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# EXHIBITION HALL 3

# EXHIBITION HALL ISSUE 3- NOVEMBER 2009

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## *Editorial*

There's a Steampunk Hamlet coming out in May.

I'll let that sink in a moment.

You see, the Butterfield 8 Theatre Company in the beautiful city of Concord, California, will be doing a version of the Bard's third greatest play (after King Lear and MacBeth) that takes place in a steampunk-ish Victorian England. This won't be the first version of Hamlet I've seen that takes Victoriana as its visual basis, but the Steampunk twist will be interesting. You know your aesthetic movement has officially come around when they're doin' Shakespeare around it!

And there's something to be said about the theatre world grabbing onto a Steampunk lever as a setting. Aside from the visual interest, there's an inherent grottness to the entire Steam-thing that can certainly assist in the development of tone. There's always the worry that the setting will over-power the piece, but Butterfield 8 is a great bunch of theatricists, so I would expect that to not be a problem. Check out <http://www.b8company.com/> for more info on their entire up-coming schedule.

It's interesting to note that Hamlet isn't the best Shakespeare play for Steampunking. The Tempest, Othello, Troilus & Cressida, those would all work better in a Steamy setting, but Hamlet'll do pretty well. I'll certainly be there as the Butterfield 8 Theatre Company does really good stuff.

This issue is coming out right before I make my trip to Chicago to be the Fan Guest of Honor at WindyCon. You remember, that con with a Steampunk theme that has one of my favorite authors (James Blaylock), my favorite artist (Phil Foglio), and one of my favorite musical stylists (Tom Smith) which I won't stop talking about. It's only a couple of weeks away. Who'd have thought that I'd be excited about going to Chicago in November? There's an article later which'll talk more specifics.

This issue's a little different because it's coming out at almost the exact same time as Journey Planet, the other zine that James Bacon and I do with Claire Brialey. We've put together an issue dedicated to Alternate History. I love Alternate History, and that's where many of the roots of Steampunk live, you know. I take a look at an old-



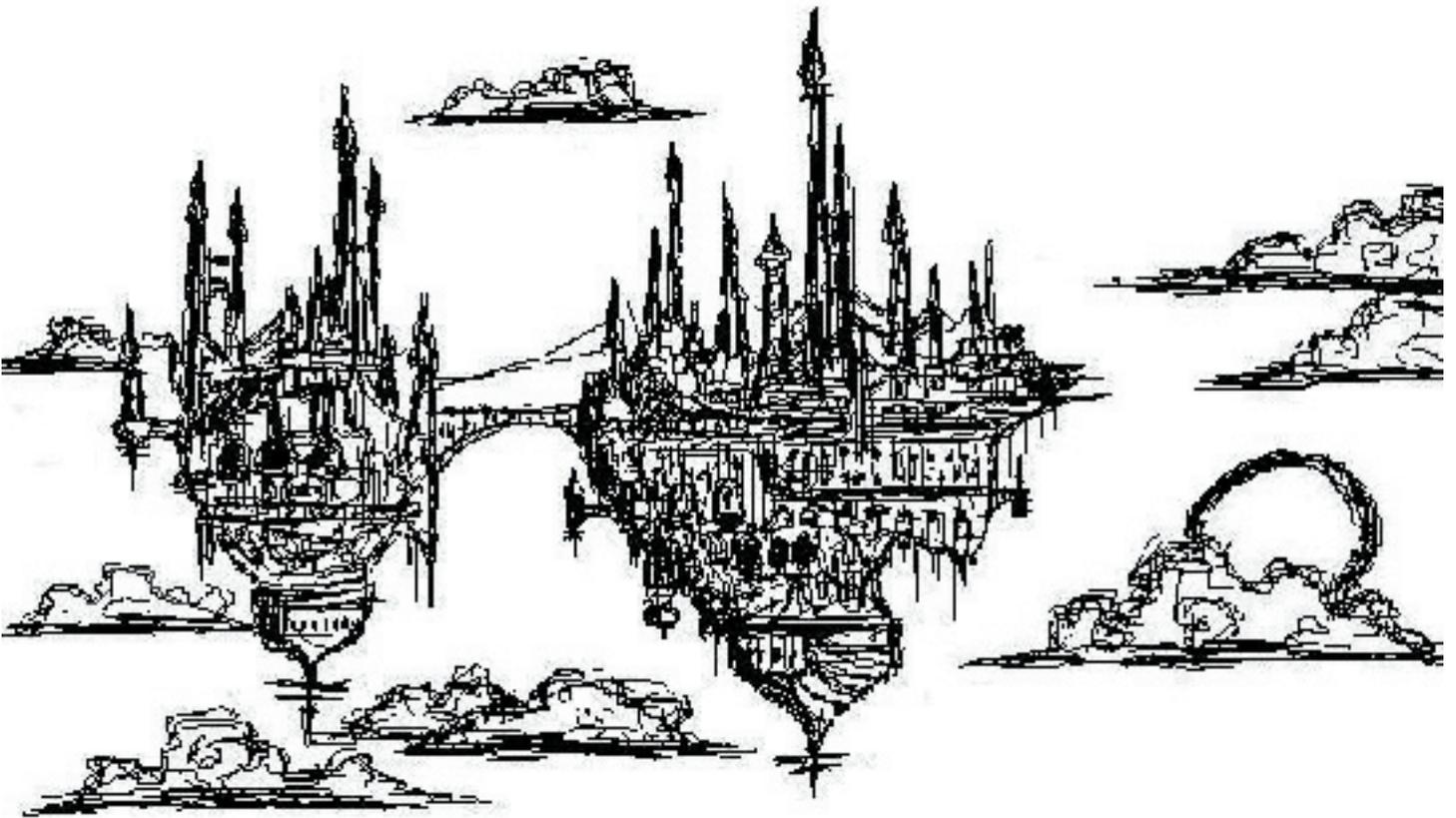
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timey radio show called Stroke of Fate.

There haven't been a lot of Steampunk radio dramas, which is a shame. It's something that I'd be very much into. There are a few very good steampunk podcasts that have done dramatic presentations (I'm thinking of Steampunk Spectacular as an example) and there are some audiobooks that would certainly qualify. It's an area where I think someone should get to workin' on that. Perhaps at a con where there's a Steampunk theme would be a good time for an audio drama. I was at Baycon where they did a 1930s version of War of the Worlds which would almost qualify. It's something to think about. Perhaps there needs to be more dramatic Steampunk in the world. Could be, no?

What's this issue got? Well, there's an interview with The Unextraordinary Gentlemen, a look at one of the early Steampunk pieces that's far too much over-looked: The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer, and a look at some Steampunk novels that have been much over-looked. A look at SteamCon (which is why this is late!) and so much more!

It's odd, but even when I think that the next issue is going to be smaller, it turns out to be just as big. Maybe that says how the Steampunk movement is growing. Either that, or we're just lucky and have loquacious writers sending us stuff!



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## REVIEWED: THE MYSTERIOUS GEOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATIONS OF JASPER MORELLO

It is difficult to define what the perfect Steampunk movie would be. Everytime we've been given a Steampunk universe on screen, we're disappointed with what we get. The graphics are good, but the story is placed into the background. The story may be good but everything seems like a



shadow puppet in comparison to real story-telling. One of the simplest things in the world is to deny yourself some mode and focus on the other aspects of the piece. One of the greatest examples of this in recent history was *The Mysterious Geographical Explorations of Jasper Morello*.

I first encountered it as I was watching short films in 2004 for Cinequest. I had seen at least 20 films that afternoon, and I came across Jasper Morello, a film with a strange name from Australia. I turned it on and it was amazing. For 20+ minutes, I was riveted. There's no other world for it. I was watching on my computer and I had to pull it closer and closer as it was going on. My nose was practically moving the liquid crystal around by the time it was over. I was deeply drawn in.

