



## MARCH 2011 NEWSLETTER

**International Gods of Mystery:** gods of the World: whether it's Zeus, high on Olympus throwing down lightning bolts, or Shiva contemplating the destruction of the world, nothing is quite as interesting as mythology, and no subject is more intriguing than the gods themselves. Take a step into the realms of Titans and Kami as we explore the myths of the gods!

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

**Tuesday March 1, 2011 – 7p**  
Hillsdale Public Library  
Young Sherlock Holmes (1985)

### **Drawing A Crowd**

**Wednesday March 9, 2011 – 7p**  
Fantasy Games & Hobbies  
9 Miller Rd - Mahwah  
Asgard vs. Olympus...let's get ready to rumble!  
For additional information click  
[www.fantasYGamesandhobbies.com](http://www.fantasYGamesandhobbies.com)

### **Face the Fiction**

**Saturday March 12, 2011 – TBA**  
**Diversity Panel:** Bernice McFadden and Beth Kannell  
\*Full details on p. 2

### **Suspense Central**

**Monday March 14, 2011, 2010 – 8p**  
Panera Bread Restaurant  
165 Rt. 64 West  
Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752  
Anansi Boys by Neil Gaiman

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

**Wednesday March 16, 2011 – 7p**  
Borders Books & Music  
235 Interstate Shopping Center Shopping/Rt. 17  
Ramsey, NJ 07446  
This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it.  
\*Dining follows this event.

### **Themes of the Fantastic**

**Tuesday March 22, 2011 – 8p**  
Wayne Public Library  
Mythology, international gods and Lore  
[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

### **Modern Masters**

**Tuesday March 25, 2011 – 8p**  
Panera Restaurant  
1300 Rt. 17 North, Ramsey, NJ  
**Creatures of Light & Darkness/** Roger Zelazny's

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

**Saturday March 26, 2011 – time TBA**  
Fantasy Games & Hobbies  
9 Miller Road, Mahwah, NJ  
Rogue Trader is a game of space adventure, set in the grim darkness of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40000 universe. Are we the wolves in the fold, or merely the sheep?

### **Medium Screen Classics**

**Saturday March 5, 2011 – Incoming!! – 11:30am**  
Incoming! This time our Seasonal Movie Viewing Group, MSC, drops the bomb on you! Beware of dreadful movies as we have a day of fun-filled movies that rated 1 star or less. Slated are: Menace From Outer Space (1956), Wild, Wild Planet (1965), and Legends of the Superheroes (1978).

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

SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:  
Diversity Panel

**When: Saturday, March 12, 2011**

**Where: Well Read Bookstore - [www.thewellreadbookstore.com](http://www.thewellreadbookstore.com)**

425 Lafayette Avenue

Hawthorne, NJ 07506

973-949-3440

**Time: 7:00pm**

Join us for Bernice McFadden (<http://www.bernicemcfadden.com>) and Beth Kanell ([www.BethKanell.com](http://www.BethKanell.com)).

**Beth Kanell:** Beth Kanell lives in Vermont, with a mountain behind her and a river at her feet. Her writing space is a small room upstairs in her house, where she lines the walls with sheets of brown paper to draw and write on, as she plans each book. Ms. Kanell is the author of *The Darkness Under The Water*.

**Bernice McFadden:** Glorious is a [2011 NAACP Image Award Nominee for Outstanding Literary Work - Fiction!](#)

Bernice McFadden's Awards and Honors

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2011 BCALA Literary Award in Fiction (Glorious)</li><li>• 2010 New York Times Book Review (Glorious)</li><li>• 2010 Debut Selection for The One Book, One Harlem Program (Glorious)</li><li>• 2010 O Magazine "Book to Watch" (Glorious)</li><li>• 2010 Historical Novel Society "Editor's Choice" (Glorious)</li><li>• 2007 Short-listed for the Hurston Wright Legacy Award in Fiction (Nowhere is a Place)</li><li>• 2007 National Book Club Conference BeBe Moore Campbell Memorial Literary Award</li><li>• 2006 Washington Post Best Fiction (Nowhere is a Place)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2004 Subject of The Lifetime Television 20th Anniversary Commercial</li><li>• 2004 Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Fiction Honor Award (Loving Donovan)</li><li>• 2002 Nominated for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (The Warmest December)</li><li>• 2002 Short-listed for the Hurston Wright Legacy Award in Fiction (The Warmest December)</li><li>• 2002 Zora Neale Hurston Society Award for Creative Contribution to Literature</li><li>• 2001 Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Fiction Honor Award (Sugar)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2001 Black Writer's Alliance, Gold Pen Award, Best Mainstream Fiction (Sugar)</li><li>• 2001 Black Writer's Alliance, Gold Pen Award, Best New Author</li><li>• 2001 Go On Girl Book Club New Author of the Year Award (Sugar)</li><li>• 2000 New York Times Book Review (Sugar)</li><li>• 2000 Barnes &amp; Noble Discover Great New Writer's (Sugar)</li></ul> |
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***Face the Fiction: Where imagination lives!  
Only at the SFSNNJ***

## February Meeting Recaps

### That's Science Fiction! – Gidorah the Three Headed Monster! - Tuesday February 8, 2011

This is a very serious write-up on a very serious subject on a very serious movie... OK, I cannot even type that with a serious face. To quote Mike Piazza, "This is not Science Fiction, this is Mystery Science Fiction!" As far as reviews of the movie goes, that one line pretty much says it all.

