



Tied-In

The Newsletter of the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers

Comic-Con: A Pro's-eye View

By Jeff Mariotte

With somewhere around 125,000 participants (exact figures are never publicly revealed), everyone's experience of Comic-Con International: San Diego is a little different. I've been attending since 1984, but always in some sort of working capacity, never just as a fan. Of course, with nearly as many people in the San Diego Convention Center as there are in the entire county I live in, it's not someplace I'd go as a fan, even if that were an option. I like my wide-open spaces, and although San Diego was home for a long time, it's not anymore. Now the urban congestion is just a precursor for arrival at the convention center and the throngs that will surround one for the rest of the week.

Comic-Con officially kicked off on Wednesday night, so-called Preview Night, which is open only to people who have bought four-day passes. Since four-day passes sold out early this year



Jeff and Adrienne

(every type of pass sold out well in advance of the con), Preview Night was jam-packed. The main activity on this night is on the dealer's room floor (if "dealer's room" isn't too limiting a term for a room so big you can almost see the curvature of the earth looking down the aisles) is trying to snag free loot or standing in line to buy "con exclusive" merchandise at inflated prices. Since I've been at it long enough to be jaded about

both, most of what I did involved trying to track down some friends without being killed by surging hordes. A friend of a friend broke a toe in one of the mob scenes—not an auspicious way to begin a convention that will undoubtedly involve lots of walking around.

After Wednesday night's dry run, the con began for real on Thursday. I had breakfast with an artist friend, and we wandered into the convention center a little after the doors were opened at 9:30. Already, the crowds looked like Saturday afternoons of previous years. Most of my day was spent in business meetings with comic publishers, but I made the rounds of the book publishers there too: Penguin, Random



An autographing line at the Comic Con



A long line of fans waiting to get into the convention

House, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, Tor, Harper, and Luna (and of course, all the various imprints associated with those). In the past some of these booths have been staffed only by sales and marketing people, but more and more editors are attending the show, and I had substantive discussions with some of them. There were more than a hundred authors in attendance this year, too—

some of them people who also write comics, but by no means all of them.

For anyone not in meetings, the convention offered distractions aplenty: a widely varied program of panels, auto-graphings, movies, gaming, and more. One of Thursday's big draws was the Summit Pictures panel that included,

Is it a con that tie-in writers should try to attend, in spite of the crowds? Absolutely.



Attendees at one of the many crowded panels

the preview of HBO's *True Blood* series, based on the novels of Charlaine Harris.

If you think there's a common theme—movies and TV drawing the crowds—you're right. At night, in addition to the programming, are the parties (the ones I went to, like Thursday night's Del Rey bash, thrown by publishers).

Friday began with another social breakfast, early enough that I had to wait outside with the crowd for the doors to open. As the sidewalk filled up, security guards at the doors kept trying to push people back while police officers in the street told people to stay on the sidewalk—a dangerous situation that prompted some

heated words and a riot being suggested, to applause from the crowd.

I visited with some artist friends on Friday morning, before the day's meetings began. My first signing, at the Mysterious Galaxy/Penguin booth, was held at 1:00, followed by another meeting that took me a little more than halfway through the Scribes Award ceremony and panel. Friday afternoon was more running around, missing other panels, until it was time to leave the center for more parties.

Did I mention that Comic-Con is exhausting?

So exhausting, in fact, that I missed the IAMTW breakfast scheduled for the next morning. I just couldn't get up and out early enough, and enjoyed a leisurely breakfast with my family instead. Saturday is traditionally the busiest day of the con, and this year was no exception. I tried to spend some time seeing parts of the dealer's room floor that I hadn't seen, but with the mobs thronging in and intersections blocked either by sheer numbers or by people stopped to photograph people in costumes (this happens every day, but Saturday night is the Masquerade so it's even more pronounced then), there was much that I couldn't see.

My one panel was on Saturday afternoon. Because two of the panelists were convention Guests of Honor, Joe Hill and Max Brooks, and one of them was screen star Adrienne Barbeau, we were in a good-sized room and nearly filled it. As people took pictures of us, I took some of the audience, to show what pros on panels look at while the fans in the chairs are looking at us.

