

FLASHBACK

Issue 2 • September 2004 • Tales of Anime • Fanimecon • Baycon



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For more photos from Fanimecon, see our first issue now available at www.efanzines.com



Cosplay Magazine Issue Two September 2004

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Tales of Anime 2004

I had so much fun this year at Fanimecon, that I couldn't wait another year to go to another convention. Fortunately, Tales of Anime 2004, a small, one-day convention held in San Francisco at the end of August, was there to entertain me while I waited for the Japan Town Anime Faire to come around.



Although it seemed kind of a strange date to hold a convention, it was held just two weeks before the JTAF at a hotel only a few blocks away, it turned out to be a nice relaxing convention with lots of the attendees coming in costume.

While the cost of the convention, \$12 in advance, was quite reasonable, on-site parking added quite a bit to the cost, even with validation. With very little effort, I was lucky and found an all-day, free parking space just four blocks away. It was even in the shade.

The hotel was a good choice for the convention. Entering from the street, you wouldn't know there was an anime convention taking place there, but once upstairs the mezzanine level was entirely given over to the convention. It was convenient, yet isolated from the general public. It was plenty roomy for the convention without being too big.

Unlike most conventions, the dealers were set up in the common area - you had to walk past them to get to registration. I really like this idea. I hate the thought of being charged an admission fee for the privilege of spending my money at a dealer who is also being charged to set up. I think the dealers' room at a conventios should always be free to attend.

As usual, I didn't buy anything at the dealer's room. I did look at some tankubon and some DVDs, but the prices weren't discounted enough to temp me. There weren't a lot of dealers, but a good variety of products were available.

Once I got to the desk, registration was quick and easy with no lines to speak of. Registration at the con included a Tales of Anime water bottle, which I thought was a little unnecessary, but then I don't like to load up with too much stuff at conventions.

Because this event was hosted by the same group that puts on Yaoicon, and because of the very bishonen artwork they used to promote it, I was concerned that the event would lean too far in that direction, but it did turn out to be an all-ages, and gender-preference neutral, event.

Left: Lain as J-Rock star Gackt. In addition to anime, movie, manga and video game characters, cosplayers also come dressed as Japanese pop or "J-Rock" stars.

"I really liked the design for this costume," Lain said. "It's like (the *Trigun* character) Vash's costume."

I was disappointed at the video programming. Most of it seemed to be stuff that has been licensed and it did seem to lean a little far into the bishonen category. Given that the theme was horror, I would have liked to have them show a few more horror-based anime. I also thought that they needed to have more than one track of anime. I had been really impressed by the very cutting-edge shows that a local university anime group had played at a recent meeting and I was disappointed that the convention couldn't do at least as good.

One room was used as a carnival area where conventioners could play traditional games, like darts or throwing hoops, to try to win anime based prizes. I really wasn't interested and I didn't see a lot of people playing the games whenever I stopped by. It was an interesting programming experiment, but I doubt that it was successful. Another room that was set up with computer games was much better attended and while I'm not a computer gamer, it looked like a lot of people were having fun, or at least wasting time pleasantly.



Left: Lupin the 3rd in vampire disguise.



Right: Dany as Mina Harker from *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*

"When I saw it, it looked really neat," she said. "It didn't seem like anybody was doing it."

She spent three months working on the outfit including ordering special red-tinted contact lenses, which she debuted at the San Diego Comic Con.

"It's (cosplay's) cheaper than therapy," she said.

What really made this convention fun were the cosplayers who attended. While it was a small convention, I think there were a higher percentage of cosplayers attending than at other conventions. The cosplayers were all very nice and I enjoyed getting to talk with them.

The masquerade was attended mostly by cosplayers and was one of the better ones that I've attended. The small size meant that entire audience could sit close enough to the stage to get a good view. I was able to snag a second-row-center seat. Lighting was sufficient that I could take good photos even without using my flash. It felt a lot more informal and friendly than competitive. The show went smoothly and without any hitches. Judging was done in a reasonable time frame. While the judges were making their decisions, previews were shown, including several good previews of the new *Ghost in the Shell* movie. I think I recall that they showed a pretty good trailer for the new *Devil May Cry* video game as well that looked quite good. I did think the trailer for the new *Silent Hill* video game went on for much too long. It was a terrible trailer and I certainly have no desire to ever play the game after seeing it.

The convention ended with bishonen bingo going on in one room and a yaoi showing in the video room. I do wish that they had something more general audience appropriate to end the convention as well, but as they didn't, I left after the masquerade.



Top: Yu Yu Hakusho family, Ko An Ma and Bokan.

Bottom: Sango and Kagome from *Inuyasha*.



Right:

The conventions theme "Heroes and Demons" inspired Reiko to cosplay as Shia from Koge Donbo's Pita-Ten.

"She's a devil in training who can't be anything but nice," Reiko said. "I wanted to try a new costume and I heard about the con's theme."

