

**LaCon II 1984**  
**Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper**  
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**Art Show**

The art show at LaCon II continues the trend toward a larger standard deviation in art shows that I've noticed lately. The good stuff is very good (and very expensive) and the amateur stuff is generally pretty bad. There were some exceptions to this trend, but not many. I'm really sick of unicorns, media art (how many pictures of Spock can one look at?), and cutesy-funny artwork. (Phil Foglio is *not* cutesy-funny.) Having a separate section for limited edition prints and other multiple-copy artwork that could be purchased easily and at reasonable prices was a good idea.

**Hucksters**

The huckster room at LaCon II was roomy and well-lit. There were a good percentage of book dealers, a welcome change from recent conventions when it was almost impossible to buy a book in the huckster room. Prices were about what you'd expect. The fastest moving items seemed to be the Japanese toys and the buttons.

**Exhibits**

For the first time (at least as far as I know), there was a special exhibit area set aside for film (and other) exhibits. LaCon II set aside approximately one-third of the hall for the art show to be used for various exhibits and presentations.

The film exhibits included:

- | *Dune*: large stills from the film and a slide show of all the main characters and other scenes
- | *2010*: models of the two ships as well as a short documentary on the making of *2010*, and trailers for the film. Their gimmick was to give out holograms of the ship, which many people promptly had mounted onto the *Ladyhawke* buttons (see below), which happened to be exactly the right size.
- | *Ladyhawke*: a medieval fantasy-adventure due out next year. There were stills and a press release, along with several props from the film. The buttons they gave out to advertise the film were interesting in that they were square and just the right size to be used to mount the *2010* holograms.
- | Society for Creative Anachronism: a large exhibit of costumes, weapons, and crafts.
- | Lucasfilms: various props from Lucas's "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" films.
- | *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*: Lots of props and photos, including the car used in the show.
- | *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*: Many props (and re-creations of props) from the film.
- | *The Stuff*: A New Worlds Pictures parody. The exhibit consisted of about a half dozen stills.
- | *Oz*: A big walk-through exhibit (e.g., four times the size of a BTL office) with props, costumes, still, and a documentary on the making of the new Disney film. Looks good!
- | Miscellaneous: The saucer from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Robby the Robot from *Lost in Space*, a few dozen items from Forry Ackerman's enormous collection of SF movie memorabilia, a display promoting the Museum of Science Fiction and Fantasy (soon to open in Beaumont, Texas), and various masquerade costumes from previous Worldcons.

**Video Programming**

As usual, there was a full track of video programming, consisting (of course) mostly of Japanese animated TV shows and films.

## Masquerade

The masquerade was one of the major problems of the convention; it was too damned long. The first run-through took four hours (plus one hour for the Children's Masquerade), ending about midnight. The judging, awards, etc., were finally finished about 2AM. (I gave up about 10PM.)

Why was it so long? Well, for one thing there were several lengthy "presentations" (skits) which could have been eliminated. There is a time limit per group, but it is figured at x minutes for the first member of the group plus y seconds for each additional member. When you have groups of fourteen people, it seems interminable. Another problem was the plethora of media re-creation costumes. When you've seen one Luke Skywalker, you've seen them all--except at a masquerade, where there are probably five more waiting in the wings. And lastly, there is what Mark Leeper refers to as the "Ambassador from Thugbin" costume and claims is actually a media costume. This is the generic science fiction costume--long robe, funny headdress, and a title like "Grand Ambassador from Aldebaran V"--the sort of thing made popular by the "Journey to Babel" episode of *Star Trek*. Who needs it?

There were some very good costumes, and even good presentations, but they tended to be swamped by the mediocre and overly long. Someone was videotaping the masquerade; with fast-scan it could be quite worth-while.

