

Exhibition Hall



February 2012

So, this issue has a theme of sorts. We've got reviews of two books, Expedition to the Mountain of the Moon by Mark Hodder and The Buntline Special by Mike Resnick. The theme: Historical Personages. Both these novels, highly enjoyable to me, feature actual personages of the past in steampunk-y situations. I almost imagine a mash-up between them, Sir Richard Burton and Doc Holliday hangin' out in the past, kickin' it hella olde skool!

But I digress...

So, this issue has the debut of a new feature: the Best of Steampunk Scholar! Mike Perschon, Steampunk Scholar at

<http://steampunkscholar.blogspot.com/>, Mike's been kind enough to allow us to reprint one of his pieces in teh coming issues! We love Mike, one of Our Canadian Cousins, and we're happy to have him in these pages.

He also is one-half of the cover team this issue along with The Steampunk Ambassador, Kevin Steil! We love Kevin to and he worked up the photo we ran on the cover this issue!

Robert Hole is one of our all-time favorite people. His zine, e2PMI, ceased publication last year, but was one of the best htings to read leading up to the Reno Worldcon. He was kind enough to read and review The Expedition to the Mountain of the Moon for us. He's good people!

James Bacon, my Hugo-winnign co-editor for most of my zines, came into town from London. He was out here for Nova Albion last year, and again before WorldCon. It's always good to see him and we had a real good time on the Fanboy Planet Podcast (www.fanboyplanet.com) talking about Before Watchmen. It was fun. If you like Movies, Comics, TV and/or wrestling, give a listen to it!

Sadly, we lost one of the better comics folks last week. John Severin passed away. He did one of my favorite comics of the last 1990s (or maybe early 2000s) The Rawhide Kid. He was a star, and he was 90, so he was doing good work even after most artists have hung up their pens.

Alright, that's enough preamble.
ONWARD TO CONTENT!!!!!!



**COMMENTS? CONTRIBUTIONS?
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LETTER-BOX

Voxhaul & I

Dear Chris, James and Ariane:

Ah, another Exhibition Hall, issue 18 this time, a pleasure to see as always. It is smaller than usual, but it means it will appear more often, that's a good thing. Comment shall follow anon!

Looks like you love the movie Hugo as much as I do. There was a touch of steampunk at the beginning, others have mentioned clockpunk, but any movie aficionado would delight at the real aim of Hugo, which is a tribute to the works of Georges Méliès. (I finally got the accents right.) Good for Martin Scorsese for taking a completely different tack in his career by making a great movie out of a great book. His reward so far is the Golden Globe for Best Director.

I had heard this was the best movie to see for 2011, and we saw it in spite of the recommendations. The touch of steampunk attracted us, and the setting of old Paris was good to see, too. The storyline of the rediscovery of Georges Méliès within the storyline of Hugo Cabret discovering his father's automaton was beautiful, and the fact that someone cared enough to bring Méliès' work back to the public eye brought some tears. We are so fortunate in that part of the movie was actually the first movie ever shot, L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat. The whole movie was a movie fan's delight to see and enjoy. Sir Ben Kingsley made a wonderful Papa Georges.

As I was writing this letter, I was listening to BBC Radio 2, and this movie was mentioned as continuing on the work of Harold Lloyd. As Lloyd hung from the hands of a

large clock, so did Lauren and Hardy in some of there movies, and so did little Hugo as he was trying to escape the station inspector. Early comedians like Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton made more of an impact then they ever suspected.

Wonderful movies by Georges Méliès...I have seen many of them, but not all. Perhaps I should look for that DVD of his movies. Both Yvonne and I enjoyed this movie so much...for Christmas, Yvonne gave me Brian Selznick's original graphic novel The Invention of Hugo Cabret, plus Selznick's The Hugo Movie Companion. They added even more to my appreciation of the movie. What do you think? Hugo for the Hugo? I could easily nominate and vote for this movie.

