

The Devniad

Book 69b

un zine de Bob Devney
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Orbita Dicta
Heard in the Halls of
Arisia 2001
Boston Park Plaza Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
January 13, 2001

Actually this science fiction/fantasy/comics/TV/movies/gaming/costuming convention ran Friday Jan 12 through Sunday Jan 14, but I could attend for only one day.

Since it's just a month before my home con, Boskone, it had been several years since I'd managed to cram Arisia into my so-called life. As noted above, it's still a lot more about media and a lot less about books than Boskone or Readercon or even a Worldcon. This attracts a younger, rowdier, at least marginally slimmer, more high-energy (OK, sexier) crowd that makes a nice change.

On the downside, there are significantly fewer pro writers to encounter. So the conversation on the panels suffers somewhat. And in my eternally arrested eager-English-major adolescence (it's a truism that veteran fans go to cons to meet and party, not to panel), that's among the best parts.

Of course, in my panel-humping rut I go about Arisia all wrong. One dimly glimpses that this con's real action seethes in the costume events, dances, and gaming parlors. In the parties. Given the age, energy, and PDAs of many of the fans, perhaps in the bedrooms. And in the up-all-night media rooms, which (supplementing a rich horde of old horror flix, Hollywood blockbusters, and scads o' anime beamed right to your room TV) screen a first-class,

smartly selected slate of "movies that have to be seen with a crowd of obsessed fen in order to get the whole effect, the kind of thing you won't get at home on television."

So you can eyewallow in everything from WW II stag films to Melies' 1905 Ur-SF-film *From the Earth to the Moon* to *The Cell*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *The Princess Bride*.

From the Fashion Police Blotter: the Arisia crowd may be younger than that of many other cons, but it's (paradoxically) more leathery.

In fact, it's like a cow's vision of hell. Yes, there are lots of the usual folk in denim or feathers or bondage black broadcloth or tee-, aloha-, or under-shirts. But a membranous minority of the fans overflowing the meeting rooms and creaking down the halls are wearing leather jackets, leather vests, leather boots, leather pants, leather capes, leather bustiers, I don't know, leather *kimonos* — the first crafty cordwainer who figures out how to make see-through leather contact lenses will make a fortune here.

Arisia's venue, the venerable Boston Park Plaza Hotel in the heart of the city, has location location location going for it, certainly. There's even good eatin' to be had in most price ranges within *actual walking distance!* (Other con hotels sometimes calculate this vital metric wearing 7-league boots.) But some aspects of its antique convention space could win it the title of Escher Hilton East.

Getting from, say, the grand dealer's room on the 2nd floor mezzanine up to the bedroom-bazaar dealer's row on the 5th floor means vermiculating one's way

through labyrinthine, low-ceilinged, pipe-festooned corridors and stairways, feeling much as must the gold-digging servants of Caliph Abdullah Al Mamun in 820 A.D. as they crawled dustily up the Ascending Corridor into the Queen's Chamber deep in the scary dark bowels of the previously unbreached Great Pyramid of Khufu.

Although I'll bet those guys wore less sweaty leather.

I like the mezzanine, though. Grandly poised above the also quite useful lobby, it's the con's best place to meet and greet, to be seen or make a scene.

Enough of my own opinions, let's get to everybody else's. As usual, the following con quotes present in crazily assembled mosaic *[with my own setups and asides in brackets like, well, this]* one man's aural history of his con, filtered through the usual suspect haze of confusion, bad handwriting, failing memory, and perhaps a few outright fibs ...

[Fan and old friend Kate Waterous begins my con experience on an up note]

I'm very happy these days. I met this guy at Chicon, and we're going hot and steady. Although he lives in Seattle, which makes it a little difficult ... He's at Rusticon out there this weekend, so we're both conning.

[In the panel on Star Trek at 35, another friend, writer Michael Burstein, hails the helmsman]

Takei's a really nice guy. If anyone deserves to have a new series built around him, it's him. It's *not* William Shatner.

[Laughter/cheers from audience.]

