

The Drink Tank Number 35

Daddy, Where Did Science Fiction Movies Come From?

In the early part of the 1980s, I was constantly watching movies. We had videos for our VCR and the theatres around town knew my Dad and me by name. I can remember one weekend watching three movies in the theatres and three more at home. There was also a show on TV back then called Dialing for Dollars, hosted by Pat McCormick, a Bay Area institution when it comes to TV. I watched the funny old movies they had on every day, mostly Laurel & Hardy films, sometimes the Little Rascals or Marx Brothers and when the time of year came, the old Universal Monster movies. One day, he said they had a short subject for us, a thing called A Trip to The Moon.

My love affair with Science Fiction film can be traced to that wonderful afternoon.

The film was the most famous of the work done by a gent name of Georges Melies. He was a French magician working at the Theatre Robert-Houdin. He was a pretty good magician, though far from a national touring act. He happened to go to the first demonstration of the Lumiere Brothers films in 1895. There is a story that says that when the brothers showed their most famous film, the train pulling into the station, that many people ran for cover, afraid that the train was actually coming at them. Melies claimed that was his favourite part, that it had showed him the power of the moving image.



He tried to buy himself one of the Lumiere Cameras, but they actually said that they thought that there was no future in film and that they wouldn't sell him one. They did, however, keep making movies for the better part of the next ten years, so most believed that they were just trying to keep him out of the game. Melies was a smart guy and managed to build himself a cinematograph with the greatest of ease.

He started off doing the same thing the Lumieres were doin'. These were called Actualities. Basically, they were just captured real events that happened every day. The very first thing the Lumieres shot was a group of workers walking out of a factory. One afternoon, Georges was filming on the streets of Paris. After a few seconds, his camera jammed and he had to stop and fix it. When he started cranking again, the scene had changed as there were entirely different people and carriages in the shot. The hospital cart that had been in the centre of the shot had been replaced by a hearse. This must have happened to the Lumieres, but with Melies' eye as a magician, he instantly understood the possibilities.

At first, Melies' films were added as a part of his act using elements of his act. Georges would appear in them as a magician and do all sorts of tricks that weren't possible without the use of trick photography. The Vanishing Lady was one of his earliest films and it was a pretty simple, though very ramped-up, version of the classic Lady in the Bag trick. He also did ones where he would make balls disappear

and ones which used the current rage for all things Oriental to spice up his act. Before too long, Melies realised that the films were far better received than his stage act and he began shipping his films. He became one of the stars of film.



The trick-photography films that Georges was doing were hugely popular, especially with audiences who were starting to tire of the Actualities that the Lumieres (and many others, including Edison) were putting out. Melies would use static camera shots (which was essential to his being able to do so many camera tricks) and simple scenes on sets that were elaborately painted and constructed. The film *Bluebeard*, from 1901, shown at the right, was a very typical film from Georges' output between 1898 and 1901. They were static with stories that might work to a viewer without hints but were almost always intended to be shown with a narrator. Most of the modern DVD versions of Melies' works include a narrator describing the scene. The stories he told were simple in this time period, but they were rich and enchanted audiences. He also did several films that are still studied and talked about today. One series, *L'Affaire Dreyfus*, dealt with the Dreyfus Affair and was actually banned at one point. This had ten scenes and was seen as a stepping stone to his later works. His version of *Cinderella* was also important and deserves notice as one of the first fairy tales brought to screen. It was after this period that Melies did the work that he would become best-known for.

In 1902, Melies spent about a month preparing for the biggest film of its time. It was a loose adaptation of Jules Verne's *From Earth to the Moon*. The film consisted of thirty scenes and cost an astronomical 10,000



Francs. It was a risk, but he certainly made his money back. There were a few filmmakers who were coming up to Melies' level, notably J. Stuart Blackton in the US. *A Trip to the Moon* was a huge hit around the world, but little of the money he

could have made was realised. With his success, pirates got at the film and made many illegal copies. Edison is said to have ordered his London people to make a copy and he distributed it around the world, making a load of money. Many of Melies other films suffered the same fate.

You've probably seen parts of a *Trip To The Moon*, with the classic images like the Rocket getting stuck in the eye of the moon, and it's been parodied so many times, I've lost track of the number. Most folks seem to fail to notice the film itself is a jab at the scientific communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Melies himself plays the lead role.

