



SFSNNJ Newsletter

Secret Agents, Super Agents

November 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 7p <i>That's Science Fiction!</i> <i>In Like Flint (1967)</i> Hillsdale Library	5	6	7	8 7p <i>Whispers from Beyond</i> 8p <i>Face the Fiction</i> Guest: Lisa Desimini Borders, Ramsey
9	10 8p <i>Suspense Central</i> Title: Crossover : A Cassandra Kresnov Novel / Joel Shepherd Fuddruckers, Rt. 4 *pre-mtg. will be at Fuddruckers	11	12 8p <i>Drawing A Crowd</i> Topic: New Moon Comics, Little Falls, NJ Pre-mtg. Uno Chicago @ 6:30p	13	14	15 2:30p <i>Fantasy Gamers Group</i> Reality's Edge Game Store
16	17	18 8p <i>Tripping the Write Fantastic Author Group</i> Ian Fleming – <i>Casino Royale</i> Borders Garden State Plaza *pre-mtg. @ On the Border @ 6:30p	19 8p <i>Films to Come</i> 4 Star Movie Discussion Group Borders Ramsey Interstate Shopping Center Pre-mtg NY Steakhouse @ 6:30p	20	21	22 2p <i>Infinite Chaos: Temnia Campaign</i> Ehrenfels Manor, Rutherford, NJ
23	24	25 8p <i>Themes of the Fantastic</i> Topic: Spys, Secret Agents, Super Agents New Moon Comics, Little Falls, NJ Pre-mtg. On the Border, Rt. 46 @ 6:30p	26	27	28 8p <i>Modern Masters</i> Title: Breakaway: A Cassandra Kresnov Novel / Joel Shepherd Borders Ramsey Pre-mtg. Mahwah Pizza & Pasta @ 6:30p	29
30						

Face The Fiction Presents

Lisa Desimini

Saturday, November 8, 2008, 7pm & 8p

**Borders Books
Ramsey, NJ 07446
201.760.1967**

Event Name: Face The Fiction

Guest Speaker: Lisa Desimini

The SFSNNJ proudly announces our guest speaker for the November 2008 Face The Fiction: artist & illustrator, Lisa Desimini. Face The Fiction is the SFSNNJ's monthly general meeting, which occurs on the second Saturday of each month.

Lisa Desimini

Artist, illustrator and author of children's books. Her artwork has graced the covers of many book jackets, including Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*, *Pigs In Heaven*, and *Animal Dreams*, the *John Nichols* trilogy, *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech and Charlaine Harris' *Southern Vampire* (Sookie Stackhouse) series.
(www.lisadesimini.com)



What's Inside...

- ?? **October Meeting Recaps: 4 - 9**
- ?? **Out & About: 9 – 11.** This month we are fortunate to have several contributions – *Steve Spinosa* provided two (one from his Arlington, VA trip and one for Sci-Fi Spectacular), *Chris* (Chiller), and *Aubrey* and *Peter* from an event Peter put together. It's nice to belong to such a well-rounded group of busy people. Thanks for the input guys!
- ?? **Peter Gutierrez – 12 – 13.** This month we continue the serial, **The Cruel Mirror: When Horror Movies Are “Based on True Events”** By *Peter Gutiérrez*. This month's installment – *The Lady “Vampire”*. Next month brings *The Possessed*. Enjoy! We also have a great article from Peter this month: **Black and White in a Color World - How Manga Has Retrained Our Rods and Cones** by Peter Gutiérrez
- ?? **A Warhammer Halloween Story** – original short story by Todd Ehrenfels. 14
- ?? **Movie Reviews: 14.** *An American Carol* by Steve S & Gene
- ?? **It Came from the Queue!** by Aubrey Ward 14 – 17. **Jack Brooks Monster Slayer, Prom Night (2008), Baby Momma.**
- ?? **Upcoming Conventions: 18.** PhilCon, Lehigh Valley Comic Con and a look at **2009** with Lunacon, I-Con, AnimeNext.
- ?? Enjoy and please let our contributors know what you think about their work. It's always nice to hear good things.

October Meeting Recap

That's Science Fiction! – Tuesday, October 7

Moderators: Aubrey Ward, Chris Hasselkus

Title: **13 Ghosts**

Recap by: Ann-Marie, Chris Hasselkus

October's That's Science Fiction! was a lot of fun. Aubrey, of course, provided snacks and Halloween plates/napkins - very timely and festive. While we sat enjoying the snacks, we had a special visitor - Super Girl! Yep, Super Girl, complete with blond hair - that kept sticking to an unshaven face - a very short skirt and combat boots. You had to be there. Don't worry - there is photo evidence soon to be available for your viewing pleasure.

The night started off with the 1937 Disney cartoon short, *Lonesome Ghosts*. Ghost Hunters Mickey, Donald and Goofy; get a call to get rid of ghosts in a haunted house. They don't know that the call came from bored ghosts in the haunted house. The ghosts proceed to have fun at Mickey, Donald & Goofy's expense. Gene remembered a toy he had as a child that had the cartoon (kind of like a view master type thing).

We then hunkered down to watch *13 Ghosts* - the original B&W, 1960 version. Somehow it seemed even older than that. Amazing 'special effects' had us amused. We took some liberties with the dialog and storyline. It was a lot of fun and a film we'd never shown before.

After the movie, we cleaned up, and while putting things away, discussed the remake of *13 Ghosts* with Tony Shaloub and Matthew Lillard. It was agreed that we should show the remake at That's Science Fiction! It's very creepy.

Outside, Barry decided to 'shake things up' and suggested Ridge Diner. The suggestion met with enthusiasm and off to the diner we went. It was a very nice diner and we had an enjoyable time there. Conversation was varied, Barry kept trying to get a word in, Jo misbehaved, Todd looked dapper in his sports coat, Aubrey locked Super Girl in the trunk, Liz sat at the head of the table trying to maintain some semblance of control - pretty much the usual. **(AM)**

All I have to say is how great Aubrey looked as Supergirl. Helen Slater has nothing on him! Oh yeah - the film. *13 Ghosts* was a blast from the past. Made in the same year as *Psycho* (1960), it brought back memories. Afterwards, Barry suggested going to The Ridge Diner, which is further north on Kinderkamack Road. Everyone attending the film continued the merriment at the diner. A fine time was experienced by all! **(Chris)**

Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, October 8

Topic: Supernatural/Paranormal characters in comics/graphics

Recap by: Chris Hasselkus

The discussion was supposed to be about dark, foreboding creatures in comics. Not being very familiar with the genre, I was stumped. Rob of New Moon Comics spoke instead about the way DC and Marvel treat bookstores. While DC does everything it can to assist them, Marvel has no use for them and would like to put them out of business. One would think that would be rather counterproductive on Marvel's part, but it seems they would rather deal with the larger chains such as Barnes & Noble and Borders (even though they're not really comic book stores) than true comic book stores, which exist to sell product that a company like Marvel produces - comic books. Go figure.