Tonight was a night of firsts, and I would like to thank Tara and Vic of [MyBergen.com](http://MyBergen.com) for their coverage of the event. Tara was a gracious guest and she, Chris, Bill, Mike, and the rest of us shared in a lot of fun pre-film conversation about sports, driving, and the local news (this was prompted by my relaying that the sports guy on ABC News stated that Spring is on the way because Mr. Met was spotted at Citi Field, a statement that caused me to quip, 'If he sees his shadow does that mean six more years until the Mets make the playoffs?'). We all had great laughs, and Tara took some nice pictures of us (even me). Look out for those on the MyBergen site, as well as some links to some more upcoming SFSNNJ events! Thanks again guys!

When we all settled in for the film, we immediately began to crack jokes. One of the main characters scoffs at a UFO hunting scientist saying that "There are no such things as Brain Waves.' she should obviously know, as she demonstrates a complete lack of any brain waves throughout most of the film, even going so far as to forget that her brother, who is standing in front of her, is a police detective... three separate times.

As anyone who has watched any of the later Godzilla films can tell you, these movies are chock full of funny bits, but what makes them great is the inconsistency of their silliness. Surprisingly, during one scene when the various monsters, Rodan, Godzilla, and Mothra (hide your sweaters and woolens), are having a conference on how to deal with the threat of Gidrah, you really do not need an interpreter, but they have the two little fairies interpreting anyway. A scene later, when an interpreter... or play-by-play announcer... or color commentator... or anything, really... is actually needed, we get silence and monster shrieks. Thank you movie.

This is a movie that relies on the stupidity of its characters, a fact that is not lost on one of the characters, who deadpans that the monsters are selfish and self-absorbed, foolish in their inability to perceive the threats that they face, "Just like humans, really..." At one point, the Prophetess says that they must leave this place for death and destruction are coming, then they all proceed to get out of the car and walk.

At that point, I inserted the line, "Um, I did mention the death and destruction, right? Leaving might be advised... this seems particularly ill-conceived!"

Other notable lines:

Japanese General: We cannot simply use atomic weapons on the monster, the whole world is watching...

Todd: and they might realize that we have violated every one of those post-war disarmament treaties...

Godzilla falls to the ground for the umpteenth time.

Chris: He seems to be spending a lot of this movie on his back.

Martian prophetess appears to be naked in the examining room.

Ann-Marie: So to hypnotize her they had to take off her clothes?!

Scientists: Look it's growing and getting bigger!

Todd: There is nowhere near enough time to make all the jokes that this deserves. Eight men, one tent, and a 'growing rock', do the math.

Scientists: Wow, our compasses are all messed up...

Todd: Wait, I thought the Japanese were supposed to be GOOD at science, how have they never heard of Magnetism, it's not like it's all that unusual.

Liz: Maybe they just thought that they all bought the same cheap compasses that are defective.

Assassins attempt to pick to pick the lock on the 'Prophetess' hotel room.

Todd: The Tokyo Playhouse revival cast of *Guys and Dolls* leaves much to be desired.

And that is just a sample of the fun we all had without you.

By the way, the monsters won, but Gidrah escaped to wreak havoc on America for botching his name in the title credits.

Tune in next month as we join the inestimable Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson in their youth with the Barry Levinson film *Young Sherlock Holmes and the Pyramid of Fear*.

#### **Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday February 9, 2011**

Moderators Mike P and Haywood did a great job Wednesday night at DAC, covering both *Happy New Year Resolutions: New Beginnings* (January's topic) & *Super Guys Romancing Super Dolls* (February's topic).

The first portion of the evening the topic was January's theme of new beginnings. Mike and Haywood covered a wide variety of types of new beginnings - from super villains turned good guy to heroes starting over. Mike read through a list he compiled while Haywood added details. Barry often chimed in to clarify more recent updates.

Here's a look at some of the New Beginnings (this list was 4 pages long, extensive and well researched):

- Captain America #'s 157 - 171: CA receives extra super strength and the power of flight
- The Avengers #'s 63-99: Hawkeye becomes Goliath for three years
- The Avengers #19 + #114: the Swordsman turns a new leaf by joining the Avengers and fighting alongside them
- Tales of Suspense: Iron Man goes through several variations of his suit before settling on the suit giving him the most fluid movements
- Power Man #17 + #50: Luke Cage, Hero for Hire changes his name to Power Man

The second portion of the evening covered romance - or the comic book version. We noticed a trend - girlfriends seem to get killed off...frequently. Their job is more dangerous than the job of the super hero they're involved with!! This is a small representative as this list was 5 pages long.

- Let's start off with one of the not so dead ones - lol - on Earth 2, Superman and Lois Lane marry and live happily ever after. Haywood added that the same occurs on Earth 1.
- Bruce Wayne + Silver Saint Cloud = Silver dies the victim of foul play! Yikes! Todd and Barry had fun with this one, both (at the same time!!) discussing how the foul play was actually "death by batarang".... what is wrong with those two?! LOL!
- Nick Fury buys his ladylove an engagement ring. She never gets to wear it...because...she gets killed.
- Tony Stark aka Iron Man gets the I'm A Coward Award. He loves Pepper but won't go there so she has to settle for the chauffeur. This one had Aurelia gobsmacked! She wondered why Tony couldn't have at least introduced Pepper to a fellow millionaire at a party!
- Another of Aurelia's favorites was Black Bolt and his wife Medusa...she dubbed them the Hillbilly Superheroes. Why you ask? Because they were first cousins...