The film has a wonderful premise: Jasper Morello is a navigator of airships who had a bad time on his last assignment. He is given his first assignment in three months by the Academy, which vexes Captain Griswald, who would rather not have Mr. Morello on-board. The reason for this expedition is being led by Dr. Claude Belgon, who is a controversial



scientist of the Academy. Belgon is making a study to try and save the city of Morello's residence where, of late, a plague has taken hold. This makes Morello even more troubled as his wife is a nurse, surrounded by those with the disease. This concept alone would be enough to drive a story, but it is only a part of the magnificence that is the film.

The film rolls through situations that are perilous and bring you along in an almost desperate way. There's desperation in the trip, which is only compounded when the crew must abandon ship and come onto a new ship. There's the situation back in town and it's worsening, as we learn from Morello's aether communications with his wife Amelia.

The story turns even darker when a creature which might have the power

BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

to end the plague is captured. This leads to a terrible series of events that leads us to our ending. It's amazing to see, particularly when you consider the weight of the story and all the connections that can be found outside of the text of the film.

The true power of *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello* is the aesthetic. The visuals here are astounding. The backgrounds are the most thoroughly imagined of any Steampunk-type film I've ever seen. This is not London shrouded in fog where airships dwell, nor the Old West tested by the existence of a giant mechanical spider. This is a complete vision brought from a mind that seems untethered to prior art.



Or at least to the real world.

We see an ultimately industrial world, the kind that seems influenced by everything from the Brothers Quay to Albert Robida. The airships are powerful ships that you might see in the works of Robenet in the 1880s. There is influence that drips from these pieces, but they still have a freshness that comes from an original take on

the sensibilities of the artists.

The characters are perhaps the most remarkable creation. They are not presented as fully drawn, they are mostly shadow puppets. You get some details, buttons on a shirt for example, but mostly, it is in silhouette that we see our characters. This makes the few moments when we encounter details more powerful, unnerving even. When you become accustomed to living a world without detail, it becomes terrifying to see the lines of a face. It is beautifully realized, these shadow characters. Instantly, one of my favorite silent cartoons, *The Original Movie*, which was also told in all silhouette. It's a lovely take, an amazing way to go about the storytelling, by depriving us of one distraction to focus us laser-like on the rest of the piece.

You can see *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello* on YouTube, though I'd suggest buying the set from

<http://www.jaspermorello.com/gazette/>. You will not be disappointed, and it may just

open your eyes to the possibilities presented by short films and how Steampunk can actually work both off the page and away from costumes. It will affect you, and as you come to the conclusion that you're fairly certain is not the best of all possible worlds, you may discover that it's the only kind of ending that makes sense in a world that is quite truly wonderful.





## INTERVIEW- THE UNEXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN

*The Unextraordinary Gentlemen were one of the three bands that I instantly wanted to interview when I started thinking about doing Exhibition Hall. They've played some very well-received shows all over the place, and while I've never managed to see them, I've heard nothing but good things. about their shows. I first came across them on the Clockwork Caberet podcast. I'm happy to say that they were kind enough to answer a series of questions I sent via eMail. You should also check out [www.unextraordinarygentlemen.com/](http://www.unextraordinarygentlemen.com/) or*

*through their MySpace for more info.*

**Christopher J Garcia-** *OK, here we go! I gotta start by saying that I'm a big fan of your stuff. It reminds me of the music I always wished existed when I was in College back in the mid-1990s. Just had to put that out there. Tell me about how y'all found each other and where the seed of the Unextraordinary Gentlemen was first planted?*

**Schreeck:** Why, we were invited to Professor Mangrove's Disappearing Dinner Party and eventually wound up in the here and now, of course!

**Richard:** Schreeck and I met at a local karaoke club, I was impressed with his visual style and dynamic vocals. He wasn't afraid to take chances, and would often reinterpret the vocal lines just to make things interesting. He inspired me to start a band with him and luckily he was interested.

I met J. a couple of times before at my old band's (Sex with Lurch), shows as well as she helped me troubleshoot some music software I was just getting started with. She's also in a band called Demonika & the Darklings where she also plays violin and theremin. When the time came for UXG to start playing our shows live, I really wanted a violin onstage with us, and I remembered her and (lucky again) she was interested.

The band's concept came from a long process of trading ideas back and forth between me and Schreeck, as well being limited to the tools we had access to. I loved playing bass and could adequately program some keyboards and a drum machine to provide a musical backdrop with, as well as craft demos. We wanted to do this kind of lo-fi post-punk/art punk/synth-pop blending, based on influences we shared. We called the project "Time Bandits", based on Terry Gilliam's movie, and planned on dressing up in mismatched period clothing. It was going to be a bit sillier than we are now.

But there were already a few bands with that name, so we went with "Unextraordinary Gentlemen", a nod to Alan Moore/Kevin O'Neill's "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" graphic novel series which had inspired me to read a lot of Victorian fiction that it referenced. That then gave us the idea to go a more storytelling/narrative route with the vocals and lyrics similar to Nick Cave and Tom Waits, but using writers such as H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, Charles Dickens, Alan Moore, etc. as influences. We wanted to create characters and an alternate world, a mixture of mostly Victorian London crossed with a smidgen of the American Old West. We even cast ourselves as characters, and the band became a kind of time traveling pub band that sang stories about this world and its inhabitants.

That's the short version anyway, heh.

**J.Frances:** I was thrilled when they asked me to play with them! My band had just

voted out our laptop and I was a little bummed. I was happy to still get to work with electronic elements in this band. I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to pull off being in both bands but it's been working out fine, keeping me busy, and having a good time!

**CJG- *I must know more about the Museum of Information that you so hauntingly allude to on your website.***

**Schreeck:** Haunting is an appropriate tag for it. A distantly recent personal excursion to parts northwards revealed the former M.O.I. Building is now a software development company. I was treated to a fantastic coffee by Kris Grey, who was extremely anxious to meet me. He could have just seen us play a show if he came down to L.A.! Unfortunately, I cannot really talk about what we, er, talked about. Let's just say there are forces in Seattle that we would be best as a band to stay well clear of. Space/time continuum and all that, you understand. There. Was that vague enough for you? (laughs)

**CJG- *Let's talk a bit about the LA Art-wave scene. I'm not overly familiar with it (other than the band My Barbarian, whose existence makes me glad that there's a MySpace), but tell me how a group such as the Unextraordinary Gentlemen could form out of it.***

**Schreeck:** We're not really familiar with it either. Ha! Artwave is just a self-label that sounded right to us. Like Neo-Victorian Synthpunk or Post-Gothic or whatever else you feel like calling us to our faces.

**Richard:** Yeah, I don't know if we are really part of any one scene here in L.A., we tend to hang out and play with the goth, post-punk, dark cabaret type bands as well as burlesque shows and general artistic events/clubs. We get steampunk gigs, but so far those have been out-of-town.

**CJG- *Walk me through the process of y'all creating a new piece. Who does what and how do you take a particular piece from rough start to finished piece (or is a piece ever really finished for y'all)?***

**Schreeck:** A song is pretty much "official" once it's recorded and released, of course - though it may still evolve on a smaller scale in subsequent live shows. New stuff can come from hours of vocal and keyboard noodling betwixt me and the Professor or something random like J. Frances tuning her violin. We are easily inspired. So far.

