

Friends of Fandom - The Year's First Issue of ...

The Info Alert

<http://www.cam-info.net/archive/>

February/March 2004



February/March 2004

Greetings From the 4th year of the 21st Century.

The year has started off busy, running both sad and happy. Lori Wolf died of cancer, leaving a huge void in Texas fandom. (<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tx/travis/obits/2003/wolfll.txt>). John Trimble and John Lowsley both survived heart attacks. AggieCon survived de-funding, and ApolloCon was born in Houston. Plans are being made for a new mystery convention in Austin and a Texas edition of World Fantasy and other major events. There are even whispers of another future Texas WorldCon. REVELcon is fast approaching with its unique blend of zines, song tapes, and adult themes. Three branches of the Houston Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Exchange Network are now busily meeting to discuss books once a month. And this marks the first Info Alert in a very long time where neither Clif nor Margaret has any outstanding health issues.

And now...

Fasten your seatbelt and bring your browser window to an upright and locked position.

And we are off

As always, how far off you have to determine for yourself.

You Heard It Here First

The Austin Literary Arts Maintenance Organization (ALAMO – The 1997 WorldCon people) has officially agreed to entertain the possibility of bidding on a future WorldCon somewhere in Texas. Did you hear a few ifs and maybes in that? Nevertheless, rumor has it that at least one pre-supporting membership has been accepted for \$20.12. Hmmm.

ALAMO – <http://www.ALAMO-SF.org/>

Forthcoming SF & Fantasy Books

February releases from Catherine Asaro, C.J. Cherryh, Robin Hobb, Mercedes Lackey, & Andre Norton.

New March releases due from Guy Gavriel Key, Mercedes Lackey, Anne McCaffrey, Sean McMullen, Jody Lynn Nye, & Harry Turtledove.

For more sf&f new book listings and more detail (updated monthly), see <http://www.cam-info.net/forthcomingsf.html> .

Asimov's Moonshine

Asimov's magazine has a reprint science article by the master of popular science exposition on its web page. Asimov considers the effect of the moon on humans starting with werewolves and working his way down to influences of the tides and moonlight itself, eventually dismissing reports showing such differences as the effect of drugs depending on the phase of the moon.

As always, when reading Asimov one should keep in mind that one is receiving a brilliant and informative exposition of the party line. In this case, it appears to me (Clif) that Asimov is looking for a reason for throwing out data that happens to contradict orthodoxy, always a dangerous procedure. I always like to keep in mind Asimov's classic article which explained the inverse square law and how it forever made impossible the ray and beam weapons so beloved of early space opera. Nevermind the laser.

Moonshine - <http://tinyurl.com/ysjcg>
Asimov's - <http://www.asimovs.com/>

One Plus-Five Ring to Rule Them All

In the latest issue of the Del Rey Books Internet Newsletter, editor Robbins analyzes Lord of the Rings in D&D terms:

“I think few will argue against me that Tolkien's Middle-earth inspired much in the world of Dungeons & Dragons, but it was never as apparent to me as in my latest viewing. I was dumbfounded by the fact that Boromir takes three arrows and continues to fight in the end of Fellowship. His hit-points must be through the roof! I was equally impressed by Frodo's constitution through the entire quest. Hobbits must surely have an allowance for a rating of 19, because on that journey--with limited food and water, the psychological weight of the ring, no sleep, and the undeniably taxing landscape--another race would have surely succumbed. Assuming Frodo is the focus of this group, Legolas is by far the best NPC. His feats of derring-do in each movie reflect an obvious Elven allowance of 19 on dexterity, and certainly he's near 18 in strength, wisdom and intelligence. Further, he has high-mastery of the long bow (forget about the endless quiver and what is probably a +4 Elven bow!) and special abilities that include greater aural and visual acuity. And Gandalf... Well, what is there to say about Gandalf except that the experience points earned fighting the Balrog were clearly enough to raise him several levels?”

(You can subscribe to their newsletter free at <http://info.randomhouse.com/cgi-bin21/DM/y/ecxw0DH1XK0WM0HPm0A1>)

I Can Give It Up Anytime I Want

Anne Rice claims that she is giving up vampires. Permanently. Never writing about them again. Nor witches either. Now she is looking for something "more extensive" as she is "weary of the constraints of the metaphor."