True, the Gatehouse Gazette was a true trip into the Victorian era, and cause a little controversy along the way, but it got people talking, which made it a vital zine. Nick Ottens has chosen to shut it down...I suspect it was taking up more free time than he had available. Thank you, Nick, for a real treat of a fanzine. I will keep my eyes open for a new Steampunk Magazine.

Good for now. Yvonne and I are planning to get a local steampunk/fannish high tea on the go, and we're planning it to be at The Old Mill Inn and Spa, one of the best places in Toronto to have that high tea. I can always relay some pictures. Take care all; hope this new year is good to you. See you next issue!

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

I love Harold Lloyd. Expect a Drink Tank featuring him in the future!

Mark Hodder's Burton & Swinborne's "Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon" (Jan. 2012, ISBN: 978-1616145354) is not a science fiction book. It is rather a fantasy. Much of steampunk seems to be more fantasy than science fiction anyway, so that is hardly a recommendation against. It is also much more than plain old steampunk. It is a fine scientific romance in the best tradition of Verne and Wells.

Despite being the third in a trilogy this book is an excellent stand-alone volume. The back story is well covered and repeatedly. And that perhaps is my main criticism.

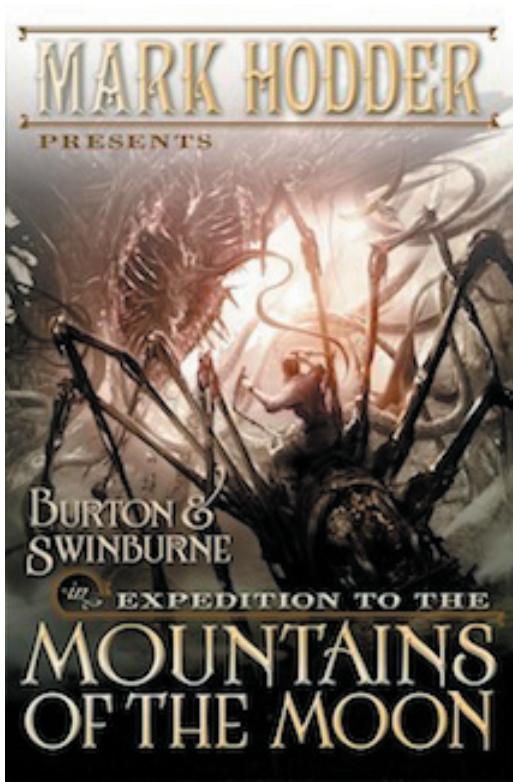
I have not read the first two books in the trilogy though I look forward to doing so.

There is enough back story in this book to allow for little to no confusion in following the plot. Unfortunately the back story often seems to get in the way of the main plot, even if it's actual role is supportive. The back story is presented well and as narrative rather than as exposition. There is very little, perhaps no, "as you know Bob..." in this book (at least I certainly don't remember noticing any).

The various elements of the book take place over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The story follows the adventures of noted real-life African, Indian and Arabian explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton, his poet sidekick Algernon Swinburne (real but not really Burtons sidekick) and their companions in a race from England to find a mystical jewel in the heart of unexplored Africa. The jewel is one of three left by an ancient reptilian race. The "Naga" stones, named after the ancient race, contain the collective consciousness of the lost race. They also serve to focus the extrasensory powers of humans.

Two previous stones have been discovered and it changed the world balance of power. Burton's race is with representatives of the



German Empire who wish to use the third stone to expand their empire and take over the world.

In addition to these mystical elements there is time travel, genetic engineering, and of course the steampunk prerequisite steam powered contraptions. In this world many of the contraptions rely not only on steam power but on the genetic engineering. And this genetic engineering is actually far beyond even our current abilities.

The story moves along at a brisk pace, the main plot happens in two different timelines, with the digressions adding a third. To say this is a simple read would be a vast overstatement, but to say this

is a complicated book would also be an overstatement. Despite my objections to the digressions, which are really more of a quibble, the book weaves the three timelines well and it is not too difficult to follow the jumps among them.

To add to the fantasy element, in my mind much of the biological science written about is frankly impossible, though certainly entertaining and intriguing, and used before – some of it is echoed by Jules Verne himself.