After the panel was a group signing, outside "under the sails," where all of the con's big signings are held. Again, the big names drew the crowds, and I snapped a shot of what a long signing line looks like—even when they're not lined up for you.

By Saturday night, I was too tired for parties. I had dinner with family and a friend and turned in early.

Sunday's biggest event was a signing with Steve Niles for our tie-in novel *30 Days of Night: Eternal Damnation* (so far, a *30 Days of Night* novel has won a Scribe Award every year they've existed!) at Mysterious Galaxy/Pocket Books. The second biggest event—and more welcome, in the long run, was the announcement that the convention was over for the year.

Is it a con that tie-in writers should try to attend, in spite of the crowds? Absolutely. As I mentioned before, the real draws are the movie and TV presentations, and many tie-in writers rely on the continued success of TV shows and movies for our daily bread. Plus, if you can get off the floor and up to the panels, you might gain some insight into that series or movie that'll help when you're writing a novelization or original novel set in that world.

The Scribe Awards are held, there are lots of editors and writers in attendance—and look at it this way, if you're NOT there, some other tie-in writer is going out to lunch with that editor and you're not.

Yes, it's big and noisy and crowded. No, you probably can't see the whole floor, and you definitely won't make it to every panel. But for the working pro who wants to line up new work and promote what's already done, there's no convention in the business that's more useful in so many ways: networking, becoming acquainted with new properties and more familiar with existing ones, meeting fans, doing panels and signings, etc., no matter what genre you work in.

Besides, you just might take home one of those Scribes, and that ain't bad.



A crowd in the dealer's room

Russel Davis Takes the Helm of SFWA



Russell Davis

As I set out to write this, it's Sunday, July 6, 2008... and this is my sixth day as the President of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of American (SFWA). Jean asked me to share a few words about the direction that I intend to take SFWA over the next twelve months, and how it might impact members of the IAMTW.

The first, and probably most profound change, is a process that started over a year ago. Then President Robin Wayne Bailey formed a small committee to examine if SFWA needed to change what state we are incorporated in for a variety of reasons. (Right now, we're a Massachusetts corporation.) The committee found that a move was necessary, particularly in view of our need to do award and election balloting electronically. At that point, they were charged with taking a couple of additional steps:

determining what states would be better options for SFWA... and drafting a new set of bylaws to go with that process.

What a long, strange road it's been, but we're getting much closer. The final report of that committee was turned in to me and the new board on – you guessed it – July 1. And our first order of business is to review it, go over the draft bylaws for changes, corrections and additions, and then (once it's vetted by our legal counsel) get it out to the membership for their approval.

Now, I freely admit that all of this sounds about as exciting as watching paint dry. But, here's the part where things do start to get a little interesting. During the past several years, there have been a lot of questions pertaining to SFWA membership criteria, and I admit that they can be confusing. No small part of this results from some fine-point contradictions in the bylaws and the published membership criteria, and additional confusion created from the ever-expanding marketplace of science fiction and fantasy.

With the rise in popularity of graphic novels and comic books, as well as other forms such as manga and anime and video game writing and RPG

"What makes this exciting is that the end result will be an organization that can do its work with more efficiency, can respond to its membership needs much faster, and in the end, can achieve the goals of the corporation in a better way."

writing and so on and so forth, the terms "novel," "short story," and "script" are a little... confusing. Is a graphic novel a novel? Is a comic book a book? Perhaps, due to length, they are short stories? Or, perhaps due to form, they're more like scripts? In regard to a script, what does "professionally produced" actually mean?

Now, I happen to be a "big tent" thinker when it comes to these questions. I believe that the core purposes of SFWA aren't and shouldn't be focused on deciding issues of form and format, but on encouraging the overall growth – regardless of form – of science fiction and fantasy writing. And what I hope will be one of the results of this process is a clarification of our membership procedures that will allow far more types of professional SF and fantasy genre authors to join our ranks. Ultimately, this benefits SFWA by creating

more resources for the organization in terms of volunteers, industry expertise and (yes) finances.