Face The Fiction - Saturday, October 11

Moderator: Ann-Marie Brown; Co-moderator Steve Spinosa

Guest Speaker: Linda Zimmerman

Recap by: Ann-Marie

We had a special treat for Saturday's Face the Fiction. Not only did we have the creepy location of the Bergen Museum (Sandy said just being in the vicinity of the place creeps her out - the place has a certain 'atmosphere'), but our October guest, Linda Zimmerman scared the pants off of us!

The evening began with Todd and Craig heading off to 'direct traffic' at one entry door, while Jo, Aubrey and Mike P guarded the other. I went downstairs to borrow Aubrey to help with set-up, and while standing there, Mike P starts telling us this is the perfect location for a vampire attack and looked like something from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Great, and here we are trapped like rats in a cage - thanks Mike for that horrific visual - lol. Aubrey and I had no problem quickly vacating and leaving. Jo and Mike to their

October Meeting Recap

fate.

Upstairs things got the finishing touch - we had an abundance of food and drink - we got Todd and company to head up and let Linda have the floor. Floor us she did!

Linda has an all-new power-point presentation with all new stories, locations and a few truly startling photos and even had audio clips - beyond disturbing. Linda chose several local 'haunts' and nearby haunts. Rockland County was prominent in her presentation. In 1908, a facility was to be built by the State of New York for the "feeble minded", called the Eastern N.Y. State Custodial Asylum. One year later, it was renamed Letchworth Village Home for the Feeble Minded and Epileptics after William Pryor Letchworth, a noted humanitarian who advocated the creation of the institution. The center was built in a college style layout nestled among beautiful hills, and the buildings are adorned with Greek porticoes and tall arched windows. Closed in 1996, some of the buildings have been re-used, and others remain vacant, *or are they?* The photos alone were creepy. Another Rockland location was a private home in Pomona. Linda was able to get a very frightening photo there - the malevolence of the apparition caught was palpable. It still freaks her out now, it freaked me out and I wasn't there.

The Castle Tavern in Greenwood Lake not only was part of the Linda's presentation, but Sandy can see it from her deck! Linda's version of the legend surrounding the location matched Sandy's, and both declared the location 'not quite right.'

Fort Montgomery, the Shanley (Shanley not Stanley) Hotel, an abandoned resort upstate all gave us the creeps and shivers. Then there was the Ulster County Jail and its audio clip - eeewwww. A voice and what sounded like cell doors being closed or maybe opened?! We took a short intermission, purchased books, snacked, and then Linda took questions.

I wanted to know what it felt like to be in a location and then after leaving see or hear evidence that you weren't ALONE. Linda confirmed it's unsettling but that she refuses to allow the truly frightening to get the best of her. This was clearly demonstrated when she felt 'attacked' at the asylum but returned to let Mr. Not-so-friendly-ghost know she wouldn't be deterred. Mike P, Bill, Sandy, Paul and several others asked questions that Linda provided great answers to. It was approaching 11p, Linda and her husband had to head out - she had another presentation Sunday. Some people headed home, while some of us had to wait for the museum volunteer to return to lock up. Let me tell you, it is scary being in a dark place - we were the only ones up there - waiting. And that creepy elevator!! Very good meeting, very good time only enhanced by the location.

Suspense Central – Monday, October 13

Moderator: Aurelia Long

Title: ***The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray*** by Chris Wooding

Recap by: Ann-Marie

Suspense Central met on Monday, 10/13 to discuss *The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray* by Chris Wooding.

The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray is an alternate history meets horror meets fantasy. It has a little bit of everything tossed in - magic, monsters, ghosts, wych-kin, wych-hunters, a Victorian London overrun by creatures and, for good measure, a serial killer called Stitch-face. The author does a great job of blending all of the elements into a fun mystery with some genuine scares.

The main character of the story is a wych-hunter, Thaniel Fox. In this alternate London, wych-hunters are paid, very well, by the government to fight wych-kin (creatures born of darkness that stalk London). While hunting a wych-kin, Thaniel finds a girl wandering the streets in the night. She appears to be mad; Thaniel realizes he can't leave her alone, so he brings her home. What he doesn't know is that Thatch, an ancient wych, has possessed the girl, Alaizabel. As Thaniel and his guardian, Cathaline Bennett (also a wych-hunter) try to discover a 'cure' for Alaizabel, they are drawn into a nightmare world even darker than they are used to. While a serial killer, Stitch-face stalks the night killing young women in what is being labeled as the Green tack Murders, a cult, the Wych-kin Fraternity, is stalking the night in a bid to release complete destruction on the world.

Elaborate mazes of stories mesh for a nice complete package. As Thaniel, Cathaline and Alaizabel try to stop the Fraternity they meet up with many characters that help them in their quest. The ultimate showdown with the Fraternity provides some good scares, particularly the Druag that get released (really nasty ghosts from Irish lore).

Those that had read the book enjoyed it immensely and thought it would make a great movie. Those that didn't read (i.e. Todd) will just have to wait and see - lol). Aurelia did a fantastic job of keeping the many characters and story lines straight. Liz had read the book and provided clarification on several points to those who had not read the book. Liz, Chris and Aurelia all read from the book. Aurelia also did her Price Is Right impersonation to show us the symbol of the Fraternity (every time it got mentioned). Gene hadn't read the book, but agreed it sounded like a very visual movie. Remi told us all that if we didn't behave, **Remi-kin** would set things right - she was holding knitting needles, we behaved (well, to the best of our limited abilities).

We had a nice time and discussed the book until 10:00! Did I mention how much we liked it? We wrapped up a little after 10 and discussed upcoming books/topics/etc. Join us next month, once again at Fuddrucker's for Crossover: A Cassandra Kresnov

October Meeting Recap

Novel by Joel Shepherd.

Films to Come - Wednesday, October 15

Moderator: Barry Weinberger

Recap by: Ann-Marie

Films to Come reverted back to its original and much loved form for the October meeting.

Barry opened the meeting by presenting two books: (1) a graphic novel stylebook by Jim Butcher - *Jim Butcher The Dresden Files: Welcome to the Jungle*. and (2) *Locke & Key: Welcome to Lovecraft* by Joe Hill. Both were beautifully detailed and looked promising.

