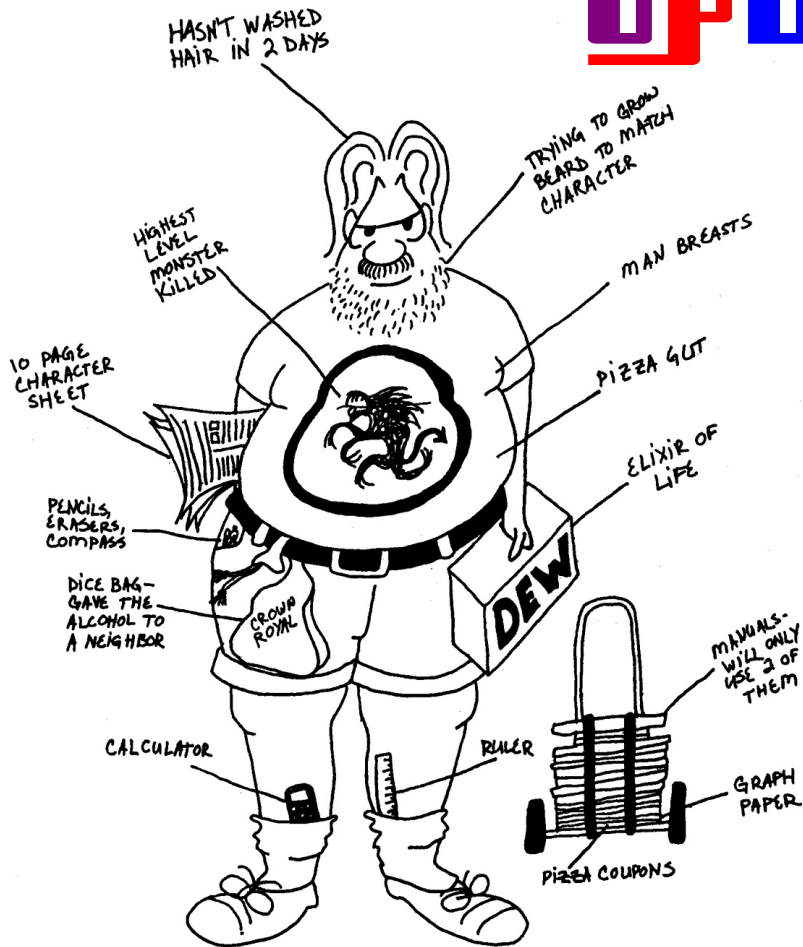


# SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION UPDATE



THE MALE ROLEPLAYER

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## Musings of a Faned

First off, on the subject of this cover, it's by Kimm Antell. Yes, I could see how it would be offensive, but I've gamed with that guy. Hell, I've showed up to cons sharing a few of his traits (the gut, the case of Dew...). I'd really like to do some gaming again soon. I think it crept into my reviewing a little bit, too. I've been doing a heck of a lot of reading, but still haven't managed to finish an epic fantasy novel I've been reading in the background. It's no longer than *Julian Comstock*, but I just haven't managed to get it read. I'm down to about 75 pages, though, so you should see my review of it next week. I promised Laura a review of it, and she'll get it, darn it!

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All contents copyright their creators. This zine is free, either by direct email or [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com). A letter of comment or other contribution will get you on my mailing list, as long as I remember to put you there. If I forget, bother me a second time, or however long it takes to add you. I haven't been printing this one, which leaves me free to use as many pages as I wish, and do things like color. It also lets me use all the contributions I can muster, so fire away!

## Calendar of Events:

### January 8-9:

**ShadowCon XIV** (Memphis, TN – Holiday Inn Select. Combination SCA and science fiction convention. Darlene Bolesny, Debra Parmley, Roland Mann, Chris Finklea, Kristina Kelly, Mike Rodieck, King of Gleann Abhann.)