"I like getting pictures taken, especially when it's me as a character."





Original creation Red Chobit from manga version of *Chobits* by Nancy.

"I always wanted to do a Chobit, but there were so many around, I wanted to do an original," she said.

The main Chobit characters have all white and all black outfits. Nancy's red outfit was based on a character that only appeared in one panel of the manga series.

The costume was made for the San Diego Comic Con, and was being worn to this convention with some modifications. The costume took 24 hours of work to create, not counting the time to shop for materials.

She said finding the right materials is important, particularly if they can be found on sale.

"If I see it, I'll buy it, because I'll need it some day," she said.

One of the drawbacks of the outfit is the long train, which wasn't a problem at the San Francisco show, but presented some trouble with people stepping on it at the crowded San Diego show.

On Cosplay.com, she uses the fan name PegasusMaiden, but her gallery at AmericanCosplayParadise.com is listed under WingRuby.



Above: Jose Salgado as Dante from *Devil May Care 2*
“I always liked Dante,” Salgado said. “He’s so cool with his poses.”

Salgado said it took him a month to construct the costume, spending five days just on the sword.

Right: original costume.





Left: Rico Dumpit won for best costume following the Tales of Anime Theme for his portrayal of Alfred Ashford from the horror-theme game Resident Evil.

"It was a survival horror themed convention," he said. "I thought it would be funny to see someone come as Alfred Ashford."



Right: Inspired by a cosplayer he saw at Fanimecon 2004, this cosplayer came as a Pyramid Head from the Video Game Silent Hill 2.



Above: Some cosplayers chose their costume based on how much they like the character they are portraying.

"I believe he's a really noble character," Michele, dressed as Ramza from Final Fantasy Tactics. "I felt honored to be him."

The costume, which took about 6 or seven hours to construct, is her 15th since she started cosplaying.

Top Right: Juli Lehnner worked on her costume of Black Mage Rikku from the video game Final Fantasy X-2 on and off for five to six months.

"I thought the costume was really cute and pretty," she said. "The video game is cool."

She's working on a Brandon Heat costume, from Gungrave, which she said she hopes to have ready for the Japantown Anime Faire.

Right: Suburu from Tokyo Babylon.



Miaka No Baka (Left) and an unidentified cosplayer with two interpretations of Sarah from *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence*.

The costume worn by Miaka No Baka was planned to allow her to go as a duo with Nandobaka's whose next planned costume is also from *Castlevania*.

"She's the person who gets rescued," she said.

Miaka No Baka has created 40 costumes since she began cosplaying.

"I just like creating what I see on TV."



Hiku portrayed Hughes from *Full Metal Alchemist*. "Because he's my favorite," she said. "I like the idea of dressing up as my favorite character."



On opposite sides from *Gundam Seed*, left is a member of Zaft's Le Creuset team, right is Flay or Frey Alister of the Earth Alliance.



Above: For her 15th costume, Hanyaan Faery made Peruru from the Sailor Moon Super S Movie.

"I used to be a total Sailor Moon fan," she said. "I wanted to pay tribute to the series." The character also went along with the convention's theme as she fights demons.

An active cosplayer who plans on pursuing costume design as a career, Hanyaan Faery has been creating costumes for more than three years.

"I'm a total costume design freak," she said. "I like the feeling that when you've finished, you've made a character come to life."

"I've been really fond of crossplay — you don't have to let gender determine who you play."



Above:

Lauren Eldon said she chose to come as Joachim Armster from *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence* "because he's bad ass."

In order to make the armor, she cut sheets of plastic into shape and then used glue and paint to finish the project. Her mother helped sew the outfit and her father aided by putting in the decorative rivets.



Miko and Remmy, as George and Yukari from Paradise Kiss won for best group costume at the masquerade.

"I wanted a costume to end all costumes for me," she said, saying the degree of difficulty in making the costume was what made her choose to make it.

Both outfits were created for their senior ball.

His took 10-15 hours. Dress took over 50 hours with each flower taking one hour to make. She originally started to embroider each beaded flower onto the dress, but that took two hours of work for each flower, so she changed to using glue.

"I'm a crafty person," she said about the appeal of cosplaying. "I like getting pictures taken of me."

While the winning costume was made by Miko, Remmy also makes his own costumes, including a Wolfwood, from Trigun, that he wore earlier in the day accompanied by Miko as Vash the Stampede from the same show.

"I like showing off my skills," he said.





On Stage at the Masquerade:

Above:
Dante and Joachim Armster kill Pikachu,

Right:
In red: Subaru, in yellow
Hokuto from *Tokyo Babylon*.





Resident Evil skit

Haanyaan Faery's well-received dance number as Peruru was awarded Best Skit Performance.



A couple of Resident Evil cosplayers goof around before the masquerade.