After showing the books, Barry launched into the September recap of films. Up first, the elusive Harry Potter that's been postponed. Part of Barry's "conciliation" *Harry Potter* discussion was about *Equus* (which proved to be a recurring theme throughout the night). When Todd pointed out that *Equus* was about horses being injured, our moderator expressed extreme disinterest - he was thinking along other lines. The next film was *Miracle at St. Anna*. Aubrey had seen the film and considered it "unsettling" in its historical inaccuracy, but overall enjoyed the film. *Burn After Reading* received some discussion as well. Gene and Barry both liked the film, and Barry provided some trivia: (1) the Tower Records that used to be in Paramus (sorry Barry) was used in the movie for the gym scenes and (2) the Coens have an upcoming film, *Yiddish Policeman's Union* based on the book of the same name. *Appaloosa*, *Blindness* (Aubrey said it started as SF then turns into a human drama), *Lakeview Terrace* (Todd couldn't resist and stated "no snakes, no planes" - in order to make it more palatable, Barry related it to Star Wars - Windu), we quickly moved through the rest of the films and jumped to October.

Barry opened the October selections by stating that it was the month of scary movies and the first up was truly scary - *High School Musical 3*. Chilling. *Body of Lies* was next. Our astute moderator noted that this film didn't do better in its opening week because it was "beaten by the juggernaut that is *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*." *Changeling*, *Rachel Getting Married*, *W*, *What Just Happened*, *Religulous* (Barry found it not that funny, not that organized but interesting to that it was on the big screen), *An American Carol* (Gene felt it was 'tired' and used old jokes too much), *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* (all Barry had to say was "we're doomed"). The rest of the October films were coming out this weekend or shortly thereafter.

Next up, November. The upcoming portion included *Australia*, *The Road* (Liz B said the Pulitzer winning book the movie is based on is a very depressing book), *Milk*, *Quantum of Solace* (Bond film), *Role Models*, *Bolt* (Disney), *Nobel Son* and *Repo! The Genetic Opera*.

The announcement was made that closing time was fast approaching. Barry presented a few more books he thought would be of interest: *Special Effects* (his comment as he passed it around provided some mirth), *You Must Remember This: The Warner Brothers Story* and *What Just Happened?* by Art Linson (it coincides with the Barry Levinson movie now out).

We vacated after cleaning up and headed over to the diner to continue discussing movies, TV and debates. Much fun was had and a very enlightening conversation about music took place. As Barry and I were leaving, a truck with a horse trailer pulled in. I looked to see if there were horses inside and there were. I said, "oh look." Barry said, "*Equus!* The food delivery is here." See what happens to moderators!

Join the fun next month as we delve into holiday movies.

Tripping The Write Fantastic – Tuesday, October 21

Moderator: Todd Ehrenfels

Author: **Brian Lumley**

Recommended Title: ***Necroscope***

Recap by: Chris Hasselkus

The author was Brian Lumley with the recommended reading being "Necroscope". Todd waxed eloquently as usual about mostly that book and all of the sequels it has spawned.

Modern Masters – Friday, October 24

Moderator: Todd Ehrenfels

October Meeting Recap

Title: **Renfield: Slave of Dracula** by Barbara Hambly
Recap by: Ann-Marie

Following dinner at Limani Blue Greek Restaurant, a new choice and quite enjoyable, Modern Masters met at Borders in Ramsey to discuss **Renfield: Slave of Dracula** by Barbara Hambly.

The book, written in the same diary format of the original *Dracula* by Stoker, provided the back story to the overlooked character Renfield. The same characters were included in **Renfield: Slave of Dracula** and nothing was changed from the original other than the glimpse into the mind of the tortured Renfield. It was interesting to see this particular character fleshed out and given both a story and a purpose.

Liz had some difficulty getting past the "bug eating" thing, but did want to find out more about the author's take on Renfield and why he did the things he did. Kathleen gave a great summary and answered all of the questions thrown at her. I compared the book to Rob Zombie's version of *Halloween*. In Zombie's version of the 1978 classic, a full story is given to Michael Myers. You're shown why he became a homicidal maniac, the beginnings of 'the mask' and early personality traits. **Renfield: Slave of Dracula**, does the same for Renfield. Here, he is given a family, a history, he is more than the poor deluded creature we see in *Dracula*. It was fun seeing another dimension to this otherwise peripheral character.

We discussed the book and various versions of *Dracula* until 10:00, browsed (Todd was buying everything in sight!), then finished up in the cafe with coffee, snacks and awesome samples of cookies provided by the cafe staff until closing. Join us next month for **Breakaway: A Cassandra Kresnov Novel** by Joel Shepherd.

Themes Of The Fantastic – Tuesday, October 28

Moderators: Bill Wagner & Steve Spinosa

Topic: Paranormal Investigators in SF/horror/fantasy

Recap by: Ann-Marie

The rain and cold didn't deter the Themes group - a nice gathering showed up to discuss investigators of all sorts of paranormal & supernatural characters. There was a plethora of answers and I was surprised at how many things we came up with. I even learned some new titles. To me, that's always a good meeting - when I come away with a list of potential new favorites to read and/or watch. I tried to keep up with all of the answers flying around the table (how does Steve Spinosa do it?!) My poor little fingers were furiously working overtime, but I may have left out or given credit incorrectly - if I left you out or gave your input to someone else - tough - lol! If you had a contribution I bungled, please correct it. Thanks.

Chuck G dominated the meeting. He had contributions I'd never heard of but have me searching for them:

Dr. Silence Phantom Fighter (a pre WWI period character that had all types of paranormal foes), the "shameless knock-off of Hercule Poirot"

Jules de Grandin (Jules de Grandin is a fictional occult detective created by Seabury Quinn for *Weird Tales*. Assisted by Dr. Trowbridge (a Dr Watson-like figure), de Grandin fought ghosts, werewolves, Satanists, etc. in over ninety stories between 1925 and 1951. Jules de Grandin and Dr. Trowbridge lived in Harrisonville, New Jersey. De Grandin was a French physician and expert on the occult, and member of the French Sûreté. Often, the supernatural entities in the mysteries are revealed not to be supernatural, but the actions of insane, evil, depraved human beings.

The entire series of stories has been reprinted in a three volume set called *The Complete Adventures of Jules de Grandin*)

Van Helsing

Ghost Busters **It should be noted that Rob gave us a neat bit of trivia here - the character Slimer in GB was a homage to John Belushi from the cast

Sixth Sense - not the Bruce Willis movie, but a TV series from the 60's well before the film

Indiana Jones - whether he wants to or not, paranormal/supernatural events seem to find him

Men In Black

Carnacki the Ghost Finder (Detective stories in which the great Thomas Carnacki investigates the supernatural using scientific tools, such as photography, and tools that are augmented by theories of the supernatural, such as the electric pentacle, which uses vacuum tubes to repel supernatural forces)

Craig also ponied up at the table:

Lincoln Child's **Agent Pendergast** character (Aloysius X. L. Pendergast is a fictional character appearing in novels by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child.