## Hugo Awards

- | NOVEL -- *Startide Rising* by David Brin
- | NOVELLA -- "Cascade Point" by Timothy Zahn (ANALOG 12/83)
- | NOVELETTE -- "Blood Music" by Greg Bear (ANALOG 6/83)
- | SHORT STORY -- "Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler (IASFM mid-Dec/83)
- | NONFICTION BOOK -- *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Vol. 3* by Donald Tuck
- | DRAMATIC PRESENTATION -- *Return of the Jedi*
- | PROFESSIONAL EDITOR -- Shawna McCarthy
- | PRO ARTIST -- Michael Whelan
- | SEMIPROZINE -- Locus
- | FANZINE -- File 770
- | FAN WRITER -- Mike Glyer
- | FAN ARTIST -- Alexis Gilliland
- | JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD -- R. A. MacAvoy

Robert Bloch was a very entertaining Master of Ceremonies. He spoke of the first Worldcon (which he attended), which had 50 writers when there were only about a thousand readers. Now, he says, there are a thousand writers and only fifty people who actually read anymore.

Harlan Ellison and Robert Silverberg presented a special award to Larry Shaw, who was a major editor in the Fifties.

R. A. MacAvoy, in her acceptance speech for the Campbell Award said that she doubted that John Campbell would have liked what she wrote. She tried for many years to write what Campbell would have liked, but finally decided to write what she liked, and that at least, she says, he would have approved of.

## Blood Drive

They collected about 120 pints, a very good amount. They could have had about 200, but the local Red Cross was not prepared for the large response and when the wait was over an hour, many people

left discouraged. Future conventions should inform the Red Cross accordingly.

### **Attendance**

There were over 9000 members registered, with over 7000 actually attending, making this the biggest Worldcon ever. In spite of this, it wasn't crowded (except at the *Dune* presentation and the "Star Wars" marathon).

### **Programming, etc.**

In general programming was good, with the inevitable conflicts and lulls for everyone. The pocket program was well-laid out and it was easy to tell exactly what was going on at any given time. The hotel kept the pool and jacuzzis open till midnight, so there was even time for hot-tubbing (the record was 56 in a jacuzzi, if you keep track of those things).

### **Panel: Making SF Films--Television**

Gerd Oswald (*Outer Limits*), Mike Casutt, Dan Blatt, David Carren, and Kirby McCauley (agent) discussed the past, present, and future of SF on television (mostly commercial television, though there was some mention of series being planned for HBO and other premium movie channels). One of these people was connected with V, but I forget which one.

### **Presentation: Movie Posters**

Bill Warren gave a 90-minute talk (illustrated with slides) on SF movie posters from the Fifties. He was very informative, and at times very funny ("Bert I. Gordon has done two versions of H. G. Wells's *Food of the Gods* [*Village of the Giants* and *Food of the Gods*] and he's going to keep doing it until he gets it right. Someone stop him, please!"). If Warren ever does this again at a con you're at, see it.

### **Panel: Tourist Spots for the Time Traveler**

Sandra Miesel moderated this panel, which also had Connie Willis ("Fire Watch"), Poul Anderson (*Guardians of Time* and others), and Somtow Sucharitkul (*Aquilad*). There was the usual discussion of observer versus participant, and the question of whether one can ever really see history. As Willis (I believe) pointed out, you can't "see" Dunkirk if you're there, only your little piece of it, to which Sucharitkul suggested hopping about at Dunkirk in much the same way a film director edits a film. There was some question about the effect of going back to a religious "event" (like the Crucifixion or the Giving of the Tablets) and discovering that it didn't really happen that way at all. (The conclusion was that believers would just claim that the whole trip was faked.) There was little discussion on the exact topic--I got no itinerary for *my* next trip.

### **Presentation: Fantasy Dinosaurs in the Movies**

Don Glut (*The Dinosaur Dictionary*) gave a 90-minute presentation on dinosaurs in the movies, covering stop-motion, men-in-suits (he referred to Godzilla as a "maninsuitasaurus"), and mechanical modeling. In addition to tracing the general history of the sub-genre, he showed some fairly rare clips, including *Gertie the Dinosaur*, *The Dinosaur and the Missing Link*, *King Kong* (1933 version), *One Million B.C.*, and *Gorgo*. Lots of fun! (By the way, the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington had a similar "documentary" running in their dinosaur hall. We sat through that twice.)