**Richard:** Schreeck keeps a notebook of lyrics that he



**YOU CAN SEE THE UNEXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN  
AT THE STORK CLUB IN OAKLAND ON NOVEMBER 13TH!**

constantly adds to, and I keep a file on my computer of a lot of musical snippets or half-baked instrumentals. We bounce ideas back and forth, among the three of us, and tend to jump around to different songs instead of just completing one at a time. Schreeck's lyrics will inspire me to mold the music in a different way or the music I'm playing for him might cause him to change the lyrics. We are conceptual songwriters so we try to use the right sounds for each song, set the right mood, make it more complex/less complex, depending on the material. For instance, "Ants Under Glass" is a song about giant machines causing havoc, so it goes really epic and over-the-top, but something like "Chaser", where it's just a bunch of drunks at a bar, we keep it simple.

It's hard to know when to stop, as you could keep adding stuff, subtracting stuff, rearranging stuff forever, but at some point you have to stop and record it. Sometimes I find if you sit on a song too long, it becomes stale or not as cool as the initial few hours spent on it. Or I'll notice myself getting too crazy with musical ideas and the initial charm is lost, so I pull back. I like to keep things simple and catchy, with the vocals and lyrics the main spotlight. We also try to test drive songs we are working on live, even when they aren't done yet, just to get a feel for them, what works, what doesn't.

***CJG- Tell me about your fans. A group with as diverse a sound as y'all must attract all kinds of folks. What does the crowd of one of your shows look like?***

**Schreeck:** Lately, it's been the Steampunk crowd and more obviously so than in the past as costumes and, especially, accessorizing, becomes more elaborate. We also have some goths, from which Steampunk arguably sprang (though I hold the opinion that the public face of this alternative culture had its roots in San Francisco and the Burning Man Festival in Nevada), some old school punks, cabaret performers, weirdos, criminals, and Mom. Gator McMurder, who helps us record and mix our recordings, is in a gothabilly band called the Coffin Draggers and he's a big fan, too.

***CJG- This is a strange one: I love that you call your sequencer The Indifference Engine (which is even funnier as I'm writing these questions while listening to your music within earshot of the Computer History Museum's display of the reconstruction of the Babbage Difference Engine!) and I can see how it is a significant part of your sound. What technologies, musical or otherwise, have influenced your music the most?***

**Schreeck:** Richard has informed me that our sound lies somewhere between the Dickensian Disney stylings of the movie "Oliver!" and the dark dirge disturbia (yay, alliteration!) of "Repo! : The Genetic Opera". Having seen neither of those films, I suspect the answer has something to do with exclamation points.

**Richard:** Well, as far as technology goes, mostly we are inspired by whatever came about in Victorian speculative fiction. The Indifference Engine is our orchestrion, our "character" for our laptop, and I try to program it to play stuff in a mechanical way. The



influence of industrial and other types of electronic music helps a lot with that. I try to have the piano parts sound like a player piano, I keep the choice of keyboard patches down to orchestra stuff mostly, like string and brass instruments, but on our more “flight of fancy” stuff there will be choir effects and other weird noises that fit the mood and theme. I avoid toms and drum rolls with the drum machine, nothing too complicated, just simple and catchy. A lot of big beat stuff like a marching band.

**J. Frances:** I’ve always played my violin as if I was playing keyboards so I fit in very nicely with the Gentlemen’s plans.

**CJG- A literary question: what sorts of writing inspires the lyrics the most? I was so impressed with the way songs like “Open Arms, Empty Air” work both as songs and even on paper as stories.**

**Schreeck:** I am inspired mostly by stories and poems by Poe, Kipling, Wells, and other Victorian authors with the occasional Lovecraft thrown in. Others. Cinema and still images as well. Old stories of mine that finally have a home. I’m very happy to hear that they work as bits of stories because that is the intent. As a matter of fact, I have a handful of long-form prose pieces waiting unformed in the wings, waiting for their chance behind the footlights.

**Richard:** Although I don’t have a direct hand with the lyrics, I feed movies and books that inspire me to Schreeck, sometimes I have general ideas “Let’s make a song about this subject.”, but it’s all him when it comes down to it.

**J. Frances:** Schreeck is over-flowing with lyrics and stories. Seriously. They come to him constantly and I have no idea how he does it. He’s brilliant.

**CJG- Finally: Plug Away! What’s next for the Unextraordinary Gentlemen?**

**Richard:** We are in the midst of writing new songs, hopefully we’ll have something to show for it by the end of 2009. Always check [www.unextraordinarygentlemen.com](http://www.unextraordinarygentlemen.com) where you can also sign up on our email list to keep up-to-date on us if you don’t have a MySpace or Facebook page.

**J.Frances:** Yes, expect more good stuff from us in the near future. We are working diligently on our new songs and they compliment our previously released songs. Also we’re always plotting and planning our escape and travels to other cities for performances. Hopefully there will be some festivals and events that we get to participate in the next year. So keep a look-out for us!

**Schreeck:** I’m tempted to say “The World!!” and laugh maniacally but that feels like a punch in the gut because of my personal beliefs concerning so-called Time Travel. My theory has us committing acts of cosmicide every time we do our little ten-year-forward escapades. Oops. I’ve said too much! It’s all lies! My god, it’s full of stars and garters! Interview over.

P.S. : I’m telling you- it’s all about the exclamation marks.



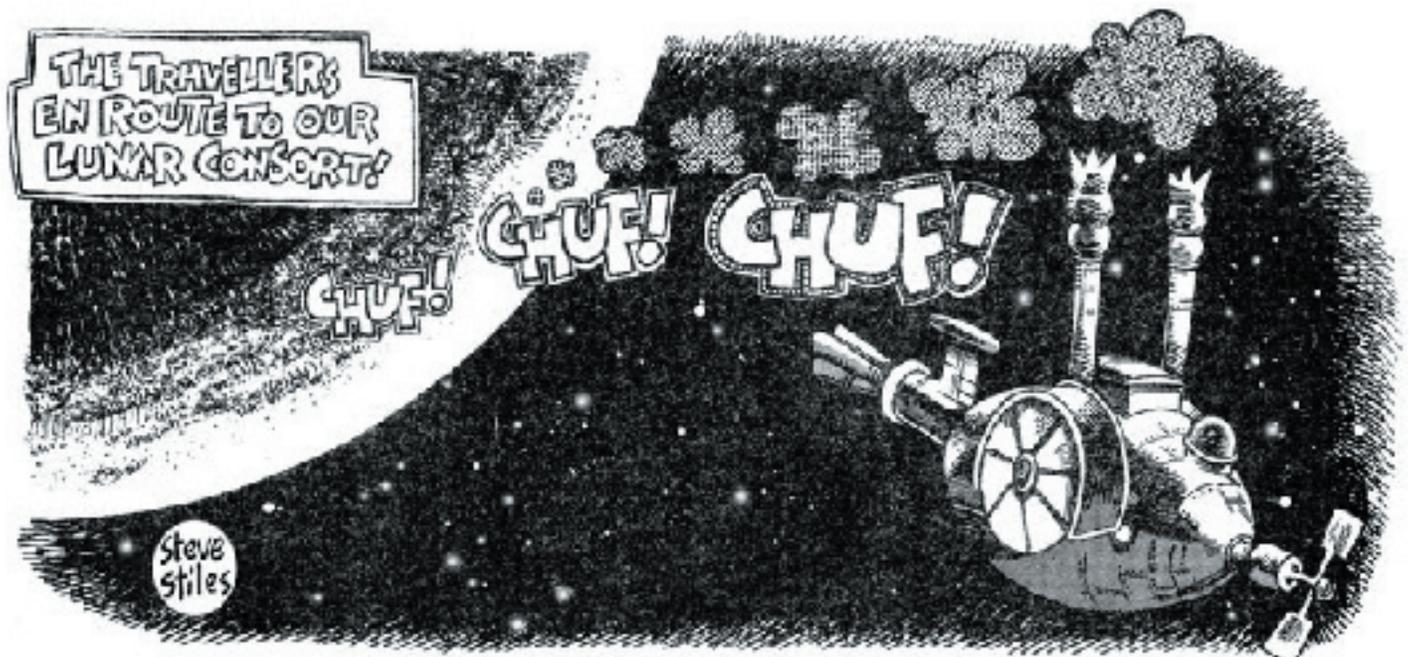
# A LONG STRANGE TRIP: THE ADVENTURES OF PROFESSOR THINTWHISTLE AND HIS INCREDIBLE AETHER FLYER

There is a lacuna in the literary memory of many steampunk fans. There is the thought that after Verne and Welles, there was nothing until *The Difference Engine* broke on the scene. This ignores some of the finest examples of what we would call Steampunk today. Keith Laumer's *Imperium* novels, the works of Powers, Jeter and Blaylock and even the tv series *Wild, Wild West* all happened in that slack between the tent poles. One of the pieces that happened in that period was a novel called *Into the Aether* by Richard Lupoff. But that is not the original concept for the material that ended up as *Into the Aether*. It was originally conceived as an illustrated piece, either a comic strip or a graphic novel. And in the early 1990s, that's what it became.

