

# exhibition hall 25



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So, it's Cinequest again. There were a couple of Steampunk-y animations this year, but really, there wasn't anything too Steampunk this year, unlike last year. There are still a lot of great movies, including some awesome animation and a few fun documentaries.

So, I've been lucky enough to get to Gallifrey One and I managed to get a bunch of great stuff. There were several Steampunk-type Doctor Who folk there, especially various versions of the new companion in her 19th Century London Guise. There was also a whole bunch of Inspector Spacetime stuff, from Community, and the phrase that I will carry with me forever and always, 'We can go anywhere and anytime in the history of the Universe... but it will probably be London during the Blitz.'

There's a Brad Foster cover, which I love! and there's a look at a book and event, but most importantly, there's a look at what we'll be doing for 5 Cons - A 21st Century Fandom Documentary Series at Nova Albion! It's a project I am so very excited about, and working with The Lovely & Talented Linda, which is something we've never done before.

And Nova Albion is coming up, last weekend in April. It's got Gail Carriger as the Writer GoH, and there's Maker GoH Thomas Willeford. The theme, Steampunk in Space, is going to be a lot of fun, and I'll be

speaking. I am so excited for the re-launching of Nova Albion after a year off. The 2011 version was excellent, especially since James Bacon was in town for it!

One thing that I'll certainly be excited for is Linda's new outfits! The costumes are always a HUGE part of a Steampunk convention, and I'm planning on doing a full episode of 5 Cons around the world of costuming and what it means to steampunks and so on!

There's a lot of great Steampunk coming out in the near too! Lilith Saintcrow's novel *The Iron Wyrms* and Liesl Schwartz's *A Conspiracy of Alchemists*. I'm so excited for both of them, though I'm not quite finished with either of them! Such is my lot in life!

Hugo nominations will be announced soon, and I'm thinking that there'll be some Steampunk on the ballot, with the leading possibility being the excellent novel *Railsea*. There'll be a much longer look at China Mieville's novel in the next issue, which will be Mieville themed, but there's a bit of thought on it in this one.

Also, for you Gail Carriger fans, there's a Tea-themed podcast from Stephen Nelson called <http://www.podfeed.net/podcast/Tea+Rage/26787>. It rad!





## 5 Cons - A 21st Century Fandom Documentary at Nova Albion

So, we're making a series of documentaries about fandom. It's called 5 Cons: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fandom Documentary Series. The Lovely & Talented Linda is producing, I'm directing, and we're raising money for it. You can find out more, and help us gather all our funding, at <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/5-cons-a-21st-century-fandom-documentary>.

That's the simple stuff. That's the pitch I'd give to someone who I met at a Cinequest party. You, you know a lot more about these things and want a greater view. You do want to know more, right? Well, too bad! You're getting' it!

Let me start with the basic concept.

Linda and I are going to 5 conventions in 2013. We're going to be shooting at various conventions, the 5 of the title, and we're going to be looking at what fandom is, was, and will be. We wanted to get a distinct view of the ways in which cons are a part of fandom. We'll also be looking at the non-con parts of fandom, though we're focusing on how these things show through in conventions. The five conventions are all pretty different. Before the official shooting starts, we're off to Gallifrey, a Doctor Who convention in LA. We'll be shooting promo footage and doing some preliminary interviews and footage. After that, we'll be at the Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition, where we'll be looking at how side-fandoms, like Steampunk, interact with the mainstream of SF fandom, and just showing all the gorgeous costumes! We're just going as attendees, though I think I'm going to be doing programming, hopefully. After that, it's off to ConQuesT! I'm the Fan Guest of Honor, so we'll be talking about what that's like in one of those episodes. Then we're working at Westercon in Sacramento (and will be doing an episode called The Cautionary Tale

of Zellacon – The Road to Westercon 66) and we'll be shooting a lot in the Fanzine Lounge and that's where we'll talk more about zines and such. After that, the Grand-daddy of 'em all! WorldCon! We'll talk about the Hugos, about WorldCon, about the process of putting a con together. I'm the Curator for Exhibits this year, so almost all my contribution to the convention will be beforehand, but still, there's that. This is where we'll be showing most of what it takes to make a con happen. Finally, we'll be looking at the role of fans and Pros and on and on at World Fantasy! It'll be an interesting set of short documentaries, covering fandom as widely as possible, and not in the Roger Nygard in Trekkies sort of way.

The thing that I really want to focus on is the idea that Fandom isn't a monolith: it's a series of connections, some of which are stronger than others, and all of which are utterly important! Fandom today is on-line and in-person, and that's not easy to record, but we're gonna give it a try and see what happens! We'll be talking to people, many of whom are bloggers and podcasters, fanzinistas and SmoFs, and trying to put together a full view of fandom today. Folks have tried this before, a couple even get close to giving a real view of what fandom is and can be, but we're trying something a little different. We're a bit on the inside, a bit on the outside. That makes for an interesting view of things. We're trying to avoid the classic 'Fandom is full of weirdos! Here, enjoy these weirdnesses!' and also the 'Fandom is the One True Path! Kneel and crawl a mile in its shadow!', which is just as bad. We're a very diverse, sometimes bizarre, sometimes enlightened, and sometimes funky group! Tell the story, and it'll be interesting. Be as honest as you can be, don't play things up too much, that's the key thing.

