



EXHIBITION HALL 6

EXHIBITION HALL ISSUE 6 - FEBRUARY 2010

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The year is slowly starting to unfold, which seems to be what I say at the start of every one of these editorials, doesn't it? Sadly, for me, but year started out pretty bad. I had a massive growth on my neck which might have been a tumor, but luckily just turned out to be an infection. Anti-biotics and time have managed to shrink it almost to oblivion. That's a good thing because I was expecting it to take up even more of my time.

And now, the issues at hand: there are more events and more fun to be had!

The first one that pops up that I know I hadn't heard of before was AnachroCon, which is April 30 - May 2, 2010 at the Wellesley Inn Atlanta Airport Hotel. I'd love to go, as I've never actually been to any con in Atlanta (yes, I've never been to Dragon*Con) and it would be nice to get to meet some of the Southern fans who I know are out there but who I've never met. Pre-Reg is only 30 bucks, which is nice. There's music, dancing, a panel on Ben Franklin, who I really think is the American Godfather of Steampunk, and all sorts of fun. You can find out more at www.anachrocon.com.

Templecon is right after this zine hits the web, so you're either going or you're not. It looks like fun and especially with Ela Rodgers and G.D. Falksen and Leanna Renee Hieber around, it'll be good stuff.

The BArea has its own major event coming up with the Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition in Emeryville. I'm a panelist and going my Those Whacky Victorians presentation and two panels as well. The first is the one that's got me most happy: The Origins of Steampunk. Yes, it's a panel I've done several times before but this time, I'm paired up with two of my favorite people: author Howard Hendrix and Steampunk Mega-Star (and a name you've seen in these pages) Michael Perschon. You can't find a better pair than those two for a panel.

The schedule should be up in short time, and I know it'll be a good time.

OK, y'all may have heard that the next issue will be the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen issue. I'm excited because I get to write about one of my all-time fave comics, and more importantly, I'm seeing if Exhibition Hall can work with a theme. It should, and still be able to get across the stuff that every issue does, but we haven't tried it yet, so we'll see.

Perhaps the least explored area of Steampunk in these pages is graphic novels. Yeah, we've covered Grandville, which is on my Hugo nomination ballot, but Steampunk has made great strides within the world of comics. Two weeks in a row, when I was regularly writing about comics for Fanboy Planet, I opened with 'Ah, Steampunk.' The reviews were for Howard Chaykin's Barnum: In Secret Service to the USA and the JLA Age of Wonder. That was 2003, and even by that point it was obvious that comics were the medium that was best suited to Steampunk.



BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

Steampunk movies had already been shown to be difficult, with *Wild Wild West* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* both striking out pretty heavily. Comics had already seen *Gotham by Gaslight*, one of the greatest Batman stories ever and the reason they started doing Elseworld stories, and *Sebastian O*, a great Steampunk comic mini-series from Grant Morrison in 1993. I've also been told that there've been a bunch of great manga, though I've not read any of them personally.

And there comes the rub: adaptation. We know that Steampunk has a difficult trip to live action film (animation seems to be at least somewhat immune with good stuff like *Steamboy* and *Jasper Morello*) and comics have managed to do right. I can't say I've heard many radio dramas in the steam vein, but that should be a fine test. I'm fairly certain there's some out there, and knowing our

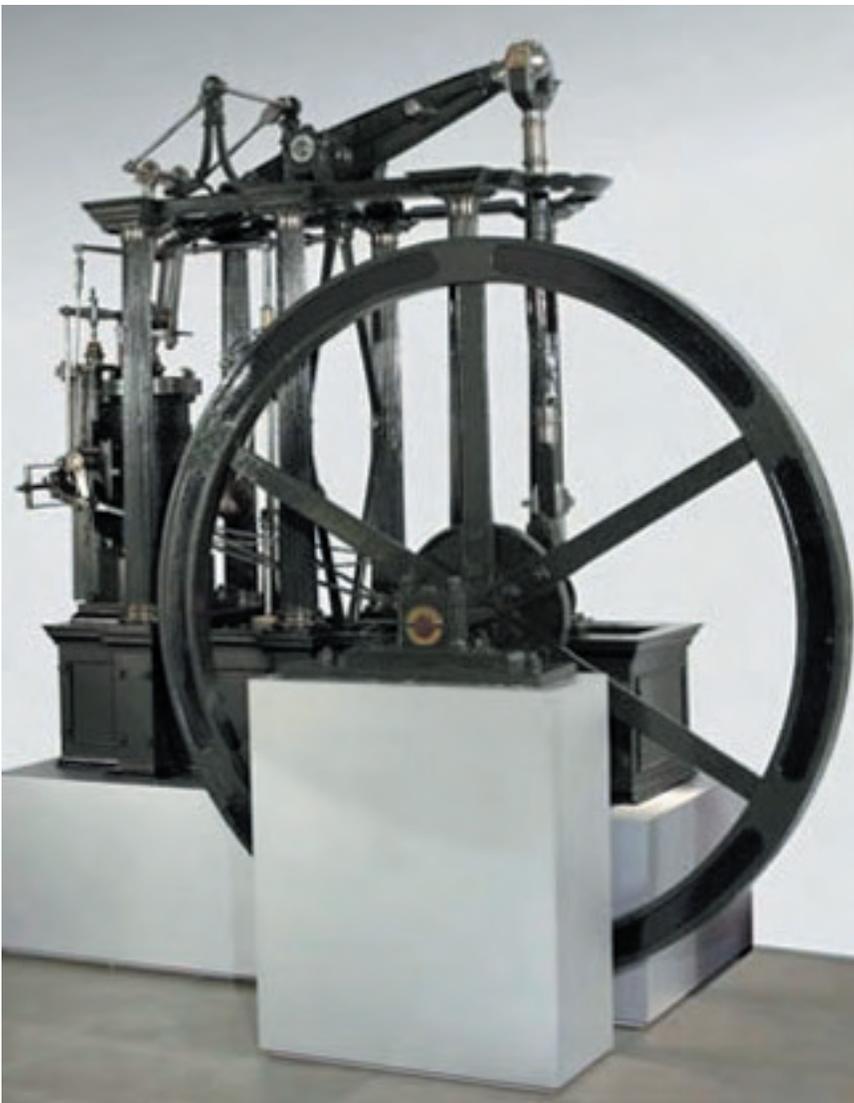
readers, you'll tell me!

In other news, I've been looking at the release dates for a few books and the one that pushes me the most is *Steamed*.

So, what's going on with this issue? Well, there's the Exhibition Hall debut of a buddy of mine who has appeared in the pages of *The Drink Tank*, Mark Valentine. He takes a look at Carnacki, who could be seen as one of the direct ancestors of everyone from John Constantine to Harry Dresden. We've got a look at what I consider to be the greatest Steampunk song of them all: *Coin-operated Boy* by the Dresden Dolls from M Lloyd, Sa-Bean Morel and myself. We've got *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Oxford Steampunk Art Exhibit*, a few reviews, *Airships*, *Fashion* by Ariane a look at two up-coming Steampunk cons, and so much more. It's going to be a good one!

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VOX-HAUL & I

We start with our pal and regular correspondent to just about every zine in the world, Lloyd Penney!

Dear Chris, James and Ariana:

Many thanks for Exhibition Hall 5. One of the advantages of the .pdf format is that you can reproduce colour on your screen far better than you can on your colour printer. That cover is great. I think one of the advantages of getting the word out about EH is that many steampunk writers and artists became aware of it, and the great Molly Friedrich cover is the proof. This zine is becoming the portal between SF fandom the domain of steampunk, and the overlap will be something to see.

I found her stuff first through Steampunk Magazine, I think. I then saw it on DeviantArt and finally in person at SteamCon. She was nice to get me that fantastic

I used to live in Victoria, BC, so going to the Victoria Steam Exposition would be great fun. There's some nice hotels down there, but nothing so Victorian as the Empress Hotel. Just checked the website, and it is indeed the Empress. It's even more Victorian than the Royal York where Torcon 3 was. You are right in that many SF cons are attempting to bring some steampunk into their programming, and in Toronto, Ad Astra is no different. I've passed along some good ideas to the convention programming team, and I expect that it may overlap with the science track of programming (Yvonne's in charge of that track). Once I have some confirmation that these panels/events will indeed take place, I will get the word out through the myriad networks of Facebook pages, bulletin boards, e-mail lists, and more, and I hope there will be a substantial steampunk contingent at the con. We'll see what happens.

I gotta get more folks writing reports because I can only be at two, maybe three cons at a time!

Chris, I know you belong to Facebook groups such as the Toronto Steampunk Society, as I do, and the organizers are always trying to see what events the Society membership might enjoy. Often, they go not far beyond the costumes that we create and assemble to



wear at conventions. I think participation brings a lot of these folks together, much as it does those busiest of SF fans. Perhaps we're not that different after all. Steampunk is very much based in an alternate history. Perhaps writers like Harry Turtledove, who has made his rep through alternate history novels, have influenced how we've created our nostalgia for a time that did not exist, and also the writers who create an already-large library of steampunk novels. Around the time I got into fanzines, Yvonne and I were also costumers. Even when we weren't computing on stage, trying to win a little certificate or trophy, what we really wanted was to show off our costumes and Yvonne's skills as a costumer and tailor. I think that's what most steampunk fans want, too, just a little attention, a little appreciation, and a little ego stroke.

And there's so much great costuming to!

I was able to download some musical clips from Abney Park's past albums. I know

everyone loves them, but I think their sounds is going to have to grow on me. More and more, I wonder if I'm only here for the costumes? I can't be alone in that, but there's always time to get further into it.

I love Abney Park, though they're the kind of music that always appeals to me. A lot of the Steampunk bands are fantastic because they combine my love of Tom Waits with my love of Punk!

Thanks to Bill Wright for memories of St. Kilda. Is that the part of Melbourne where the Melbourne SF Club meets in a church basement? I seem to recall instructions of taking the St. Kilda's tram. Some of the pictures, especially of nude bathers, and mention of an Australian lass who was arrested for the brevity, I would imagine, of her swimsuit, would make North American sensitivities look downright prissy compared to those of Australians of the time. The T.I.T.S. sign at the George is proof right there.