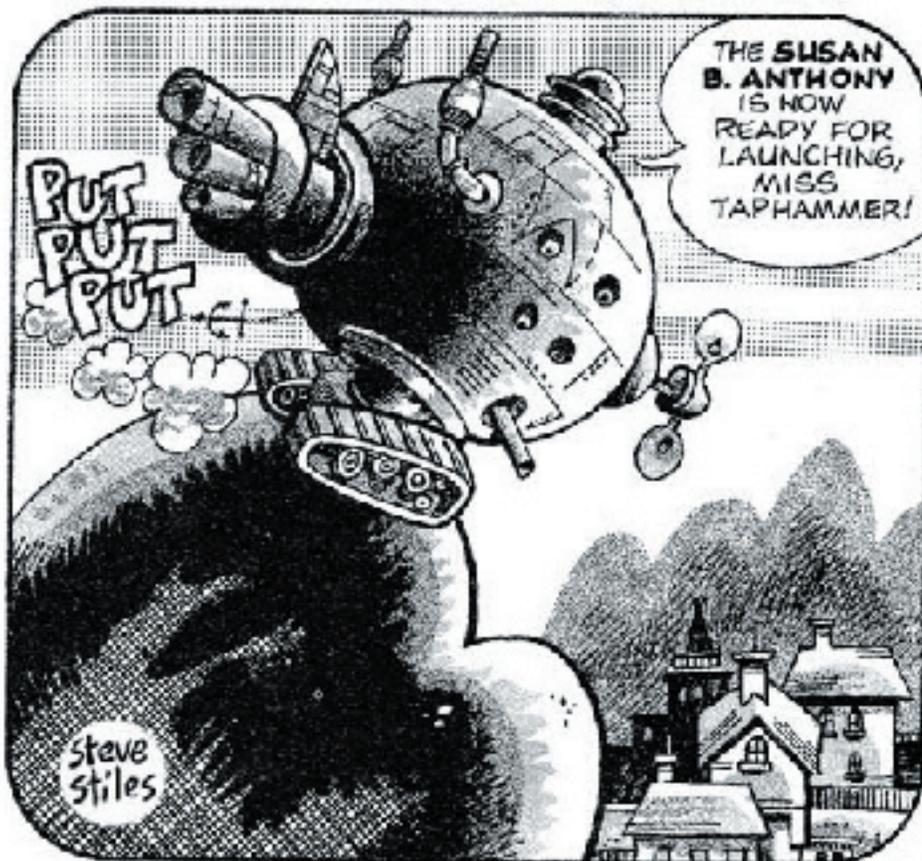
According to the last page of the 1991 edition of *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer*, it started at the 1966 WorldCon in Cleveland where Lee Hoffman, Dick and Pat Lupoff, and cartoonist Steve Stiles were sitting at a Chinese restaurant talking about those strange sciencefiction novels published in the two decades on either side of the turn of the twentieth century. There were hundreds of whacky pieces, including some very entertaining metaphysical journeys that are hard to come by these days. This talk planted the seed in the mind of Lupoff and Stiles, and it wasn't much more than a few months before Lupoff was writing the scripts and Stiles was drawing the strips which appeared in the fanzine *Horib*. About 16 pages appeared over the run.

The story is simple to explain, a Professor, his student and his manservant all hop into a coal-powered spaceship and they end up flying into the breast of a giant woman. There's also a sub-plot of espionage and treachery and another subplot of one of Professor Thintwhistle's colleagues coming after him. They go on a mystical journey which is an absolute blast. There's some deep racial satire that may raise some eyebrows.

Lupoff and Stiles shuttled the piece around, trying to get someone to publish it as a strip or a graphic novel, but alas, it doesn't happen. Something else happens. Dell Books comes to Lupoff and offers to publish the story as a novel. In 1974, *Into the Aether* is published and is well-received. At that point, there's a bit of a pause.



BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA, ART BY STEVE STILES



In 1979, Ted White, legendary fan and editor of *Heavy Metal* at the time, asked if Stiles could recreate the comic strip version in the pages of the magazine. White wanted to recreate and then also incorporate some of the material from the novel. Stiles wasn't comfortable doing the incorporation of the new stuff, so he asks Lupoff to come aboard and that brings it all off. *Heavy Metal* ran pieces from February to December, 1979.

The Fantagraphics version was released in 1991, the first to release the story as a 64-page graphic novel. It's an amazing piece of work. There's an introduction from Neil Gaiman, who was

probably the biggest thing going on at the moment since he was doing a little comic book called *Sandman* at the time. The highlight is actually the work that had been 25 years in the making. The art is classic Steve Stiles, lovely cartoons with his gorgeous line and an amazing density and weight to every character. It took me years to really get Steve's work, but had I been exposed to this years earlier, I instantly would have come to it. Lupoff's script is remarkable, beautifully nuanced and the retro-attitude is both poked fun of and worked with to give an amazingly entertaining story. What perhaps most impressed me is the cross-talk. At times, Stiles art carries the tone and mood, and there are other moments where Lupoff's text pushes through. Characters work back and forth between the text and the art, with each strengthening the work of the other. I can say that you seldom see a writer-artist combination that seems to play with the back and forth as well. It's part of what makes this an amazing read.

The story is comical, but certainly not for kids. It actually has a combination of sexiness and gosh-wow, which at first seem like they wouldn't go along, but it's pretty spectacular. There are moments where I, with my typically over-sensitive nose to racial content, was worried about some of the portrayals, only to have it all turn on me and I finally got what they were going for and the entire feeling of the piece really snapped into place solid. It was a nice trick that a lot of writers could not have pulled off nearly as well.

It's not easy to get your hands on *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer*, I had to buy mine off of eBay, and it's not easy to get a hold of *Into the Aether* either, but both can be sought out. You'll be rewarded for your efforts.

**NEXT MONTH'S INTERVIEW WILL BE WITH THE CREATORS OF  
PROFESSOR THINTWHISTLE AND COMPANY:  
WRITER RICHARD LUPOFF AND ARTIST STEVE STILES!**

# STEAMCON 2009: THE DEBUT

We got to the hotel, checked into the room, grabbed the elevator up to the fourth floor, dropped our stuff in the room and opened the curtains and looked down into the beautiful atrium with its Tlingit theme and saw a sea of humanity snaking in a queue around the pool. A quick trip to Twitter gave us the words of Espana Sheriff: there was a line for reg that she'd been in for more than 2 hours.

That's right, there was a 2+ hour line.

I was lucky, I was speaking so I simply went to the Green Room, got my badge and then tried to get Linda's, which wasn't there.

"Check pre-reg." the girl in the Green Room said, and thus, our con started.

