him how it was played, put the Revolutionary Forces of the Red Bloc stopped him using the wiley tactics of communist clones... VRAAAAAAAAAAKOV!!!!

We took a brief break for Pizza from Pizza Master, and then pushed on to watch Percy and the Olympians while a larger number of players gathered around for another game of Kill Teams. As per the description on the website, the table was divided among 4 teams.

The Blue Team:	Imperial Guard Cavalry & Veteran detachments (played by Stephen) Daemonhunters Grey Knights (played by Thom)
The Red Team:	Chaos Marines Thousand Sons Tactical Squad (played by Andre) Orks Boyz and Nobz wif lotsa Gubbins! (played by the bloodthirsty Deena)
The Green Team: Ehrenfels)	Tau Shu'va Sept Stealth Suits and Fire Warriors (played by Jeff Hering and Todd)
The Black Team:	Eldar Harlequin Assault Troupe (played by Aurelia) Dark Eldar Compassionate Hand Wyche Cult (played by Rob) Necron Eternal Warriors (played by Ann-Marie)

The goal of the game was to get to the hill (dubbed Frog Hill because it is a Rackham hill). The teams took a few moments to strategize and work together to determine a plan. Poor Rob and Andre got thrown in to the deep end of the pool, being given some difficult armies. Luckily, everyone was in the mood for carnage and the game proceeded apace. Initiative was scattered throughout the teams, and the battle proceeded with the Dark Eldar taking the lead early on, by taking advantage of their advantages of speed to dash up the field to the Frog Hill. Next up, the Grey Knight plodded their way up the field, not concerning themselves with the Thousand Sons on their flank. The Imperial Guard split their Roughrider Cavalry elements under the able command of Stephen, and advanced half towards the Orks and half towards Frog Hill in support of his Grey Knight allies, while the supporting infantry split the difference hoping to draw the Thousand Sons and Orks into a blind alley near a crevasse. The Tau advanced quickly using Jet Packs, and took the first casualty and Stealth Suit trooper Gary face-planted into a rock (jet packs are dangerous, kids) while the Fire Warriors advanced to cut the soon to be moving Necrons off from the Harlequin Troupe. After the Tau, the Thousand Sons plodded up the board, firing their bolters at any and every one in sight and dealing the first casualties to the Grey Knights, who lost a simple knight. The Eldar Harlequins then took the ball and ran with it, running pell-mell up the field to take advantage of the opening pried for them by their Tau allies. The Orks advanced quickly and began wildly firing Shootas at the advancing Roughriders, killing two of the brave cavalymen (Deena's bloodlust was already setting in by this point). Lastly the Necrons advanced slowly, separating two of their number from the pack to help their Dark Eldar allies on the flank while the remainder of the force smashed the Tau with withering Gauss Rifle fire. Turn two showed the Dark Eldar running faster for the center, taking the lead, and splitting their forces in anticipation of stalling the Green Team on their flank. The Grey Knights showed the favor of the Emperor and ran forth, narrowing the gap to Frog Hill, though they were still too far to overtake the early lead of the tricky Dark Eldar across the table. Seeing the death of two of their comrades and desirous of preserving the unit, the Imperial Guard withdrew the Cavalry back to support range of the Veterans, who continued to dangle as bait in front of the blood maddened Orks, the outriding roughriders were hard pressed to get closer to the hill, though. Next the Tau Stealthsuits jumped out in front of the advancing Dark Eldar and fired burstcannons ineffectually in the air over the heads of the advancing Warp Beast pack while the Firewarriors did in two Necrons (who promptly came back to life). The Thousand Sons, seeing Grey Knights charging ahead, plodded forward with Bolters ablaze while their aspiring sorcerer zapped another Knight into the Immaterium. The Eldar continued charging forward, however an unlucky run roll stalled them in a position that left their Tau allies unsupported. The Orks ran fast, however and closed the gap, believing that a good Waaaaagh! would deliver the Veterans and surviving Roughriders to their hands next turn. The Necrons, apparently annoyed with the Tau for killing two of them and forcing them to come back to life, turned and slaughtered the Fire Warriors with a hail of fire that killed 4 of the Tau, leaving 3 standing in an expanding red mist. Turn three began the true bloodbath as the Wyches ran forward with part of their force while the Warp Beasts and Beastmaster slaughtered the unsupported Tau Stealth Team. Not to be outdone, the Grey Knights advanced more cautiously and opened fire with stormbolters and