SFWA has been around a long time – more than 40 years – and clarifying the differences between the bylaws (which should only address corporate governance) and operating procedures (how the corporation functions) is long overdue. What makes this exciting is that the end result will be an organization that can do its work with more efficiency, can respond to its membership needs much faster, and in the end, can achieve the goals of the corporation in a better way.

For IAMTW members, many of whom write in the genres SFWA is all about, all of this (and many other projects in the works) means that if you want to make a change in what SFWA means and is, now is a great time to get involved. If you *are* a member of SFWA, speak up and volunteer on something that interests you. If you aren't a member, or you used to be, now is a great time to join or rejoin. We're going in new directions: like completely relaunching the Bulletin (our primary magazine) to address far broader areas of interest to all types of writers... and streamlining the committees so they get more done in a faster timeframe... and gearing up for a Nebula Awards Weekend next year in

Los Angeles that will be an *amazing* event... and rebuilding from scratch the SFWA website... and... well, it's a long list and I'm about as busy as I personally care to be.

But the good news, for IAMTW members and for SFWA members, is that we're moving forward and we're not just talking about change. We're making it happen, and we hope that you'll choose to get involved.

Do as We Say, Not Necessarily as We Do

By Elizabeth Christensen

Lillian Hellman was once quoted as saying, "If I had to give young writers advice, I would say don't listen to writers talking about writing or themselves."

Recently, a high school student who either hadn't heard or had ignored Hellman's warning contacted me to request an interview about my job for a school project. Since I still consider myself an engineer by trade and an author by fortunate accident, I didn't feel entirely qualified to answer her questions by myself.

I called in the cavalry, and the members of IAMTW quickly responded with enthusiasm and honesty.

The student was extremely grateful, and so was I—less because the group made me look good than because the advice was useful to me as well.

Apparently I wasn't the only person who felt that way, since the discussion took on a life of its own on the Novelscribes mailing list and spawned an eight-page

collection of responses that likely will reach even more aspiring authors.

(Any interested parties who haven't yet seen the full document are more than welcome to email me at: beth@elizabethchristensen.com for a copy.) The following is a sampling of IAMTW authors' advice to young writers.

The qualities necessary to be a successful author:

"A thick skin," said Keith DeCandido, who was echoed by Aaron Rosenberg: "Without [that] you'll give up after your first rejection or first negative review."

In a related vein, self-confidence, or a healthy ego, was another recommended trait. Steven Savile said, "I think self confidence, verging sometimes on arrogance, in



Elizabeth Christensen

your abilities is a benefit, right up there with the ability to read selectively and therefore willfully ignore all of the unpleasant stuff that appears seemingly at random on the interwebby. There are days, weeks even, when you are going to doubt yourself and your story and your ability to carry it to a meaningful conclusion...many people simply give up at this point. That supreme belief in yourself is a useful asset when it comes to getting past this point.”

Debbie Viguie echoed Steve and added: “Ironically, you also need the ability to check that ego and recognize that sometimes your editor knows how to make a better story than you do, or can at

least get enough perspective on it to suggest changes that you might not like but that will ultimately help the story.” Others chimed in on the importance of handling criticism well, including Aaron Rosenberg, Will McDermott, and yours truly.

Perseverance and dedication were popular topics. “The ability to force yourself to do a task regardless of how exhausted, busy, or uninterested in it you are,” said Debbie. Aaron, Karen Miller, Max Collins, and I all followed similar paths. Steven Paul Leiva said, “A

need to write beyond even a desire to write.” David Seidman may have put it best: “You’ve got to love it, because it’s too hard to handle if you don’t.”