The group that goes to the moon encounters all sorts of strange beasties, and Melies' character bashes them with an Umbrella and that manages to cause the Moon Men to explode. The device that gets them to the moon, a giant cannon, is gorgeous and the entire thing uses all the sight tricks that Melies knew at the time, including double exposures, stop motion and forced perspective. My favourite of the tricks was the shooting of the capsule dropping into the ocean by shooting through a glass aquarium

where there were fish and newts posing as giant under-sea animals. Melies would again use this same technique in his first version of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, as would a later version made in the USA. Melies was always experimenting, and he had a lot of chances to do so since he made about 50 films a year.



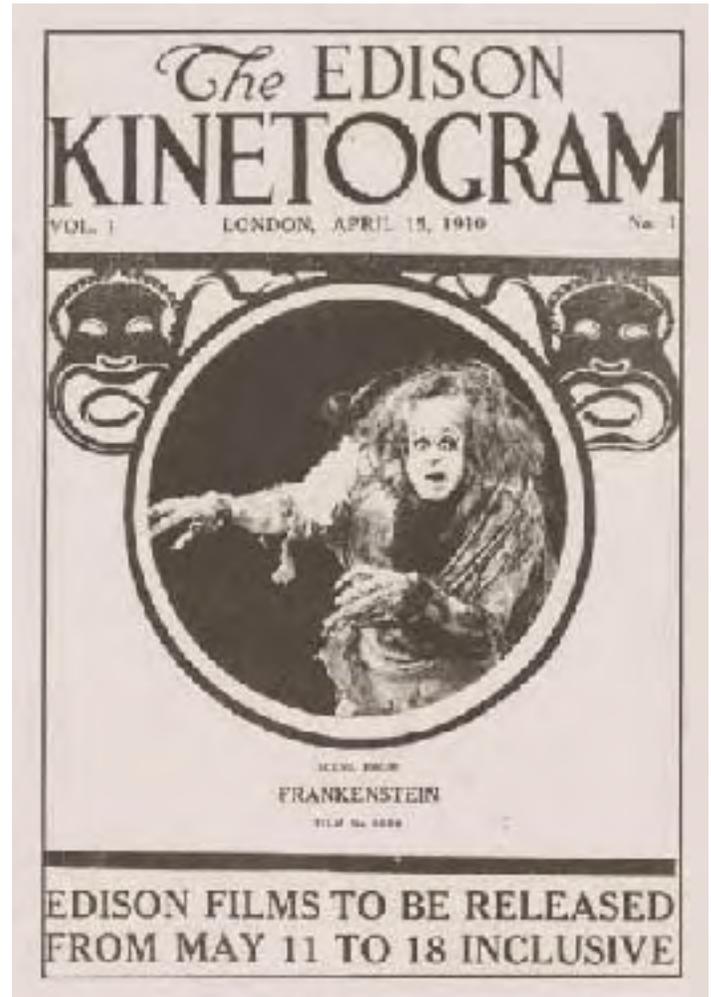
In 1903, Melies made my favourite of his films, Voyage a Travers l'Impossible or the Impossible Voyage. It was one of those films that

I still think of. I kinda think of it as A Trip to The Moon only by using a locomotive to get to the sun. It's a beautiful film and in many ways it's a superior film, with greater tricks and slightly more entertaining scenes. It was a huge success also, but there were starting to be others who were producing excellent films. The US had The Great Train Robbery show up in 1903 and its direction and editing, handled by Edwin Potter, were years ahead of Melies, even if it was not so magical.

The Melies works continued until the 1910, with some of them being very impressive. He never got out of the single static shot and the public stopped caring by the teens. After many years, he got out of the business and ended up selling toys at a train station until he was rediscovered by the French Surrealists and early film movements which bought him a house. He had actually burned his negatives, meaning that many of his films are completely lost. Of his 500+ films, only about 170 survive, and most of those are only known from Paper Prints in the Library of Congress. Many early films were literally printed onto paper since there was no law for copyrighting film. Sadly, many of the paper prints have burned, but many films prior to 1920 survive as prints.

Melies invented Science Fiction film (A Trip to the Moon), the Big Budget Blockbuster (Also A Trip to the Moon), the trick film (in 1897), the horror film (The Four Troublesome Heads), the political film (The Dreyfus Affair) and so many techniques that it would take much more than this issue to list them.

I can't recommend The Magic of Melies DVD highly enough.



An EWOC from Andy Trembley (of the *Loyal Order of The Blinking Purple Fez*) on a *Once was Lost, Now Is Found*, Film

Love the article on lost films. I actually got to see the AFI's #1 lost film, I kid you not.