- There was Hawkeye & Mockingbird. Apparently nonstop nooky machines!
- Sub-Mariner and Lady Dorma were loyally devoted...until she's murdered.
- Let's end on a happier note - there was Scarlet Witch & Vision - against odds they love and marry!

It was during the romance portion that Todd put two and two together and came up with, "Nothing says I love you like a murder." Then followed that by announcing all he'd have to do was wear green tights at the murder trial because Mike Piazza would be more sympathetic if he wore green. (This came about after a funny discussion in which Mike P commented that a character had worn green to be more sympathetic).

Barry, safely, asked a question about continuity. He posed the question as to whether DC or Marvel had the more messed up continuity. Both Barry and Haywood felt DC's continuity was more messed up. Haywood used the example of DC bringing back all of the people they had previously killed off with little or no sound logic.

Mike and Haywood did a wonderful job of taking us through new beginnings and romance in the various comic universes. Barry did a good job of keeping things moving. We had a good time learning about changes, beginnings and of course, never date a superhero unless you are looking for an adrenaline rush!

**Face the Fiction Sue Lange – Saturday, February 12, 2011**

I would like to take a quick moment to thank all the folks who worked so hard to bring this all together (and no, I do NOT mean me).

Ann-Marie Brown & Josephine Brown- For their tireless efforts to boldly go where no SF Group has gone before. They did a great job coordinating between Well Read Books and Sue. Without them there would be no Face the Fiction. While I do occasionally obtain some great star talent for the Face the Fiction line-up, it is thanks to them that the event goes so well.

Bill and Mary-Ann Skees - Throughout the years we have taken great pride in supporting small business where possible, from the early days at Reality's Edge, to New Moon, Raider Books, and Fantasy Games and Hobbies, and I am pleased and honored to add Well Read Books to the roster of venues that the SFSNNJ calls home. Bill and Mary-Ann are wonderful people, who run a beautiful and well thought-out store, and I am looking forward to many years of fun times with our new friends in Hawthorne.

Sue Lange - Of course, she really had no choice once I ensnared her in the tangled web of our website, but still, I have to thank her for being such a consistently excellent friend of the SFSNNJ and a stimulating guest. She really took the bull by the horns and worked very hard to help make the night a success, and for that it is right that she gets our thanks and praise!

Speaking of which...

We started the night off early, milling about, chit-chatting, and generally having a relaxed look at the books on display around the store. I spent some time catching up with Don Smith, relishing in the joy of reconnecting with a really fun fellow, and got a chance to chat with everyone's favorite NJ expatriate, Thom Purdy, who braved the highways and byways from Baltimore just to see me (that's my story and I'm sticking to it). I wandered over to see Sue before we got started, and introduced myself as the face behind the name on the screen (I sadly missed the Bookview Cafe Panel back in 2009). In addition to saying Hello, I used the opportunity to snag a copy of Sue's book, *Tritcheon Hash*, and explain that nothing stands between me and literature (Chris joked that I could get violent when things stood between me and a book, and I quipped that I had almost put Chris in the hospital because he tried to grab the last copy of one guest's book).

When we officially started, Sue got up, donned a set of really great spectacles, and began to read a mock Alcoholics Anonymous confession, stating that she was a recovering Post-Modernist and that she had been sane for the past four days. She then went on to relate a story of a slow descent from Modernism to Post-Modernism, attending a Fabulist party with Kurt Vonnegut, falling into a bizarre spiral of angst with Slipstream and Interstitial literature, and finally seeking help and recovery after plumbing



the depths of Bizarro. I laughed myself silly, and in fact felt kind of like it were my own confession up there.

We then got into talking about the "Truth about Slipstream Literature", during which time Don Smith made the astute observation that many of these classifications likely stemmed from high-brow 'Literature' snobs who refuse to accept that they enjoyed a Star Trek novel by Keith DeCandido. Both Sue and I agreed that this may be where the idea started, but the truth is that Slipstream and the rest of these sub-genres have less to do with the vaunted Literatii than they do with the good old Marketing Department. You see, unfortunately for us, the publishers think that we are not terribly bright... OK, well, that is not really true, their Marketing People think that we are not terribly bright... and so they feel that the way to maximize sales is by bundling things that go together into smaller and smaller sets of sub-genres. This is purely a waste of time on their part, since most of us will look at the bottom of the screen on Amazon, Borders, or [BN.com](http://BN.com) and see the "If you like this, then check out..." section, as was pointed out by several of us. Sue agreed and we all laughed at a joke about online retail and zombies, though I cannot for the life of me remember the punchline at present (curse my lack of a recording device).

Anyhow, we then got a treat as Sue read from her short story in the Bookview Cafe anthology to benefit the Gulf Coast cleanup, *Breaking Waves*. The story, entitled *Shark Attack*, was a second person narrative about falling off Teddy-Daddy-Boat and getting stuck on a buoy while a shark circles in the water. We laughed ourselves silly at the narrative, which was brilliantly executed, and Kate Landis applauded Sue for making the hero one of the most unlikely and unlovable things in the universe... No, I am not going to tell you more, read the story!