Not that she plans on giving up writing about the supernatural. The smart money is betting that she takes up angels next.

Anne Rice - <http://www.annerice.com/>

Vampire Saga Over - <http://cgi.citizen-times.com/cgi-bin/story/arts/48044>

The Art of SF

Are you a fan of Michael Whelan? Do you just enjoy Science Fiction art beautifully rendered? In any case you will not want to miss the Michael Whelan Art Gallery. The images are breathtaking. (Thanks to Gary Denton for this item).

Michael Whelan Art Gallery -

<http://members.fortunecity.com/camarila/whelan.html>

Entropy Wins Again

Hal Clement (Harry Clement Stubbs), well-loved author of hard SF and the classic story, Mission of Gravity, died October 28 at the age of 81 after writing Science Fiction for over 60 years. Marguerite McClure Bradbury, Ray Bradbury's wife of 56 years, died in LA on November 24. Jack Cady who won the '93 Nebula for his novella 'The Night We Buried Road Dog' died January 14.

Science Fiction Mythology

Cheryl Morgan examines the myths we tell about our own field, and shows the ideological (and sometimes nationalistic) views underlying such issues as the first work of Science Fiction.

Myths of Origin - <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040209/myths.shtml>

Scanning - Scanning

The latest issue of 'Notes From the Underground', newsletter of the Houston SF media club, Several Unlimited, reports, as usual for this time of year, gearing up for their zine sale at REVELcon.

Several Unlimited - <http://members.aol.com/ErikaF/su/>

REVELcon 15 - <http://www.majorcrimes.freesevers.com/REVELcon.htm>

Uhura Would Be Proud

Starbase Houston has completely re-invented their website. Check out the new site still at:

Starbase Houston - <http://www.starbasehouston.org/>

For Information on Texas Fan Organizations see out list at <http://www.cam-info.net/clubslist.html> .

Do you belong to other segments of area fandom?
Send us an email occasionally to let us know what you are up to.

Online Interviews

“I’ve not become angry with age. I am more judgmental”. – Brian Aldiss
<http://tinyurl.com/3x6fs>

“Technology changes everything, all the rules, and it stays changed”. -
Stephen Baxter
<http://tinyurl.com/3fu22>

“Frank Herbert often said that the only valid literary critic is time, ...” - Brian Herbert
<http://tinyurl.com/2ayv8>

“The book is the boss. ... First and foremost, as a writer you should write about the stories and characters that excite you, fill you with passion and emotion”.
Brandon Massey - <http://tinyurl.com/2l7nn>

“I say that I write ‘mythic fiction’ because I’m not above stealing from my betters”.
Tim Pratt - <http://tinyurl.com/3dubj>

“When everything is morphing before our eyes, can we still write about the shape of things to come? It’s an open question”. - Kim Stanley Robinson
<http://tinyurl.com/25ezd>

“Humor is one of the things I do, not think about”. - Robert Sheckley
<http://tinyurl.com/2ffkx>

“As soon as I get through this dragon thing, I’m going to start doing regular-type books”.
Lucius Shepard - <http://tinyurl.com/2jsdm>

“The Knight is to some degree autobiographical, as all my books are. For example, Able falls off a horse. I have done that myself. One is encouraged to remount as soon as possible, but not by the horse”. - Gene Wolfe
<http://tinyurl.com/26k13>

SF on the Web

Asimov’s Magazine is once more placing their potential Nebula Award nominees (the stories, not the authors) out on their web site to be read for free.

The Potter of Bones, by Eleanor Arnason
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/bones.shtml

The Empress of Mars, by Kage Baker
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/Empress.shtml

Stories for Men, by John Kessel
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/Men.shtml

Breathmoss, by Ian R. MacLeod
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/breathmoss.shtml

Knapsack Poems, by Eleanor Arnason
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/knapsack.shtml

Lambing Season, by Molly Gloss
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/Lambing.shtml

The Last of the O-Forms, by James Van Pelt
http://www.asimovs.com/_issue_0401/oforms.shtml

Abyss and Apex Issue 7

UUBUS, by Greg Beatty
<http://www.klio.net/abyssandapex/uubus.html>

My Kingdom, by Hannah Wolf Bowen
<http://www.klio.net/abyssandapex/mykingdom.html>