When they first published their "Top 10 culturally and historically significant lost films" about a decade back, #1 was Edison Studios' "Frankenstein." Al Dettlaff, a Milwaukee film collector and restorer saw the article. He had a print. Not only did he have a print, but he had reprinted, frame-by-frame from the shrunken original, a new copy and set new intertitles. Al is a total restoration junkie; he traded a pristine print of something I've completely forgotten for a box of pretty beat up miscellaneous prints that happened to contain the "Frankenstein" reel.

There's a story about this at [filmbufonline](#); it doesn't completely jive with the story as I heard it from Dettlaff back in '94 when he screened it at The Paradise in Mil-

waukee.

Oh, if you're interested, it's supposed to be available now on DVD, but I haven't had any luck finding copies for sale.

I've been trying to see it for years. I first heard about it from the folks at the AFI and just a bit later about the discovery. Private collectors have been popping up with tonnes of films that were thought to be lost. For ages I'd seen stills from the Edison version, but I STILL have never seen it. The make-up tricks they used were incredible from the day, as the stills show. From what I understand, the performance of the Monster is much different from the Universal classic, though since the film's only 15 or so minutes, you can't really manage the same amount of time that the legendary Karloff performance took.



The cunning Deep Blue (CNN)

I Really Love My Job

Today, I got to touch a little piece of history. Now, for a working historian, this isn't exactly a rare thing, but I had a good long

stare at my work and realised that I had a really cool job.

Today, we installed the Deep Blue computer section that we have into our new Chess exhibit. It came all unassembled and we have to lift the 1,400 lb. beast into place with a mini fork lift and then roll it into place by hand. Once we did that, we had to put the skins on, but we had no plans for them, so it was all a bunch of guess work.

Taking the 12 pieces and a photo, I spent an hour figuring out how to get all the pieces into place. I was a winner though, because when I was finished, the machine looked just like it did when it beat Kasparov. I am wicked awesome!!!

A Message from the Management...

Frank Wu wrote in and pointed out that I had failed to catch a couple of errors. This saddens me, and let Mr. Wu take no flack, these were my doing. I hereby apologize for all errors. Here are the two that he pointed out.

in the All's Fair in Love and Awards article, Frank mentioned that Virgil Finlay never won a Hugo, but that's wrong wrong wrong - he won a Hugo for interior art in 1953.

In his more recent article on Found items (issue 33), Frank said that da Vinci's Battle of Anghiari is known solely from other people's repros. This isn't quite right, since we also have his original drawing which still exists and toured not too long ago (early 1990s?)

As Frank noted, 'Historical and factual accuracy are essential!', and being a historian by trade, I have failed my readers, my poor pal Frank, and my family's good name. I apologize.



Wedding Crashers: The Film and The Lifestyle They Represent

If you've ever seen a film that takes a moment to gaze at the lifestyle you lived for a crazy summer, then you'd understand my take on Wedding Crashers, the hilarious film with Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson. The film is the story of two friends, John and Jeremy, who crash weddings as a way of meeting women. It's a great concept and they execute it brilliantly. Vaughn, who was brilliant in everything from Anchorman to Dodgeball, basically comes back to the role he played in Swingers and adds just a touch of his character from

Old School and makes a brilliantly scheme-driven mitigation lawyer whose best friend hops along and joins him on wedding adventures. Jeremy is brilliant at the entire wedding crashing thing, even getting away with the big no-nos because he's so damn charming. John is on the same level, but seems to make stupid mistakes and while Jeremy is simply looking for a good time, John seems to want more out of his women.

The two of them decide to crash the biggest Washington wedding of the year: The Cleary Wedding. Christopher Walken, the closest thing America has to Olivier, plays William Cleary, the Secretary of the Treasury and possibly the next President of the US. He doesn't get much to do, but think of most of the roles Olivier was playing when he was in his 60s. His two single daughters, played by the lovely Rachel McAdams and the hotter-than-a-fireplace-brick Isla Fisher, both get entangled with the crashers. When things don't get along as smoothly as John would have liked, he arranges for an extended stay with the Cleary family.

The funny thing is, as I'm watching *Wedding Crashers*, I'm totally picking up on tricks I used to use when I was sorta stranded for a summer in Boston. Whoever wrote the film had to have, at some point, done the entire 'living on the scattered brains of others' life, because all the rules laid out in

Wedding Crashers are ones that I used to make it through that long summer.

You see, I had a job as a dispatcher for a local ride company that catered to college kids. It was just twice-a-week, so I only made about one hundred dollars a week, and since it was an over-night shift, it made getting a regular gig difficult. I had been reading about guys in Vegas who made their living off of the convention and conference circuit. They would find people who weren't showing up and they'd score a badge and use it to hustle guys at golf, scam free drinks and so on. I wasn't quite that big a scammer, but I had an idea of how to go about making my living off of the Hynes Convention Centre and the various hotels.

