



May 2009 Newsletter

Not Necessarily Normal!

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday May 5, 2009

7:00 p - 9:00 p

Hillsdale Public Library

This month, *City of Lost Children*

Whispers From Beyond & Face the Fiction

Saturday May 9, 2009

7:00 p - Whispers From Beyond

8:00p - Face The Fiction

Borders Garden State Plaza

This month we are pleased to present author Michael Flynn (*Eifelheim*, *January Dancer*). We thank SFSNNJ member Steve Rubin for this guest!

Suspense Central

Monday May 11, 2009

8:00 p - 10:00 p

Borders Garden State Plaza

This month, *Atrocity Archives* by Charles Stross: Lovecraft's *Cthulhu* meets Len Deighton's spies in Stross's latest, as the Scottish author explains in his afterword to this offbeat book.

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday May 13, 2009

8:00 p - 10:00 p

New Moon Comics - www.newmooncomics.com

Virtual Insanity? - Do comic books warp our sense of reality? Stories about men flying around in capes definitely stimulate the reader's imagination and creativity but do these stories also dull the reader's ability to deal with situations in the real world? A look at the effects of comics on readers: positive and negative. Plus, a discussion about die-hard comic book fans and their healthy (or unhealthy?) obsessions with superheroes.

Fantasy Gamers Group

Saturday May 16, 2009

2:30 p - 7:30 p

Todd's New Place - directions available upon request/contact **Todd**

Join us for terror, monsters, madness and more as

GM BJ Pehush explores the city of Arkham MA with our monthly Call of Cthulu (Chaosium 6th edition) game. Books are available for order at New Moon Comics.

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday May 20, 2009

7:00 p - 10:00 p

Borders Ramsey

This group discusses new and upcoming genre and genre-related films, TV, books and current media happenings.

Modern Masters

Friday May 22, 2009

8:00 p - 10:00 p

Borders Ramsey

This month we discuss *Thirteen* by Richard Morgan. In *Thirteen*, Richard Morgan reshapes and recharges science fiction, with a new hero in Carl Marsalis: hybrid, hired gun, and a man without a country ... or a planet.

Infinite Chaos: A Temnia Campaign

Saturday May 23, 2009

2:00 p - 10:00 p

Ehrenfels Manor - contact **Todd**

Welcome to the Western Nations of Temnia, a brutal and vicious tyranny ruled by the Immortal Emperor, the illustrious Naram'tzin, your boss.

Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday May 26, 2009

8:00 p - 10:00 p

New Moon Comics

This month we will be discussing Looks Like SF, but Is It? This discussion will focus on TV series/movies/books/comics, we enjoy that may have elements of SF but are not necessarily SF or genre. Is My Name Is Earl genre? What about shows like The Equalizer? What constitutes genre?

Please visit www.sfsnnj.com for full details/updates and more

Join us for May quest

Michael Flynn.

Michael Francis Flynn (b. 1947) is an American statistician and science fiction author.

Nearly all of Flynn's work falls under the category of hard science fiction, although his treatment of it can be unusual since he has applied the rigor of hard science fiction to "softer" sciences such as sociology in works such as *In the Country of the Blind*. Much of his short fiction has appeared in *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*.

Flynn's novel *Eifelheim* was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Novel and his novelette "Dawn, and Sunset, and the Colours of the Earth" was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Novelette on March 29, 2007.^[1] The novella on which the novel was based was nominated for a Hugo Award for Best Novella in 1987.

In 1988, Flynn's novella "The Forest of Time" was also nominated for a Hugo Award. 1995 saw his story "Melodies of the Heart" nominated in the same category. He received a Hugo

nomination for his novelette "The Clapping Hands of God."

Flynn has twice won the Prometheus Award, first for his novel *In the Country of the Blind*, and then for the novel *Fallen Angels*, co-written with Larry Niven, and Jerry Pournelle, which also won the Seiun Award.

The story "House of Dreams" won a Theodore Sturgeon Award in 1998.

Michael Flynn was the first author winner of the Robert A. Heinlein medal, a lifetime achievement award given by the Heinlein Society on the advice of the Awards Committee (Dr. Yoji Kondo, Chairman). Other Heinlein Medal winners include Greg Bear, Larry Niven, and Jerry Pournelle.