Those Boiled Bones, by Jay Lake
<http://www.klio.net/abyssandapex/boiledbones.html>

ideomancer

February, by Jay Lake

<http://www.ideomancer.com/fl/Lake-February/Lake-February.htm>

The Leap From the Bridge Is Ungainly, by Charles Tuomi

<http://www.ideomancer.com/ss/Tuomi-Bridge/Tuomi-Bridge.htm>

Clean City, by Greg van Eekhout

<http://www.ideomancer.com/ss/Eekhout-Clean/Eekhout-Clean.htm>

Storm Comes A'Callin', by Jeremiah Tolbert

<http://www.ideomancer.com/fy/Tolbert-Storm/Tolbert-Storm.htm>

New Fiction at SciFiction

Inappropriate Behavior, by Pat Murphy

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/murphy/murphy1.html

Twilla ,by Tom Reamy

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/reamy3/reamy31.html

Zora and the Zombie, by Andy Duncan

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/duncan2/duncan21.html

Scout's Honor, by Terry Bisson

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/bisson4/bisson41.html

The Stare, by John Wyndham

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/wyndham3/wyndham31.html

Inside Outside, by Michaela Roessner

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/roessner/roessner1.html

House of the Future, by Richard Butner

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/butner/butner1.html

The Prize of Peril, by Robert Sheckley

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/sheckley5/sheckley51.html

Peregrines, by Suzy McKee Charnas

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/charnas/charnas1.html

Nutball Season, by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/rusch2/rusch21.html

Minnesota Gothic, by Thomas M. Disch

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/disch3/disch31.html

The Keepers of the House, by Lester Del Rey

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/delrey/delrey1.html

Liar's House, by Lucius Shepard

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/shepard7/shepard71.html

My Father's Club, by Michael Libling

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/libling/libling1.html

The Pink Caterpillar, by Anthony Boucher

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/boucher2/boucher21.html

And The Dish Ran Away With The Spoon, by Paul Di Filippo

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/difilippo3/difilippo31.html

Child of the Stones, by Paul McAuley

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/mcauley2/mcauley21.html

The Golem, by Avram Davidson

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/davidson3/davidson31.html

It's All True, by John Kessel

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/kessel/kessel1.html

D = R x T, by Howard Waldrop

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/waldrop4/

The Fellow who Married the Maxill Girl, by Ward Moore

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/classics/classics_archive/moore2/moore21.html

The Woman In The Cherry-Red Convertible By The Platinum Sea, by Ilsa J. Bick

http://www.scifi.com/scifiction/originals/originals_archive/bick2/bick21.html

New Fiction at Strange Horizons includes

The Memory of Water, by David Moles

<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031013/memory.shtml>

Indra's Rice, by S. Evans

<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031020/rice.shtml>

Living with the Harpy, by Tim Pratt
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031027/harpy.shtml>

Twenty-One Pennies, by Joel Best
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031103/pennies.shtml>

The Dream Factory, by Jenn Reese
http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031110/dream_factory.shtml

Sleeping with Bears, by Theodora Goss
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031117/bears.shtml>

Circus of Regret, by Aynjel Kaye
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031201/circus.shtml>

Heavy Things, by Hannah Wolf Bowen
http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031208/heavy_things.shtml

The Ice Princess, by Jae Brim
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031215/princess.shtml>

In the Late December, by Greg van Eekhout
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2003/20031222/december.shtml>

Three Tales from Sky River: Myths for a Starfaring Age, by Vandana Singh
http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040105/sky_river.shtml

The War of the Flowers, by Brenda Cooper
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040112/flowers.shtml>

St. Ailbe's Hall, by Naomi Kritzer
Part 1 - <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040119/hall.shtml>
Part 2 - <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040126/hall.shtml>

Century to Starboard, by Liz Williams
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040202/century.shtml>

A Season in Silence, by Jennifer de Guzman
<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20040209/season.shtml>

The Infinite Matrix has:

Script-Doctoring the Apocalypse, by Chris Nakashima-Brown
http://www.infinitematrix.net/stories/shorts/script_doctoring_apocalypse.html

Science Fiction on TV

>From Magrathea's Science Fiction on TV pages
<http://www.sftv.org/sftv/sftvschd.txt>