Here's what I had: a T-pass every month (one of the few perks of working the dispatcher's gig), access to my alma mater, Emerson College, and their library and the computers, scanners & printers, clothes living in a storage locker that I visited every day, a few friends if I needed couch space and a lot of free time. That, and one hundred dollars a week or so. That's it. Such was the beginning of my crazy year.

One of the big rules that the *Wedding Crashers* establish is that you have to have a good name. At an Indian wedding, Jeremy gives his name as Chuck Vindaloo, which just about made me weep with comedy. The



names they chose were perfect to get them admission: Italian names for Italian weddings, Irish names for Irish weddings, and so on. When I was working the conference circuit, I realised that a fake name was very important. I was often J.P. Garry, though for some of the ethnic oriented groups, I was Juan Garcia from San Diego or just Chris Garcia from the Upper Peninsula. The *Wedding Crashers* also had to have a great back story for each wedding, which is another thing that I used to do, but I had to take it a level



further.

Most of the conventions and conferences I tried to crash were events for various professionals. I had to be able to speak like one of them. Some were easy, like writers and educators gatherings, and some were much harder, like anything medical or law-related. I did a lot of reading up that summer. Everything I know about corporate law and American fisheries I learned because I needed to make myself sound convincing.

John and Jeremy also have ways of making everyone love them and feel like they should be at the wedding. I learned those tricks very fast. After managing to get a badge (usually by printing one after getting a good look or by securing one through sneakery), I'd enter always at the bar. I'd take a seat by the window and watch for a few minutes. If guys were showing their badges and getting free drinks, up to the bar I go and do the trick. If not, I'd order a ginger ale and head towards a group, strike up a conversation about the Red Sox (and anyone in Boston will always talk about the Sox) and that would usually win me a round or two off the guys. You could usually also say that you heard the appetizers were great and that they should order some. If you of-

fer to pay, 99% of the time, someone else will say, 'No, my company will get it.' I scored a lot of drinks and meals that way over the summer. It was even better when you'd arrive back at the Convention Centre the next morning. You'd say you left your programme book in Newton and they'd hand you another one while asking why you were staying so far away. The perfect answer: 'because my boss is cheap and the hotel is rat-infested, that's why.' More than once I was offered one of the set-up rooms in the hotel, which was perfect as

you could charge room service to it and live off the conference. With the programme book, you know if you are at the right group. Do they have a banquet? Is it free? Is there an outing? Hors d'oeuvres? What about valet parking or a con suite? It was all there in the guide, telling you if you should stay or see what was going on at the Cambridge hotels.

The Wedding Crashers have a very different brand of ethics. Jeremy doesn't care, he's just in it for the ride and feels no guilt over his guile. John feels some guilt, but since Jeremy was always there for him, he feels that he has to be there for Jeremy too. I knew what I was doing was technically stealing, but it was something that I had to do to make it through. Often, I ended up doing some good stuff for the group. Once I managed to score a bunch of passes to one of the movies that was opening (I think it was Men In Black) and I took fifteen guys who had been buying me drinks all weekend. I often volunteered to help with distributing stuff or collating. I even delivered a couple of speeches to fill time gaps. At times, I am willing to sing for my supper. When things were really bad, like a dry weekend when there's nothing but a

CPA convention and maybe a group of ministers, you have to either dip into your cash or find other arrangements. I could almost always head into the break room at the dispatcher's and get a good day's sleep. I often got myself a good two or three hour nap when things were very slow, which was most nights between 10pm and 1am. I used to be able to get a short, maybe half-hour, nap on a secluded hotel couch. I'd just claim I was waiting for my ride and I needed a few winks. Hotel Detectives will buy that only once, unless you make a very obvious move for the phones. I did several nights bouncing from hotel lobby to hotel lobby.

The Wedding Crashers had amazing charisma, cutting a mean rug and charming everyone. I never did that because if you get too high a profile, you're likely to be busted. I'd often fall in with a small group of the youngest attendees or a group of smokers. If you have access to cigars (and at the time my best friend was working at a Cigar Shoppe) you can make friends with many smokers quite easily.

Wedding Crashers has a wonderful supporting cast, including Jane Seymour playing a hot-for-John wife of Sec. Cleary and the secretary's confused son Kip played by Josh Wheeler. They are the perfect off-kilter American family. I loved them from frame one of the film.