It is obvious that Hodder has done his homework regarding the biographies and history of the people involved, his geography and, as far as I know, the description of the landscape through which the characters traverse are all accurate. Of course with the added flavor of the alternate timelines. in fact as a mild fan of 19th century African exploration, I was delighted to learn several new things by looking up people and places mentioned in the book.

It is a well researched book, a well-written book, and to anyone interested in a good solid introduction to high class steampunk I can definitely recommend the this trip mountains of the moon.

**Robert Hole Reviews Mark Hodder's Burton & Swinburne's
Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon**

Steampunk Scholar on The Buntline Special

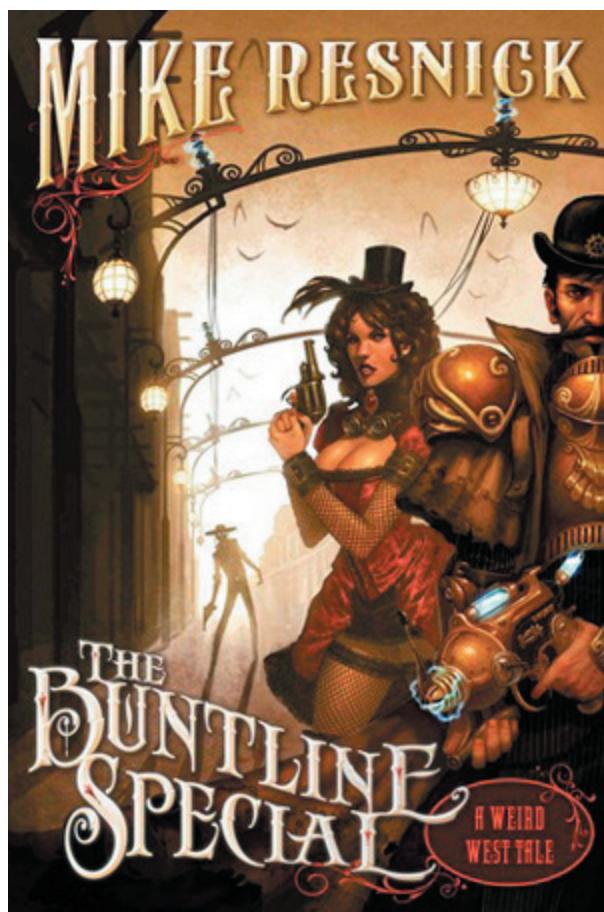
by Mike Perschon

Literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss came up with an idea he called the “horizon of expectations,” the cumulative preconceptions a reader approaches a text with, based upon its author, style, genre, and other formal elements. Although he was speaking of a reader’s response to a text, I kept thinking of the horizon of expectations while reading Mike Resnick’s steampunk Weird Western, *The Buntline Special*. Utilizing the oft-told tale of the events surrounding the shootout at the OK Corral in Tombstone, AZ, *The Buntline Special* is an exercise in playfully subverting the reader’s horizon of expectations. After all, to anyone who’s seen *Gunfight at the OK Corral* or *Tombstone*, these aren’t simply familiar characters, situations, and settings: they are archetypes of the Western genre.

A promising premise, and Seamas Gallagher’s cover art is gorgeous enough to entice any fan of American steampunk (I’ve been a huge fan of Gallagher’s since he did superior renderings of the characters from *The Wheel of Time* at his blog. I should add my agreement here to the Rob Will Review, which praised PYR’s covers, saying, “If every publishing house’s cover art were as consistently attractive as PYR’s, a lot more people would feel encouraged to read books”). Perhaps my own horizon of expectations was too large, given Gallagher’s wonderful cover art, but not unfounded, given that Resnick is a five-time Hugo winner. Granted, this is not the Tombstone of Costner’s Wyatt Earp: there are electric lights and literally horseless carriages courtesy of boy-genius Thomas Alva Edison, who is in Tombstone investigating how science can counteract magic. The players are the same, but with a twist: Bat Masterston’s name is taken literally when he becomes a creature of the night; Johnny Ringo is still one of the fastest guns in Texas, only now