psycannons on the Thousand Sons, cutting down two of the Chaos Marines with a hail of exploding bolts. The Imperial Guard, seeing an advancing Ork horde, decided to hold fast and try to funnel the Orks into a spot where they could be tied up for a couple of rounds, and fired a couple of grenades from their Grenade Launchers to cover their movements and whittle down the Orks. The surviving Tau took cover in some handy terrain, hoping to act as a speed bump and draw Necron fire away from the Harlequins. Back near the center, the Thousand Sons lurched inexorably forward, firing effectively with Bolters and knocking out another Grey Knight while their Sorcerer atomized the lone advancing Roughrider, leaving the last survivor in place to cut off the Ork advance. The Eldar Harlequins snapped up and totally eviscerated the Beastmaster and Warp Beasts with pistol fire and a devastating assault, while the Death Jester remained behind and fired a few shots of his Shrieker Cannon at the advancing Necrons. The Orks Waaaaaaaagh!-ed directly into the Imperial Guard Veterans eliminating every Guardsman in their path, however the Guardsmen were so spread out that two of the squad were out of range of the initial charge and thus survived long enough to hold the Orks back, buying the Grey Knights precious time to get into cover. The Necrons finished wiping out the Tau and polished off the Death Jester for good measure. Seeing a danger to his advance from the now closer Harlequins, Rob dispatched half of his Wyches to stall the Harlequins (an assault that ended in a draw), while his Succubus and her coterie dashed up the center line. The Grey Knights fired ineffectually at their Chaos Marine foes while they moved into the cover of some rocks, hoping to stave off the Orks and the Chaos Marines. The Imperial Guard Veterans died with honor, holding up the Orks and buying time for their allies. The Thousand Sons fired into the now in range Dark Eldar, hoping to eliminate the small squad around the succubus and were rewarded with a host of dead Dark Eldar Wyches. The Harlequins rapidly finished up the Wyches that they were in combat with, however the delaying tactic left the pointy-eared colorful troupe dangerously far from victory. The Orks piled in and assaulted directly into the Grey Knights, doing dozens of wounds and killing two of the remaining three, but being unable to kill the Justicar in Artificer armour. The Necrons blasted the Harlequins, whittling away at the troupe and leaving only one trouper and the Shadowseer alive. The Dark Eldar Succubus, alone and unsupported pulled a huge victory with a 4 on her Run roll, catapulting Rob to the top of the hill, from which he assaulted the Chaos Space Marines, killing two of them. The Grey Knight Justicar bravely held the pass, cutting the Boyz to ribbons while they hammer him with hit after hit which he shrugged off. The Thousand sons died in further horrifying assault attacks to the Dark Eldar Succubus while the Eldar managed to scratch their way up the base of the hill, but not close enough to enter the scrum. The Orks continued to ineffectually batter at the Justicar, who was doing his best Gandalf impersonation (You... shall... not... pass). Finally the Necrons managed to wipe out the last of the Green Team's Eldar. The game ended at this point with Pavel Vrakov taking the hill from the Dark Eldar and Thousand Sons Marines... VRAAAAAAKOV!!!! Seriously, though, Rob and the Black Team took a huge chance and pulled victory out in the end. Congratulations, gang!

We cleaned up, thanked our hosts, and brought the tons of boxes back to Todd's car to be packed away. Thanks again to all who participated, and I apologize for not getting a video of this fun game:)

Films to Come – Wednesday, August 18, 2010

As always, Films to Come provided entertainment, laughs and insight into all things cinematic (and then some).

Barry opened the meeting by giving us some fun background, read from *America's Film Legacy* by Daniel Eagen, on the 1953 animated musical snipe *Let's All Go To the Lobby*. This little ditty played in theaters as an advertisement before the beginning of the main film. It featured four talking concession stand products (a bucket of popcorn, a cup of soda, and 2 boxes of candy) singing, "Let's all go to the lobby to get ourselves a treat" and walking to the concession stand (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfDXlgmKFyU>). The trailer was animated by Dave Fleischer. There were some updates made to the trailer and apparently some suggestive things were added for the drive-in crowd - i.e. a hot dog sliding into a bun - shocking - lol!