The guys are incredibly successful at turning brief meetings into big time sexual shenanigans. In the world of convention crashing, this isn't unheard of, but it's rare, at least outside of NYC, Vegas and Washington. I managed one date out of Young Teachers convention. She was a nice girl, from Upstate New York, and we had a lovely time watching a film and having a delightful meal. I blew almost a full week's pay on it, but it was worth it.



Strangely, I met a girl a few months later, once I had moved back to CA, that had done a very similar gig in Atlanta. She was far more successful than I was since she worked with a partner and actually managed to get hotels for weeks on end.

The Wedding Crashers end up abandoning the technique once they've both found love. Once I got a place full time and a regular job, I still managed to hit a couple of conventions, soak up some of the great food and play a little free pinball that one of the trade shows had brought in. The last time I did one was probably 2003, but that was it. The West Coast is nowhere near as accommodating as the East when it comes to these things.

The only time I ever ran a pairing was when M and I decided it would be fun to hit a Minority Educators conference in Providence. John and Jeremy are bound to each other and when one tried to go it alone, he's a wreck.

Wedding Crashers is the type of film that I highly recommend. It looks like someone did their research and did it right. I can't say that I'm surprised: I'm betting

Owen Wilson has spent a few weekends floating from party to party without an invite in sight. And I won't even mention the way that Vince Vaughn seems a little too knowing when he's playing the crasher.

Maybe I should have taken up crashing weddings. Better food, at least.

M Lloyd on our Trip to Providence (Written for Stacked Decks #7)

Chris had that damned newsletter open at Johnny's place, reading over and over what was out there. He looked at each entry like it told him how best to keep his souffle from deflating while stabbing it with forks. He had to research he said, while

there was still couch space at Casa de los Miscreants.

“So, which will it be: minority teacher’s conference in Providence, some sort of computer programmer thing at the Hynes, or Hartford for the Episcopalians?” Chris said, circling the three with a stolen hotel pen.

“Which is bigger?” I asked.

“Computer thing is 2,200 or so, according to the guide.”

“Well, you should go to the largest one. Get lost in a crowd.” Jay piped up, walking in with his third bowl of ramen.

“Nah, there’s a downside to that. They almost never have banquets or open bars. Too big, not enough space for everyone.”

“So you want to choose the one that’s small enough to pamper attendees but big enough to get lost in.” Jay said before his first slurp of noodles.

“Sounds like the Minorities are going to win for once.” I said.

Chris checked it out.

“It does sound good. 400 people, topic I know, banquet and open bar mixer. Big hotel right by the bus station. And they did mail-in registration.”

“Is that a good thing?”

“Oh yeah,” Chris said “it means that they’ll have a bunch of mess-ups and we can probably get a badge out of it just by having a good story.”

“Really?”

I challenged.

“You wanna come with me and try?”

Honestly, I had half-hoped he’d ask. Chris and I had gone on a few adventures, but this one would take the cake. He was asking me to go with him and try to defraud a group of minority teachers of a fair amount of money all in the name of keeping Chris in shrimp cocktails and over-cooked chicken.

Then again, Chris was a lot of fun and he’d more than once given me a little bit extra to think about when he hung around.

“OK, what do I need to do?”

We hit a bus early Thursday morning and on the way, we worked out our cover stories. Christopher Garcia, teacher of US History at Santa Clara High School. I was his wife of four months, Melora (and no, that’s not what the M stands for!) who writes for San Jose Magazine. We arrived at 10 am and dragged our one back pack each to the lockers at the station. Chris told me to bring my briefcase and he stowed the scanner in it. We stowed them and headed over to the hotel.

“The plan is this, we go to the check-in and I’ll work it from there.” Chris said, wrapping his arm around me as we walked.

The registration desk was empty, save for one woman who seemed to have been there all morning. Chris walked up and handed her his ID.

“Hi, Chris Garcia.”

She looked it over and went to the list. She flipped through the pages four or five

times.

“I’m sorry Mr. Garcia, when did you two register?” She asked.

“I’m the only one registered, though my wife was hoping that she might write an article on the conference for

her magazine.” Chris answered, sounding quite official.

“Oh really, who do you write for?”

“I do education stories for various magazines, but mostly San Jose Magazine.” I answered, imitating Chris best that I could.

“Well, Mr. Garcia, it seems that we don’t have you registered. Do you know when you sent it out.”



“Oh, I think Eileen was supposed to have sent it right before the last hike in the price. That was what, six weeks ago?”

She looked up a few other things and found nothing.