SFTV News and Info

The Cylons are Running Battlestar Galactica Officially a Go

After some delays, SciFi formally announced a pickup for a 13 episode series for Battlestar Galactica in association with Sky One in the U.K. It will be based on based on the channel's "reimagined" Galactica miniseries that aired in December 2003. The episodes pick up where only a few days have passed since the miniseries. The Futon Critic has the full press release here:

<http://www.thefutoncritic.com/cgi/gofuton.cgi?action=newswire&id=6413>
and SciFi Wire has an interview with Ron Moore about the series here:
<http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/art-main.html?2004-02/10/13.30.sfc>

The Batman on Kids WB this fall and Cartoon Network in 2005

Kids WB announced that they will have a new series, The Batman, on the air this fall. It follows the early years of Bruce Wayne as Batman, and will include his first meetings with many of the villains. It will debut on Kids WB this fall and turn up on Cartoon network in 2005. For more details, check out

<http://forums.toonzone.net/showthread.php?t=102021>

The full press release can be found here on the SFTV News Message area here: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sftvnews/message/3732>

SFTV New Season start dates / Special Airdates :

Strange (Sho Beyond)	Feb 1 (Debut)
Stripperella (Spike)	Feb 12 (Resumes)
Stephen King's Kingdom Hospital (ABC)	Mar 3 (Debut)
Mad Mad House (SciFi)	Mar 4 (Debut)
Tripping the Rift (SciFi)	Mar 4 (Debut)
Scare Tactics (SciFi)	Mar 4 (Season Two)
Wonderfalls (FOX)	Mar 12 (Debut)
Star Wars Clone Wars (11-20)	Mar 26 (Resumes)
Jeremiah (Sho)	Mar ? (Season Two Resumes)
Still Life (FOX)	midseason (Debut)
Five Days Til Midnight (SciFi)	June ? (Debut)
Earthsea (SciFi)	Dec ? (Debut)

For more information, see our listing at:
<http://www.cam-info.net/sftv.html>

Prepare to be Assimilated

According to the Startrek.com newsletter, Star Trek: The Experience at the Los Vegas Hilton will be opening a new multi-million dollar addition in March, "Borg Invasion 4D". This immersive Galactic experience will open with a "Borg Ball" March 18, 2004.

STARTREK.COM – <http://www.startrek.com/>
Borg Invasion 4D -
<http://www.startrek.com/startrek/view/news/article/4325.html>

Speaking of Trek

Geoff Ryman analyzes Star Fleet's Crew structure and possible future directions for the Trek Universe continuity at
http://www.computercrownsnest.com/sfnews2/04_feb/news0204_4.shtml .

More Trek

Could the Enterprise break the light barrier? How many warp could it really take? Taking these questions an excuse to stick a model of the Enterprise in a super-orbital expansion tube used to create luminosity photos showing supersonic gas pressure and holographic interferometry studies, it at least led to some neat images. Unfortunately the Enterprise had her shields down for the test and piece of candy wrapper space junk moving at simulated warp speed smashed her to pieces. (Thanks to Sherlock for pointing this out to us).

USS Enterprise in a wind tunnel -
<http://www.physics.uq.edu.au/lp/lasdiag/enterp.shtml>
Physics department. University of Queensland in Brisbane.

Resistance is Useless

Outpost Gallifrey <http://www.gallifreyone.com> reports that the current plan for the new Doctor Who series is to make an initial batch of 12 episodes running 45 minutes each - 6 two part-ers. Latest news on the series can be found at <http://www.gallifreyone.net/newstv.php>

Dr. Who and the Virtue of Theft

Other news of interest to fans of the Dr. are at Outpost Gallifrey at <http://www.gallifreyone.net/news.php#newsitemEpZuEZyZVAIXGYLdKa> which relates how Episode two of the lost Doctor Who serial, 'The Daleks'

Master Plan, entitled "Day of Armageddon," has been recovered in its entirety. The film was returned to the BBC by Francis Watson, Head of Engineering at Yorkshire Television in Leeds. As a young engineer working for the BBC in the early seventies, Watson had been given the task of clearing out a room full of junk at the Corporation's Television Film Studios in Ealing. Among the rubbish were two 16mm cans marked Doctor Who, which Watson saved from destruction so that he could watch them on the projector at his local film club. For over thirty years and through two house moves, he kept the films safe and felt that the time had come to return them to the BBC. Watson says that he has always felt slightly embarrassed about "borrowing" the films. Which sounds better than "theft", but he is undoubtedly responsible for the episode's survival.