### January 8-10:

**GaFilk 12** (Atlanta, GA – Crown Plaza Atlanta Airport. One of the essential stops in the South for filk. Alexander James Adams, Terence Chua, Andrew Ross, Delia Sherman, and Ellen Kushner.)

**Ichibancon** (Concord, NC – Great Wolf Lodge and Resort. Wendy Powell, Michael Sinterniklaas, Todd Haberkorn.)

### January 15-17:

**MarsCon** (Williamsburg, VA – Holiday Inn Patriot. David Weber, Marrus, Steve Long, Tom Smith, Michael Jon Khandelwal, Coyote Run, Fishnet Inc., Luna-C, Treasures In The Sand.)

### January 22-24:

**ChattaCon 35** (Chattanooga, TN – Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel. Sherrilyn Kenyon, Timothy Zahn, Todd Lockwood, Jody Lynn Nye, Bill Fawcett. Always a fun con, Chattacon is one of the few places where I feel like I can really hang out with folks my own age \*and\* folks who've been in Fandom since before I was born. The bheer in the consuite tends to be of higher quality than most places, too.)

**Siege of Augusta** (Augusta, GA – Doubletree Hotel. Wargaming.)

### January 28-31:

**WAM VIII** (Timonium, MD – Holiday Inn. Boardgaming, particularly card-driven wargames.)

**Game Fest 15** (Atlanta, GA – Holiday Inn Select Atlanta-Peachtree Corners. No single-day memberships.)

### January 29-31:

**Creation Twi/Tour** (Nashville, TN)

### February 5-6:

**DrakeCon** (Rogers, AR – Embassy Suites Northwest Arkansas. Anime and gaming convention.)

### February 5-7:

**What-The-Hell?! Con** (Greensboro, NC – Guilford College campus, Duke and Dana buildings. Tom Smith, Flaming Faeries, European Medieval Arts of Arms, and a whole slew of webcomics folks and local authors and artists.)

**AggieCon 41** (College Station, TX – College Station Hilton Hotel. Steven Gould, Ellen Datlow, Selina Rosen, Martha Wells. The oldest ongoing, college-run con in the South (or anywhere else) has finally moved off-campus. I had the pleasure of meeting some of the folks involved in this one at the Austin SMOFcon, and I give them my vote of confidence.)

**Williamsburg Muster** (Williamsburg, VA – Holiday Inn Patriot. Wargaming.)

**February 12-14:**

**Katsucon 16** (National Harbor, MD – Gaylord National. )

**Farpoint** (Timonium, MD – Crowne Plaza Baltimore North. Felicia Day, Matt Frewer, Mira Furlan, Lee Arenberg.)

**ConDFW IX** (Dallas, TX – Crowne Plaza Suites Hotel. Elizabeth Moon, Jack McDevitt, Vincent Villafranca. Another good group of folks down in Texas. I recall them having good bheer at their room party at FenCon, and they seemed to have a good thing going.)

**February 12-15:**

**SynDCon** (Rockville, MD – Rockville Hilton. Gaming.)

**February 19-21:**

**ConNooga** (Chattanooga, TN – Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel. Lloyd Kaufman, Larry Elmore, Bella Morte, Radio Cult. I attended this multi-fandom convention last year and didn't have a very good time. You can find my con-report on it in last March's issue. I would like to say something positive about them, though – I've never seen a con that was more supportive of independent filmmakers.)

**Furry Fiesta** (Addison, TX – Crowne Plaza Hotel North Dallas. Tigerwolf, Kyell Gold, Michele Light. Furry convention with a theme of Space Cowboys.)

**February 24-28:**

**PrezCon** (Charlottesville, VA – Doubletree Hotel. Prezcon is a gaming con, styled as the Winter Nationals. Most notable among their tournaments is the Settlers of Catan Regional Championship.)

**February 26-28:**

**SheVaCon** (Roanoke, VA – Holiday Inn Roanoke Tanglewood. Peter Mayhew, Stephen Hickman, Spat! Oktan, Kevin J. Anderson, Rebecca Moesta Anderson.)

