

SiWire: We're Hugo Eligible!

Sunday Edition

Shawna Trpcic's Done Come and Gone...

Sadly, Costuming Guest of Honor Shawna Trpcic had to head off a little early, so she will not be around for programming or anything today. We're so glad that she came and filled our costuming needs!

The Real World of Alien Autopsies / Alien Forensics: Blood Spatter Analysis by Rackstraw

It's nearly 5 PM on SiliCon Saturday. Pat MacEwan is outside soaking a fuzzy, leopard print slipper in purple sugar water as audience members from her afternoon panel observe with interest. What's going on?

Pat has lead us out here for a practical demonstration after a fascinating lecture and slide-show which tied true crime scene stories from her own experience with science fictional speculation. The subject: the credibility and hypothetical science of alien autopsies. It's a panel she first presented in 2005 and has now revisited with new additions.

Much of the information Pat shared was very down-to-Earth considering the topic. We heard some sobering statistics about the frequency of children getting hold of firearms and incidental deaths during gangland shoot-outs.

She made particular points about how often CSI shows get things wrong by portraying investigators who remove bullets from crime scene walls with tweezers, which can leave marks (it's better to dig them out with a knife, admonishes Pat), or from the flesh of victims much closer to the surface of the flesh than they'd actually come to rest. Another common, Hollywood-type mistake (often seen in simulated alien autopsies), is the appearance of morticians treating corpses gingerly. Real world professionals know there's no need to be gentle while handling the dead.

Beyond that, Pat counseled us on other ways to detect the authenticity of alien autopsy footage or to more believably fake such documentaries if we have a mind to. In one example, she mentions dramatic, camera angle choices meant to obscure what's going on. Any camera operator who doesn't film an autopsy from a clear perspective would get fired in short order, Pat says. Another good idea is to favor prosthetics of partial remains over complete and intact corpses. The more complete the alien you're dissecting, the more likely it is to be noticeable as a fake.

Then there are the scientific details to bear in mind when you're trying to get an autopsy to look right; corpses don't bleed, real flesh and blood sags on the dead, and real flesh retracts when cut.

Pat has put considerable thought into what autopsy tricks would and wouldn't work when you're dealing with an unknown species. Anything with an endoskeleton will have many similar, posthumous attributes to Earth mammals whereas an endoskeletal creature would be different; less vulnerable to projectiles, for example. While color changes in human corpses might be very telling, they would not be useful clues on aliens unless the investigator knows the species' biological properties. The point also arose that alien weapons could have marked dissimilarities to anything known to man and so wounds would be much harder to interpret.

Following a late intermission, we joined Pat in the parking lot for the special demonstration. Prepared with a selection of common



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Next Deadline: Sometime in 2010!

SATURDAY PARTIES

The halls were crowded, parties jumped with life, platform shoes were common, costumes were rife. Burma Shave.

The Boardroom - Fanzine Lounge [SiWire HQ] - again a haven for those who wanted to talk and not fight over music or the like. Tonight was 'mood lighting' night, as half the lights were left off.

Room 241 - The Dr. Steel Party - [also noted as 'that room from where all those food smells were coming from'] - admitted 'cookies are very important'. This was the room with the hot-air popcorn popper - and deep-dish pizza. It's amazing what you can find when you follow your nose.

Room 249 - The SorcererCon Party - had far and away the best-looking banner. Inside there were scads of chocolate in its varied forms - from Oreos to M&Ms to all manner of early Hallowe'en candy minis.

Room 253 - The Karaoke Party - had an excellent rig for singing - and many therein encouraging each other to 'go up there and sing your song'.

Room 257 - The Black Hole [and semi-demi Con Suite] - was the gravitational attraction point of the party floor. It was full of celebrants, wedged in elbow to elbow [except for the dogs]. The best quotes overheard inside were: "I'm not cute, I'm a warrior!" and "With all this Mal-content there should've been a Firefly party." The traditional slave auction held in the late night hours benefited the Make a Wish Foundation - and was quite HOT, despite the evening's chill.

Room 261 - The Westercon 64 Party - had lots of yummys, most especially Lindor dark chocolate truffles. Mmmmm. Westercon 64 will be held in San Jose at the Fairmont over the July 4th weekend in 2011. The party recommended lots of 'horsing around' - to which one party-goer stated, "Just say neigh!" But the best quote overheard was the gal stating, "Stop me

before I click again."

Room 263 - The Further Confusion 2009 Gild Rush Party - was very shiny! The room used all manner of shiny gold decorations - and all many of gold-wrapped treats. It definitely had the best use of crystals and sugar.

Room 265 - the PENSFA party - was a self-proclaimed 'isle of tranquility' offering glasses of lingonberry juice, among other treats. Overheard: 'What's that on the floor?' 'Water.' 'Are you sure?' 'I suppose it could have been di-hydrogen monoxide.'

[The initial questioner looked alarmed, while everyone else there laughed with Ed.]

Overheard in the hall: 'Nyarlathotep wasn't bad, he was just misunderstood.'

'No, he was an evil Elder god.' 'True.'

Masquerade Results

Workmanship

Excellence in Soft Sculture

- Bryon the Dyslexic Dragon by Krystal Gordon

Best Novice - Ghost Waltz by Krys Taylor

Excellence in Dye Technique

- Silk Moth by Carole Parker

Excellence in Silhouette Recreation - Wizomania by Mariellen Cottman

Presentation Awards

Honorable Mention Over Execution - Ghost Waltz

Best Novice - Bryon the Dyslexic Dragon

Best in Show - Wizomania!



Barely Legal performs Rocky Horror on Friday!

(Autopsy-Con't from Pg. 1)

stabbing and bludgeoning weapons, not to mention some liquids to simulate the consistency of blood, she produced a variety of splatter patterns a crime scene investigator commonly discovers. We stood back a safe distance.

Con attendee Sally Smith volunteered to attack the soaked slipper with a hammer for one of the most engaging splatter demonstrations. True to fandom form, she likened what she was doing to a Klingon committing a tribble-cide. Having a clear interest in the subject matter, she noticed telling traces of fur on the mock murder weapon after the act.

At the end of this highly informative event, Pat earned a healthy amount of applause. She says she was pleased with the results but thought more people would show up for the hack & slash. If she repeats the presentation, she might bring a teddy bear.

SiWire: Too Many Monkeys!