Original Costumes: Above Left: a pair of Rolling 88s with original touches; Left: an original gothic lolita outfit; Above: an original suit, made by the wearer, but not from any specific anime.

Best of Show: Nandobaka as Brandon Heat from the video game Gungrave

This was just a standout costume. I completely agree with the masquerade judges who gave this one an award. Nandobaka had a variety of good poses and an unbeatable prop.

Right: note how the coffin attaches to chains on the costume. Below right: even the back of this costume had a tremendous amount of detail work.





Another award winner, for Best Costume, was Nandobaka for his very detailed Brandon Heat costume from the video game Gungrave. This costume differs slightly from the anime version of the character, in particular the character's hair is black in the video game and white in the anime.

"He's kick-ass," Nandobaka said. "He's one of those one guy vs. the world characters."

Not counting building the coffin, he said it took him three months to create the costume, even with the help of friends. A serious cosplayer, he's made 20 to 25 costumes in the past four years.



Right: Detail of the Coffin



Sae from Fatal Frame II (bloody kimono) The outfit took 2 days to create. The wearer finished it the morning of the convention

Kouryuu from Wish (black and red dress). This outfit was borrowed from a friend who was cosplaying as one of the two Sarah's from Castlevania.

One cosplayer came as Watari (bird on shoulder) from Yami No Matsuei because "I had the perfect hair for it."

Dual Convention Attack!!!

The Sweet Song of Fandom Battel!!!!

Photos and Text by **Warren Harris**

We came for Baycon, we stayed for Fanimecon.

I've been to a number of conventions of all types over the years, but with the exception of Pulpcon, I've been disappointed in many of them. I think that one problem is that I try to fit too much into one day. For San Jose conventions, I drive more than two hours to get there, rush around trying to do everything, and then drive home the same day. This leaves me exhausted and doesn't let me enjoy the convention. The other problem is that I usually attend these things alone, and unlike Pulpcon, I don't meet any people I know there.

So I decided to try really devoting some time to enjoying a convention and see if I liked it any better. Baycon is a nearby convention I've been to once or twice, and I made plans to take a few days off of work, drive down the day before the convention and stay in a nearby motel for the entire convention. Then I found out that Fanimecon, an anime convention I've been to before, was going to be held the same weekend at the downtown convention center, only three miles from the Baycon hotel, I decided that I'd try to see both of them.

Luckily my friend Rich Berman was going to be able to visit over the weekend and was also excited about seeing both conventions.

When Rich Berman and I were planning this Memorial Day weekend road trip, we originally thought that Baycon would be the main draw, and that Fanime would just provide us with a few hours of fun watching some anime.

I've been to both conventions in the past. I've enjoyed, to a limited extent, Baycon in the past, but it's always been a futile attempt on my part to actually hook into local fandom. The last time I went to Fanime was several years ago and I really didn't enjoy it. They were at a venue that was too small—there was a 45-minute wait to get into the dealer's room with the line stretching out into the parking lot—and they didn't seem to have any videos that weren't already available at my local video store.

I was hoping that with Rich along, and the idea of dedicating the full four days to the conventions,



I'd find the convention experience more enjoyable. I hoped that with two conventions there would be enough to do to keep me occupied. If not, Rich and I had several other things to do in the San Jose area, like visiting the Rosicrucian Egyptian museum and local bookstore crawls, to keep us busy. As it turned out, we did nothing but attend the conventions for four days.

Rich showed up late Wednesday before the conventions and spent the night in my library. (I have a library rather than a living room as I do more reading than living.) Fortunately there wasn't an earthquake, as I'd feel bad having to dig him out from under a couple thousand



books.

Thursday we drove down to San Francisco and spent too much time walking and not enough time doing or seeing anything. I had wanted to show Rich around San Francisco, but other than a long walk through parts of Chinatown, we really didn't get much done. So we decided that the smart thing to do would be to cut short our day in San Francisco and arrive in San Jose earlier Thursday afternoon so that we could get the registration out of the way, check into our motel and be fresh and ready for the convention the next day.

To save money we stayed at a Motel 6 a few blocks from the Baycon hotel. It was a fairly quick drive to the downtown convention center where Fanimecon was held, and Saturday through Monday we were able to park for free.

Pre-registration at both conventions went very smoothly. At Baycon, there was no line, we walked up and got our badges and program books in a matter of a few minutes. At Fanime, there was a line, but it went very quickly and we soon had our badges. Fanime did not have a program book available yet, and in fact did not have copies available until Saturday afternoon, but they had handy schedules printed, which I found more convenient and useful than the full program book. These were two of the smoothest convention registrations I've ever been through. There were no problems at all and they quickly found our badges and we were set.

The Fanime website had been a bit unclear, but seemed to say that there would be a swap meet during pre-registration badge pickup. I had brought down several boxes of junk that I wanted to get rid of, but I decided that setting up for the swap meet would be too much trouble and take too much time away from fun activities, even if I did really want to get rid of some stuff. I was going to get rid of all of my old anime fanzines, but I didn't see anybody buying that kind of thing at the show.