### **Panel: Making SF Films--*The Day the Earth Stood Still***

This panel was chaired by Mark McGee, and featured Robert Wise (the director of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*), Ed North (the screenwriter), and Julian Blaustein (the producer). Blaustein did most of the talking, which was disappointing, because the director and screenwriter usually have more to do with making a movie what it is. North was asked about the Christ symbolism in the movie, and said that he had put it in, but didn't expect anyone to notice. (In fact, it was a fair while after the film came out before people began to comment on it and analyze it.) Wise admitted that he hadn't noticed it at all during the filming. North also apologized for the one major technical gaffe in the script of saying "miles" when "light-years" was probably intended. This resulted in Carpenter coming from somewhere in the asteroids instead of deep space. Blaustein (and the others) talked somewhat about making the film during a time of political paranoia, and of the different attitudes toward science fiction then and now.

### **Panel: What If?**

A light-weight panel with Ed Bryant (moderator), Greg Benford, Timothy Zahn, Spider Robinson, and Warren Norwood. Apparently they were given a set of ten questions such as "What if we could communicate with the dead?" or "What if the phrase WXYZ weather really meant that we could change the weather by changing the station our radio was tuned to?" Most of the questions were ridiculous (as you might have guessed from this sample), and in fact when Bryant showed them to an editor the night before and asked what her reaction would be if she received a story based on any of these ideas, she laughed. On the other hand, most of the questions listed turned to have had stories (Hugo-winning, even) based on them. One idea was "What if humans had a fixed mating season?" After a fair number of bad jokes ("They do; it's from January 1 to December 31") it was pointed out that *Left Hand of Darkness* is based on just this premise (with some additional details thrown in). And there have been many stories based on the idea of communication with the dead. (One interesting point was that this ability might decrease the murder rate--there's no point in killing a witness to a crime if he/she can still testify against you after death. But then how would you punish a dead perjurer?)

A couple of the other ideas which seemed to appeal to Benford (as a physicist) in particular were "What if you could change any one physical law you wanted?" and "What if political parties were based on beliefs in scientific theories instead of in socio-economic ones?" Lowering the speed of light would have interesting effects--relativistic effects visible in everyday life; speeding it up would cause your tube of toothpaste to explode ( $E = mc^2$ , remember?). A more ridiculous one along the same lines that they played with was "What if you could have any one super-power?" A fun panel, but not particularly enlightening. (What do you expect at 11AM Sunday morning at a con?)

### **Panel: Making SF Films--The Low-Budget Film**

Moderated by Randy Robertson, this panel had (I think) Charles B. Griffith (Seymour from *Little Shop of Horrors*), Jim Wynorski (film critic), Paul Sammon (producer et al of *Planetary Pal*), Wes Craven (*Swamp Thing*), Jocko (Jock) Mahoney (ex-stuntman and Tarzan in *Tarzan's Three Challenges* and *Tarzan Goes to India*), and Larry Cohen (*It's Alive*). This panel tended to ramble since the various participants drifted in as the hour progressed. I was disappointed because Jimmy Sangster (who wrote many Hammer Films scripts) and Dick Miller (the Michael Ripper of American International Pictures) were unable to attend as planned. The anecdotes were interesting at the time but somehow have escaped me now.

### **Panel: Does History Repeat Itself?**

In a fine touch of irony, C. J. Cherryh (moderator), Brad Linaweaver, Paul Edwin Zimmer, and Steve Goldin rehashed the "Tourist Spots for Time Travelers" panel. I left early.

### **Panel: Making SF Films--Special Effects**

Bob Greenberg moderated a panel consisting of Ron Cobb (Industrial Light and Magic), Craig Reardon, Greg Jein, Jim Danforth (*Flesh Gordon, When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*), and Peter Kuran. They talked about many different kinds of special effects, which diluted the impact of the panel. Their advice on how to break into the special effects end of movie-making was less than excellent--it consisted mostly of stories of people being in the right place at the right time.

### **Atlanta**

It's Atlanta in 1986!

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