Given how many events are taking place, we could use a handy list of steampunk conventions, and conventions with steampunk programming, somewhere on the web. Those radio shows called Stroke of Fate sound appealing. If Montcalm had defeated Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, I suspect there'd be an independent country of Quebec, plus Canada East and Canada West, or an assortment of small countries based on the British colonies of the day. I also suspect that the northern border of the United States would reach north of the 49th parallel. (And, I might be speaking fluent French, too.)

That episode of Stroke of Fate about the Battle of Quebec is one of my faves. It's just awesome stuff.

Hey, all done for the moment. I hope this zine is gaining a measure of acceptance as a publication in the heart steampunk; are you getting response from others outside of SF fandom? I hope to set the example there. The art of correspondence did have its height in the Victorian era, after all. Take care, everyone, God save the Queen, and see you all next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Always a Pleasure, Lloyd!

And now, a note from Sue Lange!

Hey there,

Read with interest your comments on Nisi Shawl's observations of steampunk. Nisi is right of course and I certainly am in no position to comment on other writers' outputs, but I will say that Book View Cafe has published a steampunk anthology, *The Shadow Conspiracy*, that includes stories that speak to this issue. Pati Nagle's story, *Zombi*, features a Creole woman as it's protagonist. Nancy Jane Moore's story, *The Savage and the Monster*, stars a Native American Woman. If you want more diversity, Steven Harper's story, *The Soul Jar*, is a gay romance.

Volume II of *The Shadow Conspiracy* is scheduled for publication later in the year. I don't know what all stories will be included, but I know mine has a Sherlock Holmes character that is African.

Volume I is available now as an ebook (\$9.99) at Book View Cafe (<http://www.bookviewcafe.com>) in multiple formats. If you want the Kindle version, you can find it at Amazon (<http://www.amazon.com/The-Shadow-Conspiracy-ebook/dp/B002YD8BWK/>).

Now let me get back to Exhibition Hall.

Cheers!

Nisi's comments were great and I'm still trying to work out the Ogoun article. As I am discovering, gods and patron saints and such are complicated matters! There are various concepts and interpretations that can vary from house to house, and sometimes from room to room within that house!

I'm actually reading *The Shadow Conspiracy*, though it's slow-going, not because of the stories (I especially liked the Nagle piece) but because we've starting getting so many pieces to review that it's taking forever to get through them! I

Very interested in the second volume!

COIN-OPERATED BOY: A SET OF THEORIES (AND PARODY) BROUGHT ABOUT BY A SERIES OF EMAILS

What you are about to read is an corrected reprint of one of the better articles to appear in The Drink Tank in it's first year, 2005.

Whenever I start listening to a new band, I drop a line to my dear friends M, Jay and SaBean, Invariably, they send back news that I was way behind the times and should have heard of them years back or that they'd just returned from Amsterdam where they'd had fine seats and booed the opening act off the stage. This happened recently when I informed them of my new fascination with The Dresden Dolls.

I bought their CDs last week while I was supposed to be Christmas shopping (Evelyn wants two book: one about Unicorns and one on Spaceships) and as I started listening, I fell in love with lead singer, Amanda Palmer, and came to appreciate their song writing. There was a song on both of the CDs they put out (*The Dresden Dolls* and *A is for Accident*) called Coin-Operated Boy that really stood out.

You see, it details a young woman who is sick and tired of the regular men in her life and gets herself a boy who happens to run when you put a coin in him.

At least that's how I read it. This is an obvious automata song and is one of the rare pieces of SteamPunk music that really stands up. (*note: much has changed since 2005!*)

The combination of themes is interesting. There are very few pieces of SteamPunk anything that really look at romance (*Again, 2005!*). It exists as a sub-theme in several pieces, but mostly the stories tend to be about the mechanics and the -punk side instead of heart-to-heart stuff. Palmer's lyrics are lovely, especially the bridge, which she references as a bridge, where she adds -er to words like bitter to

make stronger statements. It is a song that is fun and fresh and there's some feeling behind it that melts a bit as it's played.

I mentioned it to M in an eMail and she said something very interesting.

M- I love that song. It joins She-Bop, I Touch Myself and Turning Japanese as the greatest Masturbation Songs of all-time. There's no better song about a vibrator!

Chris- What the hell are you talking about? It's about a girl in the older times who has been hurt and wants to have a boy she can totally control.

M- Silly Chris. Simple, silly Chris. It's not about love or a broken-hearted girl. It's about good old-fashioned playing the battery-powered body blender.



I didn't quite know what to think of that. I sat on it and I printed out the text of the lyrics. There are a few clues that seem to support M's theory. She wants sex she can control, if you let 'boy' represent 'sex'... Well, made of plastic is an obvious sign that that may be what it's about (though I don't know where Elastic would fit, as that's part of what it's made of too) and then there's the line about never leaving the bedroom again, which

is something I've heard women say after receiving a nice New Shiny. The 'sitting on a shelf' lyric also works far better with it being a vibrator than an actual doll or person.

The general theme of the song, if you buy Lady Lloyd's premise, seems to be that coin-operated simply means automatic and not that it literally requires a coin. It really only works with the version that is on the Dresden Dolls album because it says 'I can even take him in the bath' as opposed to the live version which says 'I can even fuck him in the ass'. Interesting theory, but I don't fully buy it.

BY CHRIS GARCIA WITH M CRASDAN AND SABEAN MOREL

I forwarded the mails to SaBean, who said that both M and I were idiots. She says that a lot, but here she proposed a different idea. Her thought was that the Coin-Operated Boy was a male prostitute or prostitutes.

This one holds more water when applied to both versions. It's an obvious point that coin-operated could easily be put into the category of prostitution, as you simply give him money and he performs. There are a couple of other things that SaBean pointed out (and M followed-on) that also make this a good point.

First there's the line 'He's not really experienced with Girls', which is a point in SaBean's favour because, as M pointed out in a long, rambling eMail, there are far fewer female customers than male for male prostitutes. It also follows that both 'take him in the bath' and 'fuck him in the ass' work on equal levels. Many weights and sizes to choose from would tend to point to the woman having her choice of man-whores. The bridge

where she's obviously telling a guy she's interested in (or was seeing) that she's much happier with her coin-operated boy makes much more sense if you're talking about a real male prostitute and not a vibrator.

There are weaknesses to the theory. He would not be made of plastic or elastic, though if it were a female prostitute with a strap-on, then both cases could be made (but that would be a far leap and never work) and 'he'll say he loves me' thing is probably not something any practitioner of The Trade would do.

Still, the best answer, and the one that fits the lyrics and makes the most sense is that it's a literal Coin-Operated Automaton Boy who she plays with, because, once again, that would prove that I am right.



REVIEWED: SHERLOCK HOLMES

I first came to Sherlock Holmes through homage/parody. The first books I remember reading that featured a Holmes-like character (hereafter referred to as an 'HLC') was *Sherlock Bones*, a dog who solved crimes and was a blast. I loved those books and read them over and over when I was a kid. Following that, I watched *Young Sherlock Holmes* in the theatre at least three times and then we rented it several times after the

years because it was a blast. *The Great Mouse Detective* was another early HLC experience for me. I then watched a ton of the Holmes movies over the years, largely the Rathbone movies. It wasn't until Jr. High School that I started reading the actual Doyle stories. Probably 6 or 7 years after I first picked up those *Sherlock Bones* books. As such, you can say I am no purist.

And that leads me to my premise: Robert Downey Jr.'s portrayal of Holmes was far smarter than any writer has ever managed to put to paper or screen.

Let's start with the movie as a whole. *Sherlock Holmes* was directed by Guy Ritchie, one of the most colorful and gritty directors in the world. He's got his problems and clichés, but largely, his films are lively and tough. Both *Snatch* and *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels* were absolute blasts, though they showed a director who likes to run in the ruts of those directors before him. Those well-worn trails happen to run through *Sherlock Holmes* as well, and perhaps this is where his career had been heading because it works so perfectly for the story.

Let's look at the story. It's a good start

for a new Holmes franchise as it combines peaks of future adventures, establishes the tensions and tarries of the Holmes/Watson relationship and makes use of that ultimate logic in the face of absolute un-logic. The story is a member of the peerage apparently rises from the dead and is terrorizing London society and the like. That's a gross oversimplification, but it's all you really need to know. The story is structured less like a



Holmes story and more like one of the crime stories you'd read from Westlake, Spillane or Christa Faust if they'd been writing in the Victorian Era. Let it be known, this is a crime film and not a detective film. That's a huge difference that many folks over look. Yes, Holmes is sniffing out a crime and is the central character, but that story is somewhat secondary to the crimes and the way that Holmes is dealing with the world of crime that he has entered. He's more Mike Hammer than Sherlock Holmes as

times, which I rather like, being a huge Hard Case Crime fan myself.

Now, let's get to RDJ. Mr. Downey has developed into an action star with his turn in *Iron Man* and here he solidifies it. He plays Holmes as both the toughest man in any situation and as *Dumbo* without his feather. Without Watson, he is a mess. I think Mr. Downey's time riding the White Horse probably informed his performance a great deal, but the way he worked Holmes into a mess was remarkable. When he knew he didn't have Watson, or a suitable replacement, he was a mess. This shows in the scene of the prize

BY CHRIS GARCIA

fight. He was fighting for Watson's money, or so it is portrayed, and is losing until he encounters a former lover's kerchief and then goes on to destroy the bruiser he's up against. This is a scene that plays right into director Ritchie's strengths. There's always a bare-knuckle boxing scene in all his movies, it allows so many of the tricks he has his cinematographs deploy and it allows him to grind the plot down for a second to give his characters a bit of a re-charge. This works beautifully well with Holmes as we see that he is not only a maddening know-it-all, but he's also a man who has trained himself in every possible discipline. It's a very smart piece of screenwriting coupled with a really fun piece of cinematography.

In many ways, I believe that Downey started by watching Chow Yun Fat in his films with John Woo. He played Holmes in many ways like those detectives from Hong Kong. There's a certain Man Love to it, a bromance in the parlance of the times. At times, I felt it was a flock of flying white doves away from being a Woo film. Downey shares so much with Chow Yun Fat's characters: hyper-able, cunning, human on a level but ultimately flawed. Watch *Hard Boiled* then peep Holmes and you'll see it. That connection and commitment to another guy fills the screen throughout much of *Sherlock Holmes*.