We moved into general discussion, and Thom Purdy stole my usual question about whether Sue wrote to music or silence. The answer was silence, because as a musician, Sue would end up just listening to the music and enjoying that, not getting any work done in the process. I can certainly sympathize there! Questions and antics... I mean answers... continued on well into the evening, after which I muscled my way to the front and got my book signed first, much to the astonishment of all present (maybe not really). We wrapped up and many of us proceeded on to the Land and Sea Diner, where conversation ranged through a wide variety of topics, including, among other things, the Nostalgia Critic, GOProud at CPAC, Simpsons writers on parade, Teddy Roosevelt Monster Hunter, why lesser-known Presidents are really pretty cool, and Margaret Atwood's pretensions all while our waitress hunted for my Fruit Salad in the jungles of Fair Lawn (which is like Patagonia only colder and in NJ). We ended up staying at Land and Sea until past midnight, when several of us turned into pumpkins.

Next month we have a real treat with a panel of writers discussing Diversity in Literature! Join us for a great time at... Face the Fiction. **(Todd Ehrenfels)**

**Additional comments:**

A great meeting, with a wonderful presentation by Ms. Lange! She gave a very entertaining introduction to herself and a marvelous reading of her short story "Shark Attack." "You want to hear about Animal Rescue?" Had to be there. A fun and active discussion followed. Interesting questions from members of our group abounded. Sue shared her eclectic thoughts on assigning useful definitions to the many types of fiction, highlighting the term "slipstream," which is what apparently falls between science fiction/fantasy and mainstream literary fiction, aka "the fiction of strangeness." Strangeness - I think our group knows something about that! You know, the weird stuff you read that kind of defies strict classification, which in my experience covers most of the stuff I've heard discussed in our group. So, the overall feel of this meeting, like many of our meetings, was, shall we say... interstitial - (to use another term that was bandied about last night - between the accepted boundaries!)

And... Well Read Books was a well-chosen venue for the meeting. Owners Bill and Mary Ann Skees were more than friendly and welcoming. **(Gene McGrath)**

Absolutely! We had a fantastic time...great location at Well Read, great guest and really nice turn out.

Well Read was not only beautiful aesthetically, there was a tremendous variety (LOVED the huge selection of used books - anything with an orange sticker: 1/2 off the cover price!!), Bill & Mary Ann were wonderful hosts, coffee, tea, candy...perfection!

Sue Lange was a lot of fun - loved her very funny opening monologue. Interesting presentation on a topic we've not had before. The interaction took things to the next level - we didn't just sit and listen for two hours - we were part of Sue's presentation. Sue signed and left copies of two of her book titles for those who may not have been there Saturday. Just ask Bill or Mary Ann - they'll be happy to help.

Great group. Todd, Thom and BJ did their usual job of *pretending* to behave (ask them about spiders & German toys). Thankfully, Sue was on to them - particularly Todd..she'd heard about his gladiator-style tactics at book purchasing time - lol! It was too funny when Sue passed out handouts to the group. She apologized saying, "I have handouts. Well I have handouts for only ten of you. I guess Todd will be one." Sure enough...he was. The rest of us did this thing called sharing.....

Don was a perfect addition to the motley crew! His astute "self-loathing" observation was Sue's favorite. Welcome Don!

Excellent time. **(AM)**

**Suspense Central – Devil's Cape by Rob Rogers - Monday February 14, 2011**

In spite of the veritable blow-hardiness of the wind outside, a fair-minded group gathered to discuss Suspense Central's February selection: *Devil's Cape* by Rob Rogers. For a book that none of us really loved, but most thought was "OK", we sure spent a lot of time chatting about it (from 7:55 to 10:05 to be exact). So what all did we talk about?

Chris, Aurelia, and I started talking early, and discussing our personal thoughts on the book. Chris thought it was OK, and Aurelia liked the book, but I felt that there were issues with the construction of the narrative. The writing itself was excellent, as were the characters and story, but the book really suffered from poor composition, and a few changes would have vaulted this from hard to find mid-list book to award nominee pretty easily. Kathleen and Josephine, who agreed with my assessment, joined us.

Part of the issue was that the book is front-loaded with too much info dumping. Nearly 135 pages of the book are devoted to "how we got to this point", which basically accounts for 1/4 of the book, and is told in a very linear fashion. Most of us agreed that these scenes could have been better served scattered throughout the narrative to provide more closely related context to certain scenes. This would have enhanced the dramatic impact of specific scenes, and provided a better connection between the reader and the characters.

Another issue is that we have more connection to the villains, who are very well developed and featured, than we do to the heroes. The Robber Baron, was a pretty cut and dried master-mind type, and the 'surprising end reveal' is really not surprising to anyone who was paying attention or reading the book like a traditional Thriller. I did like the neat little touches that Rogers gave the Robber Baron, but over-all he seemed sort of a comic-opera bad guy. Kosta Kalodimos, the uncle to two of the super-characters, was a lot more menacing and smart seeming, however this effect was ruined when he gave us "Execute Order 66" style Palpatine line. Yeesh. The Cirque d'Obsurite was pretty interesting, but they were a bit inconsistent and seemed sort of caricature-ish at times.