As it turns out the swap meet was being held, but there were no tables, the sellers had to put their goods on the floor. It was interesting but a little chaotic. I didn't end up buying anything, although in hindsight I probably should have.

Friday was the first day of the conventions and we decided to go to Fanime first and then spend the afternoon at Baycon. Fanime programming started early Friday, while Baycon didn't get started until the mid to late afternoon. Because we didn't want to pay to park, we took the convenient light rail, which ran past our motel and dropped us off right at the convention center.

At this point we were still figuring that we would be spending most of our time at Baycon. But Fanimecon was so much fun that we kept putting off going to Baycon.

Surprisingly, I really didn't feel like I saw a lot of anime. One of my main reasons for going to Fanime was that I wanted exposure to a lot of anime series that I hadn't seen before, particularly the new stuff that hasn't been released yet in the U.S.

But I ended up spending so much time taking photos of cosplayers, who were all very nice and friendly, that I had little time to do much else. I have no regrets, I had a great time. I only wish that I had spent more time talking to cosplayers and taking photos. I shot eight rolls of film, and I really needed at least two more. There were dozens of great costumes that I missed, and only found out about after other attendees had posted their photos online.

We stared out on Friday watching *Protégé de la Rose Noir*. In addition to anime, Fanimecon had an Asian films track that showed a lot of great films. I'd seen several of them, but there were movies that both Rich and I wanted to see. In fact the Asian film room was more appealing than many of the regular anime tracks.



I'm not going to tell you that *Protégé* is a great movie. I'm not even going to tell you that it's a good bad movie. Frankly it stunk. I figured it would, but I thought it might be bad enough to be fun. But it did have a few scenes with Ekin Chang dressed up as the Burt Ward version of Robin the Boy Wonder that were worth laughing at. There were also some amusing scenes parodying Jackie Chan training sequences.

The rest of the morning and most of the afternoon was spent wandering the dealer's room, sampling anime and taking lots of pictures.

In order to spend at least some time at Baycon, I did miss the Megatoyko panel that I had wanted to see, it was being held at 5 p.m. Friday, so that we could at least put in an appearance at Baycon. Megatoyko is a very popular webcomic that I like. While it is a U.S. product, it's heavily influenced by anime culture. I would have thought that this would have been held at a better time, say mid-afternoon Saturday.

Once at Baycon, most of the panels didn't seem that interesting, so Rich and I hit the dealer's room. As usual, there were many more places selling junk than books. I didn't see any pulps for sale. There were two places with good used books. I bought a bunch of Robert E. Howard books from an L.A. area dealer and I spent quite a while going through the stock

of a dealer who was selling books for \$1 each. I also ended up buying a few volumes of Lone Wolf and Cub that were on sale for half cover price. I'm slowly filling in the missing parts to that set. So even at Baycon, I was more interested in anime and manga.

I attended a late panel on interesting ways to kill characters and Worldcons: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly, while Rich, who is working toward a teaching certificate, took in a panel on SF in education. I didn't get much out of either of my panels, but the Worldcon panel was mildly interesting. I take it that the New Orleans Worldcon left much to be desired.

I did take a few photos of Baycon, but the number of people in hall costumes at Baycon was much less than at Fanimecon. I did get a photo of a person at Baycon dressed up as a Skaven from Warhammer, but the photo was too dark and blurry. It was a great costume and really creative. Even for costumers, dressing as a giant warrior rat is going to extremes. There was a very nice robot costume that looked inspired by Sorayama, but she disappeared before I could get a photo.

This is where we really started to realize that we were going to reverse our priorities. The energy level at Fanimecon was much higher than at Baycon. At Fanimecon, I never seemed tired or bored. Even when I had to stop and take a rest, there were lots of cool





costumes to look at and everybody always seemed to be having a great time. At Baycon, I'd get there and want to go to sleep. People just didn't seem to be as excited or as friendly or approachable. Fanimecon was also much larger. They ended up having more than 7,000 people attend while Baycon only had 2,349.

Baycon had an anime program as well, but it only ran at night, and the schedules weren't posted very far in advance. In the early showings, they tended to show older stuff that I've seen or had no interest in. They didn't have schedules for anime up very far in advance, so I missed out on some shows I wanted to see because by the time I found out about them, it was the next day. One of the shows I really wanted to see, 100 Stories, was only playing at Baycon, and then only at 2:30 in the morning. I just couldn't stay up that late. Other good shows were run at 5 a.m. or 6 a.m. when we were still recovering from the previous day.

I think we hit Baycon first on Saturday as I wanted to take a turn through the dealer's room again. The cheap bookseller had brought in new stock, so I had

to go through all his books again.