[Media critic Dan Kimmel says the franchise's continuing popularity makes marketing easy]

If they slap the *Star Trek* name on it, it'll sell —

[Fan Nomi Burstein agrees]

— *Star Trek: The Cooking Channel!*

[Kimmel on how to continue the streak]

Make a series of TV movies. Keep the franchise alive that way. Play around with different ideas ... "Oooh, that *Star Fleet Academy* show seemed to work. Oh, that *Captain Sulu* movie seemed to work" ... And in the pilot episode of *Starfleet Academy*, Wesley is hired as Dean of Student Life.

[Patiently, one of Analog's rising stars explains that, despite the way I styled his name in my promo flyer of old con quotes, it's actually]

S-h-a-n-e T-o-u-r-t-e-l-l-o-t-t-e.

[In the corridor, a friendly fan who handled my preregistration, Happy Thomas, shows off newborn minifan Quinn Ochs Thomas]

He's 7 1/2 months. Aren't you! This is his first con. Yes, good con, lots of things to eat!

[In the Retro SF panel, writer Ramona Louise Wheeler recalls the time her editor at Analog bestowed a real rah rah compliment]

Stan Schmidt has kind of off-handedly compared my work to Heinlein ... It's space opera, with just enough hard science to keep Stan happy —

[Ernest Lilley of SFRevu responds faster than you can say "Skyway Soap"]

— So Ramona: the first sentence of your book *Have Starship, Will Travel*. Would it be, "You see, I had this starship"?

[Speaking of obscure wordplay, try this: fan Scott Green recalls a real Tilley of a claim from The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction]

People may not remember this, but *F&SF* used to designate itself as the "New Yorker of Science Fiction."

[In one of the weirder father/son pairings ever recorded, Green links the creator of the iBot super-wheelchair and brand-new It personal transport to the artist of Tales from the Crypt and Shock Illustrated]

Dean Kamen is the son of Jack Kamen, the great EC comic book illustrator who's still alive and kicking.

*[Three giggling at-best-twentysomething
femmefans in back are asked by Old Man Lilley
for their personal definition of "retro SF"]*

Uh, the kind of SF books that are too old
for us to have read?

[At his Arisia Fan Guest of Honor Interview, the unfailingly loquacious Wombat (jan howard finder) provides a brief survey of world fandom — and an intriguing plug for February's Boskone Special Guest Cohen]

You know you are in Canada when they charge you for your hot dog in the con suite ... In Australia, they have parties, although the hotels make that very expensive ... In Britain, you don't have a con suite. Because everybody's in the bar.

Only two people at British cons ever managed to clear the bar ... One was Bob Shaw, with his little "scientific talks" — all about his latest scientific discovery ... The other is Jack Cohen, who's a reproductive biologist. So his talks are always about sex.

[Waiting for the Guest of Honor Reading to commence, young fan Jeanette Healy looks so delicately pretty in the beautiful white ballroom dress she made herself that you'd never guess she's a junkie]

I only picked up *Cordelia's Honor* because I knew Bujold was going to be the GOH here, and they were going to have a dance based on her writings. Actually, I only started it to pick up costuming ideas.

It didn't quite work out that way. I went right through reading all 10 in the Miles series in the last couple months. And now, I am addicted.

[Said GOH Lois McMaster Bujold introduces a chapter from her first fantasy since 1993's The Spirit Ring]

My new publishers are Eos. Used to be Avon Eos, now belongs to HarperCollins ...

For my next book, the publication date is August. Eos will have chapters on their Web site sometime in March ... It's called *The Curse of Chalion*.

... Now I'll plunge you into a new world, with new characters.

[On the mezzanine, Boston-area fan Charley Sumner can't wait to get out of town, the traitor]

I'm almost thinking of voting for Charlotte this year. But I really wanted Cancun. I like Worldcons for *travel*.

[In the panel on the Year in Review: Movies, fan John Black teases the audience about Crouching Tiger, Sleeping Dragon]

But didn't you just think it was a silly kung fu movie —

[And is scorched by the fiery tongues of their passionate response]

— It was a romance!

— It was Jane Austen!

— It was *opera*!

[Standing next to me in back, Charley Sumner keeps muttering asides more interesting than what the panel is saying; as for instance]

It went straight to video, but *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command: The Adventure Begins* is a great self-referential parody of pulp SF movies.