It is a crucial episode which helped to set up an ambitious twelve part story, a classic space-opera romp through space and time which saw the Doctor and his companions try to thwart the traitorous 'Guardian of the Solar System', Mavic Chen, and his Dalek allies - culminating in the destruction of time itself!

Angel Falls into Dark Shadows

The WB has confirmed that it will cancel its vampire series Angel at the end of its current fifth season. Why? According to WB President, Jordan Levin it's to create timeslots where they can repeat shows. That's right, you heard him correctly. The hit show Angel and the hoards of Buffy fans are being written off so WB can show reruns. But WB has a strategy to recapture the fans they have alienated. Are you ready for this? They are bringing you a remake of Dark Shadows, the gothic soap opera. This could be really good if they do it right. What are the odds?

Let the Games Begin

The Year is 92030. The human race has been through many wars but none as far reaching as the war that begun one thousand years ago. Now, the galaxy is split between a race of intelligent cyborg robots and the human race. Watching over the human race is the Imperium, which is a benevolent organization which desires the progress and survival of the race. The Imperium understands the gravity of its task. Without them, the human race would soon break apart as 99% of the human race live and die without any knowledge of what is going under the surface of society. Gaia, a means of communicating in a virtual reality, has allowed subversive syndicates to operate within human space. Then things get complicated. And now the Max Death approaches.

A vast Space Opera of a RPG game, ICAR has several unique features. First of all, it's completely free on the web. This includes artwork, pseudo-scientific explanations,

excellent GM tools and huge amounts of detail. Its gaming system is a “cinematic percentile” system which allows quick and visual combat.

A Steve Jackson game it's not, but you are still getting a lot of bang for your non-existent buck.

ICAR - <http://www.icar.co.uk/>

Science Fiction at the Movies

Everything you ever wanted to know about what is wrong with the Lord of the Rings movie is now available on the web. More than you wanted to know, actually.

Nitpickers Guide to Lord of the Rings - <http://jackflannel.org/lotr/>

I (Clif) have to say that I think that many of the changes listed are actually dramatic improvements.

Hell Freezes Over

Return of the King has eleven Oscar Nominations including Best Picture. (You are holding your breath? Maybe the fact it is Fantasy rather than Science Fiction might help.) Disney was in the running as Pirates of the Caribbean has five nominations and Finding Nemo has four.

The Oscars - <http://www.oscar.com/>

Which brings us to ...

Awards Awards Awards

Hugo Nomination Time:

Those that are members of Noreascon 4 or were members of TorCon 3 will want to make Hugo nominations at

http://www.noreascon.org/hugos/hugo_nomination.html . If not, it's a good excuse for purchasing a WorldCon membership now. There is a separate online ballot for the Retro-Hugos at

http://www.noreascon.org/hugos/retrohugo_nomination.html .

Noreascon 4 - <http://www.noreascon.org/index.html>

TorCon 3 - <http://www.torcon3.on.ca/>

Sapphire Nominees in Black and White

Sapphire Awards are for Science Fiction Romance. Note Catherine Asaro is represented once again, managing the difficult trick of good SF AND interesting romance.

Dance with the Devil, by Sherrilyn Kenyon, St. Martin's
Heart Thief, by Robin D. Owens, Berkley
Skyfall, by Catherine Asaro, Tor
The Star Princess, by Susan Grant, Dorchester
Tinker, by Wen Spencer, Baen

Arthur C. Clarke Award

We previously mentioned the financial difficulties that the Arthur C. Clarke Award was having as Rocket Publishing stopped all funding except for the cash prize itself. Funds were raised by the newly minted nonprofit Serendip Foundation so the award ceremony could take place. Now the Science Museum where the Award is traditionally held has raised their rates from nothing in 2002 to a sudden charge of a thousand pounds in 2003 to seven thousand pounds in 2004. Needless to say they are looking for a new venue. In the meantime their shortlist for 2004 has been announced.