**ConCave** (Horse Cave, KY – Hampton Inn. You'll have to go through the convention to get a room, though, and they deliberately avoid an online-presence. It's worth taking the trouble to find someone who can put you in touch with the con, though – I went the past two years and had a blast each time.)

March 5-7:

StellarCon 34 (High Point, NC)

CoastCon XXXIII (Biloxi, MS)

March 6-7:

Arkansas Anime Festival (Bentonville, AR)

March 12-14:

Kawa Kon (St. Louis, MO)

Madicon 19 (Harrisonburg, VA)

MegaCon (Orlando, FL)

MidSouthCon (Memphis, TN)

RevelCon 21 (Houston, TX)

March 17-21:

IAFA 31 (Orlando, FL)

March 19-21:

FantaSciCon (Chattanooga, TN)

March 20-21:

MomoCon (Atlanta, GA)

March 25-28:

Furry Weekend Atlanta (Atlanta, GA)

March 26-28:

Enlightenment XIII (Timonium, MD)

April 1-4:

Frolicon (Atlanta, GA)

April 9-11:

RavenCon (Richmond, VA)

Conglomeration (Louisville, KY)

April 16-18:

PyrateCon (New Orleans, LA)

Game Con (Aberdeen, MD)

T-Mode (Alexandria, VA)

KampingKon (Calhoun, GA)

April 22-25:

Game Days (Timonium, MD)

April 23-25:

JordanCon (Atlanta, GA)

Twilight Convention (Arlington, VA)

April 24-25:

Dicehead Siege (Chattanooga, TN)

April 30-May 2:

MTAC Odyssey (Nashville, TN)

Recon (Cocoa Beach, FL)

Malice Domestic (Arlington, VA)

OutLantaCon (Atlanta, GA)

Anachrocon (Atlanta, GA)

Twilight Convention (Charlotte, NC)

June 4-6, 2010:

ConCarolinas/DeepSouthCon 48 (Charlotte, NC)

August 5-8, 2010:

ReConStruction/NASFiC 10 (Raleigh, NC)

September 2-6, 2010:  
 AussieCon 4 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)  
 September 3-6, 2010:  
 Dragon\*Con (Atlanta, GA)

***Julian Comstock: A Story of 22<sup>nd</sup>-Century America* by Robert Charles Wilson (Tor, June 2009)**

Warren Buff

There's an octopus on the cover. That's important, but I won't tell you why.

Wilson's novel is set in a future which remains a dark if slim possibility, one where the United States has expanded to control most of Canada and Central America, is ruled by a hereditary President and Senate, and is controlled by a landed aristocracy and the Dominion of Jesus Christ on Earth. East and West serve as the poles of this society, with the Senate and President in New York, and the Dominion in Colorado Springs, while the Army is divided between the Army of the Laurentians and the Army of the Californias. Technology and the population have been set back by the scarcity of oil and a few metals, a series of plagues, and long periods of religious fervor. And by the strange combination of these factors, it's also a steampunk novel.

The first hints of this come in the characters' preoccupation with aristocracy. The title character is the nephew and heir-apparent of the hereditary President, while the novel's point of view, Adam Hazard, is a Western boy of the leasing class. The two of them, along with Julian's mentor, Sam, wind up conscripted into the Army of the Laurentians following the book's initial intrigues. There, we come to see a little more of what makes this a steampunk novel: the geopolitical scene is dominated by empires (the United States, Mitteleuropa, Brazil, and China are mentioned), and warfare is just gradually returning to enough mechanization to fascinate the characters (automatic weapons, trains, and long-range artillery are still new enough on the scene to turn the tide of battle). Adam's romantic and sexual mores reflect positively Victorian attitudes, frustrating his feminist love interest, Calyxa (who expresses her frustration at his naiveté in her native Quebecois French), and allowing him to delicately and obliquely discuss Julian's homosexuality. The case for steampunk is sealed with the forms of mass entertainment in this world: yellow journalism, silent films (with live casts providing the dialog), and pulp adventure novels.