Steam-Con was held at the Seattle Airport Marriott, a hotel built around an atrium with a lovely pool and wood everywhere. It's got some lovely programming areas, though the con apparently didn't have all of it and so spaces weren't ideal. In fact, it may have been something else: the con may have actually been too big for the facility. I am told that they were thinking it would be 500 attendees and then things were stretched outward towards 1200, and then 1300. That's a bit much for the place, but the real problem is that when you have that many people, some of the events become difficult to manage. They'd outgrown their hotel the first year. A rare problem.



The first sign of this was when the tickets for the couture tea and the Abney Park concert sold out well ahead of time. Probably less than half of those who came got to go to the shows, which is sad since they were the top draws to the convention in a way. That was one of the successes of Steam-Powered: everyone could go to the concert and that was a wonderful thing.

Now, you may think this would point to the con being a failure, but that is absolutely not the case, and largely the reason for that is the community, and that makes me very happy as to the

future of the SteamPunk community.

We get Linda's badge, which takes another half-hour or so, and then head to eat at the restaurant. It's a lot like the Coffee Garden at the San Jose DoubleTree, only glassed in. You can still see everyone as they walk by, which makes it a great spot for folks walking by in their magnificent costumes. It also has one major difference from the Coffee Garden: the food is magnificent. Linda's salad had delicious walnuts and apples, and my Steak Sammich is so good I immediately think of how many superlatives my Yelp! review is going to contain. The service is a tad slow because of the number of people in costumes which the servers are absolutely amazed by.

Tim Powers, my favorite writer and the Writer GoH, notices us and comes over to chat. Tim's a great guy and we chat a bunch throughout the con. There aren't all that many folks who are part of the Science Fiction community at the con, so those of us seem to be the gathering together, which is nice.

We start to do a walk-around of the facility and run into Espana, who has been in line since 10am. It is nearly 2. It's crazy. There weren't enough computers or people



operating them. I notice that after 1, Mary Kay Kare has joined in to help and the line moves faster. Always good to see things pick up.

Linda and I head into the Vendor's Room, which is actually awesome for Linda, as there are costume pieces and hats and such, but I'm disappointed because there are few book sellers. There are the Foglios, who I chat with and talk about how we're both the Artist GoHs at WindyCon. When I mention that the con's three weeks away, Phil does a comic panic bit, which is always entertaining. The best of the vendors is House of Wormwood, makers of fine hats. Habadashers, unless there's a specific term for makers of women's hats. Linda tries on almost all the hats, which are lovely and feature pieces such as vacuum tubes, old British coins and images of animals from Victorian textbooks. Linda finds one that is absolutely lovely, though she has to try it on in various ways, so I head off to see the panel about Victorian London as Setting for Steampunk. Now, there's a lot to be said for London as a setting,

but it's also something of a SP cliché. The panel was Robin Hobb, a great writer from the Northwest, Caitlin Kittridge, who I thought was an American Girl doll, but is actually a lovely young author of Fantasy who is about to release a Steampunk novel, and of course, Tim Powers. They make some very good points, and Tim is always deeply thoughtful and hilarious. The point of London as center for Steampunk novels is manifold, but I've always thought that it was a part of the fact that it was the first era with photographs and moving pictures and that Victorians were packrats (and the gaudy busyness of their houses is evidence) who also had a jones for recording things. As Tim pointed out, London is also a shorthand for all the fiction set in London prior to whatever you'd write. You could simply say 'Whitehall, Walthamstow, Fleet Street' and instantly you've set up the entire mood and tone. It's a good point.

After the panel, I head over to see a presentation by Exhibition Hall's own Mike Perschon. He was presenting his lecture entitled *Finding Nemo: Verne's Anti-hero as Original Steampunk*, which was one of the highlights of the Eaton Conference back in March. It's a great piece that covers Nemo as the figure of Verne that really defines much. It also seems that Nemo is also the figure who receives the worst translations. It's a great Panel and Mike's a good guy, so it's always good to see his speaking.

After that, Linda and I head off and discover that while the hotel is really nice and the folk around are incredible and all psyched to be there, we're both tired. Linda heads up to the room to take a nap, but I'm more interested in looking through the Art Show, which is a form of relaxation for me compared to my normal running around. It's a small art show, but there's some awesome stuff, especially the works of Porkshanks and Myke. Sarah Dungan's work is also fantastic, watercolors that are wonderfully set and give off a feeling

of a Steampunk Saturday Evening Post. They're awesome pieces. I walk through, enjoying the stuff, and then head into the Vendor's Room again. I run into some friends like Merv and Judith, and Jay Lake. It's always good to have folks around.

I head back to the room and Lind and I watch a bit of Friday Night SmackDown! It's not a convention unless I somehow manage to watch a little wrestling. It was good stuff, too. We get ready and head down to a reception in the Art Show. It's all the same art I'd been wandering through, but some of the artists are there and there's wine. Red Zeppelin Wine. It's not particularly good, but the cheese and cracker plates are delightful. Linda and I chat with Mike some more, and I start seeing the need to ask for permission to run some of the art in this fine rag. The stuff is just so good. As always, there are people who you'd love to see with stuff in the show missing, but what can you do?

We leave the reception and then head to the restaurant, where I have an exceptional pork chop and Linda's halibut fish and chips were really good. I was loving this place hard and wondering what I would do for food when I was gone...

After we finished, we joined Mike, his wife and a couple of further Canadians for drinks. Well, I didn't have anything to drink, I would have fallen asleep right there in the armchair if I had, but the conversation was lively, especially about the need for a hanging animal head somewhere in the wood and rock lobby. The size of it to compete with the rest of the elements would have been massive. Mike recommended a stuffed and mounted Balrog. That might just have fit the bill.

We retired about 11 and there was a Star Trek: The Next Generation episode on.



It was the one that introduced the Trill to the Trekverse, so we watched it all the way through.

Saturday morning, up early and fresh from 8 hours of sleep. Always a good thing. We headed to hear Girl Genius Radio Theatre. The Foglios and friends did a couple of entire story arcs in complete dramatic voice presentation. It was a lot of fun, especially Kaija Foglio, who played Agatha Heterodyne with manic and delightful zest! The second adventure, Sleeping Clank, was an absolute blast, especially with Phil playing a determined construct fully aware of its duty to its Mistress...even though she didn't remember creating it.

After that, Paul Guinan was presenting his creation Boilerplate in the large panel room where Girl Genius had been. I wasn't particularly interested, but there was a History of Steam Panel going on. Sadly, the room was stuffed to the gills, so I headed up to the room to type this report. It worked out, I think. There was another line for registration and as I was walking back to the room, they were just posting a sign which said that Day passes were sold out. That's a shame, as there looked to be a fair number turned away, but it was a plus also. I headed to the Vendor's Room when I discovered a bouncer at the door. The room was at capacity. That's both a good and a bad sign. When you're turning people away from your Vendor's Room, it means that the place is packed and you can imagine that big sales are going on inside. On the other hand, it also means that there are so many people inside that others who paid their membership aren't getting to go and may even be discouraged from trying again later. This may all point to the con being a victim of its own success. As Yogi Berra said: "no one goes there anymore, it's too crowded."

I headed back into the Guinan panel and sat and listened for a while about the theory behind the Boilerplate book and how he plays with history. It's a good thing. Mike was the moderator, so Linda and I headed off with Mike for lunch to discuss all things Steampunk and so on. It's always good to get to eat with peoples who have a similar concept of appreciation that you do.

Lunch was the restaurant again. So good food.

I headed off to prepare for my panel and Linda went to the Vendor's Room, which is dangerous. Usually I am there to keep Linda from going off the rails and buying everything. I headed into a well-stocked Green Room and started writing again and preparing for my first presentation. I was walking around a bit and headed up to my room again to make sure I had everything. I then headed back down as I noticed it was 5 minutes until my panel. I hopped in the elevator with a trio of folks. They mentioned that they were on the way to the Olympia room. That's where my panel was. At least I'd have three people there. I'm used to doing panel with only a few people in attendance.