“Well, we don’t have you down, but we can get the two of you press passes and if it comes up, you can up-grade to regular membership. That way you won’t miss anything, but you won’t get the free drinks and tickets to ”

“That sounds fine.”

She took two of the frame holders and slid the two name papers in with the work PRESS in iconic ariel script. Chris smiled and as we were walking away, he turned to her.

“You wouldn’t happen to know where the business centre is, would you?”

“Just down the way. Show them your badge and you can use it for free.” She answered.

Chris smiled. He had achieved victory. We headed for the business centre and a few feet in front of the door he saw someone with a badge that had a California city on it. Chris stopped and tapped his arm.

“Well, I didn’t know there’d be other Bay Area folks here. Chris Garcia, I teach at Santa Clara High.”

They chatted and I got a good look at the badge the regular attendees had. It was the same except for the PRESS and it had a series of small circles that seemed to that said thu, fri, sat, sun and mon twice each. These weren’t on ours, but I knew that Chris had noted this too.

After a few minutes and a lot of talk about It-it sandwiches, Chris took us to the business centre.

“This is where the magic happens.” Chris said. I set up the scanner and Chris scanned our badges, then using Photoshop, he got rid of the PRESS and added the circles.”



“Why are those there?” I asked.

“They’re either drink or meal markers. They punch one each time you use it.”

This made much sense, and I knew why he had me bring the scanner. We wrapped up, both of us with badges that were nearly identical to the real things.

The first day was a small meet-&-greet where the two of us worked it like champs. Chris had me watching for the woman who gave us the badges, but she was still at the registration desk. Finger foods were our dinner and the drinks were free, paid for through our badges. Chris, who had thought ahead, had printed up several copies of each name badge, so we had several drinks, all on the house. After things ended, Chris and I left the hotel.

“So, what, are we sleeping in the bus station?” I said, trying to make him realise that I could just give my credit card and get us a comfy room.

“Nope, we’re stayin’ in the hotel.”

We walked around back and Chris found exactly what he was looking for; the side lobby.

This wasn’t visible from the front desk and the door that opened on it was locked after 10. There was no reason for anyone to come here after hours, since the bathrooms, the bars and the regular lobby were on the other side.

“You go ahead and get some sleep. If I’m not here and someone wakes you up, just say you’ve got a migraine and are waiting for me to get back with your drugs.”

That was sheer brilliance, though I managed six full hours and not a soul bothered me until the cleaning staff came through around 6:30.

The next two days were panel discussions, mixers, free breakfasts, which Chris also turned into lunch using the zip-loc bags he brought, and little bite dinners. It was

good living, but Sunday was supposed to be our big night. That was the ban-



quet and Chris had sent our good suits to the dry cleaners and managed to get them back so that we could look fresh for the big show.

I didn't think it was possible, but we were having a great time. It was like acting, only you had to write the script and remember the rules as you went along. Chris had a brilliant move. He sat us at an unbussed table right before the dinner rush crowded the restaurant. When folks we knew from the previous night came by, Chris struck up a conversation and when they asked what we had Chris said "oh, just a couple of appetizers to tide us over." They asked if we were still hungry, we said yes and they asked us to join them on their account. Chris said he had to go and settle the bill, but he just went up and got change for a twenty. Brilliant moves that boy makes sometimes.

We ate heartily at the banquet and Chris thought that we should head out and not do the final day. We made remarkable small talk, and using the zip-locs, managed to get us rolls and other small food things to tide us over-night and on the bus trip home.

On the way out, we ran into the girl who had been behind the registration desk.

"Oh, I'm glad to see you got the payment worked out." She said.

Chris smiled and laughed a little.

"Yeah, we had a top notch time.

That night, we headed out to Brown and Chris and I found a spot in their library where we could hunker down and stay through-out the night, leading to our bus ride back to Boston.

Never let it be said that Christopher J. Garcia is not an evil genius.

Emailed Words of Comment
Sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my gentle readers

First off, a series from Earl Kemp

6-30-2005

Chris, I just read through your Winchester Mystery House issue. Great stuff. In fact, I don't see how you keep up the pace. You must have some damned good drugs.

Keep on keeping on.

Best,
Earl

Followed by
7-7-2005

Chris, if you don't stop it I'm going to have to do something drastic. Your pace is driving me nuts. Can you hook me up with your dealer?

And, damnit, it's all really good stuff too.

Take a break.

Best,
Earl

and
7-8-2005

So, Chris, seems like only yesterday I was telling you that you were putting up zines faster than I could read them. And, if I'm doing nothing but reading them, that means I'm not getting anything done.