he’s also slowly decomposing; and the Clanton gang has more than numbers on their side in their opposition of law-dog Earp and his companions—they are allied with Geronimo, rendered as a shaman with high magic powers. Despite all the magic and mechanical digressions, Doc Holliday and the Earps remain mortal and unmechanized, unlike Emma Bull’s Territory, which imagines Earp and Holliday with the ability to use magic. Admittedly, Doc will finally wield the steampunked *Buntline Special*, but without it, he’s simply the superior pistoleer of our history with a penchant for intelligent conversation, droll humor, and the affections of Big Nose Kate.

In steampunk Tombstone, Doc’s lady-love runs a whorehouse with an automated



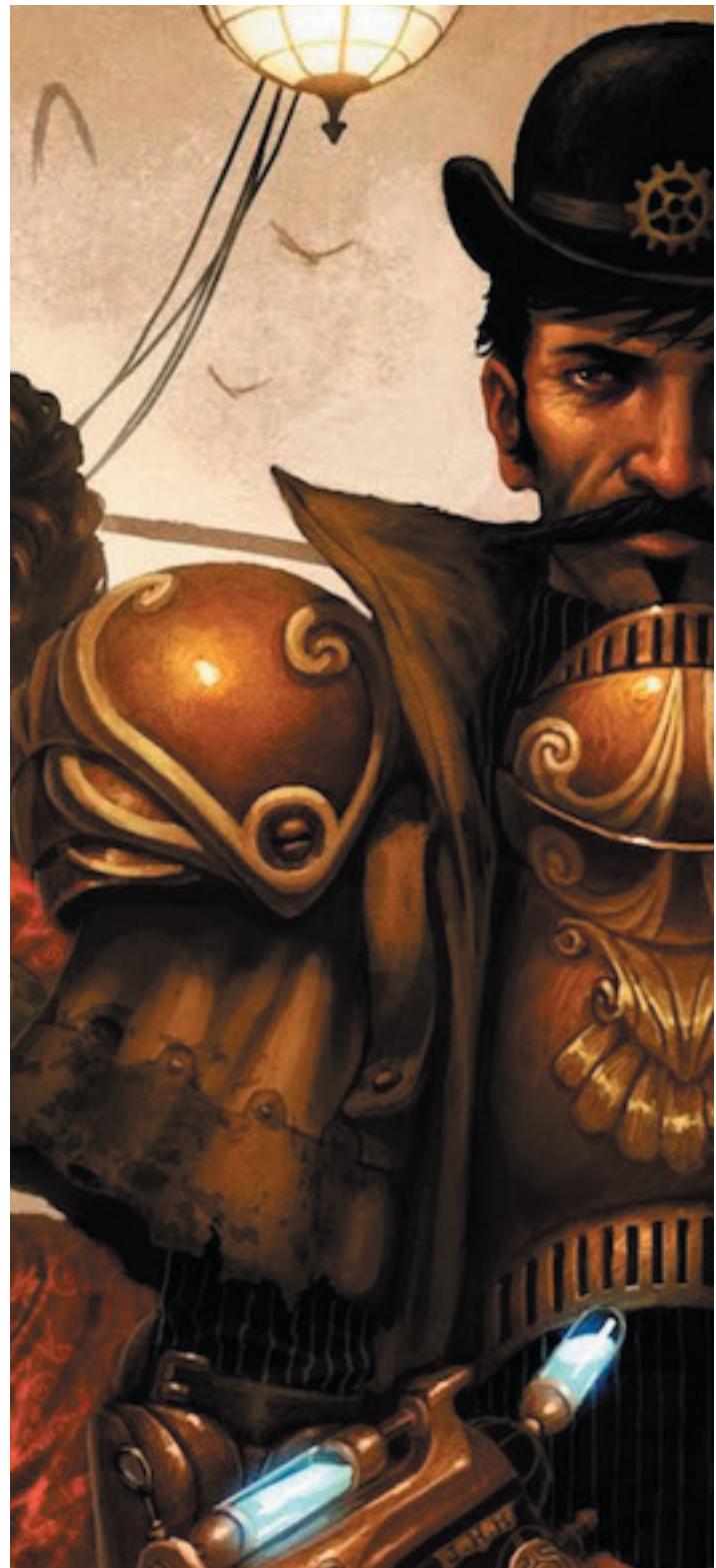
twist: several of the girls are clockwork dolls. And while they provide the impetus for a few below-the-belt jokes and a means of narrow escape, they're largely left as many of the steampunked digressions are in *The Buntline Special*: unexplored beyond the "ain't it cool" factor. Accordingly, I had to adjust my "horizon of expectations." *The Windup Girl*, this wasn't. So it's not social commentary: what is *The Buntline Special*?