In the novels, Pendergast is a special agent with the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). He is a favorite among fans for his unique personality, appreciation of culture and his almost supernatural competence)

Hellboy

Forever Knight (I have to point out that Craig thought the pilot of the series with RICK SPRINGFIELD was WAY better than Gerard

October Meeting Recap

Wyn Davies - he'll kick my backside for this one people, but I must bring you the truth - I only tell the truth - lying is for BAD people)

Buffy/Angel

Linda Zimmerman & L'Aura L'Hadik (guest speakers that investigate ghosts)

The Mummy (she's an archaeologist, he's a treasure hunter, but the supernatural finds them, big time)

The Frighteners

Eerie, Indiana

Fringe

Randolph Carter (Randolph Carter is a recurring protagonist in H. P. Lovecraft's fiction. A thinly disguised alter ego of Lovecraft himself, the first tale in which Carter appears--"The Statement of Randolph Carter" (1919)--is based on one of Lovecraft's dreams)

Doc Savage

Chris:

C. Auguste Dupin (C. Auguste Dupin is a fictional detective created by Edgar Allan Poe. Dupin made his first appearance in Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), widely considered the first detective fiction story.^[1] He reappears in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842) and "The Purloined Letter" (1844))

Ghost Hunters

Supernatural - good answer Chris, good answer

Tangina (Zelda Rubenstein's character in Poltergeist)

Bill:

X-Files (Scully & Mulder)

QED (TV series)

Dr. Strange

The Exorcist (Exorcists, **Fr. Merrin & Fr. Karras**, certainly deal w/ the supernatural as a job description in that film - I'd have taken early retirement)

Dresden

Bill also brought up this nifty little tidbit about Peter Cushing and a crossover and then realized he may not be correct.... Bill, Bill, Bill...

Jo:

Freaky Links

Quincy Morris

Kolchak the Night Stalker (poor Bill almost tossed her out of her chair - he wanted to give that answer. I think he may have pinched her under the table but I can't be sure)

Me: in between taking notes and trying to keep mayhem from breaking out, I offered:

Fright Night's Peter Vincent "fearless vampire hunter" character

Blade (of course)

Underworld - Kate Beckinsales' character Selene is a Death Dealer - cool - where do I sign up?)

and, because Todd was stuck somewhere on the PA Tpke, I tossed out **Bloodrayne** (Uwe Boll! Uwe Boll! I no sooner said it, and Craig commented that somewhere on the PA Tpke Todd was screaming, blood pouring from his ears, the hairs on the back of neck standing up, whimpering, "why, why, secure the perimeter, why."

So, we tortured Todd from a distance (impressive), Bill pinched Jo for swiping his answer, Gene sat eerily quiet, and we still managed to have an awesome discussion that has increased my reading load. Good times, good times.

SFSNNJ Out & About

Steve Spinosa talks about his trip to Arlington, VA.

Well, gang, I was at the second annual AFP National Summit in Arlington, VA this past weekend and it was a blast!!! I left Thursday night from the Friends of the NRA Dinner in Wood Ridge with Hank Butehorn & Mayor Steve Lonigan. It was a rollicking journey, with Mayor Steve telling us great stories!!! We arrived at the hotel by 1:00 am Friday and checked in. I woke up at around 7:00 am & headed to the special donor briefing in the Alexandria Room. As I walked in they had breakfast set up for the folks. At around 9:30 AFP President Tim Phillips & Vice-Chairman Art Pope kicked off the briefing, followed by Phil Kerpen, who discussed the current energy & financial crises in our country. Assemblyman Michael Carroll had some remarks on governing, but the main focus was on the Economy with the keynote speakers Garrett Jones, Steve Moore & Art Laffer discussing the current situation. Lunch was served during Mr. Moore & Mr. Laffer's presentation, then afterwards Buses were loading to head to Capitol Hill for the big rally. It was a lively affair with speeches by Tim Phillips, Steve Lonigan & Dallas "Rebel Yell" Woodhouse, the chairman of the North Carolina delegation. Later on that day was the general reception & the "Tribute to Ronald Reagan" dinner. The stars of this segment were Ed Meese, Senator James Inhofe, Dinesh D'Souza & George Will, who was fantastic!!!

October Meeting Recap

The General Session started at 9:00 p.m. with Tim Phillips opening the show, followed by Mayor Steve Lonegan, who pumped up the crowd with an excellent speech (There was a group of middle school children in the row I was sitting in...I hoped they weren't expecting Hannah Montana!!!...lol). Other speakers who appeared during the morning included Herman Cain (who sounded like a Baptist preacher), Fred "The Beatle" Barnes, John Fund (who focused on ACORN, the bad voter fraud group), & John Stossel. Lunch & special Delegation Briefings followed, with the New Jersey delegation hearing from Assemblyman Mike Doherty (who hinted at Lonegan's potential candidacy for Governor) & Assemblywoman Allison McHose. During that period Tim Phillips called me out to introduce me to AFP chairman David Koch. After that I attended one of the Breakout sessions (the one on energy) & the closing reception That evening I got to go to dinner with the Lonegan "Posse"(which included Mayor Steve, Maryanne Wright (Steve's "minder") & her friend Sharon). We went to a bar called the "Tortoise and The Hare", where the entire D.C. staff from AFP was hanging out, dancing & singing to an '80's tribute band called Members Only. It was a great night!!!

The next morning I got on the bus for the tour of the Washington Monuments with the "cool kids" of the New Jersey Delegation (including Field Director "Master Chris" Trimarchi). We came back to the hotel to pick up Mayor Steve, Maryanne & Sharon, and then headed back to New Jersey. In closing, I want to thank ALL of the AFP D.C. Staffers for the warm & respectful treatment I received in Arlington this weekend, especially Erik, Daniel, Maggie, Laura, Anne, & Michael. They did a fantastic job & deserve all the praise in the world!!!

Chiller Convention by Chris Hasselkus

As some of you know, I attended the Chiller Convention Friday night, 10/24/2008. Among other things, John Zacherle turned 90 this year. Other than being hard of hearing, he's still sharp and fun to be around. I obtained signed photos of those I really wanted: Edward Asner, Robert Culp, Angie Dickinson, Barbara Steele, and especially Linda Hamilton (I waited over an hour for hers, but it was worth it - she's really appreciative of her fans). You wait much longer than you get to spend with the celebrity, but if you really want to meet the person, that's what you have to do.

Out & About: Horror Writers United by Aubrey Ward

It was a dark and slightly stormy Tuesday night. October 28th marked the **Horror Writers Gathering** at the illustrious Montclair Public Library in..... well, Montclair, NJ. With my best buddy Shaqwan in tow (best buddy's real name changed for security reasons and cheap laughs) we headed down Bloomfield Avenue just like MapQuest told us to do.