A fun bit of trivia about the ditty also had Todd telling us that Marie Antoinette did not say "Let them eat cake" she really said, "Let's all go to the lobby". The things you never knew...

Barry then moved onto the next thing on his list. He asked, "So, what's hot at the box office?" Liz, having paid close attention to Barry's reading about *Let's All Go To The Lobby* chimed in with, "Hot Dogs!" Good answer Liz, good answer. Hey, at least she was paying attention!

What Barry was actually looking for however, was the movies people are seeing. He had the current list of All-Time USA Box Office for 2010. Making the list: (16) *Salt* (15) *Robin Hood* (14) *Valentine's Day* (13) *Shutter Island* (12) *The Last Airbender* (11) *Grown Ups* (10) *Clash of the Titans* (9) *The Karate Kid* (8) *How To Train Your Dragon* (7) *Despicable Me* (6) *Shrek Forever After* (5) *Inception* (4) *Eclipse* (3) *Iron Man 2* (2) *Alice in Wonderland* and (1) *Toy Story 3* raking in over \$400,000,000!

This time Barry added a fun look at the All-Time Worldwide Box office. It was interesting to see several films making the worldwide list that did not make the USA list. (16) *Knight and Day* - not on USA list (15) *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* - not on USA list (14) *Despicable Me* (13) *Sex and the City 2* - not on USA list (12) *The Karate Kid* (11) *Shutter Island* (10) *Robin Hood* (9) *Prince of Persia: the Sands of Time* - not on USA list (8) *How To Train Your Dragon* (7) *Clash of the Titans* (6) *Inception* (5) *Iron Man 2* (4) *Eclipse* (3) *Shrek Forever After* (2) *Toy Story 3* and (1) *Alice in Wonderland* taking the top honor with \$1,023,285,206!

Very interesting and fun addition we hope to see again.

Next was "the list" - this time we covered July, August and September (fall previews).

July:

A quick recap of July had some movies added and some revisited.

Salt - Barry thought it was decent. I

Inception - Barry fell asleep and was confused. Chris found it confusing as well, but stayed awake.

Dinner for Schmucks - Barry thought it was pretty funny and offered the aside that it was based on a French film.

The Kids Are Alright (which was the running gag for the evening - had to be there) - Liz enjoyed this film. She found it to be more serious than she expected, but still enjoyed it and would recommend it. Barry agreed and Chris felt it would be nominated for awards and did provide that it was more of a dramedy.

The Girl Who Played With Fire - follow up to *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. Barry did not enjoy this one as much as the first film. These films are based on a Swedish series of books of the same name.

The Last Airbender - Barry, Sharon R and myself were familiar with the animated Nickelodeon series and enjoyed it. Barry was the only one who had seen the live action version. I'm waiting for the new animated Nickelodeon version (Legend of Korra).

August:

Many of the films haven't been released yet. A brief discussion about *Eat, Pray, Love* took place centered on the commercial aspects surrounding the film. Moderator Barry had some fun with *The Expendables* - more like fun at the expense of the cast. Todd likened the upcoming *Lebanon* to *The Beast of War*.

September:

The fall preview had lots of good stuff to look for and some not so good stuff. *Wall Street* will have a sequel after many years. The *Grindhouse* short *Machete* goes full-length feature. Woody Allen has *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger*. Mark Romanek, who gave us the creepy *One Hour Photo*, comes back with *Never Let Me Go*. Liz read the book and said it was creepy with supernatural aspects. Put it on your list! *Resident Evil: Afterlife* is the fourth in the series of films based on the game by the same name. Paul S. Anderson returns as director - he did the first *Resident Evil*, which Todd and I both recommend. Then there's *Devil*, produced and written by M. Night Shyamalan. This is about a devil tormenting people in an elevator. Todd wisely pointed out that Shyamalan does that in real life! *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole* is an animated feature based on YA books.

We still had time left so Barry showed us *The Avengers* book (The Avengers coming soon to a theater near you with a much debated cast), *Stephen King On Writing* (book on writing by King that lists some of King's favorite books) and the sad mention of the end of *At The Movies* on TV. This long running show bid adieu after many years. Podcast Barry...pod...cast ;-)

Barry gave the remaining time to any questions or input from attendees. Chris had handouts he passed around, Sharon offered a few tid bits on free-on-demand movies, Colleen had some questions about some of the recommended movies and Jo misbehaved as usual ;-)

Excellent meeting. Insightful in so many ways.

Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, August 24, 2010

Stormy weather was certainly not enough to keep our stalwarts away last night, with a fun group of friends gathering together in the homey warm glow of the Wayne Free Public Library to enjoy each other's company and the interesting topic. Laughter and conviviality were the watchwords as we sat and spoke of many, many things.

The night started off with Chris, Chuck, and I joking around about our absent moderators (insert obligatory Edgar Rice Burroughs reference here). In keeping with the theme of Gothic Horror, we painted an image of Bill digging up ERB in order to reanimate him in the hopes of a good script for the upcoming John Carter movie. The idea of Steve at a political rally replete with zombies and vampires was laughingly brought up again. I hope that both moderators survived their escapades, and will return to take back over next month, if only so somebody will be around to shut me up when I wander off topic.

Anyway, Chris had brought a great handout listing some of the most notable Gothic horror stories of all time, and Chuck, Chris and I started working our way through the list when we were joined by Barry, Steve R., and Josephine. I found it passing strange, but we started gabbing fairly early, and in spite of meandering around the topic (for which I was suitably teased by Barry), we wound up discussing a variety of cool things. From Alistair Reynolds' Chasm City to Simon Green's various series, from Warhammer 40K to Event Horizon, and from The Thirteenth Guest to Pandorum we explored the murky moors of Gothic Horror for close to 2 solid hours (taking aside the time that was spent discussing the movie Running Mates and Guns at Batasi!). Some of the (very many) titles mentioned included:

Books:

Chasm City by Alistair Reynolds
Dracula by Bram Stoker
Deathstalker by Simon R. Green
Drood Series by Simon R. Green
Frankenstein by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley
Hawk & Fisher by Simon R. Green
Ghost Story by Peter Straub
Horus Heresy
Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice
The Nightside Series by Simon R. Green
Shadowbridge by Gregory Frost
Shadowlands by Peter Straub
The Shining by Stephen King

Games:

Warhammer 40,000 from Games Workshop

Movies:

Alien
Event Horizon
Gothicka
Nightwatch
Outland
Pandorum
Silent Hill
Underworld

Again, this is just a small sampling of the many titles and authors that we discussed last night. The laughter and fun continued out into the parking lot, where we discussed subjects ranging from NBC's 30 Rock to Medium Screen Classics range of fun films on Saturday. Barry will be posting some more on that soon, so keep your eyes open.

Next month join us for History Through the Eyes of... as we watch real history through the eyes of fake people, and/or fake history through the eyes of real people!

Modern Masters – Friday August 27, 2010

In the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war, but in the brightly lit and cheerful present of the Ramsey Borders, there is only Modern Masters. Amusingly, I actually ran two editions of Modern Masters on Friday. That's right. I got a chance to sit around and talk about the Horus Heresy series with a cool gang of fans before the event, and then I got to talk about the whole thing all over again with SFSNNJ folks an hour later. Let me tell you more, shall I?

OK, so I arrived at Borders directly from work at 6pm, as I had completely forgotten about the pre-meeting dinner at Moe's (sorry to those who went there hunting me down to do me bodily harm or just hang out). At any rate, I sat down after grabbing 18 Warhammer 40,000 and Warhammer Horus Heresy books off the shelf, and immediately found myself in a conversation with two big fans of the series (who were disappointed that I was not, in fact, Dan Abnett nor am I likely to be any time soon). Our chat centered on Nemesis, the most recent book in the series, but also wandered around and about from the early days of the Great Crusade to the climactic battle of Terra. We also talked shop about gaming, and discussed Dark Heresy, Rogue Trader, and the forthcoming Deathwatch role-playing games as well as Warhammer 40,000. It was a nice time spent chatting with some cool, hard core fans, who would likely have stuck around had their parents not been ready to go. It was nice of their parents to thank me for taking the time to chat with their sons, Steve and Mike, and, yes, responsible adults do play games with little plastic men;)