This was not the case.



When I got there, the room was already packed to the gills. There were people standing, every seat was taken and there were people waiting outside the door. I had to make my way to the front and when I got there, it was on. I set up my computer and then it was time for Those Whacky Victorians, the panel that took a look at Victorian exhibitions and the strange inventions. I actually did not expect it to be a popular panel, and it turned out to work beautifully. I went right into the panel.

They were a great audience.

I got laughs for little gags, and I actually managed to get them to do a laugh where I actually had to stop and wait for it all to die down. Sadly, I had less information than I thought and it turned out that it was only a 30 minute panel. I really think that the topic deserves a good presentation, so I'm going to keep working on it until I get it right. Who knows, maybe it'll be WorldCon 2029 where I finally do the definitive version.

After that, about ½ the audience stayed behind. This was odd. I was sitting up front, since I was on the next panel in the Olympia room, so I had to wait. I asked the room if they had a panel topic, and they did not, so I fired up Exhibition Hall and showed issue 2 and a preview of issue 3 while we were waiting. It was a nice way to get the name of the zine out there.

Jay Lake is insane, but we knew that. He did tell me about Air Loom Gang. The

panel suffered from a lack of my ability to moderate. I sort of pitched a beginning-middle-late time frame concept, but we hadn't prepared for it. We covered a lot of the best stuff from the old, I passed around The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer, which is probably being reprinted soon! There were a few pieces



that I hadn't heard about. Jay was funny, and Liz Gorinsky and Caitlin Kittridge were both great. The room was absolutely packed. That's a plus of all the people.

After that, I was riding the slide down that follows speaking to crowded and interested rooms. I headed to the Green Room, which had amazing food, including homemade shortbread and truffles that were amazing. You gotta love it.

After that, I went to find Linda, who was at the Tim Powers talk. I would have loved to have stayed, but I really wanted to see Unwoman who was playing at the same time at the Cabaret. The day-long Cabaret was a great idea, giving folks who might not be able to make it to the big Airship Invasion concert a shot at hearing them at least a little. They made sure that almost everyone got an opportunity to see the bands that were playing. Abney Park did a hugely popular acoustic sing-along for folks, and Unwoman was at the Cabaret, playing piano instead of Cello like she would be at the Invasion.

It was amazing.

I really love Unwoman's voice, like a float of absinthe at the top of a champagne flute. Almost Operatic, sweet but tinged with a bitterness that flies in with lyric. I was



enchanted. She did a cover of an Amanda Palmer song (I can't remember the name, sadly) but her take was to give it strength in the breath and not the gritty variance that Amanda specializes in. I watched three songs and then she mentioned that she was offering a USB drive with all her music on it for 30 bucks. She then, very wisely, mentioned that she was playing a song that she would be doing at the Invasion, so I ran to the ATM, got money and as I got back, her set was wrapping up. No matter, it was a fantastic purchase and I loaded it onto my machine as soon as I got back to the room.

I went back to the room, dropped everything off, and headed down to meet Linda at the Powers thing, we

got together and headed to the restaurant.

After that, it was time for Girl Genius Radio Theatre. While we were at the restaurant, Linda mentioned that she had a sudden craving for Starburst. I mentioned that I'd been OUTSIDE, which never happens during cons, and I'd seen a 7-11. She didn't believe me. We headed over to the Girl Genius Radio Theatre, where my panel would follow in the same room, and the place was packed, but there was a single seat by the door. Linda took the chair and I ran off to gather stuff. I first went up to the room to get Declare, the Tim Powers book that Linda's co-worker wanted to get signed. I went up, grabbed my computer, the script for the Babbage talk and headed out, without Declare. I'm not sure why I forgot, but I did. I ran down to the room and handed them off to Linda, telling her that I forgot the book, but I had seen Tim signing in the lobby, so I'd get him to sign it on my way back. I headed back to the room, found the book and ran to where Tim had been signing and he was gone. Sorrow. I then headed over to Linda and handed her the book, saying that he wasn't there. I then headed out and across the street to the 7-11, where the Starburst dwell. I bought two packages and ran back to the room and handed them off to Linda. She smiled. That made it all worth it. The folk sitting around her were amused with my devotion.

I left and watched the line to get into the Airship Invasion. It was long. A very long line. It was a big part of this con.

I went back to the room and Phil Foglio called out "Is there anyone from the next panel?" I called back "Yes" in a meager voice. They then vacated the premises and about 40 people stayed behind to see the presentation on Charles Babbage and the Difference Engine. I admit, my take on Babbage and especially on Lovelace, may be a bit ungenerous, but really, the fact that they're presented about the founders of computing and programming really do vex me something fierce. The audience was smaller, and not nearly

as responsive as the ones from earlier in the day, but they were attentive and smart and I like those kinds of audiences. They did laugh at my comparison between Charles Babbage management style and American Car Companies. I ran slightly longer than I intended since I wanted everyone to be able to get to the Airship Invasion on time.

Linda and I headed back to the room for a bit and then we dropped things off, straightened ourselves up and then it was off to the show. When we got there, they were playing the music of Unwoman...or so I thought. Now, Unwoman is tiny. The local phrase is 'she's Jean bitty' in reference to the co-editor of Science Fiction San Francisco, Jean Martin, who is about 5 foot on the nose. Unwoman was playing her cello, so she was seated, and since the stage was only two or three feet off the ground, I couldn't see her at all. She played several songs, and though I was unable to see her playing, her voice and playing were lovely.

We were then treated to Vernian Process. I've only heard their remixes, but live, they turned out to be a pretty solid goth/punk/steam band. Sadly, the sound mix was off and they were too loud and a few people fled to the hallway where they could still hear the music but not have the deafening. I thought they were OK, and they provided a great contrast to both Unwoman (who actually played with them) and Abney Park.

I really like Abney, and I thought this was a pretty good showing from them, though Finn, who was the star of the performance I saw back at Steam-Powered, has left the group, which is sad. The new girl was really good though, but she didn't have the same presence. I'd say that the San Jose performance was more successful, but the overall show here was better than the total package from last year. The coherence and counterpoint of the bands worked better here.

At this point, as we were walking back, Linda and I started comparing the two Steampunk conventions. We both thought that Steam-Powered and Steam-Con shared the same spirit, and both were very good cons, but the facility was certainly better at Steam-con because it was larger, allowed for more programming options and had a fantastic restaurant. Steam-Con's programming was more varied, and there was a lot of it, but there was a slightly more personal feeling to the programming at Steam-Powered. The big win for Steam-Con was the site, while Steam-Powered certainly had the advantage of not having any major lines or the crowding that Steam-Con had, which is a good problem to have the first year. I'd say they were both on the same level. Steam-powered was the second best con I went to in 2008 (behind only CostumeCon) and Steam-Con is the second best con I've been to in 2009, behind only the Montreal WorldCon.

We went to bed and woke up early so we could catch Mike Perschon's talk about the



Steampunk Star Wars CGI challenge and the representation of known characters in a Steampunk mode. He dissected things so beautifully that I've got to get him to write it up for this fine publication. Here's an academic look at the sub-culture that is without parallel.