Let's look at Nova Albion

Let's talk about young fandoms. Over the decades, many many fandoms have been founded and folded, some in the space of a few short years. Even before SF fandom got itself started there were fandoms born and died. These things happen. Currently we've got Steampunk fandom, now just a few years old, but growing and strong, while still maintaining a feeling of youth. Steampunk is a slough of a number of converging fandom and fandom-like things. First, there's the SF fans, they've been there all along and you'll find folks who are familiar to SF fans running Steampunk cons. There's the costumers, who have always been either in fandom or Fandom Adjacent, and they're a big part of Steampunk, making attendance at a Steampunk con one of the most visually stunning things you can do. There's the Maker folks, DIY people who build amazing things, perhaps best exemplified by the great Jake Von Slatt. Things like Makers Faire have informed a lot of what Steampunk conventions have tried to do, which gives them a different feel than most SF cons. There are artists, and they're a great, often hyper-realistic, bunch! Steampunk music might be where the most interesting stuff is happening, as Abney Park is the group everyone thinks of, but I tend to prefer Unwoman, Mr. B The Gentleman Rhymer, Steampowered Giraffe, and especially The Men Who Will Not Be Blamed for Nothing. It makes for a rich experience.

Now, here's the funny thing, while books still make up the major portion of SF fandom, it seems that they're not nearly as important to Steampunks. There's the story of the young lady at the first SteamCon who was animatedly watching as Mike Perschon and a few others were talking about various Steampunk novelists. This young lady got wide-eyed and asked "you mean someone saw all the costumes people were doing and wrote stories about them?" I've encountered this again and again, in one form or another, and though you'll likely find folks who have read Gail Carriger or Cherie Priest, most Steampunk literature is ignored by a fair portion of Steampunk fandom. That's something I plan to explore with our shooting at Nova Albion. The relationship between the literature and the fandom, and how deep it penetrates.

The other thing is I want some BEAUTY! There's nothing as gorgeous as watching the waltz with the lovely costumed folks at Nova Albion. There are amazing, some mind-blowing, costumes there. It's gorgeous, and though there's no formal Masq, there are several events where tons of people are in their finest.

Here, we'll be asking folks about what they love about Steampunk, how it effects their everyday life (and there's a WIDE range of answers to that one, I'm sure) and hopefully we'll get to chat with Gail Carriger, who happens to be Writer GoH!



# STEAMPUNK EMPORIUM And Swap Meet

Saturday February 16, 2013 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Great Escape Games  
1250 Howe Avenue, suite 3A  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
Free admission for shoppers



## swapping in sacramento by valerie frankel

The first Sacramento Steam Society Swapmeet was a delightful success. Despite its modest title, people drove from hours away, with an estimated 700 attendees. Held in the sizable back room of Great Escape Games on February 16th, the place was packed with sixty vendor booths and a multitude of colorful attendees. The comedy troupe known as the Aether Brigade did its usual show with weight lifting, rope tricks, and cyborg performers. The other big draw was Gail Carriger, the bestselling author of the Parasol Protectorate series with *Etiquette and Espionage*, her first YA book, set in a Steampunk boarding school. There was also a drawing with an impressive list of prizes, as all the vendors had donated items.

Among the vendors, some stands offered piles of vintage knickknacks, purses, books, and shoes. Various makers, found at many conventions across California, had handmade crafts of leather and gears. Old favorites had new offerings, like Steamy Tech with their twirlable wooden gear jewelry...now with heart-shaped pieces

for Valentine's Day. Steamy Bits and Pieces had upgraded some of their medals to clockwork ones that actually tick. More unusual offerings included a silhouette artist and an inventor with amazing one-of-a-kind creations. Mark Johnson's devices, on display in several galleries, included a steam-powered clock, actual civil war sewing machine (lovingly restored), observational macroscope, and several types of time machine. "Goodness," I said. "If you drop it, you'd be trapped in one time and place."

"Yes," said a passerby. "But if you fall and break your leg, you'll also be trapped in one time and place."

Mark Johnson suggested finding another time traveler or at least a steampunker to repair the time travel device, which seemed like good advice. Disappointingly, however, several of them only seemed to take people forward in time, which seems a contradiction for retro-futurism.