At any rate, I sat around reading Fulgrim for about 20 minutes when Chris and Josephine arrived to interrupt my reading time. We quickly engaged in a discussion of the Flight of the Eisenstein and were joined by Colleen. The discussion mainly revolved around the Warhammer 40000/Horus Heresy setting, but we started off with an important question: Why did I choose Flight of the Eisenstein for the recommended reading? As Chris pointed out, this is the fourth book in the series, so why recommend that one instead of, say, book number one (Horus Rising by Dan Abnett, who is not me). The answer is somewhat complicated, but it boils down to three factors: 1) Abnett-isms: Dan Abnett tends to write stories with the notion that a person picking up his book is very familiar with everything that is going on and is going to happen. As the Horus Heresy series is a prequel saga, taking place more than 10000 years before the main Warhammer 40,000 setting, Dan tends to figure that the reader already knows what will happen and writes to help explain the foundations of the crisis. This means that there is a lot of buildup, and not a lot of action. Also, there are a lot of inside references that someone unfamiliar with the universe will not understand. 2) Smaller Scope: Unlike most of the other books in the series, Flight of the Eisenstein really only concerns the reader with the story of Captain Garro of the Space Marines Death Company and his struggle to understand and make sense of the betrayal of the Warmaster Horus and his own Primarch, Mortarion. This personalized set of events is sort of a cross-reference between events here in Flight of the

Eisenstein and *Galaxy in Flames*, which relates the story from the point of view of Garviel Loken of the Sons of Horus and Saul Tarvitz of the Emperor's Children.

3) All the elements of true Gothic Horror are present here: Unlike *Horus Rising*, which really has almost no horror element to it, *Flight of the Eisenstein* has a great deal of horror built in, with appearances malefic daemons of the Warp and terrors mundane and mystical rife throughout the story. *Fallen Gods* really has an air of the supernatural to it, however it really requires having read *Horus Rising* and is not good as a stand-alone book.

We discussed all of these point sin between my trying to remember all the loyalist and traitor Space Marines involved in the revolt. Why? Well, I was asked why the books, though sequentially published, jump back and forth through the timeline of the Heresy, and so I needed to make sure that people understood *Flight of the Eisenstein*. In the *Horus Heresy* there are 18 Space Marine Legions, each with 20-30 companies of Marines. Half of the Marines side with Horus, and these are the traitors who would become known as the Chaos Space Marines (Sons of Horus, Thousand Sons, Emperor's Children, World Eaters, Death Company, Iron Warriors, Word Bearers, Night Lords, and Alpha Legion), while the other half remain loyal to the Emperor and are known as the Adeptus Astarte, or Space Marines (Dark Angels, Blood Angels, Space Wolves, Ultramarines, Salamanders, Iron Hands, Raven Guard, Imperial Fists, and White Scars). There are dozens of stories concerning the events leading up to the massacre of Istvaan III, which is partially described in *Flight of the Eisenstein*, and even more stories concerning the aftermath of the massacre and the march back to Terra, the Battle of Terra, and the rout of the traitors.

While the scale and scope of the setting is enormous, we agreed that James Swallow did a great job of making this small slice feel intimate and personal. Garro cut a fantastic and heroic figure as the last loyalist Death Guard officer and his coterie. His companions, the Rememberancers Euphrati Keeler, Mersadie Oliton, Kyril Sindermann, and the last loyal officer of the Sons of Horus, Iacton Quuze were also great. What I felt was wonderful about the tale was the role that normal humans play in the story. Space Marines, 8-foot tall super-humans, seem to constantly underestimate the normal folks, and the actions of the housecarl of Captain Garro against the nasty Commander Grulgor are nothing short of heroic in and of themselves. Watching the Rememberances interact with the desperate crew of the *Eisenstein* was also great. Chris especially liked the sequence where Rogal Dorn, Primarch of the Imperial Fist Space Marine Legion, comes aboard the *Eisenstein*, only to be confronted by a hope that the new arrivals are loyalists. Chris read the, admittedly awesome, scene, eliciting laughter and praise from all of us.

Although we spent a lot of time on the universe, there were still so many more things we could chat about. Josephine was asking lots of great questions when the announcement came that the store was closing... because Todd had forgotten that the hours had changed! We quickly put the section back in order, reshelved the books, and I swore that I would come some day and organize the Warhammer 40,000 section. I reminded folks that next month would be a trip down history lane with Harry Flashman and George MacDonald Fraser. Until next time...