Which brings up Jude Law. The man is talented, there's no question, but he's Michael Caine in many ways that he has no limit to the depths he will crawl for a paycheck. Here,



he has a goal: play like he is not a fully-vested partner in Holmes' obsessions. He has to play Watson as a character who is outwardly trying to get out while his connection with Holmes keeps pulling him back in. It's actually a much tougher role to play than Holmes in this case. Law does a remarkable job, I think he was best performance in ages.

The writing of the pairing was strong, but it was Downey who shone because he got the best fights and we hear the explanation through his voice. The fight scenes where Holmes was involved were great. His fight with The Giant (played by former WWF wrestler Kurrigan) was both hilarious, ridiculous and so much fun that I totally forgot about how ridiculous it was. The fight at the climax was great, and that pit-fighting scene was strong as well. It gave off the feeling of a director trying to make an action star out of an actor. Robert Rodriguez has done that before, Clooney in *From Duck 'til Dawn* and Selma Hayek in *Desperado* (and Banderes as well, but really, rewatch it and you'll see how much more he was setting up Hayek for the future). This was Ritchie finalizing the transition of Downey from Dramey to action star.



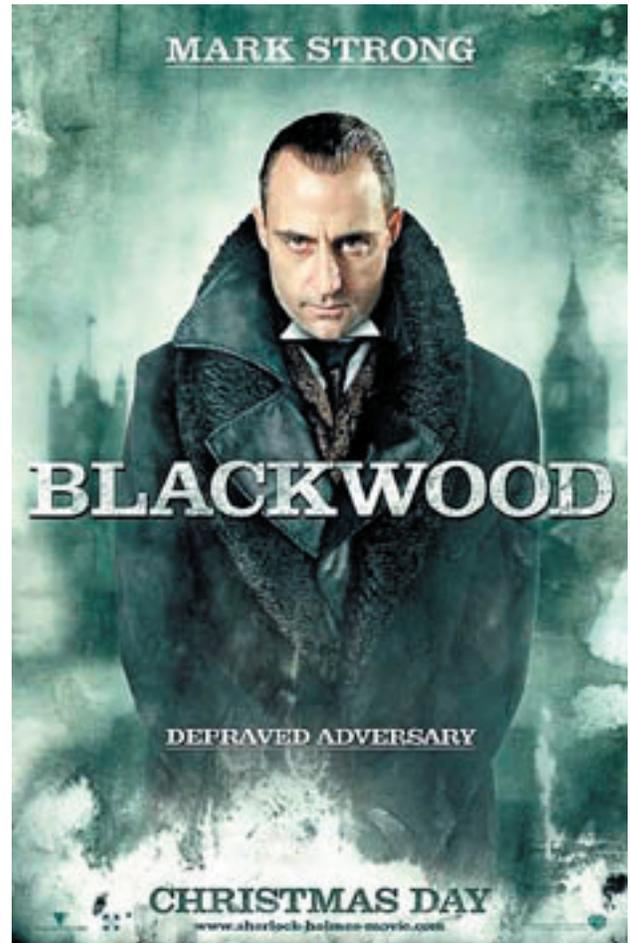
The film itself is a lot of fun. The choices that Ritchie and his team made were all played up to heighten the fun. The music, at times simple and usually very intelligently placed, hits off nicely with both the setting and the action. The writing rarely let up, and the performances were

right there with the writing, save for Miss Rachel McAdams. She's got a very narrow slot where her work is optimal and it's in films like *Wedding Crashers*, *Mean Girls*, and to a lesser extent for all but 13 year old girls, *the Notebook*. She was out of her element and didn't seem to have as much behind her stuff as Law and Downey. Still, it only knocked a few scenes out. The winking at Holmes fans was also a bit obvious at points. Moriarty and gags from other Holmes stories was interesting, but a tad over-played.

The villainous Lord Blackwood proves to be one of the better villains in the history of Sherlock Holmes on film. Mark Strong, who I loved in both *Stardust* and *Sunshine*, is an excellent evil mastermind who plays the supernatural card. It's fantastic how evil he makes Lord Blackwood seem while not chewing the scenery as would, oh let's say, Gary Oldman. He plays it without the liveliness many would approach the character with, and that makes it both darker and more realistic. I would compare him favorably with several of the previous villains, including Lionel Atwill and Larry Oliver...I mean Laurence Olivier.

Perhaps this is the best Holmes as could be done for the 21st Century American viewer? It remains largely British in look and feel (though that scrubbed up to the nails London that American productions like to do with 19th Century pieces set in the Capital). There is enough grit here that it doesn't feel completely sterilized, nor is there the dainty quality that it pains me to admit existed in *Young Sherlock Holmes*. There is a bit of edginess that plays well with the setting, the cinematography and especially the performances. The one weakness in that grit is it finds its way into moments where it's not needed. The dinner scene with Holmes, Watson and Watson's fiancée Mary was dark, but they could have used a cheerier setting to contrast the subject matter. As it stood, it felt a bit par for the course.

There are some points where I loved the background characters. The former wrestler Kurgan, aka Robert Maillet, played Dredger, a massive giant thug. He did remarkably well



in the role as the thug and his fight with Sherlock Holmes was really entertaining. I would like to see him show up in future films of the series (and let's face it, this is going to be a series) because he was so much fun! The various police officers in the film were a good bunch too. When they make a musical out of the film, they'll obviously be the most entertaining of all Greek choruses.

You know, I can't wait for that to happen.

Over all, *Sherlock Holmes* gives a whole lot to enjoy and when it falters, it's not so much as to destroy all that fun you've had. Yeah, the dates don't line up (Tower Bridge's construction, the establishment of Bartitsu and so on do not coincide), but you don't really notice. Why not? Because you're lost in a thrill ride. Think about it, do you recognize the mistakes in the background themeing on Splash Mountain when you're barreling down the last drop?

STEAMPUNK WORLD'S FAIRE PREVIEW!

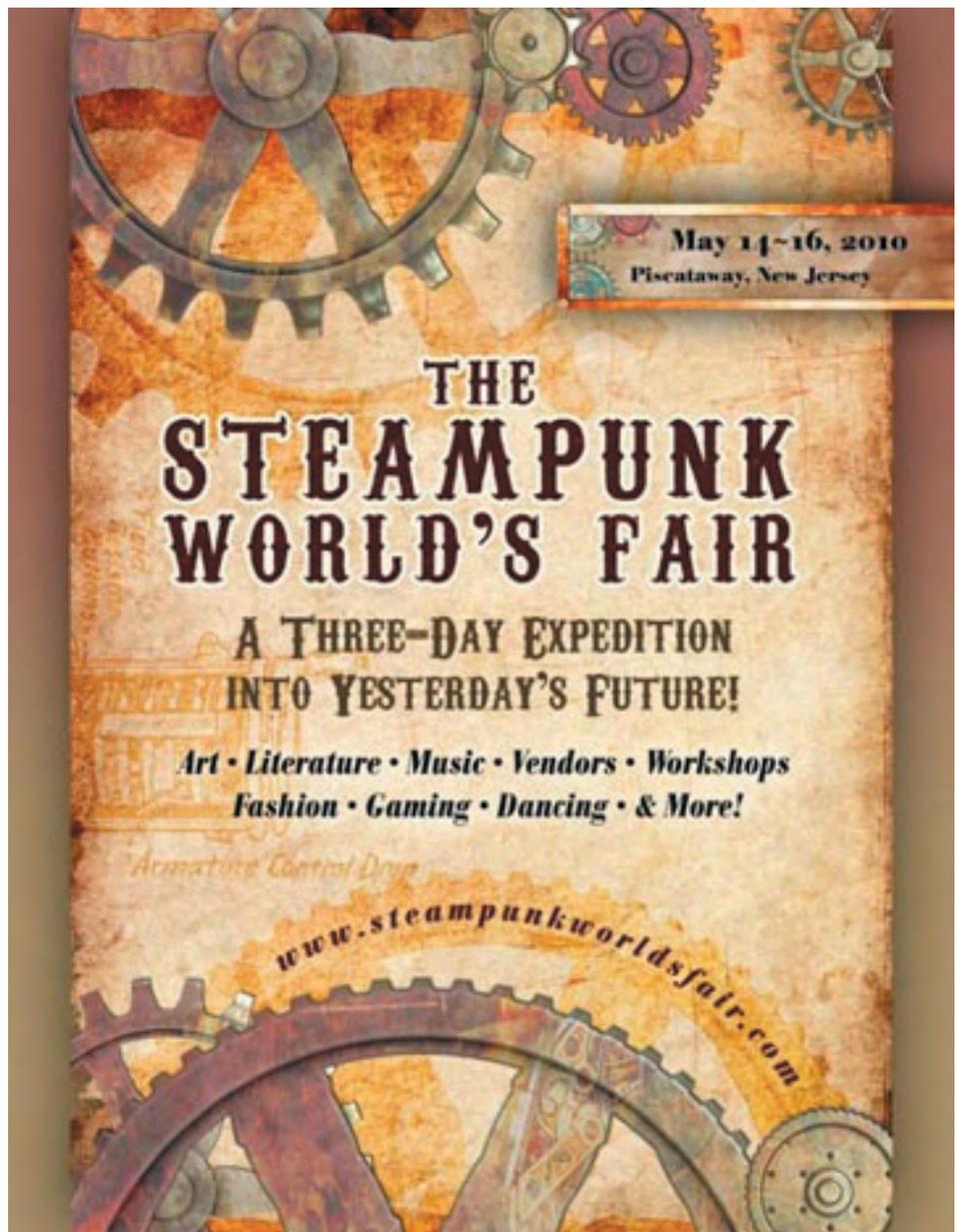
The place to be for steampunks and steampunk enthusiasts this spring will most certainly be The Steampunk World's Fair, a three-day expedition into yesterday's future. The most unorthodox steampunk convention and festival on the East Coast, this celebration of all things steamy will be coming to you May 14th-16th at the Radisson Hotel of Piscataway, NJ. An interactive and social event for people of all levels of steampunk know-how; yes, even you sitting in the corner of the internet, not sure you know what steampunk is or if you even like it. The art, culture, fashion, technology, history, gaming, and music of this fascinating and scintillating subculture and genre are all represented throughout the weekend.