Let this be fair warning to you, I don't give a damn how good it is, I'm not going to read any new zine you post later today, or tomorrow, or the next day.

Take that....

Earl

followed by
7-15-2005

Chris, one of these days you've got to

slow down a bit. I thought you told me you were going to take some time off and try to get straight.

So...what's this Roosevelt Hotel stuff...?

Earl

Well Earl, you got your wish and I only did one issue last week, since I took a weekend off to hang out with The Little One and Genevieve and planned out the movie I'll be making this weekend. Now, with the gauntlet thrown, I'm ready to flood eFanzines with more material than anyone could possibly read (Don't worry, Bill, I'm only joking)

Next, more from Earl, this time about the Hollywood Roosevelt

I have the strangest feeling that I have spent a great deal of time inside that hotel and somehow forgotten about most of it. That's because my memory has such self contradicting things going on about the hotel that I can't trust any part of it to be real, or that somehow I'm really screwing up with my locations.

It goes sort of like this: In 1965, I spent a great deal of time commuting from San Diego to Los Angeles, and the purpose of those trips was to consult with Stanley Fleishman, the famous First Amendment attorney who also happened to be chief legal advisor to my employeer, Greenleaf Classics. The funny part has my memory of those meetings taking place in Stanley's law offices inside the Roosevelt Hotel. On the face of that, it doesn't make much sense, and because I was there to see Stanley, I didn't pay much attention to the hotel aspects of my numerous visits.

I do remember spending lots of time in his office with him, talking, being advised, bullshitting, etc. Lots of time looking out the window across the street to Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the gawking tourists milling around. Lots of time looking out the window across the street in the other

direction to the Brown Derby restaurant. Going with Stanley to lunch at the Derby, with him being greeted with, "Hello, Mr. Fleishman, your usual table's ready." Sitting there surrounded by famous, aging, and long out of work but recognizable Big Name Moving Picture Stars. Wow!

What a life it was...thanks for the memories.

Best,

Earl

The geography isn't quite right, but I'm imagining that the office was on the Southwest corner of the Roosevelt (which looked out towards the Chinese Theatre) where there were offices back in the day (when the lobby was seafoam green and hideous) and the Brown Derby would not have been visible from the corner (it was over on Vine with a bunch of buildings in the way) but that other Hollywood institution, Sardi's, was right down the street. Also right there were Cafe Montmartre and CC Brown's, though that might have been gone by that point. Nowadays, if you wanna see has-beens, the places to go are the Pig & Whistle, the bar at the Roosevelt (recent sightings include Emmanuel Lewis and one of the less famous Caradines) and Amoeba Records (especially for old time rockers).

Now, a little bit from our good pal and editor of Some Fantastic, Matthew Appleton

Just finished Drink Tank #33 and again I'm amazed at how quickly you continue to put out such good issues (I've been busy for the past week or so getting the next ish of my 'zine edited and laid out, so I'm playing a little catch up on others' work). If I had to pick a lost item I'd like to see found it'd have to be the missing portions of Fritz Lang's Metropolis. Given how much early film is lost to the ages - - such as the Cheney film you discuss -- I know we should be grateful that there's still a version of Metropolis remaining. However,

given that anywhere between 1/4 and 1/2 of the original is now gone, what we have left is sometimes leaves the plot somewhat incoherent.

For me the really interesting thing about this film is something I discovered in college. If you play one of the shorter edits, and play Queensryche's Operation Mindcrime album, there's a surprising amount of synchronicity between the film and the music. It's no Dark Side of the Moon/Wizard of Oz, but the coincidence is arguably there.

Keep up the good work!

-- Matthew

The most complete Metropolis cut I know of is the one that Kino put out on DVD, but there are many other versions that are less complete but have additional footage (including at least three that are in private hands). The Kino version is 100 minutes and feels more or less complete, certainly more complete than the known version of Theda Bara's A Fool There Was which I saw last year. I am led to believe that there's probably about 105 or 110 minutes of footage out there, along with a lot of stills, so if a group like Turner Classic Movies wanted to do what they did with Greed, they certainly could give us a closer match to the original.

You know, I've heard someone else say that there was an album that matched up, but I could have sworn it was a Queen album. Then again, it's not far off. The Alloy Orchestra does a great orchestration to Metropolis that is well-worth finding on either DVD or even just the CD.

And now, The Greatest Canadian Hero: Lloyd Penney

Dear Chris:

Suddenly, I have fallen behind again! Or are you too darned fast at getting these out? A little of both, I guess, so here is an attempt to catch up again. I have .pdfs of The Drink Tank 29 to 33, plus the Special Issue on the

London bombings.