Authors’ likes and dislikes about their jobs:

Unsurprisingly, no one is a fan of the paychecks in this business. “Dislike: the inconsistent income,” said Keith DeCandido. “Dislike: low pay rates,” echoed David Seidman. Karen Miller agreed: “I dislike that it can be so brutally driven by financial considerations that don’t always have a connection with the quality of work on offer.” Russell Davis put a more positive spin on the topic—sort of. “What I like

most: getting paid (eventually) to make stuff up. How cool is that? What I dislike the most: getting paid (eventually).”

“Dislike: The business aspects—finding the job and all that goes with that,” said Steven Paul Leiva. “Dislike: self-promotion and the fact that a writer can’t just be a writer these days but has to learn about ‘delicious’ and ‘rss feeds’ and ‘blogger’ and forums and second life and everything other than the business of telling stories,” offered Steven Savile.

Aaron Rosenberg said, “What do I dislike about it? The uncertainties: making the contacts, getting the chance to pitch, pitching, hoping they go for it, revising it, finally getting approval and contracts, waiting on editorial notes, waiting on payment, waiting on reviews. It’s nerve-wracking.” Karen added: “I dislike the uncertainty, the fact that luck plays such a big part in what happens to you.” My own contribution: “I wish there was a set path I could follow that would ensure me success in pitching a new novel to a publisher now that I’ve demonstrated some skill and a willingness to work with editors—but if that path exists, I haven’t found it, and neither has anyone else I’ve asked.”

On the flip side of the subject, most of the responses highlighted the joy of creating

for a living. "I love most that I get to play with my imagination. I love that it encourages me to read widely, travel widely, be curious about the world," said Karen. Aaron said, "What do I like about it? I love to tell stories, so getting paid to tell them and being able to tell them to people I've never met all over the world? That's awesome!" Will McDermott nailed it: "I think if you ask most writers they will tell you that they don't write for the money (there usually isn't much) or the fame (again, only a few are known by more than a small set of readers). Most authors write because they can't NOT write. They have stories inside of them that they want to tell."

Some responses were specific to the world of tie-in writing. "Getting fanmail from people who were touched by something in one of my books," offered Debbie Viguie. Steven Savile went further: "The letters from readers who are moved by your story, the complete fan-boy thrill of working on shows you loved growing up and realize that somehow you are sowing seeds—some other kid is reading what you have written and thinking, 'man this must be a cool job, I want to do this'... and you're ruining his life just the way yours was ruined 20 years ago by some other writer whose book you picked up and thought 'damn,

this must be such a cool job... I want to do this.' Heh."

Advice to give to a high school student considering writing as a career:

Honesty is the best policy, especially when it comes to career choices. "Don't do it," warned Steven Savile. "Just don't. Go get another job. Be an accountant or an executive or a lawyer or something. The odds of becoming a full time novelist are slim in the extreme, with a mean wage of about \$4,000 a year spread across the most successful

to the least successful . . . and if that is enough to put you off, well then you shouldn't be thinking about this as a career in the first place because writing isn't a career, it is a vocation."

Debbie Viguie offered an unvarnished look as well: "You will work twice as hard as your friends and you will have very little to show for it in terms of money. Forget your weekends, they aren't free days, they're work days just like all the others. People who can handle this career are those to whom writing is an obsession. If you find yourself in church, in restaurants, in the restroom, and in cars madly scribbling story notes or actual text,

then this might be the career for you. If you have ever nearly broken down your front door in a mad attempt to get to a paper and pen (or computer) or reached the point where you routinely carry scratch paper and a pen with you on your person, then think long and carefully. You might have the needed obsession with writing but do you have the stomach to deal with the frustration, the uncertainty, and the rejection of it all? Lastly ask yourself if you could be satisfied with

"You will work twice as hard as your friends and you will have very little to show for it in terms of money."

writing as a hobby for just the enjoyment of yourself and one or two friends. If the answer to that is yes, pick a different career."

"DON'T DO IT, YOU FOOL!!!!!" This came from Keith DeCandido. "Okay, seriously: Accept the fact that you will spend your entire life being rejected. I am, by most definitions of the term, a successful writer. I've had 35 novels, 28 short stories, 12 novellas, a bunch of comic books, and many essays published, and I *still* get rejected *all the time*. It's part of the job. You cannot take it personally and you cannot let it stop you."