Medium Screen Classics – Saturday, August 28, 2010

The 10:30am screening of *City Beneath the Sea* went on as planned with Barry and Chris watching. Several people including Liz B, Debra M, and Bill Wagner joined them throughout the day. A few newcomers enjoyed the line-up as well. Following *City Beneath the Sea* the line-up was *Genesis II*, *Planet Earth* and *The Man From Atlantis*. Several attendees went on to continue the fun at Seville Diner.

Big thanks to Barry for an excellent, as always, line-up of interesting, fun movies. Can't wait for the Winter return of this fun seasonal movie-viewing group.

Rogue Traders – Saturday, August 28, 2010

Chapter 5: It's Raining Madmen (828.866,M38)

It is hard to believe that it has barely been an entire day since we landed on this filthy, pestilence-ridden death-hole. Since we landed, we lost four hours of time, got shanghaied into a tribal war, and are now trying to fulfill a 'quest' handed out by a crazy heretic living in a tree-house! The ignominy of this ridiculous situation cannot be understated, but let me try to explain how we ended up in this mess.

After getting shot at, we negotiated a deal with Dividiacus, Hetman of the Aeduii, and his merry band of snipers. Lorren, one of the bodyguards we had left with Ivan, had come to our aide and helped us move through the swamp in support of these locals. Apparently House Wolfe has had its greedy mitts elbow deep into the local boogeyman tribe, the Halvartii, and the locals, who have some seriously ancient weapons, cannot deal with the reinforced numbers of the Halvartii.

Dividiacus took us to the site of the Halvartii tribe, careful to skirt around an area that he called 'the Sky-King's Sacred Place'... blasted savages... When we arrived at the Halvartii stronghold, we discovered that it was, in fact, an ancient Imperial Communications Bunker. Obviously it was originally built to provide communications and systems support for an Astropathic Choir as well as Vox Comm Relays through this miserable system. The sheer amount of debris floating around is already playing merry hob with our vox and augur systems. At any rate, the important thing was that I got close enough to the building to determine that the best way to assault would either be through the bricked up rear entrance, or the roof. Either way it will mean having to fight our way through the Halvartii floor by floor, but then that is what the crew is for.

After scouting the Halvartii base, we went to the Aeduii town, though town is a laughable term for this ramshackle assemblage of mud huts and wooden palisades. Their protection consists of a few warriors manning what Lorren and Jorn have identified as Hepex-Pattern Rocket-Grenade Launcher (a heavy weapon that was instrumental in the development of the modern Bolter, or so they tell me). While the Aeduii girded themselves for war, we prepared our weapons and bodies for the inevitable conflict. Of course, the inevitable conflict happened a lot earlier than we had anticipated.

Around local midnight we were attacked by a Stormbird (yet another ancient piece of tech) which flew over and deposited dozens of Halvartii warriors and three House Wolfe infiltrators. The battle was short and bloody, with Lorren blasting the leader, Stephanie DuWolfe with a round from the Hepex Launcher, Ramhat slicing off the arm of one of the attackers, and Lith drilling one of the others right through the eyes with a bolt-pistol round. The only survivor of the attack was Stephanie DuWolfe, whose interrogation required a bit of unwarranted brutality from Jorn, and some clever tactics on all of our parts.

The morning saw us moving out early, in spite of little sleep on our part, to meet with the Wise Woman. It was hoped that she might be able to tell us what was in the Sky King's Sacred Place. The Wise Woman, of course, turned out to be some sort of Psyker Heretic who began preaching about some sort of cult dedicated to the worship of something called the Mater Mundi. It is a good thing that Sarvus was not there, or she might have had an axe-handle firmly embedded in her skull. At any rate, she advised us to go to the sacred place and search for some ridiculous riddle.

We managed to infiltrate an ancient hangar left over from the initial occupation. The ships were all of a set piece of the theme of antiquity, and adorned in heavy purple and gold with a roaring lion's head emblazoned throughout. The ships were identified as Stormbirds, Thunderhawks, Caestus Assault Boats, and even a few Page and Squire class shuttles. One of the Stormbirds was repainted in House Wolfe Grey and Green. When we attempted to find a way out, we discovered a clever series of tests that allowed us entry to the passage that presumably will take us to the true leaders of the Halvartii. May the Emperor protect us all...