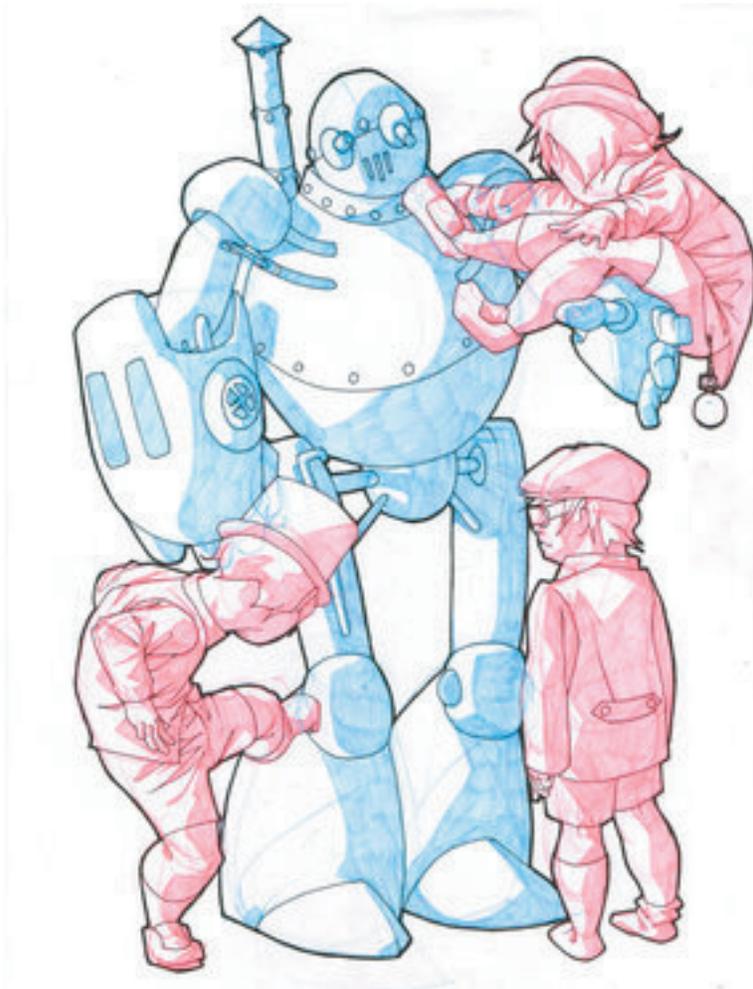
After that, I got myself back up to the room to do some writing and work on packing. I don't like flying in at the moment the con starts and flying out immediately after it ends, but that was exactly our itinerary for the weekend. We said goodbye to Mike Perschon and his wife and I briefly had a moment to say 'Be

seeing you' to Jay Lake and folks.

I headed off to my final panel, The Past the Never Was with Cheri Priest, who's book *Boneshaker* is the current hot thing among many of the Steampunk set. We meandered about Alternate History, Steampunk as a reaction, the literature and various methods of consideration of how history can and should be played with. I'm certainly of the belief that Alternate History really isn't a part of science fiction and fantasy, though it's under the umbrella of Speculative Fiction. In fact, I'd say it's the most speculative of the Speculative Fictions. This was another packed panel, I'm sure for Cheri and not myself. Of all the panels I did, only one was not standing room only, and that was the Babbage panel right before the concert, which probably would have been more packed if it had been at a different time, and even as it stood, it was a good turn-out.

We stuck around and saw some of the Hiss and Purr, which was strong. They are planning on doing it again for next year, at about the same time of year. Linda bought her membership already. I am hoping they'll ask me back to talk again because it was so much fun. Yeah, there were some problems, as they said in the Hiss and Purr, they'd out-grown their hotel the first year, but despite the lines, it was a great time and I can't think of another con that took off like this one in its first year. Gotta love it when these things work out.

Overall, and it's something that's difficult to review, the power of SteamCon was the availability of all that energy, all the people who truly love the Steam and come together to make an event truly memorable. I've only got this feeling a few times at cons, and SteamCon was positively soaking in it! There is a very hopeful feeling that I left with, one that tells me that this is a fandom on the rise. This must have been what the people leaving that first WorldCon in 1939 were feeling as they left Caravan Hall.



# THE CLOCKWORK CALIPHATE

Photographer J. Daniel Sawyer of Artistic Whispers attended the East Bay's first ever Steampunked Ottoman Empire evening on October 15<sup>th</sup>: *The Indescribable Delights of the Clockwork Caliphate*. The event, held at Oakland's magnificent Tanjia Moroccan Restaurant, was a Clockwork Salon Society fundraiser for the Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition, coming to the Bay Area in March 2010. Daniel was kind enough to submit a photo essay of his evening in the Caliph's tents...



The evening's host was the eponymous Clockwork Caliph, (played by Bill Roper), who held court with the masterminds of Nova Albion in the corner, affording him a view of all the evening's proceedings.

The Indescribable  
of the Delights  
Clockwork  
Caliphate



Steampunk regalia was the order of the evening - nearly all in attendance were in some form of customized neo-Victorian attire.



The Brunos, a local eclectic folk band, opened the evening with a rousing number, and then continued throughout the event to embroider the proceedings with their sonic exotica.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY J. DANIEL SAWYER OF ARTISTIC WHISPERS



**Many guests were fully accessorized - goggles, Steampunk jewelry, hats, gadgetry and silks were the order of the day.**



**Dinner was a complex, five course affair, beginning with a rich lentil soup, crusty loaves of house-baked bread, pickled vegetable appetizers, saffron chicken or savory vegetarian Bastilla pies wrapped in phyllo dough with crushed almonds and powdered sugar, and culminating in a choice of six delicious entrees: lamb skewers artfully served on an eggplant, chicken with lemon and olives or honey and prunes, salmon with vegetables, roast lamb and onion or vegetable tagines in earthenware... it was indeed a feast! Per Moroccan custom, all food in the establishment is eaten with the fingers and many guests chose to have theirs accompanied by a spectacular wine. Dessert was chunks of crisp watermelon served with fried bananas dribbled in honey and a sweetened Moroccan mint tea.**



**An hour or so in, dancer Amira Ariana of Tatseena Belly Dance, emerged - much to the delight of all who were not otherwise enraptured.**