With Professor Elemental ("Cup of Brown Joy") and HUMANWINE ("Rivolta Silenziosa") headlining the musicians, SPWF has gathered the largest collection of steampunk musical acts to date- many of whom will be featured in their Saturday night Gaslamp Cabaret. Other acts throughout the weekend include Black Tape for a Blue Girl, Weird Val, The Absinthe Drinkers, The Clockwork Dolls, Emperor Norton's Stationary Marching Band, and **Walter Sickert & the Army of Broken Toys**. From opera and sea shanties to rockabilly and gypsy punk to everything in between, the World's Fair aims to have something to satisfy every musical palate.

Around the event, you may also find a veritable buffet of sideshow acts, raveling minstrels, snake oil salesmen, fire-eaters, contortionists, mind-reading

robots and a séance to contact the ghost of Nikola Tesla, burlesque performances, and world fusion and belly dancing.

Musical marvels and vaudevillian performances aren't the only delights to be found at SPWF. Guest speakers and artists will be hosting events and discussions throughout the weekend. Graphic artists Tom Brown, Brigid Ashwood, and The Comiku Girls; world-renowned photographer Kyle Cassidy; film industry leather-master Adam Smith; pirate crews The Penny Dreadfuls of S.S. Icarus, and The Outlanders of Outland Armour; authors CJ Henderson, Emilie P. Bush, Violet Haberdasher, G.D. Falksen, Clay and Susan Griffin, and many more announcing every



BY WHISPER MERLOT

week.

The event also features a Friday afternoon Cup of Brown Joy Tea Party and evening grand ball hosted by The Davenport Sisters of The Clockwork Cabaret. Saturday's major feature, in addition to the Cabaret, includes the "Lovecraft's Revenge" murder mystery dinner buffet. There will be original short film screenings, several original steampunk plays, a day-long Mad Science Fair, and The Library of Lost Literature sponsored and hosted by Weird Tales Magazine. And for those of you gamers out there (and we know there are plenty of you!) there will be role-playing, storytelling, computer and board games. Along with three Live-Action RPGs, The Gentleman's Duel tournament, and the Steampunk Persona lounge.

You will also have the opportunity to shop at the many fine establishments in the Merchant's Bazaar, featuring everything from clockwork jewelry and absinthe spoons to historically accurate evening gowns and on-the-spot vintage photography.

A cavalcade of discussions, debates, workshops, readings, contests, and demonstrations shall fill the halls, stages, courtyard, and event rooms. Such delights include fashion demonstrations where gents will strip down to their long-johns, tea leaf reading and palmistry classes, kissing workshops and history lessons, jewelry making workshops, East meets West tea ceremonies, tips on how to steampunk your home, readings from new and classic literature, Tesla coil demonstrations, and weekend-

long photo scavenger hunt and hallway outfit and accessory contests.

If you can't wait until May to join the fun, you can check out our steampunk room, The SteamPort, on February 19th-21st at The Wicked Winter Renaissance Faire (<http://www.wickedfaire.com/>) Or head out for an evening to the Steampunk World's Fair's monthly dance and event night: CLOCKWORK. Hosted at the Radisson Hotel of Piscataway, CLOCKWORK features live musicians (many of whom are appearing at the May event), DJs, dinner, drinks, games, cookies, dancing, merchants, and monthly themes and contests.

We'd love to see you all there! For more information on the Steampunk World's Fair, her events, vendors, and performers, please take a moment to discover <http://www.steampunkworldsfair.com/>. Weekend memberships are \$30 until right before the event (this includes a \$5 gift certificate good at any SPWF vendor). Rooms at the Radisson are \$96/night and selling fast! Overflow hotel to be announced soon!

The Steampunk World's Fair is a collaboration between Jeff Mach (Wicked Events), Josh Marks (formerly of SalonCon), and Cap and Whisper of S.S. Icarus (The Penny Dreadfuls).



A VISIT TO OXFORD

I decided that I wanted to go to the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford, England, as they are currently hosting a well-publicized exhibition of Steampunk Art. Readers will be pleased to know that they have until the 21st of February to go and see this exhibit.

Oxford is an old town, records of settlements go back to the 8th century, and its history as a seat of learning were first recorded in the 12th century. I travelled on a fairly modern train and arrived at a fairly modern looking station. The west part of the city seemed very modern, buildings of the later part of this century, but as I walked in towards the Museum, which is on Broad St., the buildings become more classical. The city feels like a massive college town and that's what it is.

I walked past the Oxford Retreat, a beautiful pub, where the canal starts and heads north. The canal was frozen solid, and here in Oxford there were still heaps of snow following our surprising post xmas cold snap.

The Museum of the History of Science is itself a wonder. It is a building known as the Old Ashmolean, which was the first ever museum open to the public back in 1683. Elias Ashmole housed his personal collection here, and it was a centre for the gathering of 'natural knowledge' Lectures would take place in the basement. In 1924, the Museum was gifted the Lewis Evans collection and from there it took its current form. It is a relatively small and compact building, square looking, with a first floor and a basement.



The front railings were adorned with a massive Steampunk banner, in a pleasing steampunk style, made from Brass and with a wonderful clock piece, and I knew this would be a good exhibit. The curator is Art Donovan, an artist from New York. Himself and his wife own a bespoke lighting company, and they design and create high class lighting. Art himself creates his pieces from raw materials- brass, mahogany and glass, rather than using antique pieces.

He had created a wonderful massive lamp, swirling ironmongery with a green orb as a focal point of the stand, with the futuristically-styled gothic glass and brass lampshade incorporating both curves and angles.

Instead of walking you through each item, I shall choose a selection of the artists that really took my fancy, out of total of 18, all of whom seemed to have outdone themselves in both ingenuity and brilliance, I would like you to get a taste of the exhibit.

Tom Banwell has his studio in the town of Rough and Ready in Northern California and owns a western leather hat-making business. He created three helmets which incorporated face plates. The first, based on

BY LONDON BUREAU CHIEF JAMES BACON

a classic American red helmet, was called 'Firemaster' was coloured as a beautiful worn red leather, with a brass and leather styled gasmask. I was particularly impressed with the Griffon Logo on the helmet badge and the wing-like neck guard part of the helmet.

The next helm, in all admittance did somewhat remind one of Darth Vader's Helmet, was a 'Defenders Helm' in black leather. It's more than just a helmet, it's a face mask and gorget that all sit together. The mask has some fantastic respirator inlets, made from metal and two different eye pieces, while the detail to the gorget and helmet is really very impressive.

I was rather taken by James Richardson-Brown's work. He has been published in the likes of Chap magazine, and I found out that he has published a book, and there are some free chapters available as part of his Sydeian Research Coalition website: <http://www.sydeian.org/TimelineIndex.htm>

I passed wonderful eye pieces, sculptures, and robot creations. There was an eye pod that was kept in a jar with an evil eye looking out. Hanging on the wall, like some semi organic creation was the Ornithoptiv



Lamp by Art Donovan



Mask by Tom Banwell





Ornithopter Boarding Device by Amanda Scrivener and Thomas Willeford

Boarding Device by Amanda Scrivener and Thomas Willeford. This was hanging from a wall, and had a mesmerizing appeal. It was like some sort of ancient leathery or organic material stretched over wings that were on a back pack. There was tubing and valves and a gauge, and a massive thing which gave the impression that this could actually work.

In their own words;

Brought to you by Lord Featherstone and Prof. Maelstromme those mad inventors at Grimmelore Manor.

This both comfortable and lightweight Ornithopter with its five minute capacity (3 minutes recommended) steam reservoir is ideal for performing those mid-flight Airship boarding actions and those days when perambulation does not quite cut it. Our easy to understand pressure gauge and release valve combination should prevent you from ever becoming an unintentional part of any firework display. Operate this with one hand while the other is free to protect yourself with a ray gun or other obscenely powerful weapon

of your choice. Good to use in any of your more commonly found weather conditions such as sunny, mild, low humidity and winds up to 6 miles an hour with almost no chance of stabilizer failure and deadly fall.

I checked out The Professor's Flickr account, and then their website, and their creations are just mouth-wateringly beautiful. I was really taken by this and one of their other creations on exhibit.

www.bruteforceleather.com

There were some wonderful models, and I thought the Church Tank was so intricate and detailed, while jewelry, time pieces, engines, yes, finely machined brass engines, lights and current technology steampunkified were all just lovely.

There was definite discernment on the part of the curator, here, and I was very impressed.

Nicely, there was a sign saying 'More Steam Punk Exhibits this way' and one walked into another room, with wonderful brass and glass inventions, and it took me



a moment to realise that these were 18th and 19th century items, part of the permanent collection. It went on and on, and I enjoyed some of the real items, as much as the contrived.

Complete Mechanical Womb by Molly 'Porkshanks' Friedrich





AGAINST THE ABYSS: CARNACKI THE GHOST-FINDER

William Hope Hodgson wrote nine episodes in the career of 'Carnacki, the Ghost-Finder', probably (though we do not know for certain) during 1908-10. Two of them at least, 'The Whistling Room' and 'The Hog', are amongst the most powerful and intense depictions of personal terror in the face of supernatural evil by any author in the 20th century. Some of the other stories have effective passages of chilling description, and all of them, even those that end up with a rational explanation, offer plenty of narrative satisfaction, from the unusual ideas, strongly-realised central character, and energy in the telling.

The collection has become a classic in the occult, or psychic, detective field, much reprinted, and evidently relished by readers. As Gerald Suster pointed out in the (UK) Sphere paperback 1980 edition, the book once set a sort of record. In 1973, sixty years after it first appeared, it was in print from three publishers at once. The author's early death in World War 1 meant that his books went out of copyright in the mid-Nineteen Sixties, and that certainly helped publishers to risk a reprint. But many other books are also out of copyright: few have been so enthusiastically reissued. Individual episodes have also been anthology favourites. Despite this popularity, though, *Carnacki the Ghost Finder* is not always well-regarded, and in this essay I propose to suggest the stories merit more attention.