Then we made a u-turn back down Bloomfield Avenue because the street we were supposed to take was blocked by police. Apparently, the group Counting Crows decided 10/28/08 would also be a great night to stage a concert. I was freaking out but Shaqwan told me to "stop trippin' and make a left at the next street".

We found the library (YAY!) but couldn't find the parking lot (UGH!) so we parked on the street next to the library (WOOHOO!) but it was under a big gnarly tree with big branches creaking in the winds (Hi, daddums. Do we have tree branch insurance?). So I parked, we said a little prayer that if a log did fall from the tree that it would hit the pretty silver Lexus parked in front of my vehicle and headed for the discussion.

The first thing that hit me about the Montclair Library is how quiet it was. There was nary a peep in the place. I figured the program was going on upstairs so we went up the stairs and..... the auditorium wasn't up there. Shaqwan went with Plan B and asked a librarian where to go. Back down the stairs we went and eventually found the Horror Writers gathering.

Leave it to me to arrive at a 7pm meeting at 7:30. See, what had happened was that I thought the program was happening at 8pm. Sometimes my eyes register sevens as eights and vice versa. It's a miracle I graduated from kindergarten. Shaqwan and I hustled in as quietly as possible and quickly synched ourselves with the rest of the group.

Our dear friend and sassy movie critic, Peter Gutierrez, lead the panel discussion. I know this because he was holding the microphone.

Joining him were acclaimed novelist Mary SanGiovanni, writer and associate editor of **Space & Time Magazine** (www.spaceandtimemagazine.com) Gary Frank, **The Villadom Times** film critic and horror historian Dennis Seuling, writer and **Dark Territories** anthology contributor Brian Pederson, and VeX magazine founder/editor and **Wild Eye Releasing** principal Rob Hauschild.

One of those topics centered on quirky characters doing dumb things that could turn off a book reader or a movie viewer. Gary gave an example of a book he read that started with a man waking up to discover that someone was in the shower. Instead of cowering in fear, bailing from the room, or calling 911 he decides the best course of action in a situation like this would be...to pour a drink. The speakers were pretty unanimous on the idea that most people are turned off when characters in horror stories are lacking in the "common sense department".

October Meeting Recap

Mary mentioned a part of a novel called **Enduring Love** by Ian McEwan (also made into a 2004 film starring Daniel Craig and Rhys Ifans) where a group of people tries to stop a runaway hot air balloon. The people grip the ropes trying to anchor it but the craft and the current are too strong and the people are taken for a scary ride. One by one the balloon rescuers lose their grips and plummet to the earth. When the last one falls two perfect strangers race towards the body and then become dangerously linked by the events. Amazingly, this brief description that couldn't have been more than 2 minutes long captivated many of the hearers. I know me and Shaqwan made a note to pick up the title at a later date.

If you're reading this, Mr. McEwan, you owe Ms. SanGiovanni some commission.

Eventually, Peter allowed audience members to ask the panel questions. The most thought provoking inquiry had to be from a gentleman that asked the writers and horror enthusiasts about the morality of what they write. I think the consensus was that though these tales can get on the gruesome side a lot of horror creators are pretty upstanding and morally correct citizens. If you don't like to be scared or grossed out or thrilled to death then don't read it. 'Nuff said.

I, too, asked a question. In fact, it was the last question (and no it wasn't "Where's the loo?"). Leave it to me to get under the wire. I basically asked the panel if they preferred real life monsters (serial killers, stalkers, paparazzi) or supernatural/ fantasy baddies (vampires, werewolves, Freddy Krueger).

I can't remember who liked what specifically but I do recall Peter noting the big trend of J-Horror ghosts stories and I think Mary was more inclined towards the supernatural ghouls. Vampires were brought up as an example of how a fantasy felon can get stale. The rules are basically the same for most vampire stories. Sometimes those rules are tweaked or completely altered which makes the experience for the reader/viewer extremely rewarding or highly regretful.

We then ended the program with a healthy round of applause and proceeded to schmooze, buy signed copies of books, and swipe as many free bookmarks as possible.

****Addendum from Peter Gutierrez****

A couple of clarifications, in case anyone's interested: Gary Frank's new novel is Institutional Memory (Forever Will You Suffer is from '06); and neither he nor Mary SanGiovanni contributed stories to Dark Territories, but rather were its editors. Neil Morris, who was in attendance (as the guy who asked about morality), is a contributor; the antho also features work by Hildy Silverman, F. Paul Wilson, and the late Charles Grant.

Out & About: Lafayette Theatre Science Fiction Spectacular (11/1/2008) by Steve Spinosa

Yesterday my brother Jim & I took a ride up to the Lafayette Theatre in Suffern for day 2 of the Science Fiction Spectacular. We met up with Masters Chris H. & Barry W., as well as Debra Matofsky. The theatre had a "Robot Monster" outside the theatre, as well as a "bubble machine" The five of us went in, where there was Jeff Barker on the organ warming up the crowd with the help of a Theramin player before the first feature, EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS (1956), which was an enjoyable film. Later Chris reported that Masters Bill & Gene, along with Brian & Ana, were attendance for the live on stage recreation of the play THE WAR OF THE WORLDS on Friday night. Chris also said that Master Barry showed up for the screening of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS film from 1953 that followed the play on Friday. Jim and I left after the first feature but Chris, Barry & Deb stayed to see THE MAN FROM PLANET X. All had a Good time!!!

Genre News

Peter Gutierrez

The Cruel Mirror: When Horror Movies Are “Based on True Events” By Peter Gutiérrez

More than any other film genre, horror has a problematic relationship with the real. Sure, war movies are presumably based upon real wars, but although their political motives are sometimes questioned, their carnage is rarely viewed as in bad taste, let alone exploitative. Horror movies, on the other hand, cross some kind of moral threshold when they become “based on true events” since horror, especially in its paranormal mode, can clearly exist and be effective when completely divorced from reality. Yet when they venture away from fantasy, horror movies become both more sobering and somehow more intriguing as a result. Think about it. Remove the “inspired by” tagline from films as different as the fraudulent *The Amityville Horror* (1979, 2005) and the widely respected *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986) and how does your gut reaction to them change? Are the films inherently as compelling? To feed audience expectations by saying that what’s on the screen “actually happened” plays into the universally voyeuristic—some would say cruel—aspects of the medium itself: the photographic realism that helps cinema mimic life is heightened by claiming that the narrative itself is real. And on a kind of existential level, the moment we frame screen horror as residing in the same world that we do, the psychological assault on the audience becomes more pronounced: “This could really happen to you and yours because, check it out, it really happened to other folks just like you.”

To gauge the upside of establishing such real-world bonafides, one need only recall the entire class of horror films that try so hard to look reality-based even when they’re not. Obvious examples include *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *Cloverfield* (2008) as well as, most interestingly, George Romero’s work, whether *Diary of the Dead* (2007) or *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), with its similar docu-vibe. By way of comparison, how many gangster sagas or rom-coms employ a vérité approach to evoke heightened first-person experiences?