In fact, it was pretty much universally agreed that the best of the heroes was Dr. Cain Ducett, aka Bedlam, who we really get a feel for in both the early and later narrative tracks. Dr. Ducett starts in the 1980's as a 15-year-old thug/gang member in the Concrete Executioners, a black street gang in Devil's Cape. He is very much 'on edge' and when he is goaded by a girl nick-named Jazz, he pushes her down, when she arises, she places a curse on him in an attempt to kill him. This luckily fails, and while he is in Juvenile Detention he decides to concentrate and apply himself to improving his lot. He eventually becomes a Psychiatrist specializing in treating extremely psychotic and delusional patients at Devil's Cape's primary asylum. Dr. Ducett's patient, the black-widow killer Rusalka, is kidnapped by local super-villain Scion, and in the rush to recapture her he transforms into the demonic figure (later taking the super-hero name of Bedlam during a press conference). We all liked Ducett/Bedlam a lot, especially because he manages to solve most of his problems using his mind instead of his amazing strength, heightened senses, or other super abilities (instead of fighting Rusalka in a later scene he talks her into

surrendering).

The twins, Jason and Julian Kalodimos (aka Argonaut and Scion) appear to be working at opposite sides of the game, with Jason/Argonaut being one of the new groups of heroes and Julian/Scion being a tool of Kostas Kalodimos and the Robber Baron. One of the early scenes showed the father of the twins, Elias Kalodimos, performing a special ceremony using the last strands of the Golden Fleece. It is unclear as to whether this makes their powers derived from mysticism (as is repeatedly implied in both Elias and Jason's dreams and visions) or if this was just coincidental and they would have had powers regardless, as Aurelia points out. Chris noted that the behavior of the twins is pretty consistent with standard Comic book superhero twin tropes.

Kate, who takes on her father's mantle as Doctor Camelot, is very poorly drawn and not very interesting, however the last survivor of the Storm Raiders, Sam Small, is quite intriguing. The Storm Raiders themselves do things in a manner that shows realism and professionalism. One such action is updating their wills any time they go out on a sortie to deal with villains. The idea that you never know if you are going to come back alive is really handled well by the older heroes, and shocks the younger heroes to the core.

All in all, while we did like the book in spite of its flaws, the primary issue that we found was one of editing. A better editor could really have pushed this over the top. Sadly, one of the problems with the small presses is often a lack of experienced editors, or editors who are afraid to do more than check grammar and spelling.

Tune in next month as we discuss *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman.

#### **Films to Come – Wednesday February 16, 2011**

It's Oscar Time again...this month, moderator Barry Weinberger, took us through the complete list of [Academy Award nominations](#). We discussed the list in detail, describing what we liked/didn't like and which actors or movies we thought should or shouldn't be nominated in the individual categories. This, as usual, was a rousing discussion as we rarely see eye to eye on our likes and dislikes ;)

We also went through the usual Barry-generated lists of recently released and soon to be released films with the filmography of the directors releasing these films (with Maltin's ratings for the previous releases and notations for genre films). We do need to applaud Barry for these lists he prepares since he compiles them personally from various sources and they ALWAYS generate spirited discussion. And this month was no exception!

As always, we had fun! Diner followed...(Jo)

#### **Additional comments:**

Our intrepid moderator Barry Weinberger once again provided an informative and fun meeting. As he usually does, we went over movies coming out in January, February, March - and even beyond. Films such as *Cars 2* and *Harry Potter* were also mentioned because they are so highly anticipated. The other big topic of the evening, of course, were the Oscar nominations, good and bad things about them, who we felt would win, and so forth. We continued our discussion at the Horizon Diner. Differences of opinion abounded about the Oscars, but that's what's so fun about discussing them. (Chris H)

#### **Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, February 22, 2011**

"That's six degrees of separation insanity-style!" This statement from Todd pretty much set the tone of the evening...

Themes met last night to discuss the topic of "teams". It was decided early on, to make things a bit more challenging, that families could not count toward a team. With this one limitation we were off...off the walls that is. Much silliness and many laughs later, we had several pages of notes and tons of teams. I won't list everything, but here's a look at some teams we came up:

TV:

V: Fifth Column



GI Joe cartoon - Todd firmly believes the Joe's got lucky because Cobra Commander was a schmuck...he was particularly perplexed by Cobra Commander's Weather Dominator..."big deal, you'll make it rain."  
Thundercats - do not, I repeat, do not get Todd started on Mumra and Snarf. For the record, Jo was a fan.  
Red Dwarf  
Bowry Boys/Dead End Kids  
Chuck offered the Three Stooges..."all 7 of them!" and the Marx Brothers  
Supernatural's team of Dean, Sam & Bobby - Chris snuck it in because Bobby isn't actually family.  
Jo provided the town of Eureka  
Mission Impossible (Steve R)  
Lost in Space  
Buffy and the gang (Me)  
Mulder & Scully  
The Unit  
The Prisoner  
The A-Team  
Last of the Summer Wine - a team of three old men in a British show. One is always a dirty old man, one a pompous stuffed shirt and the cynical survivor (Chuck)  
Thundar which led to me, Jo and Todd shouting "ride Ookla"