**OCTOBER 15TH  
2009  
TANJIA MOROCCAN  
RESTAURANT**



**She began slowly, weaving a spell over the crowd to a languorous tune with a lovely North African beat.**



**After her first number, Amira (which means "Princess"), moved into a faster dance to a lively tune...**



**...jumping, turning...**



**...and finishing in a magnificent corkscrew**



**The evening was remarkably free of brandished weaponry, at least until she brought the swords out.**



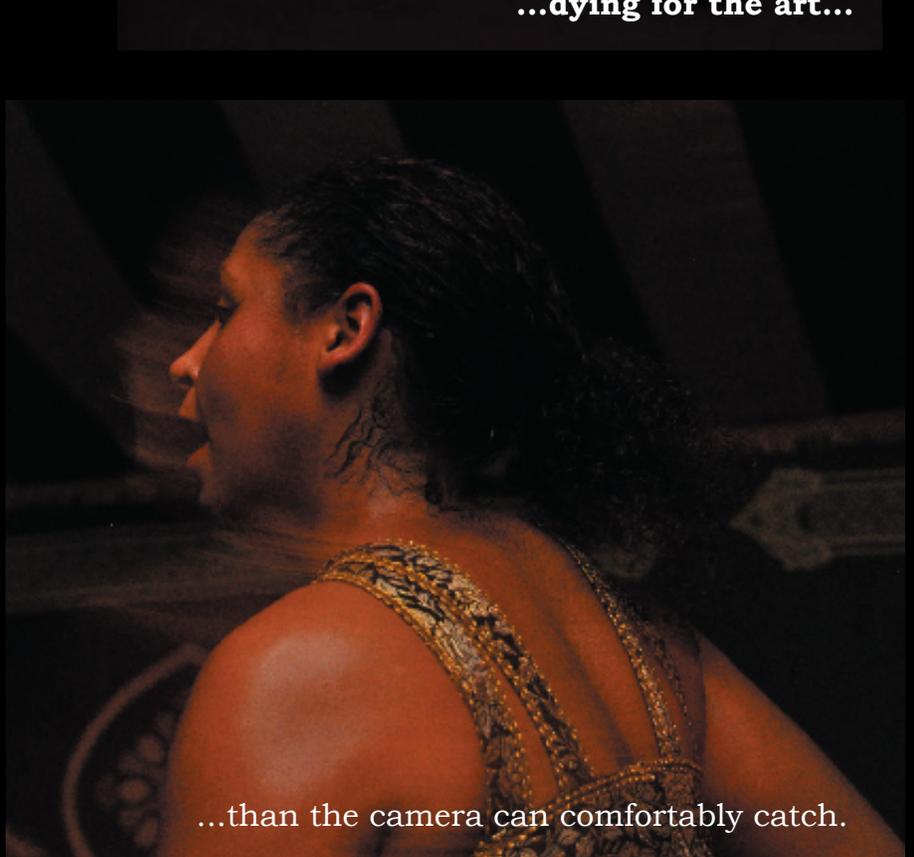
**Living on the Edge...**



**...dying for the art...**



**...dancing faster...**



**...than the camera can comfortably catch.**



**The Caliph relishes a rest from the excitement...**



**...and shares a drink with his court.**



**Amira Ariana did two separate shows - in the final solo act, she entered in pearls, chiffon, and a steampunked flat bowler hat and did her fastest number of the evening, before turning her eyes to the crowd.**



**The candles had burned halfway down by the end of the evening, leaving the stragglers lingering over empty dishes with broad smiles, looking forward to the next event staged by the fine folks at Nova Albion.**



**She enticed the Caliph to join her in the center of the tent and taught him a few basic moves.**



**In short order she had nearly the whole room lined up and moving to the music, at least up until people began falling down laughing at their inability to keep up with her.**



**The Caliph and his court enjoy the final moments of the dancer's impromptu lessons from the safety of their perch.**



**The dancer finished the evening with a magnificent flourish that left us all breathless, then disappeared leaving the rest of us to discuss the performance while the Brunos played a final tune.**

# VOX-HAUL & I

**We've got some notes on issue 1 to run, starting with this from Nick Ottens!**

Dear Sir!

Congratulations on the release of the first issue of "Exhibition Hall". It is always a pleasure to read a new steampunk publication however there is a peculiar statement in your magazine that I'd like to address: if you are under the impression that "Exhibition Hall" is the first steampunk e-zine, please know that there are at least two other steampunk online magazines out there: "SteamPunk Magazine" and my own "Gatehouse Gazette". It is the latter I'd like to talk with you about.

The "Gatehouse Gazette" (website at <http://www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse/gazette>) has been in publication for about a year and a half now with a 9th issue currently in development. We mostly feature essays and reviews with usually an interview in every issue as well. We look beyond steampunk however and focus also on dieselpunk (if you're not familiar with the term, please, feel free to visit my website, <http://www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse> in the "Home" section are several articles about the genre) and era film and events. We oppose the rather radical political agenda of our cousins over at "SteamPunk Magazine" but don't often feature much political content.

If you haven't read any of our issues, I hope you will, and I hope you'll enjoy them. If there's any way in which our two publications might be able to cooperate, please, I'm open to suggestions!

With kind regards,

Nick Ottens  
(Netherlands)



***It's great to hear from other folks in the Steam Zine Scene! I can not recommend y'all highly enough! Gatehouse Gazette is a fantastic publication and I'm still catching up with past issues (and re-catching up with Steampunk Magazine as well!) You're right, we're not the first Steampunk zine (I'd make an argument that Would That It Were was back in the 1990s), and I think we all have our own little niches that we cover.***

***There is a radical agenda in Steampunk Magazine, at least to a point, but I have to say that the quality of material they put out is high enough that I can overlook it most issues. You have some magnificent lay-out too! Plus, y'all cover Europe so much better than we can.***

***Here's to the explosion of Steampunk zines in the near future!***

***And then, on issue 2, is Mr. Lloyd Penney!***

Dear Chris, James and Ariane:

Thank you all kindly for the second issue of Exhibition Hall. Good to read there's been a lot of response to this fanzine. With lots of feedback and contributions comes a superior zine, and one that may be easy to edit.

I have not attended any Steampunk events lately...there's just no time. There's been

a couple of events with the Toronto group, and a number of them through the Hamilton group. However, we still have scheduled going to Astronomicon 2009 in Rochester for the Steampunk content there. I'd like to go to the next DragonCon, but unless we're well working by this coming summer...

I've seen ads for Continuum 5 in fanzines like Ethel the Aardvark, and thought that this might be an interesting convention to attend. If only it wasn't on the other side of the world. Not much mentioned on Steampunk, but this is something more and more people are discovering and enjoying. Now it's Dragoncon that seems to be the big Steampunk convention...whooathunkit?

The 53rd Thursday Club sounds like it would be a parallel of something Philip José Farmer might write. A very detailed article...I am not particularly a fan of Verne's, but I have been told that his work is best read in the original French, or in the most recent translations, which are supposedly more accurate than those in the past.

Would I ever like to be going with you to Seattle for Steamcon. Given those photos are from DragonCon, I would like to see similar photos from Steamcon. The costumes there should be extraordinary. The British Convivial also sounded wonderful. I am registered on the Brass Goggles website, but as always, too much Web, and not enough time.

Thank you for listing those two Toronto Steampunk Society events, Chris... unfortunately, I got to neither of them. I am sure we can get to more as soon as the job hunt is successful.

I've got myself a bowler hat, and there are parts of my conductor's costume I could use in another costume...I'm working on another idea for a comfortable costume. The Web is my best source of costume ideas for men, and I hope to borrow some ideas for the future. My thinking for the railway conductor is much the same as Gail Carriger's, people like the conductor are the cogs of the steam-powered world we like to visit. We can't all be adventurers and air pirates, can we?

I think I have finished up here, another interesting publication. Shall there be another in November? I wish they will be, and I think my wish shall be fulfilled. See you then. God Save The Queen! (...and all those who sail in her.)

Yours, Lloyd Penney.



***Well, I don't think that Howard Hendrix and Phillip Jose Farmer will ever be confused for one another, but it was one of his best inventions. It just sounds soplausible! I've got to get myself on to Brass Goggles. I really rarely read blogs, but I really should make more of an effort!***

***There aren't a lot of Steampunk fans who aren't into costumes. I'm writing this in the Stampunk panel at World Fantasy and even here there are people in costumes, which is supposed to be verbotten at the con! It's a power greater than rules. I've gotta get to work on covering more and more events around the world. There's a giant Moscow community that I'd love to cover.***

***And we can all be Air Pirates...just not all Captains!***



#### **Art Credits**

**Cover by P.Knives (<http://www.pknives.deviantart.com>), Page 1 by Micha Zimmermann (<http://emze.deviantart.com>), Page 2 by Doc (<http://lithic-hyperbole.deviantart.com/>), Page 3 & 4, stills from *The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello*, directed by Anthony Lucas ([www.jaspermorello.com](http://www.jaspermorello.com)), Page 9 & 10 art from *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer* by Steve Stiles, Page 18 by Julian The Great (<http://deputee.deviantart.com/>), Page 26 Gatehouse Gazette cover by Myke Amend, Page 28 by Hachiko (<http://hachiko.deviantart.com>)**

#### **Photo Credits**

**Pages 5-8 Unextraordinary Gentlemen photos from Penance, Pages 11-18 Steamcon photos by Chris Garcia, Pages 19-25 Clockwork Caliphate photos by J. Daniel Sawyer of Artistic Whispers, Page 27 photo of Lloyd and Yvonne Penney from Lloyd Penney.**