?? Saturday, May 9, 2009 – 8p

?? Borders Books & Music,
Garden State Plaza Mall,
Suite 2200, Paramus, NJ,
07652, 201.712.1166

April Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – Tuesday, 4/7/09

The *Maltese Falcon* (1941) was shown as part of Pulp Fiction Month. It was the film that really got Humphrey Bogart true stardom. It was also John Huston's directorial debut. I always felt the reactions in the film were very odd; the reason is that they were just as odd in the book. We will be discussing the Dashiell Hammett novel at Modern Masters later this month. With one exception, which I will mention then, the film is a literal translation of the book. After reading the novel, it made me appreciate the film more. A really excellent example of film noir. Some of us then continued the merriment at the nearby Seville Diner. **(Chris H)**

Addendum: Chris, just a note about your line: "A really excellent example of film noir."

From Wikipedia: "*The Maltese Falcon* ...was cited by *Panorama du Film Noir Américain*, the first major work on film noir, as the **first film of that genre.**" (my added emphasis - so not only is it an excellent *example* of film noir, it's the **original** example of film noir!)

And FYI: Wikipedia also mentioned the film has been named as one of the greatest films of all time by Roger Ebert and Entertainment Weekly. **(Gene)**

Suspense Central – Monday, 4/13/09

It was a dark and stormy night... well, it was a dark and cloudy night... it was a chill April evening, and a group of particularly hard boiled book fans were clustered, whispering conspiratorially across the serried tables of the Borders cafe. I looked around the tables and took stock of the faces looking back. Dames and fellas mixed it up like high society, all for the strange bird at the head of the table. He said he was from Sparta, but I had my suspicions. The room was plunged into darkness, then a shot rang out, a woman screamed, and when light returned there was a body on the floor. I could tell it was going to be a long night. It's Pulp Month, and it just does not get more intense than the fast talking, hard boiled, pulpiness of Suspense Central...

OK, so maybe that's not exactly how it happened. We set up the tables around 7:30 and sat back to wait for the rest of the gang, and soon we were accompanied by our guest of honor, Paul Malmont, and the discussion was immediately derailed by sidebar chatting about Navy Seals and sea pirates:) Luckily, the winds of change were a-blowin', and soon we were discussing the ins and outs of Street & Smith Pulps with a question from Chris about the Shadow story "The Golden Vulture". Paul explained that the story (written in 1934 and not published until 1939) was held back by Walter Gibson.

Next we discussed one of our favorite scenes in the book, the meeting of the Literary Guild. Paul explained that at one of his recent discussions, he was confronted by fans of Cornell Woolrich citing 11 inaccuracies in the scene. Luckily, no E.E. 'Doc' Smith fans disputed the flavor of the donuts at the meeting. I asked why Paul had chosen to set the scene the way he did, and he explained that he wanted to get all of the famous pulp writers of the time in the same room for a fun little scene, and so he did it that way. There are no membership rolls or anything, so he simply made the assumptions and let the scene play out. What a great scene it was!

Attention turned then to a discussion of characters and Paul let us in on some of the secrets of his 35 years of research, and relayed that he had no real personality information to work with for Lester Dent or Walter Gibson, so he determined what he thought they would be like and then let the horses run. Luckily, many folks who knew one or the other have since said that his guesstimates were really accurate, and that they could really see Dent and Gibson in the story. No word on the accuracy of the L. Ron Hubbard, Robert Heinlein, Louis L'Amour, etc, but I would be willing to bet on the accuracy of H.P. Lovecraft!

One really interesting thing that was discussed was the idea that the central story of the abandoned armory was always the central one in the story. Aurelia brought up the juxtaposition of the three stories (Gibson, Dent, and Zhang Zhoulin) and Paul confirmed that the central story always remained the same, even though the bits around it changed from time to time. At one point, he mentioned that it was kind of like that was the story that wanted to be written, and led to all the rest. My rejoinder is that it was similar to one of the character's assertion that Gibson was telling stories relayed to him by the Shadow himself. Great plot device!

Next was a discussion of what's next for Paul and his storytelling. One lucky shopper managed to pick up the hard cover of Paul's newest book (*Jack London in Paradise*) and some words were said about that. Also discussed were the upcoming project, a sequel to *The Chinatown Deathcloud Peril* entitled *The Amazing, the Astounding, and the*

Unknown! which features the return of Hubbard and Gibson, and the introduction of Bradbury, Asimov, DeCamp and other SF notables. Sounds magnificently exciting!