**Movies:**

Todd and I teamed up for Lost Boys - team fighting the vampires and the vampire team  
Ivanhoe  
British Avengers  
Robin Hood and his Merry-Men  
Godzilla, Rodan & Mothra teaming up against Gidorah (Chris)  
Buckaroo Banzai & the Hong Kong Cavaliers  
X-Men  
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles & Ghostbusters (Jo)

**Books/Comics:**

Old Man's War, Chris Bunch teams, Poul Anderson's Dave Falkyn (Steve R)  
Timothy Zahn's Black Collar series & Steven Perry's Matador series (Todd)  
Lensman series by EE "Doc" Smith  
X-Men  
Order of the Stick web-comic (Todd)  
Vance's Planet of Adventure (Chuck)

Doom Patrol, Legion of Super Heroes and Justice League also were mentioned. Todd's emphatic, "ooo, can we talk about villain teams?" Bill's connecting actors all night to who knows what. Something about Ivanhoe's tights, finding out Todd's uncle is a robot & Todd's "danger Todd Ehrenfels" complete with flailing arms...and Bill proudly yelling, "the seven dwarfs!!" (because his answer of Thunder Birds didn't count). That's the kind of meeting it was...fun, answers abounded, we wrapped up about 10p still calling out teams as we put the chairs away. Next month...international gods. **(AM)**

**Modern Masters – The Spy Who Haunted Me by Simon R. Green – Friday - February 25, 2011**

I have to start off by apologizing to the artist for the new release of the novel *Deathstalker* by [Simon Green](#). Yes, the new cover is awful, and yes I hate it, but as horrendous as it is, an artist did spend at least a few hours painting it, and that does deserve some respect. I completely respect the time and effort that went into what is probably the worst *Deathstalker* cover of all time (Covers from left to right: new release, American edition, UK original cover).

As you can see, the American Edition (center) had an absolutely awesome cover. Why they did not just use that, I do not know (probably money), but the new cover with the hideous art is what I am going to have to buy to keep my collection current (argh). We literally spent almost twenty minutes complaining about this artwork before we got on to talking about Green's work in general and *The Spy Who Haunted Me* in specific.

For a change we started by discussing the broad range of the author's works, a subject that we usually hold to the end of the discussion. We started with a quick trip down memory lane to novels like *Shadows Fall*, *Deathstalker*, and *Ghostworld* while I attempted to ignore the horrors of that dreadful cover art. As I stated during the meeting, [Simon R. Green](#) is one of my favorite authors, and has been since I picked up my first copy of *Ghostworld*.

Simon Green is an Englishman (cue Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore For He Is An English Man*) and he sure knows how to write. In addition to being a multiple International and New York Times Bestseller, he is also a writer for the BBC. He began writing in 1976 with *Manslayer*, but it was not until 1988 when he sold a record 7 novels and received the commission to pen the novelization of Kevin Costner's *Robin Hood*. It was all wonder and enchantment from there as Green released blockbuster after blockbuster with *Hawk & Fisher*, *Blue Moon Rising*, *Deathstalker*, *Shadows Fall*, *Nightside*, and so many others. In recent years, along with the highly popular *Nightside* books, Green has made a big splash with the *Secret Histories* series which follows the Drood family in their Bond-inspired adventures quelling the horrors of the supernatural with wit and more than a bit of brute strength.

The featured selection this time around was *The Spy Who Haunted Me*, the third installment in the *Secret Histories* series. The book starts off with a high profile caper and Eddie Drood, in the guise of his cover identity Shaman Bond, helping a group of villains steal the Crown Jewels in order to help Australia gain independence... Yeah, it seems a bit strange, but it is a simple hors d'oeuvre for the main course of adventure that will follow. The setup of the book is that Alexander King, the legendary Independent Agent, has set up a challenge to find a new successor. A team of super agents including the Simon Green regulars Walker (from the *Nightside* series), Eddie Drood, and the Blue Fairy are sent on a series of missions investigating the *Loch Ness Monster*, Roswell, Sasquatch, the Philadelphia Experiment, and a mysterious Russian science station. The goal is to solve the most important mysteries of the supernatural world and prove that they are worthy successors to King's legacy. The problem is that the investigations are almost as dangerous as the investigators themselves, and much like *Highlander* there can be only one. The book is excellent, and a whole lot of fun.

Chris, who had not read any of the other books in the *Secret Histories* series, was very impressed by the books. While this is the third book in the series, Chris commented that it was very accessible and easy to get into. I was amazed by how much Chris seemed to dig the book, even reading a few great passages from the story.

Kathleen, Ann-Marie, and I, who had been following Eddie Drood's career from the beginning, were equally impressed. Though I will admit that the first two books of this series were sort of 'ho-hum', *The Spy Who Haunted Me* was absolutely fantastic. From start to finish, this was a great story and a fun read, earning high marks from everyone. Even Aurelia found herself drawn into the narrative and was desirous of reading the whole series by the time we were done.

Next month we explore god-hood with [Roger Zelazny's](#) *Creatures of Light & Darkness*. If you need a copy, Bill Skees at Well Read Books is offering to get us 20% off if we order 5 copies or more, so let me know ASAP! (**Todd Ehrenfels**)

#### **Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session – February 26, 2011**

#### **Heroes & Rogues: A Wolf in the Fold 2/26/2011 Recap**

#### **Chapter 10: Cold Rage of the Tomb**

*From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar, Executive Officer of the Lady Malbec, shipboard date 920.860.M38*

These past few weeks have been a whirlwind of activity aboard the *Lady Malbec* and I am not entirely certain that we have not bitten off far more than we can comfortably chew. Since we arrived in the warzone we seem to have bounced from problem to problem, reacting almost as often as we have been acting. Having been confronted by several problems of late, I think that we have finally hit a wall

of more epic proportions, and frankly it scares more than I would ever admit to Liana or the rest of the crew.