[I think Dan Kimmel said this, so it's to him that Amblin's lawyers should direct all legal notices]

The one I dread going to see is *AI*. Stanley Kubrick's last movie, directed by Steven Spielberg. I can't think of a worse combination.

[One of this year's best SF films hit number 89 on the all-time world box office, but fan Sam Jones points out X also equals an even better number]

X-Men is the top-grossing non-sequel opening weekend film of all time.

[Text of a pin worn by a woman in the hall who looks like she took her own advice]

BOOTS FIRST, THEN CORSET

[The guy in the crowd who declares this so proudly never considers it may suit us just fine]

I've never been to a Boskone!

[Waiting for the Artist GOH Slide Show, fan Alexis Layton compares the artist's name up on the screen against a document in his lap and notices a tiny (OK, titanic) slip-up]

They spelled his name wrong — on the title page of the *Program Book*!

[NESFAn Leslie Turek continues our talk about terrific typos; looking stuff up later, I think she may have in mind here 1987's Get Off the Unicorn, but still!]

Anne McCaffrey wrote a book called *Get of the Dragon* — "Get" meaning progeny? And it was printed as *Get Off the Dragon*.

[The GOH slide show — a slow-paced multimedia extravaganza — commences and washes us in music, dolphin sounds, waves, and breathing behind many dissolves and closeups of details from the work of Polish/French artist Wojtek Siudmak:

I like particularly the cathedral with a river spilling under the door, waterfalling down from an old plateau; the face eaten away by water; the giant with a ringed planet/moon system where his head might be; and the holes in an angel's ragged wings ... afterwards Siudmak, looking like a shy, clever professor in gray jacket, black shirt, and white hair proves that, even speaking through his French interpreter, he knows how to turn on le charme]

Boston is a very beautiful city, and you are very nice people!

[He's also gracious to hardworking con chairbeing Elka Tovah Menkes, collapsed on a couch in front]

I'd like to thank Missus Elka.

[About his work, he conveys a French version of "you aint seen nothin yet"]

Unlike a writer, I have never felt the psychosis, the panic of being faced with the blank white page. I have a vast supply of ideas waiting, going through my mind like the meteorites.

... For 3 months, I exposed my work last year at the Eiffel Tower ... People came from Norway, Brazil, Japan, the U.S., Canada — even the Arabs were there.

I was expecting that everybody would react very differently, coming from different cultures, nations, realities. But the reaction was very similar. Finally, perhaps, it's the emotion that is universal.

[Has he read many SF writers?]

I don't have much time to read science fiction. But I have been tremendously impressed by Philippe Cadique — the most extraordinary of science fiction authors — and also Jacques Vahnce.

[Bravely revealing my uncultured boobosity, I sheepishly ask for the spelling of this great French SF author FeeLEEP kayDEEK — only to have some savvy audience members call out the solution to my derangement]

— Philip K. Dick!

[And his art influences?]

My favorite surrealist is Bracelli. *[The pretty damned obscure Italian Giovanni Battista Bracelli, I presume after about an hour of extra research.]* An engraver of the 17th century. And of course, Dali. But in spite of Mr. Dali's genius, sometimes he stole Bracelli's ideas.

... Yes, Bracelli was an engraver who did about 100 small diagrams in his life. Each person was drawn with the elements of his trade ... A carpenter was drawn with feet in the shape of a table, and the body was made of drawers. As in Dali's sculpture of the Venus di Milo with drawers ... These ideas were really inspired by Bracelli, and that's not cool.

[Afterward, Siudmak's translator — a local expert hired for the con — reveals one reason (besides being French herself, I mean) she seems so animated]

This is an honor for me, and such a change! Here, this is a fine artist — not someone who has to defend himself. Most of my translation work is for the poor people stopped by the INS, you know?

[At the panel on The Fanzine and the Internet, gamer and ziner Peter Maranci discusses paper vs. ether; specifically, why e-zines may never replace, er, let's call them p-zines]

You can't lift your monitor up out of the way as easily as your APA when the cat gets in the way. As he always does!

[Moderator Deb Wunder feels the zines they are a'changin, though]

... I don't think zines are going to die.
But they may mutate.