Stephen Baxter - Coalescent
Greg Bear - Darwin's Children
William Gibson - Pattern Recognition
Gwyneth Jones - Midnight Lamp
Neal Stephenson - Quicksilver
Tricia Sullivan - Maul

Arthur C. Clarke Award - <http://www.appomattox.demon.co.uk/acca/>
Short List - <http://www.appomattox.demon.co.uk/acca/news01feb.htm>

Forthcoming SF, Fantasy, & Gaming Cons

February cons include ConDFW (Feb. 20-22) (literary)

ConDFW - <http://www.condfw.org/>

March cons include Over-Load-a-Con (Mar. 5-7) (gaming), REVELcon 15 (Mar. 19-21) (fanzines), & AggieCon 35 (Mar. 26-28) (general sf).

Over-Load-a-Con - <http://www.overload-a-con.com/>
REVELcon 15 - <http://www.majorcrimes.freeservers.com/REVELcon.htm>
AggieCon 35 - <http://aggiecon.tamu.edu/>

I Used to Know What a Gostak Was

The 2004 WorldCon in Boston has made their Progress Report 5 available over the Web in PDF format at <http://www.noreascon.org/files/PR5-forScreen.pdf> . This issue contains the constitution of the World Science Fiction Society as of Sept. 2003, for those who are interested, plus proposed amendments passed on to NoreasCon4. It's 48 pages also includes an introduction of Jack Speer, Priscilla Olson reveals her goal of programming "so good that everyone pretty much gives up on ever trying to surpass it", an appreciation of Hal Clement, a map showing new WorldCon memberships with high density clusters in the North East, California, and Texas (as it should be), and the actual phrase "The Gostak distems the doshes".

Could it be that earlier progress reports can be accessed online simply by changing the PR number? Alas, no. You have to know to simplify the name as in <http://www.noreascon.org/files/PR1.pdf> through <http://www.noreascon.org/files/PR4.pdf> with progress report 0 requiring <http://www.noreascon.org/files/PR0.1.pdf> .

ApolloCon - Journey into the Unknown

There is a web page for the new Houston Convention at <http://www.apollocon.org/>

Circle your calendars for June 25-26, 2004. You can save \$5.00 (\$25.00 instead of \$30.00) by registering in advance.

ApolloCon
P.O. Box 541822
Houston, TX 77258-1822

Space, The Final Frontier.

Out of This World Publicity

Long John Silvers has made the offer that if NASA discovers evidence there was an ocean on Mars, they will celebrate by giving away one of their giant (half-foot long) shrimp to every person in America!

Steve Davis, President of Long John Silver's, Inc., sent a letter to NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe, expressing support for NASA's efforts to find conclusive evidence of an ocean on Mars. "We have closely followed NASA's recent exploration of Mars and all of us are rooting you on to find ocean water on the Red Planet," Davis wrote. "The 'Free Giant Shrimp' offer is our

way of saying NASA's exploration of Mars and the discovery of ocean water would be 'one small step for man, one giant leap for seafood.'"

Long John Silver's has purchased an insurance policy to cover the anticipated cost of the free Giant Shrimp redemption, should NASA announce the discovery of conclusive evidence of an ocean on Mars between now and February 29, 2004.

SpaceRef.com Shrimp Story - <http://www.spaceref.com/news/viewpr.html?pid=13437>

Torino Scale Asteroids

As we reported last time NASA keeps track on all potential collisions with known Asteroids and Comets at <http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/index.html> . Ratings (on the Torino scale) go from 0 (Essentially no possibility of collision and/or damage in the next 100 years) and 1 (Bears watching and acquiring more data for more accurate predictions) to 9 (Predicted collision capable of causing regional devastation) and 10 (Predicted collision capable of causing a global climatic catastrophe).

Usually there are almost all zero's for all near-pass asteroids with an occasional 'one' popping up for a short while until better data is acquired, at which point they too go to zero. When we mentioned this last issue there was only one 1 on the Torino Scale, 1997 XR2, with estimated chances for an actual collision a bit less than 1 in 10,000. In the months since, rather than sink back to a zero, 1997 XR2 is still there and now is showing almost no change with an estimated chances for a collision of 9.7 chances in 100,000. Not likely, but lots better than your chances of winning top prize in the lottery. We don't have to worry till June 1 of 2101 in any case, and it is likely that 1997 XR2 is hanging in there because of a lack of good observations to tie down the orbit better.