It started innocently enough as we attempted to complete the Ciria-lol Trade Route. Establishing this route, in conjunction with our Sparta Hill-Ciria and Sparta-lol routes, would allow us to create a trade triangle between the three worlds, which would allow us to manage supplies from our new central offices on Yois. With the new additions to the House being shuttled out to Ciria and Sparta Hill, we determined to take the *Lady Malbec* and *Wylers Gambit* out to lol to attempt to sell the minerals and materiel that we acquired from XYZ. Micro and Benito assured me that the cargo would be useful to a variety of different factions among the Adeptus Mechanicus, who is developing the world of lol into a proper Forgeworld to help feed materiel into the front.

When we arrived at lol, Domenica Wayne took over primary communication and obtained a perfect insertion orbit for cargo unloading, and I assembled a team to go to the surface, and Micro introduced me to Magos Tavitus, a member of the Fabricator Cult. Tavitus offered us a completely unreasonable amount, so ridiculous that I determined not to look into the reason for his hostility. Luckily, though, Micro caught the attention of one of the outcasts of the Exploratorii Cult, a bizarre and only semi-comprehensible fellow who introduced himself as Magos Captain. In spite of his strange perturbations, we decided to see if we could speak with him in private. Luckily this turned out to be a boon for us as Magos Captain, better known as Magos Vortan, explained to us that he and his Exploratorii friends had discovered lol and were hoping to develop the system themselves before the Fabricator Cultists moved in. Frankly the partisan politics of Mechanicus Cultists is a bit off-putting, but the end result was that we were able to negotiate an excellent swap with Vortan and the crew of the *Mechanicum's Fury*. In exchange for our materials we were able to obtain a number of Standard Templates for Asteroid Maws, Orbital Refineries, and even a Maroff Field!

We managed to transit back to Ciria and completed the turnaround pretty handily, managing to acquire a decent cargo for our new friends at lol, then managed to make the journey back to lol with little incident. Unfortunately when we arrived at lol...

+++ The following information is held under Inquisitorial Seal by Inquisitor Baudus Itana of the Ordo Xenos 121.557,M40 following its discovery in the /redacted by order of the Inquisition/ and held in the primary vaults of Hate at Zama +++

Unfortunately when we arrived at lol, it was to a scene of utter devastation. I hesitate to even pen these words, given the events of those days and the dire warnings of Inquisitor Jacobbeus DuMorne. As the *Lady Malbec* moved deeper into the system, our Vox calls were met with silence, however Astropath Domenica Wayne made contact with the last of the Psykers on the Imperial Frigate *Incus Fulmen*, whose sole surviving Astropath warned us off and sent images to Domenica showing horrible machines and strange pyramids rising up from the massive rends in the surface of lol. Awakened by the foolish techpriests in their efforts to delve the founding supports of their fledgling Forgeworld.

Fearing for Vortan and his crew, Liana had Alequintus shape a course with the able assistance of Lilith and Ramhat, while Eladio made certain that we were unobserved from the planet or pursued by enemy vessels. Vortan was busy attempting to get his damaged survey cruiser up and running, but recommended that we take information and a message to the Inquisition at Zama. We made the translation to the Immaterium as quickly as we could and Lilith steered us true on to Zama, where Inquisitor Jacobbeus DuMorne demanded our immediate compliance and obedience, commanding us to transit to Thapsus and retrieve a special package then meet us at lol in a month.

We arrived early thanks to Lilith's smart navigating, however the creatures had managed to get ships out into space, and so we decided to make a quick jump out to Olisipio to avoid contact with these horrifying Xenos. While this ate into our supplies and consumable stores, it was worth it to avoid combat with those creatures. When we returned, Domenica coordinated with Jacobbeus DuMorne aboard the *Preado Extrarius* and we were instructed to take up position behind the main force. Several of the Xeno vessels had vacated the system through unknown means as neither Lelith nor Ramhat could see any trace of transits out of the area.

The *Lady Malbec* was a lucky ship, but luck tends to trend in the strangest of manners for both Tremnars and Mariocs. A small enemy ship managed to position itself for an excellent interception of the *Lady Malbec*. We exchanged fire for a few hours until a lucky strike disabled the maneuvering thrusters, allowing us to shape a course away from their vessel. Unfortunately, these beastly creatures had launched some manner of assault shuttles, and within moments, we found ourselves repelling boarders from the enemy shuttles.

We fought tooth and nail to repel the invaders. Jorn struck hard and heavy at the first skeletal machine, damaging it, but not before it could strike back, stunning the Security Chief. Lorn, who had swatted down several of the shuttles with the point defense turrets, moved to assist Jorn and destroyed the menacing machine. Micro stood toe to toe with one of the other invaders, and was brought low by one of their horrid scythe-devices before I shredded its arm with my exquisite new toy, sending the villain crumbling to the floor. After having seen its vile colleagues destroyed by our fearsome defense, the remaining invader left the bridge. Of course, the fact that Domenica had managed to score a hit on the enemy's drive systems, forcing the shuttles to return to their ship.