[Word's up from writer Ramona Louise Wheeler about Lexx]

There's a show on the Sci-Fi Channel that's really excellent: *Lexx*. For once on TV, the sex is part of the story.

[Well met in the hall, writer/fan Fred Lerner recalls reaction to a trip recently reported in his fine zine Lofgeornorst]

When I said I was going to Estonia, people said, "Why are you going to Estonia?" And I would say, "Because people say to me, 'Why are you going to Estonia?' instead of 'Well, last time I was in Estonia ...'"

This year, we're going to Iceland. You'll be reading about it.

[Fred also contributes this quote of writer Cecelia Tan's from the panel on The Alien in Human Society; as a marketer, I resemble this]

You don't know that you exist in America until you get marketed to.

[A small but choice audience assembles for the purpose of Remembering Joe Mayhew, notable Washington-area fan artist/writer/conrunner/character who died last year at age 57; veteran con enabler Hal Haag recalls Joe's diplomatic ways]

When he did the Art Show *[at Balticon]*, he would lead a tour of what he called The Ten Best Pieces in the Art Show. Not the ones that were getting the awards. Or that were picked by the staff. They were just the ones *Joe* liked.

Although the voting wasn't in yet. And although some artist he'd mentioned to the tour was "terrible" would come up to us in tears ...

[Fannish musician Erwin "Filthy Pierre" Strauss sounds a similar note about Joe]

Everybody was entitled to his opinion —

[However, in the audience, fan Jeff Olhoeft explains why it never seemed to matter]

— But he wasn't that mad if you disagreed with him.

[I think this is still Haag talking, in a digression about Asimov's great though lately less-than-svelte editor]

Gardner Dozois was used as a model for an Army recruiting poster when he was in the service. He was like 19 years old and 130 pounds ... You could make a lot of money off Gardner if anybody found one of those posters now.

[Baltimore colleague Colette Fozard tunes back to the Joe Show]

I wonder if he knew something was coming. Because he gave me all these items for the Balticon auction ... including all four covers from *Bucconeer*. And all these items from his personal collection.

[Haag closes quietly]

At his services, we were thinking we could have held a con instead: JoeCon. We had quite a few fans, and an art show with Joe's self-portrait, and five Worldcon chairs ...

[In the panel on A Writer's Tools, Keith DeCandido touts some topical tips]

Both the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America and the Mystery Writers of America have whole sections of their Web site on getting the ergonomics right.

... The lapdesk for your laptop is the most wonderful thing in the Levenger catalog.

... For a long time, when I was an editor for Byron Preiss for 5 years, I sat in what I called The Spine-Chewing Chair.

[Sherry Briggs on that age-old questions, What Do Editors Want?]

They want Courier Clean, not some weird font.

[DeCandido on helping select the 100 Best Comics of the Century]

Picking, say, *Fearless Fosdick* versus *Maus* — it's not so much a question of apples and oranges as apples and trout.

[A boxty, we learn during a tasty if hasty dinner at M. J. O'Connor's Irish Pub in the hotel block, is a potato pancake wrapping chopped beef and vegetables, kinda like a Gaelic omelet; when I answer her questions about the con with some self-deprecation about "all we weirdos," the pretty blonde waitress displays the wisdom of one who faces the public daily]

At least with you guys, the weirdness is all right there on the surface.

[Note for next year: watch masquerade from the comfort of the con suite's TV ... instead of arriving at the auditorium door 1 minute past the announced starting time of 8:30, only to encounter this message from the door guy]

We've got standing room only at this [another door guy whispers in his ear] uh, we just ran out of standing room, too. Sorry.

[Retreating to the fanzine lounge, I find it about the size of a dungeon's phone booth; hanging around is a guy named, if we believe his badge (always a mistake at Arisia), Zzoz ... he's wearing an amusing button harking back to Pulp Fiction — the dungeon scene, natch]

I DON'T GO POSTAL.
I GET MEDIEVAL.

[My notes are a little stunned; is this when Zzoz gets into a lively discussion with another black-clad gentlemen, D. T. King, on the topic of *Things You Don't Want To Hear Your Dom* (that's *Dominatrix* to we leatherless types) Say?]

— Oops.

— You do know how to pick locks, don't you?