While Rich was off doing some Babylon 5 thing, I wandered around and struck up my only conversation with anyone other than Rich at Baycon. I was passing by the Further Confusion table in the fan table area and started talking with the guy manning the table. Further Confusion is a local furry convention. He seemed friendly enough but quickly the conversation turned to where he likes to rent his pornography. There is a pretty basic list of topics to avoid when having a conversation with somebody you've just met. Religion, politics, medical procedures one has recently undergone or is anticipating undergoing, that weird rash that just won't go away, how much you like pornography. Yep, there it is, on the list. You would think a person representing a gathering of people who already have an unsavory reputation, deserved or undeserved, would avoid bringing sex or porn into a casual conversation. Fortunately he got distracted and I quickly faded away.

Saturday afternoon Rich and I caught the last part of the One Piece movie 2 at Fanimecon. This is a series that has a great fan buzz and I had really wanted to see if it was as good as I'd heard. We both liked what we saw and wanted to see more. It was a very popular showing, with the largest theater packed to standing room only.

Photos this page and previous page are hall costumes from Baycon, all photos on other pages are from Fanimecon.





Saturday evening I dragged Rich to Fanime's masquerade. I think I enjoyed this more than he did, but that's probably because I've been to these before at other conventions. It did start reasonably on time, but I think Rich was unprepared for the time it takes to do one of these things.

Some of the skits were quite good, there was a skit that had a quite clever ninja entrance from behind a sheet marked "Smoke" that was a particular crowd favorite. Some were not so entertaining; I've never enjoyed interpretive dance pieces even when the dancer is dressed as an anime character.

I do agree with Rich that the intermission while they decided

the awards was too long. I also didn't like that they didn't have a place and time for photographers after the show so that we could get good photos of the costumes. Everybody just left and we had



to race to catch up to the performers and try to get them to pose.

After the masquerade, we went over to Baycon to check out the room parties and the consuite. I thought the consuite at ConJose in 2002 was much better. At ConJose, it was more of a comfortable place where you could sit and talk to people. At Baycon it was a dark room where nobody was really talking to anybody they didn't already know. I'm not much of a room party guy, but the room parties really didn't seem like much was going on. So we went back to the motel and got some much

needed sleep.

On Sunday morning we again went to Baycon first. The panel on what three books would you take with you time traveling was an interesting variant on the old “Desert Island Books” panel. Some panelists interpreted this as what books couldn’t you live without if you were going to live in another time period, some took it as what books would have a profound effect on the time you were going to.

Both Rich and I attended a panel on the boundaries between SF and fantasy. It was pretty good until this jerk shows up halfway through. The discussion had briefly drifted in another direction, but he pipes up in a loud voice “I thought this was supposed to be about...” Yeah, nutball, just come in late and then insist the panel discuss what you want to discuss. This ass kept up a steady stream of dumb questions and tried to monopolize the panel the whole time. He kept blurting out these dumb questions where he’s say he had a dream or was thinking of writing a story about... and then one of the panelists would quickly shoot him down by naming a classic book with exactly that plot and then go back to the discussion at hand. It’s just amazing how one whack-job can ruin a panel.

Guest of Honor Michael Swanwick was on both of these panels and he was a very good speaker. I enjoyed what he had to say as he seems like a really intelligent and well-read guy. I’ll have to pick up a book or two of his to see if I like his writing as well as his guest-of-honoring.

I thought Sunday would be a letdown after Saturday. I’m used to Saturday being the big day at these conventions, but at Fanimecon Sunday proved to be the best day of all. There were lots of great costumes, lots of friendly people to talk with, everyone seemed to be having a good time. Rich and I saw the One Piece movie 3, but were disappointed. I thought it seemed aimed at a younger audience than the previous one.

Some other anime we saw over the weekend was Gunslinger Girl, which we both thought was far too slow and too derivative of La Femme Nikita, Gunparade March, which I liked more than Rich, and Tenjou Tenge, which we both liked, but again I enjoyed it more than Rich did. (I’ve since seen the rest of Gunparade March, and I want the hours I wasted on this boring waste of time back.)

We went to a panel on reviewing anime, not thinking it would be good, but just trying to kill time. It turned out to be a great panel. We both really enjoyed it and got lots





of tips on good anime to see. It turned out to be the best panel I saw all weekend at either con.

I can't point to any one thing on Sunday that made it so great, we just had a good time at Fanimecon.

The dealer's room at Fanimecon was in a much larger space this year—this was the first time they used the main San Jose convention center—so even though there were more dealers, there was plenty of space to walk between tables and lots of room. I never felt crowded even though there were a lot of people in the room. As usual I didn't buy anything at the dealer's room. These days I rent anime instead of buying it, I don't want to clutter my life with a lot of toys or nick-knacks and I didn't see any bargains on manga that would make me pull out the wallet.

Monday we started the day at Fanimecon where Rich went to see the live action Juon, a Japanese horror movie. Rich likes these more than I. I spent the time taking photos and hanging out.