It's intended to be light, escapist fiction for fans of the Weird Western, as well as a steampunked defamiliarization of this familiar story. As noted, the steampunking is entirely surface. Unless you're encountering the story of Tombstone for the first time, Edison's electric streetlamps aren't shedding light on anything new. Readers familiar with the history may be disappointed that, despite the introduction of advanced technology, undead gunslingers, and First Nations magic, the events leading up to, during, and away from the Gunfight at the OK Corral unfold with a strangely by-the-numbers adherence to the historical chronology.

Resnick is somewhere in the middle of previous steampunk Weird Westerns, neither as off-the-wall crazy as Joe Lansdale's *Zeppelins West*, nor serious and brooding as Felix Gilman's *The Half-Made World*. While he plays things straight, the voice of Doc Holliday provides tone ironic enough to solicit laughter, and it is Resnick's rendering of Holliday's persona that rescues *The Buntline Special* from being just another steampunk book in a current morass of steampunk books. Holliday's character interactions are what kept me reading; the banter between Holliday and zombie-Ringo was more engaging than their final gunfight. Like Emma Bull, Resnick wisely makes Holliday the focus. As I've noted, the steampunking of *Tombstone* is purely aesthetic. So if you're going to put your gunslingers in brass armor with pistols that look like they were lifted from Dr. Grordbort's shelf, you'd better make sure the character under the armor is someone worth reading about. Resnick does that, and while I wasn't blown away by this first installment in what promises to be a series, I'd sure give

it another go, especially if Holliday shows up again. At least now I know what my horizon of expectation should be.

For those who can't get enough of alternate Tombstones, check out Bookslut's great review of *Territory*, http://www.bookslut.com/fiction/2007_07_011498.php, which will tell you many of the reasons I enjoyed it as well.



The Buntline Special by Mike Resnick

And Views of Tombstone

By Chris Garcia

I've not been a big Resnick fan for a number of years. His books like Stalking the Unicorn were really good, and there have been some short pieces that I enjoyed, but mostly his novels aren't my thing. When I received a box of books, I was half-expecting to pass up the Resnick in there until after I'd read the rest of them. Knowing that I had an issue of Exhibition Hall to get out pushed The Buntline Special to the front.

And I am so glad that it did.

The basic story is this: Thomas Alva Edison and Ned Buntline have moved to Tombstone, Arizona to work on various innovations that will allow the US to expand beyond the Mississippi into the lands that have been held by the Medicine Men of the various Western tribes. Their powers are great, and Ned and Tom are making great inventions using Buntline's special process for creating a super-hardened brass that repels bullets. Edison is also working on a way to counteract the magic that the Medicine Men employ to hold on to the West.

SO the Government hires a few folks to look after Tom and Ned – Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and Bat Masterson.

That's a pretty good company of lawmen.