— You've got good insurance, right?

[Zzoz — I think it was still him — on a strangely useful chemical he happens to know about; strictly theoretically, of course]

It's called DMSO, the universal solvent. It can cross the skin barrier, but not, say, wax. So what you do is put some wax on your skin, put some DMSO and some garlic on top of that, and shake hands. Pretty soon, the victim will taste garlic.

[King's got a more universal topic in mind]

Time: the universal solvent.

[Another guy, possibly named Dkap (or was this still Zzoz if ever and ever a Zzoz there was; I was getting a bit tired here) sheds some light on a new technology]

OLEDs: organic light-emitting diodes. You can unroll them like wax paper, put them on the wall, and just put power through them to get light. So they're working on getting a computer screen made of OLEDs in plastic. You just unroll it.

[Dkap discusses hotel complaints this weekend (how come nobody ever talks about fanzines in the fanzine lounge?); you should know here that the logo of the Boston Park Plaza shows a swan]

What you hear people say instead of "This hotel sucks" is "I'm not Leda."

[In the beautiful Boston in 2004 party suite, NESFAn Dave Anderson compares the work of upcoming Boskone guest George R. R. Martin favorably to the rest of the field]

So much fantasy out there is groundbreaking only if you drop it.

[Erwin Strauss on which music it takes to soothe the savage fan]

They appreciate stuff that matches the moment. At the Junkyard Wars, I did the Ballroom March from Star Wars ...

[Dan Kimmel looks forward to the Coolidge Corner Moviehouse's February SF fest plans]

They're trying to get a William Shatner film from 1965 — the year before *Star Trek* — called *Incubus*. It's the only movie ever filmed in Esperanto!

... Unfortunately, the festival starts at noon on Sunday, the last day of Boskone. So I always have to leave the con early.

[And speaking of leaving a con early, it's after midnight and Queen Maureen has only stamped my passbook for a day's escape ...]

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

The Scribe of Cambridge, **Gary Dryfoos**, muses on my observation of similarities between Heinlein's "If This Goes On —" and *Soulsaver* by Jim Stevens-Arce, which both contain an underground revolt against a theocratic tyranny:

"... Yeah, but is the revolution being run by the Freemasons? (That's what they were

implied to be in the Heinlein, of course. Despite speculation to the contrary, RAH was not a Mason, but he was obviously impressed by the fraternity, and some of his characters were members. In reality of course, we have trouble organizing a dinner dance in Saugus, let alone nation-wide revolution.)”

Gary, at least with a revolution you don't pay corkage.

The Sage of Etobicoke, **Lloyd Penney**, holds forth as usual on myriad topical topics:

“*Devniad 68*: I understand your brother-in-law's complaint about SF&F failing to miss the intersection of Fun and Literary, if indeed that intersection exists. I've always leaned towards the fun and enjoyable aspects, but there are a section of SF readers who do lean towards the literary. And, in my own opinion, those readers usually forgo any fannish efforts as foolishness, and I find them boring as hell, and twice as stuffy. Give me a good adventure with some decent characters, with a smile or two, and I'll usually enjoy the book. If it doesn't qualify as literature, then there's something wrong with the critic, not the book.

“Given comments [by Yvonne Coats] about the 2000 WFC in Corpus Christi, I hope the 2001 WFC in Montreal will measure up. The green room should be an interesting place, as long as some egos don't raise their heads. [Note to Lloyd: Hah!]

“To Anna Hillier ... Worldcons are addictive. Beware, and then go anyway. It's the perfect excuse to see other cities (and sometimes, other countries), relax, indulge in the comfort of a hotel room, and then see fandom worldwide. 'Taint nuthin' like it. I look forward to Philadelphia because I won't have any parties to throw ... I'll be ... an attendee! Wow!

“*Devniad 69*: ... Agree about having a library close by. It's rare that I've lived close to a library, but that didn't stop me from walking to it to spend the day. What stops me today? The Toronto Public Library tore down the little library across the highway from me, and they're building a brand-new,

much bigger library. We'll be there for its grand opening in the spring. My only worry is that the money was there to rebuild, but won't be there for new books.