We rejoined the formation and proceeded to watch as DuMorne and his fleet blasted the Xeno scum to flinders, sending the wreck spinning deeper into the system towards lol's sun. Upon clearing the space around lol, we watched as a dozen battleships and cruisers began scorching the planet clear of infestation. The survivors, clustered around their bastion at Anko, received the victorious Inquisitor at the spaceport, and the Inquisitor forcibly changed the government of lol, blasting Tavitus clear off his feet and exploding the obnoxious Magos' head. The cover story, apparently is that a plague killed off hundreds of workers, requiring cleansing and quarantine...

+++ End of redacted text +++

a plague killed off hundreds of workers, requiring cleansing and quarantine. The new government succumbed quickly to my negotiations for resupply and reprovisioning, and we quickly transited back to Thapsus to retrieve necessary cargoes and return them to lol. After this we made the final circuit of our Ciria to lol run to establish a firmly navigable route wholly owned by House Marioc. Having completed our endeavour, we decided to see what new markets we could exploit on the nearby world of Olisipio. Things should prove fairly difficult on this Feudal world, as their luddite tendencies seem to be placing them out of our reach, but who knows...(Todd Ehrenfels)

#### **SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV**

##### **Airplane! – Chris Hasselkus**

Unfortunately the weather kept attendees down Tuesday night, 2/1/2011, at the AMC @ GSP. The film is still great, especially because the actors play it straight. Lloyd Bridges, Peter Graves, Leslie Nielsen and Robert Stack are no longer with us, but they all did a terrific job. Remember: Don't call me Shirley.  
Grade: A.

##### **Review of "The Runaways"(2010) on Starz Saturday Matinee(OT) – Steve Spinosa**

Last night Starz Saturday Matinee showed the film "The Runaways", which tells the story of the legendary all-girl punk band that existed from 1975 thru 1979, and was the springboard to fame for Philly girl Joan Jett. The story focuses on three people: Guitarist/songwriter Joan the aspiring professional who lives for Rock 'n' Roll; Cherie Currie the naive innocent who joins the group to escape her dysfunctional family; and Manager Kim Fowley the old reprobate who toughens up & sharpens the band's playing & image to make them a success. Warning: This film should not be shown to very young children as it contains many disturbing scenes involving sex & drug abuse. Highlights (and lowlights) of the film include: Kim & Joan working out the rhythm & lyrics to "Cherry Bomb" for Cherie to sing; Kim bringing in teen boys for "Heckling drills" to toughen up the girls; various seamy incidents from their first tour including drummer Sandy masturbating with a shower head while Joan gives direction (you don't actually see it, but you get the gist of it); Joan & Lita looking for a bathroom and Joan peeing on the headliners' guitar (and doing a "doody" as well) before the gig; Joan & Cherie having lesbian sex in the hotel room; Joan & Cherie snorting up all their cocaine before they land in Japan; Cherie, Joan, & Lita arguing over a magazine article with ONLY Cherie's pictures in it; Cherie's collapse in Japan from drug over-

indulgence; the final blow-up between Cherie, Joan, Lita & Kim Fowley which ends in Cherie leaving the band; Cherie's second collapse & drug rehab stint. The final scene has Cherie (working at a plastic figurine shop) calling into Rodney Bingheimer's radio show to talk to old friend Joan (who's promoting her "I Love Rock 'N'Roll" album). A good film, but for mature adults only. Grade: B+

#### **Review of The Golden Blaze cartoon film (2005) – Steve Spinosa**

The Starz Kids & Family channel showed the 2005 cartoon film *The Golden Blaze* last night. It's the story of Inventor Greg Fletcher (voiced by Blair Underwood) and his son Jason (voiced by Kylo Thomas), who enjoys the comic book series *The Golden Blaze*, with little interest in anything else, much to the displeasure of his teacher Miss Anderson and his father. Mr. Fletcher's inventions have become known throughout Quaint Valley as "Fletcher's Flops", much to Jason's disappointment. One day, though, Greg's latest invention gives him superpowers just like Jason's hero the Golden Blaze (flying thru the air, laser beams that shoot from his eyes, etc.). Jason persuades his father to dress up like the Golden Blaze and come to school to aid him against Leon Tatum (Ricky D'Shea Collins) the school bully who's own dad Thomas, the town billionaire (Michael Clarke Duncan) has a secret identity as the super villain Quake. Thomas & Greg have a showdown at the school in their superhero outfits, and Greg is defeated easily. Jason is convinced that Quake (i.e. Mister Tatum) is out to peruse the same evil plot that's described in the comic's last issue and wants his dad to stop him but Greg refuses. When Jason decides to become the Blaze's sidekick Sureshot and take on Quake by himself, Greg is persuaded by Monica (Miss Anderson) to get involved for Jason's sake. This was a very enjoyable film, and well animated (with some scenes looking just like a comic book) to boot. Our late friend Tim Cook would definitely have approved of this film. Neil Patrick Harris voices the cowardly comic book storeowner!!! Highly recommended. Grade: A+

#### **Upcoming Conventions**

<http://www.scificonventions.com/> - take a look at this site for different conventions

<http://www.scifisource.com/> - great site for all things genre