We finished up our convention weekend at Baycon.

The last panel we went to was on nearby stars. I was hoping to get some good scientific information

on what nearby stars are suitable for human colonization and what those solar systems might be like. I guess I extracted what I needed from it, but I really could have done without the pages of excel spreadsheet data that was too small to be read. The whole time I was having flashbacks to some of the worst lecture classes I took in college. It didn't help when following a five-minute digression about which nearby star was supposed to be the planet Vulcan from Star Trek had finally been resolved, (It's a TV show

people! It has nothing to do with real astronomy! Get a life!) some guy who hadn't been paying attention asks "So which one is Vulcan?"

After this the conventions were pretty much over. Fanimecon really energized by anime fan interests. I didn't feel that I had gotten enough anime from Fanimecon and I wanted more. I've been attending local fanclub showings. (Meaning that I drove two hours to go to No-Name Anime's showing in June, July and August and an hour each for UCSF and Foothills Anime.) I've filled my rental list at Greencine.com with anime titles and I've been watching them as fast as they ship me new DVDs. When these don't arrive fast enough I rent titles from the local video store. I've been buying Anime magazines and manga. My new computer at work allows me to download episodes of unreleased anime to watch. On the other hand, I've not read many science fiction or fantasy books in recent months. Nothing at Baycon really got me that excited about the genre.

For more than a week after the convention I kept looking around at people in public trying to figure out which character they were co-



splaying as. Turns out that they just dress funny.

So Rich and I are planning for next year already. This time we're going to get a hotel room at Fanimecon and spend most of our time there. We might get a one-day pass or an evening pass (both were offered this year) to Baycon, but we're not going to pay for the whole four days again. There just wasn't enough there to make it worthwhile. The cosplayers were having so much fun that we both would like to cosplay next year. Now both Rich and I are pretty conservative and neither of us would have ever thought of going to a convention in costume. But the cosplayers at Fanimecon were having so much fun that they changed our minds.

One thing I really noticed at Fanimecon was the number of really enthusiastic women fans. I've heard stories about how Star Trek brought lots of women into fandom in the 60 and 70s, and I think anime is doing the same thing now. I think there's been the mistaken impression that genre fiction needed to be aimed at boys on the theory that males wouldn't watch or read fiction with women characters, but females would watch or read fiction with male char-



acters. I think the truth is exactly the opposite. If you give women science fiction or fantasy with strong women characters they'll buy it in droves, and so will the guys—especially if the women are scantily clad.

The ratio of men to women at Fanimecon seemed to be about even. At Baycon there were still many more men than women. Fanime also was much younger. At Fanimecon Rich and I were the old geezers, although the young'n's didn't make a big deal about it, while at Baycon we were among the younger attendees.

For more cosplay photos from Fanimecon, please visit www.efanzines.com. On the page for my other Zine, Back Numbers, there is a 16 page photo zine with the best photos I took at Fanimecon 2004.

Rich Beranan's Fanimecon photos accompany his con report starting on the next page.

Fanime 2004 and Baycon 2004 Convention Report

Photos and Text By **Richard J. Berman**

After a pretty rough year, I was really looking forward to this trip on Memorial Day weekend. I hadn't seen Warren in years and I've never been to a convention before. Okay, I once went to a CreationCon in Reno, but that was more like a flea market guest starring George Takei. I really didn't know what to expect.

On Thursday, Warren and I walked around San Francisco and I got to see Chinatown for the first time. We headed down to San Jose in the evening to check in to ye olde Motel 6 and for early con registration. Fanime was being held at the downtown San Jose convention center and the adjoining Marriott. The whole con took place essentially on one floor, so getting around was easy. Early registration was quick and painless. There was a swap meet that night, but I didn't pick up anything.



Baycon was at the Double Tree Inn. The con was spread throughout the conference rooms in the building. Finding the various panels and programs was a little confusing. Again, registration was a breeze.

Friday

We hit Fanime first and I noticed the great costumes so many of the participants had on. About a third of the folks there had on a costume. I think the majority of the costumes came as characters from the Final Fantasy video game series, but a lot of anime characters were represented. I thought that I would be completely out of the loop, but I recognized most of the costumes.

The first program I saw was a martial arts movie called *Protégé de la Rose Noire*. It was a flimsy Hong Kong action comedy that was about two girls trying to become sidekicks to the superheroine, the Black Rose. One weird sequence had action star Ekin Chang dressed as Robin, the Boy Wonder. I'm talking about the Burt Ward version. The funniest part was a perfect Jackie Chan training sequence parody. It wasn't bad, but the plot was really thin and the musical numbers were painful.

The dealers' room opened up after the movie. I'll just lump what happened there over the weekend together. First, it was always packed. There was plenty of merchandise to choose from. In fact, there was so much available and with everyone crowding around, that it was hard to make any careful selections. The prices were reasonable. I picked up a horror movie for \$5. I had an eye on some DC Heroes RPG stuff, but I ultimately passed on it.