However, for all its generic potency, in terms of horror’s cultural position, referencing real events is usually a losing proposition. While readers and creators of horror literature rarely get charges of sadism leveled at them by the mainstream, their counterparts in film frequently do, largely because non-fans equate screen violence with real-world violence. But when the film in question is purportedly reflecting something historical, the commonsense defense of “Hey, it’s not real, it’s just a movie” becomes greatly diluted. To put it bluntly, it’s hard to cheer on the body count when you know it’s a surrogate measure for corpses that *did* hit the floor at one point. Still, movies like the execrable *Copycat* (1995), with its brief but glib quoting of real-life tragedies, offend me far more than the graphic yet serious-minded approach of something like Jim Van Bebber’s *The Manson Family* (2003).

So bearing such issues in mind, let’s examine a few horror archetypes, their real-life embodiments, and the varying degrees of success that filmmakers have had translating them to the screen.

The Archetype	What History Says	“Just the Facts, Ma’am”	Inspired By...	Distant Cousins
The Lady “Vampire”	While the legal testimony against the Hungarian countess no doubt included hearsay and claims that revisionist historians have since questioned as products of a witch-hunt mentality, the popular consensus about Elizabeth Bathory hasn’t changed much: she was responsible for the torture-deaths of scores, if not hundreds, of young women in her castle in the early seventeenth century. So horrific were her crimes that they eventually became fodder for sheer legend. Indeed, she may be best known for something she	Juraj Jakubisko’s upcoming Báthory (2008) merits interest in that it seems to take pains to create an accurate historical context for its title character, but also presents a decidedly “sympathetic” treatment of her. So will the film be an interesting mix of truth and propaganda? We’ll have to wait and see. Meanwhile, Julie Delpy’s much-anticipated 2009 release, The Countess , also apparently strives for historical accuracy and paints Bathory as a victim as well as a monster. However, it reputedly also features the “bathing in blood” theme, so the	Hammer’s Countess Dracula (1971) takes the Bathory legend and sprinkles in a few historical trappings, apparently the opposite approach of the current films on the subject. In fact, the name “Bathory” isn’t even used—Ingrid Pitt plays “Countess Nodosheen.” Actually, so many films have been inspired by Bathory that it’s impossible to list them here. They include period pieces as well as those set in modern times, such as Eternal (2004) and the magnificently hypnotic Daughters of Darkness (1971).	Whether blatantly or as subtext, it’s pretty clear that Bathory also provides a jumping off point for the entire subgenre of lesbian vampires. Need some specific titles? Just use the search engine of your choice and you’ll be inundated with all kinds of titles, both straight-ahead horror as well as soft porn. What might be harder to find are all the oblique references to Bathory in other films, such as the brief but hard-to-watch scene in Hostel Part 2 (2007).

Genre News

	never did—taking baths in her victims' blood in order to retain her own youthfulness.	script could very well represent a hybrid of gory docu-drama and more conventional horror flick.		
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--

Black and White in a Color World - How Manga Has Retrained Our Rods and Cones by Peter Gutiérrez

In a world where computer monitors seem to offer greater color saturation than film stock, and where television now provides images that are more vivid than life itself, how incongruous is the success of this unpretentious little art form we call manga?

Need more examples of manga's contrarian status in this regard? How about the vast color palettes of real-time immersive video games, or even conventional comic books, which have been using digital coloring effectively for more than a decade?

Of course a perfectly natural reaction to such observations is a big, fat "So what?"

And if that's the case, great.

It could mean that you so take for granted manga's ascendancy on a foundation of black-and-white graphics that its significance in a pop cultural context is kind of beside the point. Sure, perhaps the "problem" of getting young people to engage with non-color visuals may be an issue only to old-timers in the media-watching game. Certainly the defining controversy in this area—the colorized make-over of classic Hollywood fare in the 1980s—is well known to most. Still, even as the older demographic shunned this trend, the younger set continued to balk at black-and-white films, at least whenever I was screening them. Indeed, "Can't we watch something in color?" used to be a frequently heard complaint in media and film education classes... but is the same true today?

I suspect not, with my own experience informing this opinion. Generation Y and Z's comfort level with black-and-white speaks to a newfound sophistication, and I can only conclude that the popularity of manga, with its ever-growing cross-media ripple effect, deserves much of the credit. Indeed, my own eight-year-old will consume a Tezuka masterwork and might not give much explicit thought to how, in effect, he supplied the glow of whatever fires raged, how he tinted every body of water blue.

Clearly, black-and-white sequential art, once largely the marginalized province of daily comic strips, underground "comix" and indie publishers too poor to opt out, can now be found lining the shelves of every bookstore and library in the U.S.

There's more to say about the appeal of manga's monochromacity, but I'll leave an exploration of the aesthetic implications until next time. For now I just wanted to underscore the larger point here, which concerns how manga as an artistic medium and, let's face it, a global cultural phenomenon, both defies expectations and innovates new ones, both formally and commercially...

...which will be the topic, generally speaking, of this column. Namely, what does manga, as it thrives in countless ways, say about everything else that rubs up against it—which at times simply seems to be everything else?

So thanks for jumping aboard at the ground level of "Black and White in a Color World." I can promise only more erratically fired salvos from my ink-stained brain, but I hope that's enough to keep you coming back.

Peace.

Genre News

A Warhammer Halloween Story –

original short story by Todd Ehrenfels

He was frightened... no, strike that, he was completely and utterly terrified.

As a traitor marine, Polemechus Triens had lived in the Eye of Terror for millennia. Drenched in the blood of his victims, the blood lust maddened World Eater had killed, and killed, and killed. He had witnessed Bloodthirsters and horrors of the Warp destroying the flesh and souls of friend and enemy alike. Once, he had spent three hours slowly killing a Cadian prisoner just so he could savor the screams. His name meant pain, horror, suffering and death, and he was presently scared out of his wits.

He looked left, looked right, then up and down, he began to cry in desperate terror. What had those accursed Dark Eldar xenos done to him? How was this possible? He was a figure to inspire dread and disgust. Mothers would use his picture to chasten their children, whose fear of Polemechus Triens and his ilk would leave them terrified without blankies and night-lights. He was FEAR!

His gorge rose as he started to stand up, desperately seeking surcease from the gibbering, mind destroying terror he found himself immersed in, but it was no good. A scrawny man in an odd costume walked up to him and Polemechus flinched. No more, please, make it STOP! By the twisted tongue of Tzeentch and the blood drenched talons of Khorne, please make it stop!!!!