Advice on craft was also plentiful, much of it focused on constant reading, writing, and observation. Russell Davis said, “Read EVERYTHING—fiction, nonfiction, different genres, magazines, newspapers, religious tracts, whatever.

taking notes while people speak gives me a fresh sense of how my fictional characters should express themselves. I can also recommend writing poetry with a strict arrangement of rhythm and rhyme. It builds the mental muscles by forcing you (or at least me) to find new ways to express yourself and not depend on your usual habits—e.g., if ‘the sky is blue’ won’t fit

the poem’s rhyme scheme and rhythm pattern, you’ve got to invent another way to say it.”

“Reading is important but writing far more so,” offered Aaron Rosenberg. “You need to know what you can do: how fast you can write, how tightly you can hew to an outline, what your strengths are. Hone your craft as much as you can, and thicken your skin as well.”

From Will McDermott: “Write and then write some more. And read. The best way to improve your writing is to write. Join the school paper, create your own underground paper, work on the newsletter for your club, go home and write short stories. Heck, even volunteer to write an extra essay for class. Just keep writing and you will see your writing improve over time. The caveat to that is that you have to learn how to write better. So read. A lot! And don’t just enjoy the stories and the characters and the action.

Look at the words. Look at how the sentences are constructed. Notice how the word choices and sentence length change from exposition to action. See how good authors pick strong verbs and nouns and don’t rely on strings of adjectives and adverbs to pepper their work with descriptions. Read critically. Look at how the plot is constructed. See what the author does to make the characters come alive. And then, when you get back to your own writing, try to incorporate what you have learned.”

“Fasten your seatbelt—it’s going to be a bumpy ride!” said Steven Paul Leiva. “But then, that’s what we go to theme parks for, isn’t it?”

David Spencer contributed some wisdom for all of us, not just the beginners: “Even as you let your talent grow and your professionalism mature ... don’t ever let your spirit grow old. Don’t lose touch with why you love what you do, why it’s necessary to do it. If you can keep that invigorated—and you always keep your toolkit sharp, and your writing muscles in fighting trim—somehow you’ll survive.”

The final word on the subject—and rightfully so—came from Burl Barer.

“Advice to Young Writers: Finish it.”

“Write and then write some more. And read. The best way to improve your writing is to write.”

Write **CONSTISTENTLY** - in any form or format that appeals.” Karen Miller pointed out, “Writing is one of the few careers that rewards people for being older, and having lived. Be aware that writers examine the human condition, so you need to have lived a bit and experienced a lot of things so you can write about life honestly, and with perspective. Hone your skills of observation. Read widely. Watch lots of film and TV and theatre. Be curious about people and the world.”

From David Seidman: “Write a lot. Start a blog, keep a diary, carry a notepad (one never knows where inspiration will strike), and get published everywhere you can, whether you get paid or not. Read the best stuff you can find, but don’t worry if you don’t like the stuff that other people say you should like. Another thought: write outside your normal preference. As a sometime journalist, I’ve found that

Left Coast Crime Captures Lee

By Sue Trowbridge

Every year, hundreds of mystery writers, readers and fans get together in a different West Coast city to celebrate the genre at an annual conference called Left Coast Crime.

There are always plenty of formal events at LCC, including panels, writers' workshops, an awards banquet, booksellers, and parties.

Many people go just to see old friends and meet new ones. Deals are often struck in the bar and in the bookroom. Next year's convention offers new opportunities.

Left Coast Crime 2009 will be held on the Big Island of Hawaii from March 7-12, 2009. The conference's toastmaster, who is charged with keeping the crowd entertained at the awards ceremony, on the beach, at the bar, and in the elevator, is IAMTW's own Vice President Lee Goldberg.