The best tool that comes to mind, though, for discussing the appeal of *Julian Comstock* comes from my favorite role-playing game – *7<sup>th</sup> Sea* (and forgive me if I use a swashbuckling game to help describe my enjoyment of a steampunk novel – it's far more appropriate than you would think at first). At the beginning of a campaign, gamemasters are instructed to ask their players what they would like the story to focus on. This is done by giving each player 100 points to distribute between Action, Intrigue, Romance, Exploration, and Military. While many events would satisfy more than one of these categories (which is a good thing), getting that distribution from each player helps the gamemaster tailor the

story to be appealing to the whole group and to each player individually. Wilson has provided a rather well-balanced novel, akin to dropping 30 points into Action, 10 into Exploration (the book has some definite archaeological elements, and the point of view character is seeing the world outside his home for the first time), and 20 into everything else. It's a balanced novel, with its only imbalance favoring Action, which really just seems like a good thing to me.

Over and above this, though, Wilson is able to work with characters who are interesting, treating their flaws with compassion and understanding while not for a minute pretending they aren't flaws. Adam really feels like a rural, immature, idealistic boy, and he sees the world and loves in ways that definitely show him to be the son of a snake-handler, yet these flaws in him aren't treated with condescension, nor are they white-washed. He is allowed to be problematic in ways that humans are problematic – while he possesses many views which mark him as a product of his society, and are repulsive at times in their chauvinism, he is also fundamentally good-willed, and his love of learning and of his friends allows him to see beyond the simplistic worldview of his small town upbringing. We don't have to approve of everything Adam thinks to understand him or to like him, and this is perhaps Wilson's master stroke. The world is richly detailed, the characters are complicated and believable, and the plot is dynamic and well-paced. This is science fiction at its best: a wild adventure that gives you plenty to think about. And there's an octopus on the cover.

### ***The City & The City* by China Miéville (Del Rey, May 2009)**

Warren Buff

China Miéville has crafted one of those wonderful “what if?” stories that defies easy categorization. While the main narrative is in the range of police procedurals and detective yarns, the world he sets it in is strange enough to make it something more. It doesn't fit neatly into fantasy (nothing about it seems magical, after all, and the setting is fairly modern), and its science fiction credentials would be based solely upon its alternate history content and perhaps some sociology. Yet, it feels entirely otherworldly, and in this aspect, perhaps the old realm of weird fiction can make a home for it.

The novel takes place in the cities of Beszel and Ul Qoma, which overlap to the point of being cross-hatched, despite being in different countries. In order to maintain the idea that these cities are two separate nations, citizens have learned to unsee the people and places of the other city, skillfully avoiding each other (even in traffic) without ever quite acknowledging each other's existence. Those who do are dealt with by Breach, an organization beyond the laws of either city, tasked with maintaining the boundaries. Only in Copula Hall is the border acknowledged, and there, citizens can pass through security inspections to return to almost exactly the same places they were before, yet a whole country away.

Inspector Tyador Borlú of Beszel's Extreme Crime Squad is tasked with a murder investigation which is rapidly revealed to be an instance of cross-border crime. Yet when a surveillance camera proves that no breach was committed, he must partner with police in Ul Qoma to solve it. The victim turns out to have

been an archaeology student studying the bizarre origins of the dual cities, and the investigation quickly carries over into the subject matter of her research.

To complicate things, the victim seems to have been fascinated with the idea that a third city exists undetected in between the two cities, ignored by citizens of each. This hinges on the idea that with two sets of people trained to mutually ignore habits and appearances they attribute to each other, a third set could take up aspects both had learned to ignore and go about unnoticed by either. Some parts of the truth turn out to be both stranger and more mundane than this would lead us to expect, and the conflict between the two drives the novel to its climax.

It's hard to say much more than this without going into far too much detail for a review. Miéville deftly makes this fantastic world tangible, and its surreal tensions stick with you long after you're done reading.