Detective stories were of course well-established in the story magazines and publishers' lists of the Edwardian period: the great success of Sherlock Holmes had assured that. And authors were alert to the possibilities of engaging the reader's interest with unusual variations on the form: so that Ernest Bramah wrote about a blind detective, in his Max Carrados stories, Victor L Whitechurch about a railway detective, Thorpe Hazell, Baroness Orczy about a woman detective, Lady Molly of Scotland Yard, and so on: E.W. Hornung also hit upon the astute idea of telling a crime story from the villain's perspective, in his popular

Raffles yarns.

At the same time, stories in which detectives encounter the eerie, macabre and seemingly supernatural, had been part of the techniques for building up mysterious atmosphere ever since the genre had begun – the cases of Poe's M. Dupin, and Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, being striking examples. Even van Helsing, in *Dracula*, if not exactly a detective, is certainly a combative investigator who pursues the Count as any crimefighter would a master-criminal; while Dr Hesselius, in Sheridan Le Fanu's supernatural tales, is a medical man whose casebook also resembles that of a detective.

Moreover, the strong late Victorian interest in spiritualism and apparent



BY MARK VALENTINE

evidence of paranormal phenomena had led to the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 and the beginning of independent investigations into claimed “real life” hauntings, manifestations, poltergeists, possessions and other phenomena. A further important piece of background, in view of Hodgson’s frequent use of the “haunted house” format, may have been the eager reception given to Elliott O’Donnell’s accounts of supposedly authentic supernatural visitations, in *Some Haunted Houses of England and Wales* (1908), *Haunted Houses of London* (1909) and others, a publishing success for Nash, who were to become Hodgson’s publisher too.

The stage was therefore set for the creation of a character that would draw together all of these strands and seize the public imagination with fictional accounts of supernatural investigation. A few such attempts had been made, of which perhaps the most notable were the Flaxman Low stories of E & H Heron (1899). But none had quite established themselves as the real exemplar and prototype for the form, with widespread public recognition.

Algernon Blackwood was the first to earn fame in this way, with his *John Silence*: when the book was published in 1908, it was advertised on billboards and omnibuses, and soon became a great success. In his introduction to a reprint edition (1942), Blackwood reveals that these tales of his indomitable psychic investigator “were originally separate studies of various “psychic” themes, and it was on the suggestion of Mr Nash, who had already published two books for me, that I grouped them under the common leadership of a single man, Dr John Silence”. It was a shrewd suggestion, that gave a new shape and force to the author’s otherwise somewhat diffuse studies in the supernatural.

It may have been the recollection of this success that prompted Willam Hope Hodgson, still determinedly finding his way as a working writer, to produce the series of Carnacki, the Ghost-Finder, stories for *The Idler* magazine, where five of them appeared

from January 1910 onwards. Hodgson wrote for *The Idler* in what was to prove to be its last full year of existence: it folded in March 1911. Whether the stories had been devised with *The Idler* specifically in mind or not, they matched its mood well. It has been observed that its “basic mood” was “the gentleman at leisure”. The framing of the Carnacki stories was therefore exactly apt for *The Idler*: a group of gentlemen gathered for dinner in comfortable and fashionable rooms on Cheyne Walk, The Embankment, Chelsea, to hear yarns from a host who is evidently himself a gentlemanly amateur.

The first published story, in the January 1910 issue, was “The Gateway of the Monster”, followed in consecutive months until April by “The House Among the Laurels”, “The Whistling Room”, and “The Horse of the Invisible”. At the same time as the January publication, Hodgson produced a condensed version of these four tales, in one narrative, issued as a paper-covered booklet in London and New York, evidently for copyright purposes. As the other Carnacki tales (five more) were not included, it is reasonable to assume they had not then been written, or presumably Hodgson would have wanted to safeguard them too.

There was a gap of one month before “The Searcher of the End House” appeared in *The Idler* for June 1910, and that break may also suggest the story was written a little later than the first four. The sixth tale, “The Thing Invisible”, did not appear until it was published in the *New Magazine* for January 1912, by which time *The Idler* was no more. Interestingly, in late 1909, Hodgson had enquired at The Bookman, for whom he was reviewing, after a review copy of Anthony Dallington’s novel *The Unseen Thing*. This now rare novel concerns a deformed human creature kept in the attic by his brother: its cries and paroxysms are taken to be a haunting. The similarity of title to Hodgson’s story “The Thing Invisible” is striking, as is the theme of concealed family madness in both works. Did Hodgson write the story after reading the book and draw upon elements of it for inspiration? Or had his story already

been written, and he wanted simply to check what that this book with the similar title was about? The former may seem more likely, because if "The Thing Invisible" had already been written by January 1910, it would surely have been included in the copyright volume and perhaps in The Idler series.

However, that may be, it was these six that were collected by the same publisher as for John Silence, Eveleigh Nash, in 1913. (Three others, "The Hog", "The Find", and "The Haunted *Jarvee*" were added for the 'Mycroft & Moran' edition of 1947, edited by August Derleth). "The Thing Invisible" was chosen as the opening story for the Nash collection. Was this simply for some practical reason, such as it was nearest to hand, having been most recently published? Or did Hodgson consider it the best?

The Carnacki stories were written at what might be called a transitional point in Hodgson's writing career. He had three published books already to his name: The Boats of the 'Glen Garrig' (1907), The House on the Borderland (1908), and The Ghost Pirates (1909), all written, most probably, when he had time to himself at Glaneifion, the house at Borth, mid-Wales, overlooking the sea, that the family rented. They had won some acclaim but had not been the great literary or commercial success Hodgson had anticipated. So now he was turning his attention more towards the demands of the market. Indeed, he never wrote another

full-length novel (The Night Land, published in 1912, had been written earlier). Instead, he aimed his work more at the periodicals who would pay for a striking short story. It is likely that the Carnacki stories represent the first signs of an increased understanding on Hodgson's part about the best way to enter these literary markets, and the need to place his far-flowing visions into a form readers could more readily understand. They were followed by a regular supply of stories, especially to The Red Magazine, including a further series character in the shape of the nautical Captain Gault.

In devising the Carnacki stories, Hodgson made sure they would contain many elements that would be endearingly familiar to enthusiasts of the more usual sort of detective fiction. The hero appears to be of private means and his reputation is such that clients call upon him from all corners of the British Isles. He has an understanding with the police that enables him to draw on their



help when needed (although what they make of the more genuine supernatural occurrences is not recorded: can one imagine, by analogy, Lestrade vs The Hog?). We are made aware there are many more cases to tell of, through passing references with intriguing hints – "the Black Veil", "the Silent Garden". And, as so often in the field, the hero has a Boswell – or Watson – to set down his adventures for him. But Carnacki's chronicler is by no means as active as Watson. He is either indolent or

incurious, or both, since he merely turns up when summoned by the great man, enjoys dinner, and listens to the tale. He never evinces the lightest inclination to join in on an adventure. Instead, he contents himself with retelling what he (and a trio of other summoned friends) hears from Carnacki..

In “The Gateway of the Monster”, the first-told story, Hodgson deploys a significant number of elements that would also accord with readers’ expectations of occult or supernatural sources. The hero is learned in a secret ancient grimoire, the 14th century Sigsand Manuscript, knows the “Second Sign of the Saaamaaa Ritual” (we are not told if there is a First) and in constructing a circle of power around himself as a defence, using sacred herbs, holy water, and a chalked sign. Despite all these precautions, the manifestation of a giant, shadowy, clawing hand, which pounces repeatedly at Carnacki, is powerfully done. Strangest of all though is perhaps Hodgson’s invention of a modern protective force, the Electric Pentacle, with its softly glowing blue tubes. It is just possible he may have got the idea for this from a stage magician, Dr Walford Bodie, who performed many shows in the North of England, easily accessible from Blackburn, Lancashire, then Hodgson’s home, during about the same period as Hodgson’s notorious Houdini challenge. Bodie used electrical apparatus to striking effect in his act, trusting to the public’s imperfect knowledge of how electricity works to give the impression that he was immune to huge shocks and surges of power.

As shown in the exciting narrative thrust of “The Gateway of the Monster”, the Carnacki stories provided a format and framework well-suited for channelling Hodgson’s personal energy, robustness of character and striking imagination. It has been suggested that the stories drew on real incidents from Hodgson’s life, but whether this is an important element or not, they certainly capture an attitude of courage, curiosity and determination that we recognise in the author himself, from his tough upbringing at home and at sea, his enthusiasm for his

body-building trade, his youthful exploits, his challenge to Houdini and braving of the hostility of the audience, and his later pluck at war. Although the stories’ narrator is called Dodgson, and the similarity of name suggests we are to read this as meaning Hodgson, we also cannot doubt that there is much of the author in the character of Carnacki himself.

The character’s name is interesting. It was probably selected to fit in with readers’ expectations that exotic characters with unusual skills must have a name and background to match. The trend was perhaps started by M.P. Shiel’s refulgent *Prince Zaleski* (1895), a detective who, if he does not encounter the supernatural, certainly deals in the occult: and Guy Boothby’s enormously popular hero-villain Dr Nikola (in five novels starting with *A Bid for Fortune*, 1895) who (like Carnacki) is enmeshed in both conventional villainy and supernatural evil. It also likely that the stage names adopted by magicians and stage performers – indeed such as Houdini, whom Carnacki challenged in 1908 – were an influence.

There have always been those who are unhappy about the hybrid that is the occult detective. When Ronald Knox put forward his ‘Ten Commandments’ of detective fiction in 1928, he stipulated that there should be no supernatural element. The Detection Club put it more forcefully, ruling out ‘Mumbo-Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery...or the Act of God’. On the other hand, neither have weird fiction savants been entirely happy that the sleuthing format works best for their field. H.P. Lovecraft said of the Carnacki volume: “In quality it falls conspicuously below the level of [Hodgson’s] other books. We here find a more or less conventional stock figure of the “infallible detective” type – the progeny of M. Dupin and Sherlock Holmes, and the close kin of Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence – moving through scenes and events badly marred by an atmosphere of professional “occultism”.