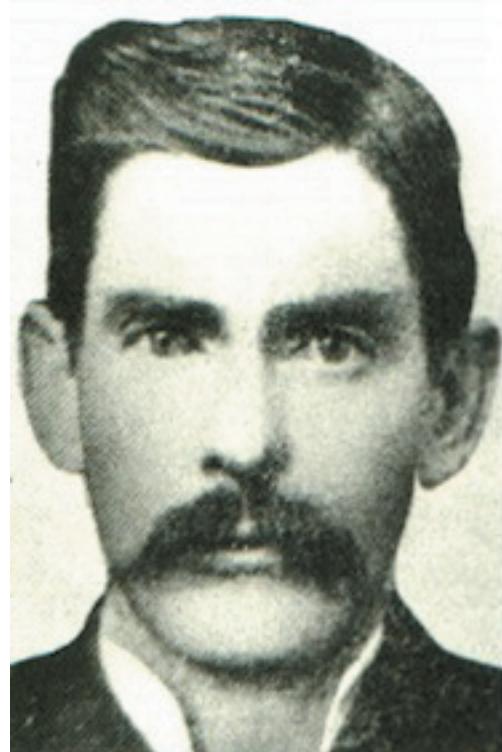
Now, I'm a guy who loves the film Tombstone. It's arguably the most testosterone-soaked film in history. Val Kilmer as Doc is pretty much amazing and when I walked out, I uttered the now-famous line "Kurt Russell is America's Greatest Living Actor!"

And it's true.

I became very interested in the history of Tombstone, in the people and buildings of the old west's most famous boomtown. While I've never managed to make it out there, I've

read histories, newspaper reprints, a couple of journals and a ton of fiction about Tombstone. In fact, it was this obsession that made me want to get buried in the Jewish cemetery in Colma where Earp is buried alongside his common-law wife. Such was the effect of the town over me. Tombstone is a city of legends, all of them true (especially the lies...)

As I started reading The Buntline Special, I realized that this was a book told from the point of view of Mr. John Henry Holliday, arguably the most colorful character in the history of the world. Wait... let me think about that one... No, it holds. Anyhoo, Holliday is dying of consumption, coughing up blood and basically going around being a bad ass. He's a great narrator, especially when you consider that he is arguably the most entertaining terminal case in history. There is obviously a lot of Val Kilmer's Doc in Resnick's Doc,



which shouldn't be a surprise. Many scholars of the Old West believe that Kilmer captured Holliday's combination of humor and despair better than any of the others who have tried on the role. While there are parts of the story where it feels a bit like a Day in the Life of Doc Holliday, he provides a fine character through which to tell the story of Tombstone and the steampunk story of Edison and Buntline.

As well as the story of the Undead Johnny Ringo.

Ringo was, arguably, the second most dangerous man in the West in the 1880s. There is lots of debate over whether he was all that dangerous, if he ever actually killed anyone in a gunfight and if he was really that quick on the draw. Through all my research, especially into the Mason County War, I'd say that there's a lot more leaning towards he was a tough guy who earned his rep than that he was just a puffed-up guy who looked good carrying six-shooters. It's likely that many of the shootings, if not most, of the shootings that are attributed to him weren't actual notches on his gun, but at least some of them likely were. He certainly killed at least one man in cold blood for ordering a beer instead of a whiskey.

He was a bad drunk, as Resnick points out, and an educated man. He read the classics, especially in Latin and Greek. He was a smart guy, but when he drank, whew-ee, not a guy you wanted to tangle with. Ringo has been used in a great many westerns, and the funny thing is that his death was ruled a suicide, the evidence seems to curvy with that thought, though many have attributed it to Frank Leslie, a truly dangerous figure in Tombstone who I would have loved to see treated in this book, but what can you do?

The funny thing is that the Undead Ringo and the most-living Holliday sit and chat and seem to have a highly intellectual time for most of the book. This is in stark contrast to their time in Tombstone when the only clear interaction between the two (there are several disputed) was when they got heated and were about to throwdown. That gunfight, more than any other, probably would have



settled the Ringo matter once and for-all. If he'd have gunned down Holliday (a straight-ahead master with either gun or knife), everything would have been proven true. If Holliday had won, well, he hardly needed the name Ringo on his list to firmly establish his legend. The Ringo-Holliday sub-plot basically hinges on that thought. It's what makes it a damn entertaining read.