### ***Sherlock Holmes* (December 2009, Guy Ritchie)**

Christopher Hensley

Sherlock is foremost a modern action flick. It mixes the time dilated action that has become popular in recent years with the obligatory, convoluted Dan Brown conspiracy. It combines them in an entertaining manner and possesses a virtue that many other action films lack: it knows exactly how ridiculous it is. As a result Robert Downey, Jr is allowed to have fun playing the eccentric detective while Jude Law hams it up as Doctor Watson, the original straight man.

What should interest the fans out there (if you're reading this, you know who you are) is that it is also one of the few good pieces of steam punk cinema to come out of Hollywood. The characters reflect a popular modern view of Victorian England but allowing itself to hint at the darker days at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in keeping with the genre's themes. Sherlock Holmes also has style, which is important. The look of the gas lit, rain soaked London streets have a BBC docudrama meets pulp detective novel feel that captures the steam punk aesthetic. The science is quirky and the technological elements have a fantastic clockwork quality that avoids the excess of more notorious steam punk outings, like 1999's Wild Wild West.

That is not to say it is without faults. The foreshadowing is heavy handed and there are some plot holes you could fly an airship through. The detective story elements of the film should be treated as a satire of detective stories, even if it wasn't all intentional. Over all though, it is a fun action movie good for shaking off the post holiday lethargy.

## **Rebel Yells**

### **News and Notes from all over**

*Joy V. Smith was quick on the response this month:*

Warren,

I love the mouse cover! And thanks for the con calendar and the book reviews. I like a hero who outsmarts his adversaries (Turn Coat/Dresden Files); and Sandman Slim sounds intriguing. (Hope Evey really got my attention with the Terry Pratchett & Dorothy Parker comparisons.)

Fun cartoon; I want to see the next panels! And I was happy to hear the good news about Lloyd's new job.

Beautiful tribute to Bobbie Irene Wilson Rice. I'm glad that fanzines cover so much territory and help spread the word about people and events.

Appreciatively,  
Joy V. Smith

Joy

(My blog includes helpful house hints & publication news)  
<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

*I saw that cover in the art show down at FenCon and I knew I just had to run it. Alan F. Beck is one of those guys I'm glad to have met, and I'll probably give him a nomination for the fanartist Hugo. Unfortunately, this issue will contain news of a couple more passings. I suppose it comes with the territory, now that Fandom has stretched out into a fully inter-generational community.*

*Lloyd Penney continued his streak with another excellent loc:*

*1706-24 Eva Rd.  
Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2*

*December 7, 2009*

Dear Warren:

Greetings to all in the SFC, I gather some of you have had snow already. Seeing I live in Toronto, I shall say nothing more, except that we haven't. Time to move on and respond to The SFC Update Vol. 1, No. 12.

Oh,ho,ho, I can't do that, Walt... Instead of something by Richard Strauss, we might get to hear a Merry Melody or a Silly Symphony? Great cover, and I had to look at it a couple of times.

Laura Haywood-Cory got a letter of comment from me on the first A Change of Heart, so I look forward to seeing the second. If anyone missed the first issue, I have a lot of them. I brought them all home from the Montreal Worldcon fanzine lounge. If anyone wants a copy, send me an e-mail, and I'll send you a copy if you'll promise to send some money along to TAFF or DUFF or any fan fund you feel is important.

The steampunk conventions we have been tempted by have been joined by yet another steampunk con, this time in the Detroit area. So close, but we must be strong, and keep our ears open for reports on how these conventions went. Our attendance may depend on those reports.

I want to hear about how Smofcon went this year. That's another con I haven't been to in a long time...Yvonne and I went to some of the early ones. Smofcon 3 was held in Lowell, Massachusetts, and I was the chairman of Smofcon 9 in Toronto. It's been a long time, and I am really feeling out of the loop.