In fact, those distinctions are not quite as straightforward as all that. A surprising number of the Holmes stories start with strong hints that some supernatural or

uncanny agency is in play (*The Hound of the Baskervilles* most obviously, “The Sussex Vampire”, “The Devil’s Claw” etc), even if in the end these are always rationalised. Most of the Carnacki stories adopt a similar approach – a strong whiff of sulphur is only used to disguise the common stench of villainy. And as in the Holmes stories, one is sometimes unpersuaded by the lengths villains will go, to create the semblance of the supernatural and disguise their more worldly concerns. Hodgson is always potent and compelling when he evokes the supernatural: paradoxically, it is the lesser infamies that make the reader sceptical.

Despite this weakness, Hodgson makes the stories succeed through a number of strong qualities that are his particular hallmark. His main character is not quite the super-human figure Lovecraft evoked: he is not, indeed, “infallible”, since he fails in the case of “The Haunted *Jarvee*”. He is not as aloof from the common run of the world as either Zaleski or Silence – or the moody aesthetical Holmes for that matter. He is a practical, methodical individual, more like R. Austin Freeman’s always-well-prepared exemplar of “medical jurisprudence”, Dr Thorndyke. Whereas the latter’s black bag might contain chemicals, test tubes, and other analytical equipment, Carnacki’s carries the tools of *his* trade: candles, herbs, talismans, charged symbols, holy water and of course his Electric Pentacle. And just as Thorndyke is well-versed in the niceties of the law and the developments of forensic science, Carnacki is a deep student of esoteric and occult literature. Although unpaid, he is not an amateur in the sense of a mere dabbler, but is profoundly committed to his unusual vocation.

This hard-headed, unflinching approach to his craft makes Carnacki’s encounters with the supernatural all the more compelling. In the four or five “pure” occult cases, where what Hodgson calls the “Ab-Normal” is either the sole or strongly the uppermost element, we feel Carnacki’s isolation and vulnerability as grotesque forces push at the boundaries of this world, their

power the more fearful because we see they are confronting a man of courage who knows his work. In this scene, for example - “There came a sense as of dust falling continually and monotonously and I knew that my life hung uncertain and suspended for a flash in a brief, reeling vertigo of unseeable things” (‘The Whistling Room’) – the image of the dust falling is a finely desolate hint at the insignificance of humanity within the fall of ages, and at the same time conveys silence and ominousness: we think, “what happens when the dust stops?”

Or, again, in ‘The Gateway of the Monster’, Carnacki’s vulnerability is stressed: “I had for a moment that feeling of spiritual sickness as if some delicate, beautiful, inward grace had suffered”. In that simple, poetic phrase, Hodgson conveys to us that Carnacki is not simply the muscular hero who depends upon physical prowess nor a calculating machine of cold intelligence, as in some detective fiction of the period. The sense of personal violation in the phrase strikes the reader forcibly. The character is more human, more a prey to emotions and sensations than is common in the genre. His mortal fear, which he freely acknowledges, is suppressed only by his sheer determination, and his deep understanding of the forces he faces.

This powerful element of the stories helps them transcend the suggestion that they work only as cheap suspense thrillers. Several commentators, as well as Lovecraft, have implied that *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder* is an aberration in the Hodgson canon, motivated mainly by commercial considerations. Peter Tremayne (*Masters of Terror, Volume 1*, 1977) contrasts the stories with his other work, and implies they were meant to be merely “money-making”: Ian Bell calls the stories “considerably inferior” to Hodgson’s other work (in an article for *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, December 1985). Sam Moskowitz (*Out of the Storm*, 1975) says they are “deliberate pot-boilers” with a “weak” story-frame and an almost totally unvisualised lead character. But I suggest these assessments do the author a serious

injustice. They may have been shaped to appeal more to a popular readership, but that is not their only motivation: Hodgson puts himself and his fervid imagination into all his work. There are a number of good reasons for regarding the Carnacki stories as an integral part of his vision.

Firstly, they retain and bring into sharp focus the sense of a vast cosmic battleground that Hodgson conveyed so strongly in *The Night Land* (1912). The image of the “night-black, dead planet, with the remains of the human race...besieged by monstrous, hybrid and altogether unknown forces”, as Lovecraft memorably evoked, is quite literally brought down to earth in the Carnacki adventure of “The Hog”, where “the monstrosities of the Outer Circle” have “desires regarding us which are incredibly more dreadful to our minds when comprehended than an intelligent sheep would consider our desires towards its own carcass”. The faltering Electric Circle which, for the time being,

protects the last humans in the Night Land is found in microcosm in Carnacki’s personal psychic safeguard, the Electric Pentacle. Yet there is a difference. In the far-future Night Land, humanity has all but lost: in the Carnacki stories, all is still to fight for, and the protagonist is our warrant that the voracious elemental forces can be staved off. We should regard the stories as providing a tauter, more disciplined evocation of the vision Hodgson lays out at greater length in his novels, with a greater concentration on the possibilities of human resistance.

Secondly, the stories do tell us something more about Hodgson himself. There are obvious parallels between him and his lead character, such as the familiarity with photography and seamanship, and more implied references, such as the absence of a father in the Carnacki family home (Hodgson was less than fifteen years old when his own father died). In “The Searcher of the End House”, the unaccountable knock on the banister at the beginning of the story is said to have been a recollection of a genuinely inexplicable happening that happened when Hodgson was living with his mother (according to R. Alain Everts, in *Some Facts in the Case of William Hope Hodgson*, 1987). Carnacki is credited with having an “inward, unused sense” in “The Gateway of the Monster”, and an “extraordinary and peculiar nervousness” in “The Searcher of the End House”, and it has been suggested that Hodgson himself experienced these too, and was something of a psychic “sensitive”. We know also that Hodgson was angered and disturbed by the physical abuse he suffered as a boy aboard ship in his Merchant Navy days, and something of that proud resistance to attack is surely to be seen in the way Carnacki fights back against the gross intrusions from cosmic monstrosities. It is certainly arguable that no other character in all of Hodgson’s fiction possesses so many of his own attributes.

We should be wary, therefore, of dismissing the Carnacki stories as simply commercial episodes. Julian Symons (*Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime*



Novel – A History, revised edition, 1985) has suggested the detective story is “The Folk-Myth of the Twentieth Century”, its ritual order and archetypes satisfying our instincts and longings in the same way as the traditional oral tale. He notes, however, that while “at their best crime writers can illuminate the condition of society...they never move...in mystical regions where spiritual truths are being considered”. Conversely, that is precisely what the occult detective story, at its best, does achieve: and the Carnacki stories are real exemplars of that.

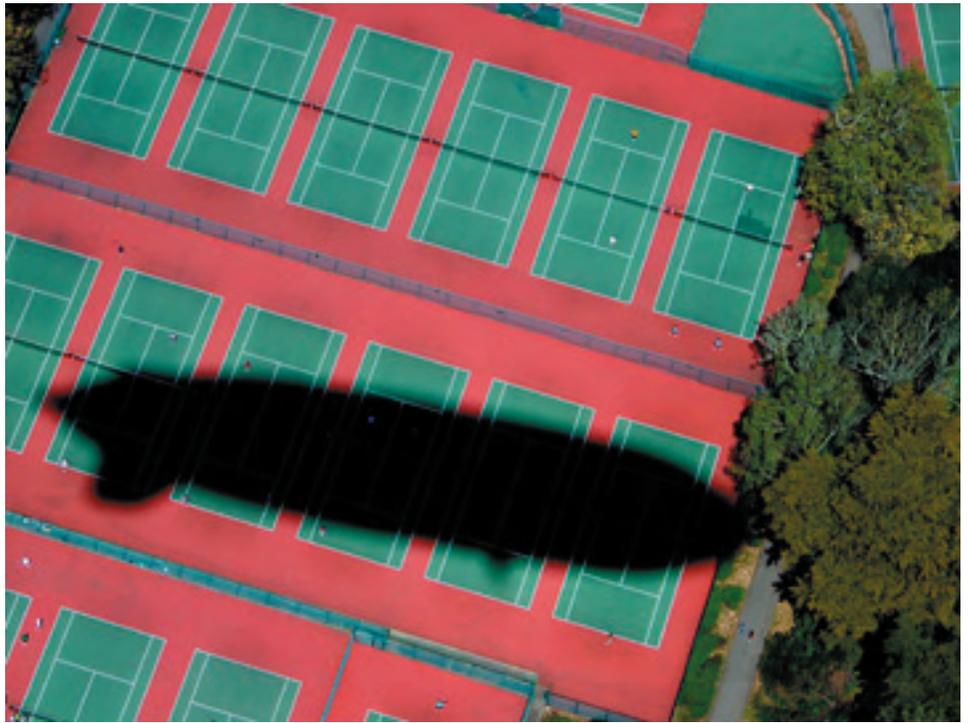
There is a case, I therefore propose, for treating the stories with some of the respect accorded to *The House on the Borderland* and *The Night Land*. Although he is described as a “Ghost-Finder”, Carnacki does not deal merely with the pallid wraiths of Gothic tradition, but rather with the same vast dark gulfs and predatory abominations envisioned

in the two novels. Moreover, much more so than in the longer narratives, we are drawn to admire the urge to repel evil. Carnacki is a combatant. Even when he is faced with one of “Hell’s mysteries”, against which “There is no protection”, he pits himself against it, though he knows it is “a crazy thing to do” (“The Whistling Room”). And when, accompanied by his client, he is being sucked into an abyss which “no human has any right to be near, for his soul’s sake” (“The Hog”), he is sustained by “A feeling of furious anger”. Why does Carnacki have this will to resist? Why, when he believes that humanity is an insignificant physical condiment compared with the immense and rapacious forces of the ‘Outer Circle’, does he continue to do battle? While the Carnacki stories may not have the rambling rhapsodical majesty of Hodgson’s major novels, they are in their own way a lucid testament of existential defiance against the abyss.



AIRSHIPS!

Santa Clara County, California. It's the heart of Silicon Valley, once called the Valley of Heart's Delights back when it was one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world. Over the Twentieth Century, the Valley transformed, cutting down trees, growing concrete buildings which would be knocked down to be replaced by newer, stranger buildings when one company died and another rose from the mortgage like Phoenix Landtrust. While London is the focus for Steampunk fiction, it may well be that



Santa Clara county is the center for actual Airship Steampunkery due to two separate eras of Airship Awesome!