The prose here is very crisp and fast reading. I'm not normally a breezer, it often takes me a week to read what most folks can make it through in a couple of days, but here, it was a snap and I finished the novel in two days flat. The way it worked made me want to keep reading, too. This is a clearly written piece and one that is obviously informed by research, and more importantly to my eyes, the popular cultural impact that Tombstone and, particularly, The Gunfight at the OK Corral.

Because that's the emotional crux of the Earps' story.

Now, while Holliday is the star of the book, it's the Earps who are the reason for it, and though there's all this Steampunkery

going on, there's still the Clanton-McLaury-Claiborne-Stillwell feud. In our universe, the Earps, acting as The Law when Sheriff Behan (who also appears in Resnick's novel) wouldn't because of his strong ties to The Cowboys, of which the Clantons were part of. The Gunfight, actually in an alley outside of the OK Corral, was brief, and the way Resnick tells it makes it sound very much like the accounts I've read about it, though they weren't standing quite as close together as they would have been in the actual fight (some claim there was no more than a couple of yards between them). There's a descendant of the Claytons, Terry Ike Clanton, who has a version of the Gunfight that highly favors the Clantons. It's an interesting take on the situation though a far more unbiased view is presented at <http://www.historynet.com/ok-corral-a-gunfight-shrouded-in-mystery.htm>. To me, the actions of Ike Clanton have always been the turning point and they show him as both the aggressor and the cause of the shootout, in which his own involvement was to try and push Wyatt out, only to get called a coward by Wyatt saying "Get to fightin' or get away!" It's one of the most famous lines in the history of The West. The Gunfight ended quickly, and it was a masterful setting for future historians and writers to hang their views on.

The only problem I had with the book is the ending felt a bit anti-climactic. After the Gunfight at the OK Corral and the repercussions, there's not a lot that will stand-up. The final showdown between Ringo and Doc is so heavily built that there was almost nothing to it when it finally came down. Maybe it's just my attraction to the actual history that led me to dismiss the fantasy. Maybe.

The other touches of the novel that got me were so simple, but they also gave Tombstone an added oomph that helped to make the novel more than just another Alternate History set in The Old West. There's Big Nose Kate, I'm sorry, Kate Elder, Doc's girlfriend who runs a brothel which features several cyborgs and a couple of fully automatic working girls. There are Buntline's special carriages, steampowered and fully bullet-proof. There's the fact that Bat Masterson is given an ironic

super-power/curse that he has to deal with. That last bothered me a little because Bat was an amazingly interesting personage and it also took him out of the story a bit (though, in truth, he was already gone from Tombstone by the time the events of the story began). Maybe it's just me, but at times the history I knew got in the way of the fantasy I should have been loving. I did love it, but it took a bit of doing to get me over the hump.

There are so many Tombstone stories, hundreds of them, and so many Tombstone characters that there would be no way to fit them all in. Folks like Turkey Creek Jack Johnson, Frank Leslie, Texas Jack Vermillion any number of legendary card players (Las Vegas, in a way, grew out of the High Rollers who clamored to Tombstone in the 1880s) and various others. It's a hard thing to believe, but Tombstone was only really in it's highest form from 1880 to 1889, then suffering after the mines hit the water table. In that time, legends were formed, mostly by the people who Resnick took control of as his characters here, save for Edison and Buntline.

Today, Tombstone is a tourist attraction. You can visit the bar at the Birdcage Theatre, Boot Hill Cemetery and, of course, The OK Corral. There are reenactments of The Shootout every day. So much of what we see in Resnick's book is right there. The book and the fact that the only major silver boomtown that has stayed in such great shape is Tombstone proves that this was one of the most significant, and AWESOME, towns of the Old West.

The Buntline Special hangs actual history on the story of a Steampunk world, and there's a sequel as well, which I believe has Holliday going off to hang with Billy the Kid. There's a lot of great stuff that Resnick can do with the idea of powerful Medicine Men trying to mess with the settlers who have started streaming into the West. The end of the novel seems to point to a coming war, which I'm excited to read about. The Buntline Special is a really strong book, a great read and a good way to spend a couple of days in among the gunfighters.