Loving the quite reasonable prices, I personally bought way too many treats, from

a discount corset (which I wore out of the store after trying on, so I didn't have to unlace) to spats, choker, feathery fascinator, and belt pouch. The phrase, "Well, I seem to have a small gap in my outfit here and this is just the right color" came up once or twice. As one might imagine, I felt I had done my part to keep the Steamy economy flowing, and after I added all those accessories to my pre-existing costume on the spot, I got far more compliments and photos than usual. I even succeeded in not falling over, as in a corset, it's not certain I'd be able to get back up.

As always at these events, the costumes were delightful. Little girls were dressed as aviators or sported colorful top hats. Gail Carriger, of course, was dressed in one of her beautiful steampunk ensembles. Cyborgs and supervillains stocked the halls, though all were more polite and friendly than some of their outfits would predict. Most impressive was a modestly-named "gunslinger for hire" wearing a concealing mask and perched on exotically curved stilts, which I found had been custom-made before he decorated them Steampunk-style. A blinking Iron Man chest device under his wild west duster and holster indicated that he'd mastered more than one genre, or at least kicked the genres around in an ally and robbed them of their stuff. He introduced himself as Marshal Maddox, though he and his companion Poppy Appleton were far from regulars. They commented in between hundreds of poses for photos, "Oh, this is fantastic. We've been to Wondercon and so on for about three years, and this is our first steampunk event." One guesses it won't be their last.

The Sacramento Clubs were all present with tables—The Aether Brigade was handing out their usual pamphlet, while The League of Proper Villains, their archnemeses, were thoughtfully handing out the same pamphlet covered in graffiti and alterations. "Fools!" bright red letters read, and the sketch of the heroes features waxed mustaches and devil horns drawn on. Mention of "The Brave Sons and Daughters of Britannia" prompts the add-on "They always show up a day late and a bullet short." With this dastardly act of pamphlet-defacing, one wonders what their next evil move will be.

Nathaniel Blackheart, Scientist for Hire (as his card read) told me the tale of how the League's founder and leader was erased from time by his enemies, but the Cabinet of Misery continues to lead them. He added, "We're an offshoot from the Steam Society so we can cosplay other times. We can do dieselpunk. We can go to the future. We pillage from many different areas." While he didn't interfere with the Aether show, he could be seen watching from the sidelines, looking evil enough he likely would've twirled his waxed mustache if he'd had one.

Everyone was surprised and pleased by the enormous turnout, and the "First" in the event's title suggests there will be many more to come. Sacramento's fandom is delightful and vibrant, from those attending their first steam event (and there were several) to the regulars, vendors, and performers seen at every convention. It's certain they'll add color, creativity, and clockwork to this summer's Sacramento Westercon.

**WESTERCON 66!**  
**THE 2013 WEST COAST SCIENCE FANTASY CONFERENCE**  
JULY 4-7, 2013 ✦ HILTON ARDEN WEST HOTEL, SACRAMENTO, CA

# review: the iron wurm affair by lilith saintcrow

Sherlock and Watson. Newbury and Hobbes. Tweed and Nightengale. It's a phenomena, isn't it? The teams that we're seeing in a lot of Steampunk novels. Working off the traditional form of a Master Detective and side-kick is a great thing to play with. In the case of Lilith Saintcrow's *The Iron Wurm Affair*, we see the tables turned on the traditional form with Hyper-deduction taking a backseat to another, more powerful system...

Sort of.

The story is set in a world where Magic is a regular part of everyday life. In it, there is a thing called Tideturn, which replenishes the magic which is used by all the sorcerors and magicians and warlocks and others. There is a class of human computers called Mentats... I mean Mentaths. I seriously could not stop calling them Mentats like from *Dune*, but what are you gonna do. They're a bit of *Star Trek's* Vulcans and *Dunes* Mentats. Mr. Archibald Clare is an Unregistered Mentath, and Mentaths are being killed left and right! Miss Bannon is a Prima Sorceress. She's got all sorts of power, and a ton of magical jewelry! She's hyper-powerful, but all Sorceror=types in service of the Queen have Shields, living fighters who protect them. Mikal is Miss Bannon's only Shield, most have at least three, and he's pretty damned bad ass.

Now, the story is OK. I found the plot a bit thin and saw around the corner a number of times as to turns and twists. At times, I felt as if the story wasn't the primary concern. It was either all about the characters, or in turn, all about the world Saintcrow created.

And both of those are well-done!

Bannon, Clare, and Mikal are all exceptional characters, each built to play off of each other. Clare is clearly Sherlock Holmes. All Mentaths seem to be, but Clare has several signatures of the Holmes we know and love.

But he's the side-kick... kinda.

You see, he's not really the sidekick, Mi-

kal sorta is, but it's there, a twist on the tradition.

He's also the typical concept of science brushing up against magic.

The world of Londinium is really interesting. It's a fascinating world, one which has a lot of color and I can't wait to see what Saintcrow does with it in the future. I think there is alot of stuff in this London that isn't the London of typical Steampunk novels. It's obviously more magical and Roman-infused than the real London, and I love it!