Let's start with the early days. Many different groups located in the Valley were trying to create flying devices. John J. Montgomery invented a "Balloon Glider" in the 1880s in the city of Santa Clara (where this writer was born and raised). He continued to create new versions of the Balloon Glider all the way up through the early 1900s, and even sued the Wrights. The Hiller Aircraft Corporation was founded in San Mateo in the 1940s to make helicopters, based on work that had been done in the BArea for more than a quarter century. The need for an airbase that wasn't going to be as effected by bay fog was very important, so the City of Sunnyvale acquired a 1000 acre parcel which is then sold to the Navy for 1 dollar.

In today's terms, that land would be worth roughly 500,000,000 bucks. That's a lot of bread.

The plan for the station was simple: an

airport with facilities for large airships. Germany had made Zeppelins into something that was the obvious wave of the future. Count Zeppelin was the driving force from the late 1800s until his death, when Hugo Eckener took up the mantel. There were several Zeppelins, most famously the Graf Zeppelin and the Hindenburg. The first crash in the Zeppelin business was World War I, which devastated Germany's economy. Eckener brought the Zeppelin back to the skies and started running service across the Atlantic.

Zeppelins were rigid-frame flying ships, very different from Blimps and hot air balloons. The method of flight was simple: make the lift provided by the lighter than air gas held in the airship exactly the same as that of the airship and its contents, then an engine can provide the thrust to move it to different heights and motor it around.

In the 1920s, the Zeppelin was seen as the next big thing, so much so when they were designing what was planned to be the symbol for New York City in



the Modern Age, the Empire State Building, they included a spire and platform that was meant to be a mooring site for Airships! This second wave of popularity ended with the very public fiery crash of the Hindenburg. These things happen.

The US War Department had used several airships in the 1920s, including the Shenandoah, which crashed, and the Los Angeles, which remained in use until 1939. The War Department decided to build two very large Airships, helium-based, and nearly the size of the Hindenburg. These would both be rigid airships, and both were ordered from the Goodyear Zeppelin company of Akron, Ohio. The first of them was named, wait for it... The Akron. The Akron did a tour and then arrived at its home: Lakehurst Naval Station in New Jersey. The Akron was a troubled airship over the 18 months of its service. There were at least three accidents, and it crashed in severe weather in April of 1933. Rear Admiral Moffett was on the ship, and the Air Station where the Akron's sister ship, the Macon, would be moored was named after him.

The Macon had a far more successful service term than the Akron. The Macon was used largely as a Flying Aircraft Carrier, bringing planes up and releasing them at height. The ship made more than 50 voyages, which was far more than the Akron managed. At Lakehurst, there was an existing Hangar that could fit the Akron (it had been built for the Shenandoah and is still one of the largest structures ever built), and Naval Airstation Sunnyvale, as it was known at that point, needed one, so a giant Hangar, nearly the



same size as the one at Lakehurst, but slightly smaller (we're talking less than a foot from what I understand). This was to be the site for storage of the Macon and there were also mooring towers as well.

The Macon also crashed due to structural damage coupled with operator error in 1935. It lasted slightly longer than the Akron. Whereas the Akron's crash included large loss of life, the Macon only saw two crew members killed, one from a fall when he decided that the ship wasn't going to make it and jumped, and the other from drowning when he tried to return to the wreck to recover some personal effects. The Akron crash had led to the War Department requiring life vests and inflatable rafts be carried on all airships. There were 76 survivors.

Moffett Field grew up around the Hangar, now called Hangar One. There were two other very large hangars built, both of which were built of California Redwood, not steel and aluminium like Hangar One. This also meant that they weren't covered in materials that contained PCBs, the contamination from which has led to serious movements to tear Hangar One down. The other Hangars remained through the days of Moffett Field as a Naval Airstation, which ended with the Clinton Administration's closing of many military installations. The property was partly turned over to NASA, which now runs NASA Ames Research



Center on the site. Private groups also came on-board to house themselves in former Naval buildings, including Carnegie-Melon University, San Jose State University, and for a while, The Computer Museum History Center, now called the Computer History Museum.

The Zeppelin idea has run underground for years. Novels by people like Michael Moorcock have kept the idea of Airships alive. Perhaps it was the same spirit that led to the formation of a Steampunk Fandom that also led to the resurgence of Airships. In the 1990s, a design study was undertaken by Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik (Zeppelin Airship) to see if Airships were viable. This led to a prototype which first flew in 1997 and then the Zeppelin NT SN01, later called the D-LZFN Friedrichshafen, which was launched in 2000 and flew more than 3,600km.

Starting in 2001, the Zeppelin NT line started to be delivered, giving tour flights over Germany. They built three more, and one was even sent to Botswana to conduct an aerial survey. The fourth Zeppelin was optioned by Airship Ventures, a company formed by Alexandra and Brian Hall of Los Gatos, California. The ship came across, passing through Texas, before arriving at Moffett Field, one of its principal mooring ports. Strangely enough, the first weekend they ran flights was the same weekend as the first Steampunk convention just a few miles up the road in Sunnyvale.

Airship Ventures now does a number of amazing 'Flightseeing' tours. They fly out over the Silicon Valley, for a price that is most affordable for those of the Silicon Valley elite. They also have flights out of Oakland, and I believe those go out over Wine Country. There is also a flight from Moffett Field to Long Beach that they run a couple of times a year. My friend Yvette and her husband went on a recent run of that flight, which included Buzz Aldrin on the passenger list. They even did some whale watching from the gondola!

There are now four flying Zeppelins in the world, the ones that are flying are Semi-Rigid airships. These ships are much

smaller than those that flew in the 1920s and 30s, but they are still impressive when they are looming over your car.

The other day, while driving in the deepest heart of Sunnyvale's residential area, I got a feeling like I was being watched. I looked over my shoulder and there was a looming airship, probably 150 feet off the ground, huge in the sky. I actually felt a bit freaked until I realized that I was living in the Age of Airships, and nothing is better than that.

Is it?



REVIEWED: IGNITION CITY

Written by Warren Ellis, Illustrated by Gianluca Pagliarani, Inks: Chris Drier, Color: Digikore Studios.

Publisher: Avatar Comics:

www.avatarpress.com

Starting with 'Judging the book by...': There are several alternate covers from a classic comic book look to the "rust"ic cross of steampunk and stirrings from the days of Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers to even Capt. Proton.

From a classic Zeppelin-filled Earth of the early 40's-50's to an Earth already launched into space with flights of fancy, fight, and adventurers. We follow the next in that lineage, Mary Raven, daughter of Top Space Adventurer Rock Raven, and the "Explorer's Club". Mary herself chases her dad to the stars. Riding rockets, ray-slinging adventures, wars on other planets and speaking "alien" languages with ease. But now the "spacegirl" is grounded. Earth pulls back from the stars and the "Why are we out there anyway?" types win and all those out-there 'heroes' are just troublemakers.

The governments of Earth repossess the personal rockets of every T-D-H Spaceboy/girl adventurer, deeming non-government-approved 'anything' is hazardous.

Leaving the Adventurers with other skills, to languish at the posh "Explorer's Club", while Spacers/Ray-slingers are grounded at "Ignition City". Mary Raven, all of 26, received news of her Father's death in Ignition City. No reasons, causes. Spurred on she packs and takes off to Earth's only/last spaceport.

The man-made Island on the equator. The only launch point to/from Earth and the Galaxies, home to the Derelict and the derelict adventurers. Adventurers left to fend for themselves amongst aliens and beasts. Heroes left to shadier ideals of a darker grey.

What is it about Ignition City? Rusting hulks of ships, giant robots and people. This Shanty Town of lost and broken starry-sky-eyed folk. Weta/steamy weapons and guns. Why was Rock killed? Was it a last Hurrah against the earth bound rules grating against the Adventurer's Itch? Or did Rock find out something he wasn't suppose to?



Mary wants to know why her daddy died... on Earth. Against the shady locals, lost soles, muses of aliens and Rocket pack Marshals.

An Earth that Could be... What's Ignition City's hold on the toss'd aside Gordon's, Arden's, Derring's, Zarkoff and Rodger's in this dusty port?

Well I don't know... I've only got 4 out of the five series! I think.

Admittedly there are some story holes and hints to a potential second series. If nothing else, a realization of a "possible" future of "spacejunk/steamjunk" nature.

Overall: Waiting for the 'bound' collection and hope that there will be other back-story series.

-w.a.i.t.: MH

BY MICHAEL T. COHEN

DRESSING THE PART

Modding and Distressing, Part II -Modern to Steampunk

Ah, how time has flown! I owe an apology to those of you who read my first installation of this article in Issue 4 and found yourselves disappointed by a lack of follow-up in Issue 5! Hopping from one fine event to another, the Steampunk Exhibition will soon be here and there is far too much work to be done! Be that as it may (and without further excuse), I have promised more information on modifying modern clothing to fit not only the Neo-Victorian (as discussed in the first installation), but also the Steampunk world, and this you shall have!

There are some amazing costumers, jewelers and artists to be found (ETSY and DeviantArt are rife with them, as is the internet at large), and there are sites dedicated to selling Steampunk clothing, accessories and gear (such as steampunkemporium.com, clockworkcouture.com and many others), if you are willing to pay another to create or supply costume pieces for you. If you do not wish (or are not able) to choose this option, do not despair! You shall have quite an array of options to choose from, so long as you are not shy about applying needle and thread to a deserving piece of clothing! I usually travel both roads, buying one special artisan piece that catches my eye and my fancy and making the rest from what I can find.

I am going to make the assumption, (dangerous as that may be), that if you are reading this article, there is a good chance you have some familiarity with, and possibly even opinions about, Steampunk clothing. If you do not, then the first thing I recommend doing is to go to your favorite search engine in the aether and enter the words, "Steampunk Clothing". From here, you can spend hours sorting through, saving and rejecting various costuming ideas and will most likely begin to get a feel for what would or wouldn't work for you. Having at least a crude sketch in your mind (or better yet, on paper), is an essential first step. As with most projects, it helps a

great deal to know *what* you are going to build, before you start putting the pieces together. That said...