“Just got notice of something I never expected to happen ... a high school reunion. In mid-May, all students who attended Park Street Collegiate Institute in Orillia, Ontario, in its 40 years of operation are invited to attend a reunion. I'd always thought that I'd turn it down if it ever happened. Curiosity has gotten the better of me, and I'm going to go and see the old dump. It'll be fun to see all the fat and balding types who were jocks (well, I'm fat and balding, but at least I wasn't a jock), and maybe even Christine, who I had a serious crush on ... We'll see if time was generous or harsh to the Class of '77. I suspect the latter, but I am willing to see which choice has won.”

Lloyd, couldn't disagree more with you and my bro-in-law Bob Kuhn about science fiction & fantasy literature's being mutually exclusive with SF&F fun. I'd say they coexist quite comfortably in writers starting at least with J. R. R. Tolkien and T. H. White and going on to people like R. A. Lafferty and Roger Zelazny, and today — oh, say a third of the pros who come to a sercon like Readercon or Wiscon. Personally, I enjoy a full spectrum of stuff, from the highest-purposed art to junk so low it makes your eyes water. Maybe that's my tee shirt slogan for next con: I LIKE LIT AND SHIT.

The Conscience of Vermont, **Fred Lerner**, responds to a thing last time about how the fungus infesting space station Mir is green and black, leading by twisted means to my conclusion it's been invaded by Libyan space pirates:

“Anarchists also use a black flag. So perhaps Mir has been taken over by anarchist environmentalists?”

Fred: ah, but there was a pesticide, surely anti-environmental, named Black Flag. So this is clearly a disinformation campaign by sinister corporate interests. By the way, who provides *your* massive zine funding?

The Babe of Brisbane, **Erika Maria Lacey**, got talked into some SF consumer choices last ish; and wants to talk me into [shudder] a new fanac project ...

“The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has garnered some rather impressive press over here, and as it is currently showing, I'll probably go see it before too long. For the most part I'll avoid those films that have Asian printed all over them, especially if they involve fighting, for most often they don't have much that'll hold my attention after the first 'ooh, look at them kick butt!'”

“*Soulsaver* looks interesting; I've not seen it on bookshelves here, but perhaps I haven't been looking too hard for when I do I begin to spend money that I don't have. But I'll bear it in mind when looking for something new, and there is a good chance that it'll appear in the local libraries. The library system where I live is fabulous, even though apparently they don't have a person dedicated to purchasing SF ... They go by publisher's recommendations, so I'm hoping that it's on the recommendation list.

“... You might still be able to do the modestly titled *Devney's Book of Death* — the SF fandom version? Track down all sorts of stories and deathbed tales and then put it in one handy (or various handy) volume(s) for folks to refer to when wanting to read about passed SMOFs. Not the foggiest about how one do it — one would need Letters of Agreement to participate in such a program, and then wait around for 10s of years ...”

Erika, what do you think I've got, some sort of NESFA work ethic?

The Tiger of New Jersey, **Evelyn Leeper**, leaps to the defense of her husband Mark, movie critic extraordinaire:

“...Re Gary L. Dryfoos's comment 'I did not read your review of Unbreakable, because these days I trust absolutely NO ONE IN THE WORLD AT ALL without exception, when it comes to not blowing the important bits of movies': He can trust Mark, who refuses to reveal anything that didn't happen in the first five minutes of the film. Mark prides himself on being the only reviewer he knows of who didn't reveal the

secret of *Terminator 2* — or *Ladyhawke*. (Now that's a tough one!) The only exception, I guess, is for historical films — Mark did mention that the Titanic sank.”

Evelyn, you speak as if *Ladyhawke* weren't history. I've always assumed the sight of Michelle Pfeiffer in that blue hood made those Middle Aged guys invent the Renaissance just to show off for her.

FlimFan

Next month, if the Boskone quotes bit doesn't wax too enormous, we'll also cover the big Fave Flix of Last Year story. Which might very well include a couple of the recently seen movies below ...

EXCELLENT:

Cast Away
Traffic

GOOD:

Finding Forrester

Backchat

on *APA: NESFA #367*,
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Unfortunately, to comment on last month's APA I'd have to *find* last month's APA in this vast wasteland of paper.

If I'm not back by next month, send up a flare.