We then went to Baycon and checked out the dealers' room. Again, I'll just summarize what happened over the weekend. I was disappointed to see only two used book vendors present. One came from LA so all of his stock was available on Friday, but the other one would dribble out books throughout the con. Sure, it forced customers to come back every day, but it wasn't very convenient. From the used book and comic book vendors, I bought *The Swords Trilogy* by Michael Moorcock, *The Fantastic World War II* edited by Frank McSherry, Jr., an illustrated copy of *The Harp and the Blade* by John Myers Myers, *Dracula's Guest* by Bram Stoker, and the six issue limited series *Empire* by DC. *The Harp and the Blade* was \$4, but everything else was a buck each. Oh, I also got a *Gunsmith Cats* manga for half price.



Everything was in good condition. I picked up a birthday present for my sister at one of the jewelers there, too. There seemed to be plenty of things for costumers, but I wish the book selection was more varied.

After the dealers' room, I took in a panel called Education in SF. It was supposed to be about how science fiction writers portray education in their works. After ten minutes of discussion, the panel concluded, and I think rightly so, that most writers really don't know the education process very well. The panel then went on an interesting tangent about which SF stories could be used in the classroom. Unfortunately, the topic didn't last and the conversation meandered on to non-SF education areas. I left after that.

We went back to Fanime and saw a couple of shows. The first was an anime called *Gunslinger Girl*. It's about a thirteen-year old (or so) girl who gets trained to be an assassin, kind of like *La Femme Nikita*. It was incredibly dull. Reading *Middlemarch* was more exciting. No, I didn't read *Middlemarch* by choice.

The other anime was *Tenjou Tenge*. It was an ultra-violent, mystical kung-fu high school romance-thriller. Whew! The first episode was awful, but the rest of it was really good. Great characters and plenty of action.



We went back to Baycon for some of the room parties and the consuite. Nothing was going on. No dancing and no one seemed very talkative. The consuite was well stocked but very poorly lit. It was done in a silly pirate motif with a resident Johnny Depp/Jack Sparrow guy who was always in character. That pretty much summed up the party and consuite action at Baycon.

Saturday

Saturday's excitement started at Fanime with a couple of shows. First up, was an anime called *Gunparade March*. During WWII, Earth gets invaded by aliens. Eventually, humanity must band together to fight them. Sixty years later, teenagers pilot battemechs to fight the alien menace. The first episode was filled with gritty action and good animation. Subsequent episodes devolved into a boring high school romantic comedy with the war virtually forgotten. Disappointing.

The other anime was *One Piece Movie 2*. Fantastic! We only caught the latter third of the movie, but it was great! A group of pirates get into adventures and battle some of the nastiest and most unusual villains I've ever seen in anime. The characters are kind of Baron Munchausen-esque, with each one having an unusual power or skill. The world was interesting and was sort of like Alice in Wonderland meets the Joker. The climatic battle was intense with the victors winning out





through their own abilities rather than any deus ex machina. I really want to see the TV series and the other movies.

We headed back to Baycon and I took in the Trailer Park. They were showing the summer movie trailers and the room was packed. Unfortunately, they would only present a couple of previews at a time before stopping everything to ask trivia questions of the audience. Just show the trailers! I left early because I wanted to see der Cosplay at Fanime, so I didn't get to look at the *Spider-Man 2* preview.

Fanime's version of the Masquerade is called der Cosplay. No real difference, I suppose, just more of an anime theme. The costumes were very good and the acts were tolerable (what was with the interpretive dance routine?), but it was three freakin' hours long! The show was drawn out, somewhat, by an unnecessary anime music video awards presentation that should have been handled in a program all its own. The emcee also did a Dieter impression from "Sprockets" that eventually grated on the nerves. To top it all off, one could

only get a decent picture of the Cosplayers outside. There wasn't any designated area inside to take photos. Very disappointing.

Sunday

The day started early at Baycon with a Birds of a Feather meeting for *Babylon: 5*. The group was small, but the conversation was great. We discussed the TV movie, *Legend of the Rangers*, how poorly *Crusade* was handled by TNT, and lamented on the lack of good space shows on the tube. There was also a sad discussion on the passing of Richard Biggs, the actor who played Dr. Stephen Franklin on *B:5*.