All in all, it was a fantastic evening, and we stayed right until closing. Sadly, Paul had to head out to Sparta and home at 9:30, but the book and the company were intoxicating, and we did not want the evening to end. Sadly, like all good things, it came to an end. Tune in next month when we will discuss Charles Stross's masterwork *The Atrocity Archives*. (As a side note, Paul D. turned me on to this book ages ago and it is great). **(Todd)**

Addendums: (Jo)

It's always much more fun to discuss a book we all seemed to enjoy with the author and last night was no exception. Paul Malmont, armed with a GPS, found his way from Sparta, NJ to Borders at the Garden State Plaza. He gave us insight into his story that we wouldn't have had just talking about the storyline.

After 35 years of research (Paul grew up reading *The Shadow*), Paul Malmont developed an exciting, action/adventure story containing real life pulp authors participating in adventures similar to the stories they each wrote. Walter Gibson, writing as Maxwell Grant, became famous for his stories about *The Shadow*. In his story, within *The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril*, he is haunted by a Shadow-like character. He also shares a rivalry with *Doc Savage* author Lester Dent.

The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril follows each author's adventure as they try to outdo each other by coming up with the next great pulp story. It's definitely one of those stories you need to stick around for the end to see how it all fits together (and no cheating by reading the end first! You know who you are!)

Paul explained that he drew upon what he knew about his real life characters to create a completely fictional (yet believable) story based upon what he thought these people would really be like.

Aurelia and Deena coerced Todd into reading from the book. The passage he read was a young L. Ron Hubbard explaining to Otis Driftwood (who turns out to be another famous author -- I won't tell who. You have to READ!) that science fiction writing (and their fan groups) are the wave of the future. Aurelia and I joked about the strange parallels this drew between fiction and reality (again you have to READ to know what I mean!).

We all had fun and can't wait for Paul's follow up to *The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril*, but in the meantime, Paul's new book is out. It's called *Jack London In Paradise*. We've already hit him up for a return visit, maybe even a Face The Fiction event sometime in the future.

By the way, I know you pulp fans will be interested in this, while reading about *The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril* on Paul's website (<http://paulmalmont.com>), I found links to his "lost" episodes in true pulp fiction style!

The "lost" episode: *The Bronze Archive*
http://mysite.verizon.net/vze233dr/paulmalmont/bronze_archive.pdf

Listen to another "lost" episode: *Litzka Versus The Dragon Lady!*
<http://mysite.verizon.net/vze233dr/paulmalmont/Litzkapodcast.mp3>

(Chris) We had a great time at Suspense Central discussing *The Chinatown Death Cloud Peril* by Paul Malmont. Besides signing our copies of the book, he talked about his love of pulps and using Walter Gibson (*The Shadow*) as well as Lester Dent (*Doc Savage*) as the main characters. I'm sure the Toddster will have much more to say about this special evening.

Films to Come – 4/15/09

The Master Of All Things Entertainment (who so earned that title) led yet another great meeting of Films to Come. In fact, in a bold act of 'turn about is fair play', Barry kept us on our toes all night. He took no prisoners and left no room for shenanigans. You think we'd be humbled or at least deterred...nah. But, we did have fun and learned why Barry is moderator and we are not.

Barry opened with a discussion about a post he made referencing the radio show *Idiot's Delight*. He also brought two books to the table: *Maltin's Movie Guide* and *Maltin's Classic Movie Guide*.

We then got another new segment - it was a big hit and Todd's favorite. Barry provided a handout (the first of 6) on Fantasy, Horror, SciFi Academy Awards, and used a quiz format to have us guess the movies. Todd took the same approach to answering the questions as he does to purchasing the guest's books - he hogged all the answers. I think he may have pushed Jo at one point :)

Next up, in order of appearance:

- 1) A discussion of Hugo nominees and award winners
- 2) Big Screen Classics line-up (handout). Barry covered the titles being shown and gave details for the genre films from Maltin's books.
- 3) Lafayette Theater's new Spring 2009 line-up to replace BSC (handout). Barry used Maltin's guides again to cover the details/rating/ etc. for the films (none genre).
- 4) Our current favorite - First Look. First Look 2009 (handout) covered the upcoming and/or current movies.
- 5) Spring 2009 (handout) - this was similar to First Look, but concentrated on the spring releases.
- 6) 3-D Movie Preview 2009 (handout) - Barry, feeling that this 3-D trend is a big rip-off, provided a list of upcoming 3-D films. He senses a conspiracy afoot to charge higher prices ;) He also wondered why the house in the trailers for the movie UP doesn't fly away until the roof of the house is removed. He reasoned that those balloons, if strong enough to lift the house, would be strong enough with or without the roof. We tried to make him feel better by telling him the house was probably anchored like a boat at a dock. It seemed to placate him.
- 7) Top Grossing Box Office to Date (handout) - the criteria being films making more than \$100,000,000. making the list: Watchmen, Fast & Furious, Taken, Monsters vs. Aliens and taking top spot, Paul Blart: Mall Cop.

While discussing the films on the various handouts, Barry had attendees read different blurbs/descriptions and provide opinions. Mike got to read again (he'll move his seat next month - lol), as did Gene and Todd (Barry: "Todd, here, read this. Take it away Todd"). Todd, ever so shy, ran with it.

Barry wrapped up the meeting with a very nice tie-in to the monthly theme of 'pulp' by telling us about a film noir site. He will post the site.

At this point, I gave Barry a quiz on 10 Big Stinking Box Office Bombs. The quiz was rated 'extremely difficult'. With no preparation, no answers or help from electronic devices, he scored 7/10 and proved why he is the moderator and we are the spectators. Some of us hadn't even heard of some of the films. Jo: "what the heck movie was that? was that really a movie?" Todd also agreed that the wording of the clues made the quiz even more difficult. I didn't get 7/10 and I had the answers!

We continued the fun at the diner where conversation ranged from Rocky to fiction being 'not real' to "your sister is right." *She is BTW. She's right.* Barry also asked what our favorites had been. It was universally agreed the variety of topics was awesome - the lists are shorter, things move along at a better pace that way, and we get more info that way. Todd eagerly chimed in to admit his favorite was the interactive quizzes (both of them).

Excellent meeting. 15/10! ...but your sister is still right ;) (AM)

Modern Masters – 4/24/09

It was a quiet night when I walked into the Chili's in Ramsey, but I was expecting trouble. The crazy dame who called me hysterically on the phone may have lied about this job, but for a private eye as hard-boiled as me, it made no difference who or what was really going on. I stared at the table and wondered when Movie Masher Hasselkus was gun pull his gun and try to perforate me. I knew it was a matter of time, and with only Crazy Craig Hatler to back me up on this caper, I knew it was going to be tough. Well, it could be as tough as it wanted, 'cause I was tough too. My fingers tightened on the grip of my revolver, and I knew that this was no time to consider the \$7.00 menu...

OK, so we started the night with some nice and cheerful Tex-mex food, and luckily avoided a shootout in the restaurant while chitchatting about everything from SciFi movies to Gene's mysterious salad, and Todd's ability to psychically attract waiters (I blame the slush fund). When we got to the store, though, the real fun began. What started as a discussion of the biography of Sam Dashiell Hammett (blah, blah, blah farmhouse, blah, blah, blah, Pinkerton, blah, blah, blah Great War, blah, blah, blah) quickly degenerated into a free-for-all of jokes about exactly how hard-boiled Sam Spade was, and what the best ways to employ Peter Lorre were. After a good five minutes of "Fat, bloated idiot" references (thank you Ren & Stimpy), we got into a nuts and bolts discussion of the story.

Chris brought up an interesting difference between the movie and the book. The movie omits a scene where Sam strip-searches Brigid O'Shaunessy in search of a missing \$1000 bill, likely due to censors desiring to avoid even a hint of impropriety (yes, that's right folks, extra-marital affairs are OK, but strip searching criminal dames is dirty pool). After that, an interesting question was put to the assembled wiseacres: who would make a good Sam Spade in a remake film of the Maltese Falcon? I suggested that Casey Affleck or Adrian Pasdar could carry it off, and Aurelia agreed, citing Pasdar's performance in the TV series 'Profit'. A few other names were floated, but Ann Marie wisely pointed out that there are no real Leading Man types like Bogart anymore.