Lee Goldberg

Left Coast Crime 2009

March 7-12, 2009

Waikoloa Beach Resort
The Big Island, Hawaii

Say Aloha to Murder



LCC 2009, Hawaii

Guests of Honor: Rhys Bowen and Barry Eisler

Toastmaster: Lee Goldberg

Fan Guests of Honor: Pam Dehnke and Vallery Feldman

<http://www.leftcoastcrime.org/2009>

E-mail: gottfried@leftcoastcrime.org

Left Coast Crime Conference, Inc.

One of the highlights of the convention will be the premiere of: "The House Without a Key," a new play based on Earl Derr Biggers' Charlie Chan novel.

The book was adapted by mystery author Hal Glatzer and will be the first time the story is presented on stage, and (one silent

film excepted) the first time that Chan will be portrayed by an Asian-American actor.

LCC will also feature a luau, talks about Hawaiian flora and fauna, pre- and post-convention trips, and fun and informative interactive panels.

For more information about Left Coast Crime, visit: www.leftcoastcrime.org/2009.

Convention Calendar

Foolscap X

Sept. 26-28, Bellevue, WA
Bellevue Sheraton
GoH: Esther Friesner
Registration: \$45
Events: Art show, banquet,
panels, and more
For more information:
www.foolscapcon.org

Archon 32

October 3-5, Collinsville, IL
Gateway Convention Center
GoH: Laurell K. Hamilton
Registration: \$60
Main convention hotel: Holiday
Inn: 1000 Eastport Plaza Drive,
Collinsville, IL 62234-6104;
1-800-551-5133 (\$119.95 single-
quad, \$189.95 for parlor half of
Junior Suites).
For more information:
www.archonstl.org

Bouchercon

World Mystery Convention
October 9-12, Baltimore, MD
Sheraton City Center
GoH: Lawrence Block
Registration: \$175
For more information:
www.charmedtodeath.com

World Fantasy

October 30-November 3
Calgary, Canada
Guests: Tom Doherty,
Barbara Hambly, David
Morrell, Tad Williams
Registration: \$125
For more information:
www.worldfantasy2008.org

WindyCon

Nov. 14-16, Chicago, IL
Westin Lombard
Guests: John Ringo, Walter
Koenig, David Mattingly
Registration: \$45 by Oct. 1
Special room rate of \$99/night
Hotel phone: 630-719-8000
Events: Seminars, movies,
costume competition, filking,
dealer's room.
For more information:
www.windycon.org

Orycon 30

Nov. 21-23, Portland, OR
Portland Marriott Waterfront
Guests: Harry Turtledove,
Ginjer Buchanan
Registration: \$50 to Oct. 31
Events: Art show, writers'
workshops, seminars, filking,
dealer's room
For more information:
www.orycon.org

Love is Murder

Feb. 6-8, 2009, Chicago, IL
Westin Chicago North Shore
Guests: IAMTW's Raymond
Benson, as well as Alex Kava,
Steve Berry, Jeffrey Deaver.
Registration: price varies
based on food options
Events: Agent meetings, pitch
sessions, seminars, banquets,
and more.
For more information:
www.loveismurder.net

IAMTW Members attend Gen Con

Special Scribe Awards
were presented this August at
the Gen Con Game Fair in
Indianapolis, which set a
record attendance with
28,000.

Paul Crilley won for best
game-related novel for his
Eberron book: *Night of the
Long Shadows*. Other Scribe
nominees in the category were
Tim Waggoner for *Forge of the
Mindslayers* and William
Dietz for Hitman: *Enemy
Within*.

Several IAMTW members
were part of the Writer's
Symposium, which offered 73
hours of seminars, workshops,
and readings. Among them
were: John Helfers, Tim
Waggoner, Brad Beaulieu,
Steven Schend, Jean Rabe,
Jeff LaSala, and Donald J.
Bingle.

IAMTW

President—
Max Allan Collins
Vice President—
Lee Goldberg

Website: www.iamtw.org
E-mail: tieinwriters@yahoo.com

Send Tied-In submissions to:
jeanrabe@hotmail.com

IAMTW
PO Box 8212
Calabasas, CA 91372

All articles in this issue are copyright 2008 by their respective authors.
All other content copyright 2008 IAMTW.