Afterwards, I met up with Warren and went to the Science Fiction and Fantasy: Boundaries panel. The writer guest of honor, Michael Swanwick, was on there and he certainly knew his stuff. I'd never heard of him before, but I might check out his work. A wonk, who came in late,

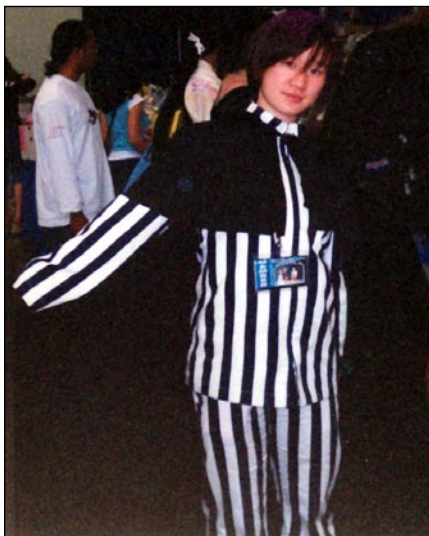


threatened to derail the discussions with his inane questions and accusations of straying off topic, but Swanwick pretty much shut him down. Interesting panel.

We then went to Fanime and saw lots of good anime. First, I saw *One Piece Movie 3*. It was not as good as the second movie, but still was very entertaining. I think one has to follow the series to catch everything that was going on.

In between anime showings, I saw my first lobby-camper. This guy, I'll call him Snorri, was passed out on a chair in the Marriott, surrounded by his luggage, and snoring. When I say snoring, I mean action snoring. Snoring to the point that his whole body shook. Everyone had a good laugh at the poor, pathetic slob who probably stayed up for the late-night hentai marathon. Little did I know that our paths would cross again.

Next, I saw *Cosmo Warrior Zero*. It was a space opera set in the *Captain Harlock* universe. This anime was about a crew





hunting the infamous space pirate. The action was pretty good, but unless you follow the Harlock shows, it was really hard to grasp what was going on. I think this was the third and fourth episode, but there was stuff in there that only knowledgeable Harlock fans would get. I might check this out some more, though.

The only panel we saw at Fanime was Anime Re-viewing. This was easily the best panel of both cons. The panelists worked for various anime-reviewing sites and were very knowledgeable. They seemed to thrive on the interaction with the audience. Originally, the panelists were going to show an anime called *Voices of a Distant Star* and have the audience review it, but there wasn't enough time. Instead, they had a

rock-paper-scissors contest to give away the DVD. After an intense battle, I finally won with a rock-beats-scissors-finishing move.

After that, Warren and I saw an old fan film called *Return of Ultraman*. Very funny. They captured the good guys' casual disregard for innocent life to a tee. Fanime Sunday ended with a great installment of *Tenjou Tenge*.

We then went back to Baycon, hung out in the consuite, and talked books. This was pretty fun. Free food and good conversation.

Monday

Monday began relatively early in the morning at Fanime. I went to see a Japanese horror movie called *Ju-On: The Grudge* that I was looking forward to all weekend. When I arrived, whom should I find but Snorri the Lobby-Camper! He was sitting in the back of the room, wrapped in a blanket, and making more noise than my Homelite chainsaw. The movie was about to start and there was no way that I was going to put up with Snorri and his magic septum. Fortunately, there were other like-minded moviegoers there and the Fanime authorities were summoned. Snorri's nasal passages must have alerted him to danger because he instantly woke up and hightailed it out of the room, never to be seen again.



Now, for the movie. *Ju-On: The Grudge* was a haunted house flick that was scary, but didn't make a whole lot of sense. If you didn't like *The Ring*, then you would hate *Ju-On*. The ghosts were particularly savage and they went after anyone even remotely connected to the house. The problems were that not enough explanations were given as to what was going on and the protagonists were far too passive. These things are endemic in Japanese horror. *Ju-On* was enjoyable but it was no *Ghost Actress* or better yet, *Spiral*.

The convention experience

ended at Baycon. First, was a panel that included Swanwick called Boy Meets Girl Meets Robot Meets Asteroid. It dealt with outdated and tired storylines in SF. Nothing too exciting happened but there was an interesting bit about a "subterrane." It's a vehicle that can phase through solid rock. Swanwick mentioned the author's name, but I can't remember it now. Any information from our readers about this plot device would be appreciated.

I went to check out the gaming room before the next panel and saw a guy whipping himself in the hallway. You know, fan cons like these allow people to cut loose, but how about some decorum in public? There were little kids in the hall at the time, too, so I thought this was entirely inappropriate. I hope Baycon doesn't suffer the same fate as Disclave.

By the way, the game room consisted of collectible card gamers arguing over rules, Warhammer 40k people arguing over rules, and D&D players arguing over rules. Well, nothing has changed since I was involved in that stuff.

The final panel was called Nearby Stars and was about how relatively nearby star systems might have habitable moons orbiting gas giants in their systems life zones. It was pretty dry, but still had some interesting information. One piece of advice for anyone doing a straightforward science panel, try not to mention where the planet Vulcan would be. The conversation, or my sanity, never really recovered from this tangent.

I had a really good time at Fanime and would like to go again. I think I would even stay at the con hotel because of the convenience. Baycon didn't have the energy level of Fanime and there really weren't a lot of interesting things going on. It was nice seeing my old buddy Warren, again. I had a great time in San Jose and I look forward to my next convention.

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