"I'm afraid we are going to need to ask you to work late again tonight, John, those workers comp claim audits need to be filled out completely before tomorrow. We know that you are a bit behind, but you had better work harder and get it done..."

Weeping, his horned helm resting on his arm, Polemechus Triens stared desperately at the walls of his cubicle and wondered what sick minds of the Dark Eldar had come up with so horrible a torture. As his hot tears fell out from under the recesses of his helmet, the fallen marine hoped they did not cause the ink to smudge on the cover sheet of his TPS report, then shuddered, his mind finally broken by the weight of the terror he endured.

Film Reviews

An American Carol by Steve S

JIM and I saw the comedy "An American Carol" in Kinnelon today. Leslie Nielsen narrates the story of

anti-American filmmaker "Michael Malone"(Jason Farley) who attempts to abolish the 4th of July but is used by a trio of Islamic terrorists attempting to disrupt a concert for the troops under the guise of making a "dramatic film". Michael is subsequently "wised up" by the spirits of JFK, General Patton & George Washington, among others, and ends up reforming his ways, as well as stopping the terrorists. Very funny film; highly recommended. Several celebrity cameos, including Paris Hilton &...Bill O'Reilly!!!

An American Carol by Gene McGrath

I also saw the film, and I thought it was a bit too goofy, they repeated several gags ad nauseum, and I feel the satire loses its impact because of it. I'm a conservative, and I love the idea of spoofing that tool Michael Moore, but alas, the film just didn't make me laugh ... that much. I was disappointed; I thought this film could and should have cut deeper.

It Came From The Queue!

It Came From The Queue!

Jack Brooks: Monster Slayer - (2008) - DVD

When Jack was a little boy he went on a camping trip with mum, dad, and the little sister. When darkness fell a terrible monster came and killed them all while poor, defenseless Jack ran away. Grown up Jack (Trevor Matthews) is now a plumber with a big anger management problem. He attends a nightly science class with his girlfriend Eve (Rachel Skarsten) taught by Professor Crowley (Robert Englund).

The Prof. just moved into a creepy old house and wants Jack to check the pipes. This causes a stir in some mysterious forces buried beneath the cursed property. Crowley is possessed by this demonic force and brings the terror to his students. Will Jack overcome his childhood trauma in time to save his classmates?

Well, while I wasn't super impressed with the movie I must say that **Jack Brooks: Monster Slayer** has some fun and squishy qualities to it that made it fun to watch. I'm gonna go out on a limb and suggest that the character of Jack was a bit inspired by another infamous monster slayer: "Ash" from the **Evil Dead** movies. So expect a little less terror but ample helpings of humor, ugly beasts, and some sloppy gore.

Highlights include Jack himself with his struggle to keep cool. Along for the ride are his whiny girlfriend Eve, a creepy old hardware store guy that gives us the history lesson about the old house (David Fox),

Genre News

and Jack's steadfast therapist that tries to help Jack find a healthy outlet for his violent outbursts (Daniel Kash).

Blips on my celebrity radar include Rachel Skarsten who burst onto my scene in the gone-to-soon "Birds of Prey".

As most of y'all know "Birds" was meant to be the 'girl power' equivalent of the other WB/DC live action series "Smallville". A great premise and solid principal cast just couldn't bear the weight of the weak plots and even cheesy visuals. While "Smallville" was given a chance to redeem itself, "Birds" got their wings clipped. So it was nice to see Ms. Skarsten again and in such a pleasant production.

And of course I gotta give a shout out to Robert Englund. "V", "Nightmare Cafe", "Eaten Alive", "2001 Maniacs" and the genre list goes on and on. And then of course his legendary role as monster royalty Freddy Krueger in the "A Nightmare on Elm Street" movies. So, it goes without saying that he is in top form as the nutty Professor Crowley. Going from mild mannered teacher to demonic heathen is child's play for Englund, which means good times for the viewer.

The effects range from silly to "eeewwww". The monster makeup is nice enough. Rubber suits, straggly hair, jagged teeth and black contacts make a huge showing in "Jack Brooks". The centerpiece has got to be the fully formed demon menace. A bulbous sack of pus with a huge jaw and tentacles that seems unlimited in number and length. Remember in **Weird Science** when "Chet" is changed into that gross frog creature thingee? Well, this demon could be his cousin.

The best (or worst scene, depending on your view) has got to be when the demon lord starts repopulating the world with monsters one captive student at a time. This tube thingee comes out of his mouth and he shoves it down the throat of his victim filling them with some horrific looking bodily fluids which transform the poor soul into an official member of the ghoulish squad. Like, wicked cool, dude!

My Grade: B+

To me, "Jack Brooks" is a fun homage to those kinds of monster movies where it's not so much about finding out what makes the monster tick but rather what's the best weapon to smash it with. Along with Robert Englund lending some heavy monster cred I also have to give a standing "O" to the film for relying more on traditional makeup effects and stunts rather than CGI. Yeah, I could tell it was a rubber suit but it looks a tad better than Jack swinging at an empty space. Anyway, horror fans will enjoy this amusing, light, and sometimes gory adventure.

Prom Night (2008)- DVD

Once upon a time there was a young girl named Donna (Brittany Snow). Donna had a teacher named Mr. Fenton (Jonathan Schaech). Mr. Fenton really took a shine to his student. He wanted to hug her, and pet her, and call her Mrs. Fenton. He even wasted Donna's parents and her little bro to make sure nothing would stand in the way of their love. But before Mr. Fenton could claim his underage bride the cops came just in the nick of time to haul Mr. Fenton to Sing Sing.

Many years have passed and now Donna is a smart and gorgeous senior preparing to get her jiggy on at the prom. The dresses are fierce, the room has been reserved for the after party, and the alcohol has been snuck in. As Donna departs from her aunt and uncle's house she is all revved up to enjoy a night she will never forget.

And good old Mr. Fenton has busted outta the joint to make sure Donna has a prom she will never forget.

This newest horror classic remake starts off strong with a solid set-up involving a student and her murderous stalker teacher. Instead of frying the guy, the court gives him the psycho defense and locks him away for life instead. I thought that was a good way to start things.

Then we fast forward to Donna's senior year. She's getting ready for the big night with her girlfriends and their male companions. So now we got the meat, I mean, the other youths introduced to further drive home the point how fleeting human life can be and how tragic it will be to see these young people's potentials cut short.

I know I shouldn't get so critical of a teen slasher movie. I mean, they're basically only made as an excuse to make the girls scream so their dates can put their arms around them and make it to second base. But the new "Prom Night" is made in 2008. By this time I expected movies like this to avoid the typical mechanisms that were used to death back in the day.