Eventually we moved on to some of the things that we liked and disliked in the story. For myself, I disliked Hammett's

constantly having Spade figure things out with little or no information (I compared it to the way Horatio Cain on CSI Miami always knows what is going on with absolutely no information which prompted a bunch of folks taking off their glasses and asking if we were OK). More discussion of general unpleasantness of the characters (of whom most agreed that Effie Perrine was the only nice person in the story) followed with questioning of the setup of some of the scenes. Most notable was the scene where Spade discusses his case with the Prosecuting Attorneys, which seemed incredibly unrealistic.

In the end, we discussed story, characters, setting, style, dialog, and everything else for nearly two and a half hours before deciding to call it a night and go browsing the stacks. It was a boatload of fun, and I am looking forward to next month's discussion of Richard K. Morgan's 'Thirteen'.

Themes of the Fantastic/Face the Fiction – 4/28/09

To end our very fun 'pulp' month, we gathered at the Toddfather's local 'place of business', aka New Moon Comics. New Moon was being turned into a speakeasy for the night and the entertainer was Mr. Danny Birt. Jo and I arrived early to set things up and make sure no coppers were around. We all know if the Toddfather calls you into the back room for a private chat, only one of you is coming out. He's hard-boiled.

Guest Danny Birt was fun and diverse. Where else can you get a guest that sings, plays guitar, does dramatic readings and discusses his writing - all in the same night?

Danny Birt has published science fiction, fantasy, and professional works in *The Raintown Review*, *Strange Worlds of Lunacy* (flash fiction), *Vadecast.com*, and *Musica Ficta*. His fantasy series *The Laurian Pentology* is published through Ancient Tomes Press, starting with *Ending an Ending*. He promises it will be a pentology - no Jordan here. In addition, Danny composes classical and filk music (nonstop hour-long piano solo, *Narcoleptic Pianist* and *Warped Children's Songs*). He works as a Music Therapist - he even showed us his guitar case covered in 'visitor' stickers as proof.

Danny started the meeting with some upbeat and fun songs he'd written. He had full audience participation - people were singing and dancing in their chairs. Of course, I was taking names of those chair-dancers. Toddfather thought the kitty for the slush fund was getting low and we figured we'd blackmail the eager participants who don't want it out there that they can swing with the best of 'em.

After getting the audience riled up and ready to go, Danny moved on to discuss his book, *Ending an Ending*. He talked about his personal path to being published and read some selections from the book that he felt indicative of the feel of the book. He mentioned he had some theater background and it showed in his reading. The voices he used were cool and helped set the tone. This was especially helpful for those who had not yet read the book. He left us hanging at crucial parts. You have to get the book to find out what happens.

Danny gave us the titles for the entire pentology and let us know the second book, *Beginning*, was available. He then read some of his flash fiction, which was a lot of fun. This book, *Strange Worlds of Lunacy* is available as well.

We took a brief break, purchased books, got them signed and then headed back for more. Mr. Birt gave us a few more readings, answered all of the questions from the audience (and there were plenty). Steve R, Chuck, Ana, Brian, Barry, Todd, Aurelia, Deena, Bill and Gene all had hands up for questions. Questions were asked about his writing, his books, his inspirations, his music, his personal likes in both reading material and music, how does music affect his writing if at all, and many questions were asked about his music therapy. There was nothing we didn't find interesting. He was an engaging speaker and gave the audience what they wanted.

After the question segment, the overwhelming audience request was for more music. Brian K had a request for the *Warped Children's Songs* CD. Danny opened with *Mary Had A Business Plan*. Brian wanted the little ditty about the asylum. Ever the eager participants, we clapped and sang along to the warped tune set to *If Your Happy and You Know It*. These were not the songs from our childhood. Brian gleefully pointed out, "you are not a well man," to which Mr. Birt responded with as much glee, "no, I am not." Good time, good time. A particular favorite was the Vatican song that Danny performed with dancing and pantomime - too funny. Genuflect!

It's was about this time that Danny Birt announced that it was after 10p and he had a looong ride home. We regretfully listened to one more song for the road - a lullaby! Just the thing to send us off onto the road with - lol. A big thanks to Danny Birt for a wonderful evening and a wonderful time. Great guest and great event. If you didn't get enough, you can visit www.dannybirt.com for information on Mr. Birt.

Thanks also to Rob for use of New Moon and having the books on hand (at a discount too).