The Bombing LoC ran in the Responses issue that came the Saturday after.

29...Sometimes, I still wonder how useful computers are, given all the problems they cause, or perhaps I should say, all the problems they can let loose with lots of human help, of course. Too many people saw it as a toy, and looked towards the far future for it to have any use at all. Because it was not human, it may have been seen as inhuman, and therefore capable of much evil. HAL 9000 comes to mind. The Star Trek movies were also bad for flashing computers (If Jim Kirk could talk all those computers into self-destructing, perhaps he could talk ours into working properly. That...does not compute.) I have to admit that I always like TRON, and when I heard there was to be a TRON v2.0, I was disappointed to hear it was a video game.

I so want another TRON. As I've said many times, the only good computer is a dead computer, and that's why I'm a computer historian.

There will be a small but determined contingent of fans going to the NASFiC in Seattle from Toronto...two of them are on the committee, Alex von Thorn and Marah Searle-Kovacevic. Let's hope Seattle knows how to do it right.

I'll try to run into them, give them a good chatting-up. I'll actually be venturing into Seattle for once when I'm there, so I may be a little pressed for time.

30...I'm sure some well-known fans were born in Fall River, Massachusetts, but I can't think of who they are right now...

I know a couple of NESFAns read me, so if you have any names, pipe up!

I've never won a Hugo Award, and I still aspire to it, but I do have a few trophies to take pride in...a couple of Aurora Awards, and three FAAn Awards. I think no matter

the award, no matter if it's a hunk of metal and wood or a simple certificate, it's good and nurturing to know that some people felt highly enough of you and your works to vote this to you. They are not the end-all and be-all, as Frank says, but they are often part of the true feelgood episodes that come long so rarely.

I'd actually rather be known as a guy who helps other people win awards than as the winner of the awards (not that I don't want a shelf full of awards!). I'd really love to be able to say "I helped that one happen!"

31...The Winchester Mystery House. A few years ago, I read The High House by James Stoddard, and I knew the book must have based on an actual building. This must have been his inspiration. The Sylvia Brown you speak of...she's the one that shows up on The Montel Williams Show every so often? (A one of the side-effects of being under-employed is becoming far too familiar with daytime television.) I'd like some explanation of the House Orbs, especially if they can be captured with a camera. with luck, in the next Catchpenny Gazette, I mention my own experiences with the Canadian version of WheresGeorge.com, WheresWilly.com, referring to Sir Wilfrid Laurier on the five-dollar bill.

Yep, the same Sylvia Brown. She's a nice lady, or at least she was when I met her. I love Catchpenny (read Found in Collection there!) and I love Where's George. A friend of mine had a fake one for a while on her site called Where's Bill, which was looking for those fake 3 Dollar Bills that were popular around the time of the Lewinsky scandal.

32...I've read Miéville's Perdido Street Station, but I'm not sure I'd read the rest of the books in the series. I think you had the same reaction in reading

the first book...vague unease, revulsion, thinking "Ick!" to yourself as you read, and I'm sure that's what Miéville wanted you to think.

I can certainly understand that. I love his ideas, I fear his visions, I like his style, I'm slightly disgusted by his presentations. Still, I do like Perdido, but it's a little gross.

The local...Chris, I pray you're right that I might know the weight of one of the Hugo rockets before my day is done. As said earlier, the award is not the main thing, but it sure can be the icing on the cake. HE would sue you if you put something he said on a t-shirt? Ooooh, touchy, touchy!

Chris, we must do the Hawaiians when it's time for Corflu. I can just see those around us going, "Oh, Ghod, not another one..." Not long after the last Québec referendum, some bumper stickers read "My Canada includes Québec". A parody version read "My Canada includes Florida". We could just make Canada the 11th province and be done with it...

One of the many Canadians in my life wore one last year that said 'My Canada includes Hockey.'

33...Frank Wu's article about lost artworks being uncovered or rediscovered reminds me of two stories recently read, about a lost poem by Émile Nelligan rediscovered and sold at auction, and a lost painting that was recently discovered under another. I wonder if we're finding these items previously thought to be lost because we are scanning and cataloging our most treasured artworks and books for the Internet?

That's exactly why, though some of the discoveries have been known for years, but the web gave a reason to document them publicly.

The Drink Tank is produced by Christopher J. Garcia and posted to eFanzines.com by Megawatt Madman, Bill Burns. If you are headed to WorldCon, anyone who sends me a sno-globe from Glasgow gets a special mention in my Hugo Wrap-Up issue!