1997 XR2 is not the most likely asteroid to hit the Earth. 2000 SG344 has 68 separate chances of hitting the Earth sometime in the next hundred years with a cumulate chance of collision of about 1 in 560. But no-one cares. It has a low velocity with respect to Earth and a low estimated mass.

We will keep you up to date on 1997 XR2 here.

Torino Scale - http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/torino_scale.html
Current Impact Risks - <http://neo.jpl.nasa.gov/risk/>

Artificial Detectives Flew Spaceships

OK. No Spaceships. But an artificial detective, yes.

There have been expert systems which dispense medical advice, that troubleshoot electronics, and that even write music of sorts. But who would suspect that Sherlock Holmes and his modern day descendents would face competition from a piece of software? Perhaps outright competition is even too strong a term, but assistance and usefulness is apparently not.

At the heart of the software is a "knowledgebase" containing a huge taxonomy of the possible ways in which death can be caused and the different types of evidence and facts that relate to them - such as eyewitness accounts, medical analyses and forensic evidence taken from the scene of the crime. What sets this system apart from previous systems is that it does not rely upon the knowledge of its software programmer to draw its conclusions. It simultaneously considers all the possible scenarios, including those that overlap. And to ensure that each scenario makes sense, the software uses a "truth maintenance" program. This refers back to the knowledgebase, examines the causal relationships between each strand of evidence and assesses whether the scenario being considered could actually have taken place. And like all master detectives it will follow the famous dictum, "when you have eliminated all the alternatives, whatever remains, no matter how unlikely, must be the case".

Artificial Detective - <http://tinyurl.com/3dcgx>

Herrings Give Each Other the Raspberry

And now, news that should gladden the hearts of young boys everywhere. According to the New Scientist, Herrings may communicate by farting.

<http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99994343>

(Thanks to Al Jackson for the tip).

The Write Stuff (Pen and Ink Optional!)

Marketing Ploy

The Web site Torrid Romance provides couples with a personalized torrid romance that uses their names, physical descriptions and other details for \$44.99 per book. Via the Web site <http://torridromance.com> clients may choose between five different romance genres for their book: a medieval romance, a western romance, an exotic vacation affair, a modern-Cinderella

tale or a supermodel/bodyguard adventure. Those who buy the service can also compose a personal message to their loved one that will appear on the dedication page. For an added cost, customers can have their own likeness put on the cover of the 180- to 200-page novel that takes about a week to produce.

Aside from being a bizarre Valentines gift, with publishing on demand, there may be an interesting market niche here. People looking for a unique gift might pay to buy an SF story about a friend whose name and details they specify. Or more interestingly, a horror story.

“Little did Clif and Margaret suspect the eldritch horrors which lurked waiting within their computer screens ...”

Back From the Abyss

Rumors of Abyss and Apex: A Magazine of Speculative Fiction shutting down with the departure of its cast of former editors turn out to be premature. Abyss and Apex will be redesigning their site for the upcoming March issue. They claim that all accepted stories will be published on schedule, and all current contracts honored and all submissions passed along by the previous staff to the new editors will be reviewed. Though they will be launching a new creative direction after their new staff settles in, for now they are accepting submissions under their old guidelines, planning on listing new guidelines as they are available. Under current guidelines they buy lengths from flash fiction up to 10,000 words. Payment is \$.03 cents/word up to a maximum of \$40.00 OP.

Abyss and Apex - <http://www.klio.net/abyssandapex/>

Current Guidelines - <http://www.klio.net/abyssandapex/guidelines.html>

International Literary Mystery Market – The Writers Publishing

No, not a market for Mysteries (though I wouldn't rule them out) but a Canadian Short Story Writer's and Artist Market with No limitation on theme and they sent the info to us presumably knowing our SF orientation. But from appearances, they don't look very imaginative fiction oriented (though their Spring issue features D.F. Lewis in the horror genre). But they are very place oriented, hitting writers and locations from around the world so if you have a lush fantasy or SF that's very steeped in an exotic location, you may be just what they are looking for. They pay \$25. Canadian (or equivalent) for one time publishing rights for up to roughly 5,000 words plus copies. They accept paintings, drawings and photos via email in JPEG format or through the mail.