SFSNNJ Member Movie Reviews

The Expendable – Todd Ehrenfels

Last night I was dragged kicking and screaming to the theatres to see Sylvester Stallone's explosive and testosterone fueled film, the Expendables. Yeah, I know, it is hardly the highbrow fare that I am known to prefer, but I have to admit that I was looking forward to this movie. Having watched the commercials and read the review that is most often associated with this film ("If adrenaline and explosions could have a baby it would be this movie..."), I was intrigued, to say the least. Why? Well, it was partly an issue of nostalgia, partly a need for a mindless action movie, and partly because I wanted to support my local Action Heroes. OK, to be completely honest, there was also a part of me that really wanted to see how much of a train wreck this thing could be.

So what did I think of The Expendables? Well, let's say I have two different opinions on the subject. As a piece of fluff entertainment it was very enjoyable (I smiled the whole way through), as a movie it was execrable. Why? Well, to answer that, we need to what parts go into making the whole of a movie.

Story: To put it simply, there was absolutely no narrative in this film. As an exercise in storytelling, this is a dismal failure, with self-contradicting plot, unnecessary sub-plots that existed simply to pad the movie, and scenes designed on the George Lucas Axiom of "Well, it looks cool..." The story itself should have been a no-brainer, but mindlessness is not quite the same thing. If Rambo and Star Wars: Attack of the Clones had a baby, it would likely be The Expendables. There is no dramatic tension to speak of, and all of the plots and sub-plots are utterly worthless clichés. Also, one would surmise that with a name like The Expendables, there would be more... well... more of a screw-job being perpetrated on the mercenaries. The implication of the title is that these guys are getting the short end of the stick (sort of like The Losers from earlier this year), and nothing could possibly be further from the truth. In fact, the heroes have both the upper hand and the initiative throughout the entire film. It felt more like the A-Team than the A-Team movie did!

Acting & Dialog: Frankly, one of the (few) saving graces for this film as a movie lies in its dialog. Mickey Rourke positively shines during a monolog later in the movie, and the characters' interactions and lines are surprisingly well written. The give and take between these veteran actors was nothing short of sterling, and the polished performances of these fellows were stunning in its execution. In fact, given the excellent dialog it was kind of surprising at how much of a failure the storytelling was. In some respects I think that this may be a matter of great professionals overcoming a pretty awful script. As a whole, I think that the performers really did an A+ job on putting lipstick on the pig, here. If good acting and bad scriptwriting had a baby it would be this movie.

Cinematography & Direction: If the 1980's and the early 2000's styles of movie making had a baby, it would definitely be this movie. Most of the movie really felt like I was watching an 80's action picture with slightly better camera and film quality. The only 'modern' aspects of the cinematography lay in the rapid cutting during fight scenes and the occasional use of shakey-cam. I would say that the quality of the film was serviceable, with no real innovations. For an adventure movie, this movie has none of the daringly bold concepts that mark adventurous mentalities.

So, what did I like about The Expendables? The performances! Sure there were some cool scenes, a few great fights, and lots of stuff blowing up, but to me, watching these men work was nothing short of astounding. Would I like to see more? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. Sure, there are better films out there (certainly there are better action films), but I sat through this film basically thinking, "Wow, if you gave these guys Imperial Guard uniforms they would totally be Schaeffer's Last Chancers!"

THACO: 8

Upcoming Conventions

Big Apple Comic-Con - **<http://www.wizardworld.com/home-apple.html>**

Oct 7th-10th 2010 • Pier 94, *New York, NY 10019*

Join tens of thousands of fellow fans as they converge to celebrate the best in pop culture. Big Apple Comic-Con brings it all - Movies, Comics, Toys, Video Gaming, Games, TV, Anime, Manga, Horror, Wrestling, MMA, Original Art, Collectibles & More!

New York Comic Con

Oct 8th-10th 2010 •, *New York, NY 10001*

Art, comics, cosplay, fantasy, media, science fiction.

Philcon 2010 - <http://philcon.org>

November 19 – 21, 2010

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ

Featuring fantasy author Peter S. Beagle, writers, artists, scientists, fans, gamers, and 48 hours of fun of all kinds.

NY Anime Festival

<http://www.newyorkcomiccon.com/en/NYAF/>

October 8–10, 2010

Jacob K. Javits Center

New York, New York