The essence of Steampunk, when you get down to brass tacks (and really, who wouldn't want to?), is *creativity*; and one of the things that separates Steampunk attire from that of the modern world is that it hasn't been mass-manufactured, so it doesn't have the cookie-cutter sameness to it that we've become accustomed to. Does this mean you have to start from scratch? Absolutely not! As I hope to have demonstrated in Part I, it is easy (and can be both fun and satisfying) to breathe new life into old (or even new) clothes. As Ms. Gail Carriger mentioned in an earlier issue,

"Be open to the possibilities. One of my most commented upon pieces is a corset I tore apart and covered in buttons, paper clips, and brass spoons. Yes, spoons. People love to see the silly and the unexpected. Shop in a different area of the thrift store. For example, women's vests sometimes also fit men and are usually more Victorian looking. The bric-a-brac section often has bendable bits of metal. Buttons can be changed, pockets can be added, sleeves removed. When you're costuming, try to train your mind to see what a piece of clothing could be, rather than what it is."

This training of the mind can be applied not only to thrift shops, but also to many retail clothing stores as well; the Steampunk aesthetic has crept stealthily into mainstream (and ooh! Couture!) clothing, and its influence abounds these days in small boutiques and collections, high-end departments stores such as Nordstrom and Bloomingdales, and even overstock outlets such as Ross and Marshall's! It's true - I've seen it with mine own eyes. And let me take a moment here to venture an opinion on "mainstream" culture's acquisition of brass buckles, buttons, hats and such... I think it provides a fantastic opportunity. Say what you will about "selling out" or "now EVERYONE will do it so it's no longer worth my time"... I don't believe it for a moment. As Jake von Slatt said so succinctly

BY ARIANE WOLFE, FASHION EDITOR

in his Keynote speech at the 2008 California Steampunk Convention, “There is no way that someone else can ruin the thing that you are passionate about by liking it too!” – this bears repeating (which is why I have).

Clothing – and the world at large, truly if I may – is what you make of it. And I do mean this literally. If you have the talent and want to sit in your workshop, hand-crafting each button... please do! It’s not a skill I have and I am likely to want to add one to my collection if given half the chance. If, on the other hand, you are more like me and have “survival sewing” skills, the abundance of clothing available in these stores means that you now have far more choices available to you for modification. Are you seeing too many people wearing the same great military-looking jacket or black waist cincher you wanted to wear? You still can. Start with that piece, strip a few things off, add a few more and you will have a unique piece of clothing, as close or as far from the original as you like. The only boundaries here are your creativity (and perhaps your wallet, which I why I adore thrift shops).

There are a couple of ways to approach Steampunk clothing and characters, and Ms. Carriger went into quite a bit of detail on that topic in the second edition of Exhibition Hall for us, so we won’t delve too far into it here – she is quite the expert, and I recommend reading her thoughts on the matter whenever possible. The basic gist is that you can either develop a character or persona first and look for items that person would wear... or you can peruse various stores, thrift shops and sales, perhaps raid someone’s attic if you are fortunate enough to have access to such a treasure, and build an outfit (and perhaps a character) out of the pieces you find. Either way, you’ll be looking at old clothing with new eyes. I tend to start with the character: who do I want to be? What does she want her clothes to say? What does she like and dislike? Some of the most fun I’ve had was “**taking my character shopping**”... I would decide who & what the character was, close my eyes and meditate for a moment on *being her*, take a deep breath, open my eyes

and then walk around the shop, letting “her” find things she wanted to wear.

I could go on for quite some time about the fun to be had looking for clothing and accessories, but I shan’t. Regardless of how and where you find your items, find them you shall, and then the Big Question will inevitably come to light: “What now?” Now... is when the fun starts. While some of what we call “modding” refers to actually cutting, altering and/or sewing a piece of clothing, some of the modification is in what items we choose to put together and how we wear them.



These shots of Sam (Sepia by Duane Stevens; color by Mike Pecci) are a good example of this. Very little was done to alter each actual piece; the creativity was in how they were put together. Sam’s hat is a replica of a soft aviator’s helmet, found in the Halloween section of a thrift store; this with the sword in one case and field glasses in the other formed a focal point for the rest of the look. Tan knit pants were tucked into boots to emulate riding breeches, the white shirt was left un-tucked and the longcoat was layered over everything, and she chose to use a basket purse crossed over her shoulder, all to give the look of a traveler who has been out on the roads (or perhaps up in her airship) for a long time. One of my first Steampunk outfits was put together this way as well...



(detail from a Photo by Mike Pecci) My character, Miss Skittles, is based on a woman who actually lived in the Victorian era and who was a horsewoman of renown (well alright, “notoriety” might be more apropos). One of the things she was famous for was that she wore a man’s Porkpie hat, so I decided that was going to be the thing I centered the outfit around, and purchased one from a Hatter (quite disappointingly sane), in San Francisco. I found a

woman online who made goggles, ordered a pair, and when they arrived, I put them on my hat. The unexpected bonus was that a lovely piece of tan tooling was wrapped around the goggles when they arrived, and I promptly added that to the hat as well, creating the veil you can see in the back. *Found* items can be wonderfully quirky and add character to your attire! The rest of this outfit is a matter of layering, and adding over time. I had the overskirt – it’s a silk wrap around and I decided not to; the underskirt came from Goodwill, as did the boots (which have since been replaced by low-heeled riding boots – another thrift shop find), the gloves and the lace over-jacket. The glasses were \$1 at a drugstore (!), the necklace is a second-hand pendant watch that was around \$4, and the case I’m carrying once held a martini shaker and glasses inside but makes a lovely little train case. The waist cincher I will admit to splurging on... it is a Dark Garden piece that I fell in love with and put on layaway until I could finish paying for it. It has become a mainstay of my Steampunk wardrobe (the original Skittles would never have gone out in public uncorsetted – though of course, you wouldn’t have *seen* hers, either) and I feel it was well worth the money and the wait.

Sometimes, creative matching and layering is not enough; you need to change a piece of clothing from what it is into what

you want it to be. This next piece is a jacket I modded a short while back. This is one of those items I mentioned earlier... these were wool blazers that had no ornamentation other than buttons up the front. There were several of them, from a costume shop that had closed, and I wanted mine to look more Victorian, more Steampunk and a bit more over-the-top. (Photos by me)



I took some gray plaid that was leftover from a Dickens Fair costume and lined the lapels with it, then sewed a purple-and-gray trim along the edges.



The buttons had already been added – and they were wonderful, so I left them. Next, I rolled up the cuffs and added some of the plaid, to hold them in place. I didn’t want to damage the original cuff, so I sewed around the

edges. I found a wonderful upholstery trim at a discount fabric store and sewed it onto both shoulders as epaulettes and also along the waistline... and there it is.



(Photo by Cindy Lu)

I thought this was a great example of the “sum being greater than its parts”... I did a few odd things to the jacket, but the overall effect really works.

I could go on for quite a while longer (as you undoubtedly realize by now), but I am running out of space and out of time. Modifying clothing for Steampunk is easy and can be fun. The possibilities are virtually unlimited, as are the variations on the theme. If you know who your character is, you can start there... otherwise, find a

piece of clothing or an accessory that you love, and build the costume – and perhaps even the character – from it. One thing I have learned in over 25 years of costuming, is that, at least for me, an outfit is seldom “done”... I change them and add to them over the years, and especially for the world of brass and steam, the subsequent layering enhances the look and lends depth to the overall effect. I wish you many thrilling thrift shop ventures and satisfying hours of crafting your costumes!



Diarmant Creations
Rafa Maya

The Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition Brings Alternate History Back to the Bay Area – Bigger, Bolder and Brassier Than Ever!

BERKELEY, January 19, 2010--The 2008 California Steampunk Convention was just the beginning. Renewed as The Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition, this flagship event returns to the San Francisco Bay Area March 12-14, 2010 presenting a world of polished mahogany, leather and brass, where steam power, airships and clockwork are the cutting edge of technology; a neo-Victorian experience, spanning from the 1830s to the early 1900s and from cultivated London to the rugged coast of San Francisco.

The 2008 event was the first dedicated Steampunk convention in the US and possibly the world. It was attended by nearly 600 guests, had a Vendor Hall with 25 diverse vendors and hosted 19 programs in two different tracks, including presentations by luminaries such as “Maker” Jake Von Slatt and WETA Workshops’ Greg Broadmore.

The Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition has moved to the Hilton Garden Inn in Emeryville, CA for 2010, preparing to host an estimated 1000+ attendees. It will offer a huge Traders’ Concourse and over 25 programs in three tracks including academic presentations, panel discussions and hands-on “Maker” workshops.

Our Guests of Honor are: ***Phil and Kaja Foglio (Artists - Girl Genius), James Blaylock (Author - Homunculus, The Digging Leviathan, Land of Dreams), and Jon Sarriugarte (Maker - The Golden Mean, Electrobite).***

Appearances also include “Steampunk Scholar” Mike Perschon, Tor Books Editor Liz Gorinsky and acclaimed new Steampunk author Gail Carriger (Soulless, Orbit Books).

New for 2010 is an amazing outdoor Exploratory Steam and Kinetics Enclosure, featuring The Golden Mean snail art car, Tom Sepe’s “Whirlygig Emoto” hybrid steam motorcycle, and steam vehicles, caliope and a live steam table from the Crew of the Neverwas Haul!

For evening entertainment, Exhibition guests can trip the light fantastic at the Steampunk Ball, don their Steamy best to compete in the Costume Competition and gather for the illustrious Party-at the Center of the Earth. Special \$99 room rates are available at the hotel for Nova Albion guests on a first-come, first-served basis and can be booked at: www.steampunkexhibition.com/hotel-reservations/.

The Nova Albion Steampunk Exhibition is a celebration of all things Steampunk, from Gaslamp fantasy to clockwork mechanicals and everything in-between. The event is a chance for fans, authors, makers, tinkerers, adventurers and folks of all stripes to gather, converge, discuss and experience the excitement and the possibilities of an alternate History-That-Might-Have-Been.

\$60 Early Bird tickets are on sale now at: <http://www.steampunkexhibition.com/tickets> - prices will increase to \$75 at the door.