The Writers Publishing - <http://www.writerspublishing.ca/>

Click on their Guidelines

Snail Mail:
R. Tuck
Editor
The Writers Publishing
PO Box 1110
Tofino, B.C.
Canada
V0R 2Z0

Eclectic Advice

For informative articles about writing and publishing try Eclectics.com .
Advice aimed at Westerns or Romance may be less helpful, but a large amount
of the material here should be useful to any fiction writer.
Eclectics.com - <http://www.eclectics.com/articles.html>

FFFeedback

We heard from Renee, AKA Crystal:

Space City Trade Federation is the Houston chapter of the Star Wars fan club
located at www.theforce.net. Our online chat forum is at
<http://boards.theforce.net/board.asp?brd=10132>. We meet once or twice a
month and do various activities such as movie outings, conventions, picnics,
lightsaber duels, parties on the holidays, and much more. To join simply
create an account and join in on the conversation. If you are new to the
group, then check out the New Members Welcome topic
<http://boards.theforce.net/message.asp?topic=7285613&replies=121> and it will
tell you everything you need to know about how the forums work and our
chapter.

We don't have a set meeting time or place for each month. Since we cover all
of Houston, including the surrounding areas, we try to offer at least 1 get
together in central Houston, and a couple of smaller ones in different sides
of Houston. That way those that can't make the first one can get together at
one of the smaller ones. Also since everyone's schedule tends to change, we
let everyone vote on what day is best for them, but we almost always meet on
the weekend.

Renee

We heard from Judith

Just a note to tell y'all how much I enjoy the newsletter.

Judith

Now that's the type of note we like to get! Thanks, Judith. Always good to hear from you.

Clif

We heard from Michael Nelson of FenCon:

One of my fellow committee members and I will be interviewed about FenCon on RedHawk Radio this Thursday (1/22/2004). The time will be between 7 pm and 9 pm, but I think it will be around 7:30.

The station (www.redhawkradio.net) plays Celtic, Alternative, and Classic Rock. The talk show is called The GrisMill and it is devoted to Gaming.

Since FenCon has a number of filkers and will be having open gaming, the station thought we'd be a good interview subject.

Thanks.

Michael Nelson

FenCon Committee Chair

We heard from Brent

... tell you about another group in Houston. The folks that do lotr.meetup.com have created a Yahoo group to enhance the community.

As you know meetup.com organizes gatherings in various places. And the LOTR group has had some success. Everyone is invited to visit:

<http://lotr.meetup.com/members/>

and

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HOUSTON-LOTR/>

Plans are already in the works for different activities.

...

Thanks, Brent.

And that's about it for another Info Alert. The Info Alert is edited and mostly written by Clif and Margaret Davis operating under the authority of Friends Of Fandom Vice-President of Publications - Dave Branda.

The Info Alert is archived on the web at <http://www.cam-info.net/archive/> and you can always receive the latest issue via email by sending any message to latestinfoalert@cam-info.net AND can subscribe to be notified of new Info Alerts by sending a message to either fof@cam-info.net or latestinfoalert@cam-info.net that contains the subject heading SUBSCRIBE .

And now with a certain comforting inevitability, THE FINE PRINT...

No! Wait!

**Breaking News - INFO ALERT NEWSFLASH
RETURN OF THE KING SWEEPS OSCARS**

Peter Jackson Vindicated!!! Lord of the Rings: Return of the King wins 11 Oscars, a feat hithertofore matched only by Ben-Hur and Titanic!!!

And while your mind is boggled you might as well check out the latest postcard of Saturn from the Cassini-Huygens Spacecraft at <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/index.cfm> .

OK, NOW THE FINE PRINT...

The Friends of Fandom Information Alert is an official publication of Friends of Fandom, distributed in electronic and print form in furtherance of its tax exempt purpose. The information contained therein reflects that believed to be true and accurate by its editors. However, we make no guarantees. All opinions expressed are those of the individual contributors and may not necessarily reflect either the official position of Friends of Fandom or the opinions of the editors, nor the officers or board of directors of Friends of Fandom. Friends of Fandom is a nonprofit, literary, scientific, and educational 501(c) (3) corporation committed to encouraging and facilitating interest and activities pertaining to science fiction, fantasy, and science fact in its various forms. Famous Last Words: "I think... that... the anti-matter leak... was my fault."