Let's take one scene of particular stupidity: Donna goes up to the suite to freshen up and get her friend Claire (Jessica Stroup) some Midol for her cramps. Instead of just going in there to get her purse and hustle back to the party Donna kinda hovers through the rooms calling out "Hello.....Is anybody there?" My response? "No you dumb twit, there's nobody in the room and if there was a crazed psycho killer in the room do you think he'd be dumb enough to come out and introduce himself?" So Donna painstakingly checks every room and lamp and

Genre News

window curtain until AAAHHHH!.... Oh it was just Claire who got so impatient she went up to get the Midol herself. And who could blame her?

I'm gonna kind of spoil things here but this is another perfect example of what kind of movie this is: Donna finds out Mr. Fenton is out and is rushed home by the police with boyfriend Bobby (Scott Porter) in tow. The house is given police protection which seems to be like 4 cops and one in the car. Donna's family is so wracked with fright that they go to sleep... Yeah, you read right. A crazy stalker is on the loose who has gotten past the badges a dozen times and they take a collective snooze. I'm sorry, but if it was my family we'd have that house set up like "Home Alone" and we would wield wooden boards with nails in them just for insurance.

The way Mr. Fenton escapes prison might bug a few people. Like, there was some logic too it but it still seemed illogical somehow, ya know what I mean?

Mr. Fenton seems to have been granted some metahuman super fast stabbing action, which I guess he learned from years of playing with GI Joe action figures. Not that he needs it. Apparently, these teens don't know the first thing about kicking bad guys in the 'nards'. He coulda knocked them over with feathers.

The cops are pretty much at a loss as usual except for Detective Winn (Idris Elba) who gets an "E" for effort. As a video game fan I was happy to see Ming Wen (formerly Ming Na Wen and then formerly Ming Na) as the school therapist and Linden Ashby as Donna's uncle, Jack.

FYI: Ming Wen's portrayal of "Chun Li" was about the only good thing about 1994's "Street Fighter". And Linden Ashby practically stole every scene he had in 1995's "Mortal Kombat" with his well timed cracks and well placed kicks. His bout with undead komatant, Scorpion, was one of the best fight sequences I've ever seen.

And while I'm all happy with Brittany Snow getting a star turn I am sorry that she had to run around in this silly movie to show her lead actress chops. Snow really had it made on the NBC retro drama "American Dreams" and was a fine addition to the "Hairspray" movie musical cast. At least she can put on her resume "has lead a movie before".

My Grade: F

I know. An "F". Kinda extreme but I cannot tell a lie...about how much I disliked this movie. Not scary, not smart, not worth your time. Personally, I think the screenwriter wrote this thing up while on the potty. What could've been an edgy and intelligent thriller was instead molded into a vapid slasher flick. This

movie could've ushered in a new generation of teen horror movies. Instead, it reverts the genre back to the Stone Age. Somebody find Jennifer Love Hewitt and see if she did anything naughty this summer, please.

Baby Mama - (2008) - DVD

Kate Holbrook (Tina Fey) is a successful woman with a prominent vice president position, a lush apartment, and a caring family. But now she tires of the single professional life and longs for a baby to care for. When invitro and adoption are dead ends Kate decides to try surrogacy.

Enter surrogate mother, Angela (Amy Poehler), who decides to carry Kate's baby. For a hefty fee, of course. When Angela's common law husband, Carl (Dax Shepard), cheats on her Kate takes the abandoned surrogate in. Now mom and surrogate have to learn how to get along to make sure the baby comes out healthy and with as little brain damage as possible.

While I'm writing this I'm getting pangs of recall.....**The Odd Couple**. Yeah, that's it! **Baby Mama** has an Odd Couple thing going on with Fey's neat and uptight professional clashing with Poehler's loose and fancy free lifestyle. Then add the jokes about biological clocks and DNA tests for good measure.

I sure didn't expect the star power. Sigourney Weaver as the head of the surrogacy clinic (she has a nice running gag about her "after 40" pregnancies) . Steve Martin as the new age-y head of the company where Kate works (ponytail, sandals and all). Greg Kinnear as Kate's love interest. Maury Tierney and Holland Taylor as Kate's sister and mother, respectively. I guess having a stellar **SNL** run and a hit show can get you a lot of friends in higher places.

Overall, the comedy was a little dry for my taste. The story as a whole is pretty good and fun but the actually humor is pretty hit and miss. Some jokes worked better than others. I guess I expected the whole movie to be this huge laugh-a-thon based on Fey's track record.

I'm not saying it's a bad comedy and not worth checking out. Fey and Poehler are both phenomenal in their roles. I figure "straight woman" Fey might've been a little envious that Poehler got to have all the fun acting the fool. Some of the best scenes involve Kate trying to teach Angela the finer points in life such as organic foods. Kate tries to push some organic pea soup Angela's way while the expecting mama would prefer some Tasty Cakes and Sprite.

I guess my gripe is that the movie starts off with an air of originality but eventually succumbs to some

Genre News

predictable circumstances. And such a happy, schmappy ending. Ugh.

My Grade: B

A really nice comedy about a woman willing to go to any means to have a baby. Yep, even allowing some crazy lady into her home. But what choice does she have? The crazy lady is carrying her child. It's an interesting conundrum and also a kinda of funny situation. Fey & Poehler make a great team. The supporting cast do their part quite well. Most of the jokes stick but a few fall flat. Overall, **Baby Mama** is worth a shot.....um, not that kinda shot. Will the invitro jokes never end?

Upcoming Conventions



PHILCON 2008 - The Philadelphia Conference on Science Fiction & Fantasy
November 21-23, 2008 • Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill NJ

<http://2008.philcon.org/>

The Lehigh Valley Comic Con, December 6, 2008
<http://mysite.verizon.net/compsecman/id2.html>

Arisia 2009
January 16-19, 2009
Hyatt Regency Cambridge, Cambridge, MA
<http://2009.arisia.org/>

Arisia is New England's largest and most diverse Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention. This year's theme is The Fabric of Science Fiction. Woven from many fibers — facts and theories, fairy tales and rumors, gossamer threads of the mind's fancy — Science Fiction and Fantasy warp the imagination by weaving intricate patterns that define who and what we are. We welcome you to the newest fabrication.

It's a little early, but there will also be **Lunacon** (3/20/2009) and **I-Con** in Stony Brook (4/3/2009), **NY Comic Con** (February 6-8, 2009). **AnimeNext**: So, we bet you have been wondering what the dates are for AnimeNEXT 2009. Well here you go. AnimeNEXT 2009 is going to begin on Friday, June 12, 2009 and continue until Sunday, June 14, 2009. AnimeNEXT 2009 is Moving! Your favorite New York and New Jersey area anime convention is moving to a larger facility for the 2009 convention. We are moving to the bigger and better facilities at the Garden State Exhibit Center and the DoubleTree Somerset Hotel in Somerset, New Jersey, less than one hour away from our former facilities in Secaucus.