This isn't much of a loc, but I've already told you what's happening here in past letters, except to say that Yvonne and I wish everyone in the Confederation the best of Christmas, New Year's or any other celebrations you might partake of. Any year that begins with a 2 sounds SFnal, but few years can beat 2010, and we are about to enter it, and see that the future holds. Everyone stay safe and warm, and we'll see you next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*There's been a lot of snow in the South, actually. We had flurries down in Texas(!) during SMOFcon, and enough to coat the roads for a while up here in Raleigh the weekend before Christmas. It was heavier in the western parts of the state. Lloyd, you win on jokes about the cover. For those not in the know, he's referencing Richard Strauss's **Also Sprach Zarathustra**, which served as the main theme of **2001: A Space Odyssey**. I'm a big fan of that particular piece, especially the notes that come out on a good recording (like, the one from Deutsche Grammophon of Herbert von Karajan conducting the Berlin Philharmonic) and great speakers. There are disturbing bass notes at the very beginning of the piece, and at the end (in a call and response with a flute). I meant to vote for TAFF, but missed the deadline. I'll have to get them some money at some point. SMOFcon was actually really good this year. I met several folks close to my own age, as well as many of the elders, and the programming was really good, informative stuff. They even let me run an item, which consisted largely of me asking Kent Bloom questions and letting him answer, because he knew way more than I do. Happy 2010!*

*Joel Zakem passed along some sad news:*

I just received this from Bill Cavin, and since I do not believe that Steve or Sue are on this list, I'm passing it on. Annette was one of the good ones, and she will be missed.

Joel Zakem

Steve Francis called this am to pass on the news that Annette Carrico died last night or early this am. Those of you who attended Concave or Rivercon

in the past may remember the friendly young lady in the wheelchair who diligently stocked and maintained the con suites at these conventions. Rest in Peace.

Bill Cavin

*Rich Dengrove gave us another loc. I'm happy to have him as a regular correspondent:*

Dear Warren,

I loved Southern Fandom Confederation Update.

The color is great.

I would send my personalzine by email except that it has too many bytes. Some servers won't allow it. With others, it would slow up the recipients. I wouldn't do that to anyone.

Jim Butcher Dresden series where he wins by outsmarting his adversaries sounds like a relief after all the outlandish daring do I have seen in the movies. That's why I have been recently watching the old Rogues series, with David Niven, Gig Young and Charles Boyer: The Rogues always win by doing a great deal of outsmarting.

Concerning your comment to Joy V. Smith, maybe I should condense some of the reviews I do for SFPA and send them.

About Lloyd Penney's second letter, I wonder if you could have Radio Punk. Fiction making the same assumptions about science the '20s and '30s pulps did. For instance, intelligent beings on every planet; and an Atlantis and Lemuria in our past. Costumes for it would be very easy. All you would have to do is slap some vaseline on your hair and wear tie and jacket.

I see Lloyd finally had some luck in getting a job, with the Law Society of Upper Canada. My fingers are crossed that he will be able to keep it.

I can understand how Tim feels about his mother-in-law Bobby dying. I felt that way when my father died, even though we had our squabbles.

Yours,  
Rich D.

*I'm happy to get your personalzine the old fashioned way. I definitely enjoyed your last ish, even if I haven't gotten around to commenting on it. Hey, we're not limited by the constraints of printing costs, so I'd be happy to run your reviews if you feel like sending some along.*

*And finally, Michael Walsh passed along more bad news:*

For those who didn't know Mark, this from Dale Arnold's "Maryland SF Update" that arrive late last night:

Mark Owings, founding member of BSFS, Balticon 5, 6, 7, 26 Con-Chair and long time Chair of the Compton Crook Award Committee passed away on December 30, 2009 from pancreatic cancer. Mark had suffered from complications of diabetes for a long time.

Mark had an encyclopedic knowledge of SF literature. He was co-author, with the late Jack Chalker, of the bibliographic reference works "The Science Fantasy Publishers" and "The Revised H.P. Lovecraft Bibliography" published by Mirage Press which was a Hugo Award nominee in 1992 ["The Science-Fantasy Publishers" was the Hugo nominee - mjw]. Mark was a driving force behind Balticon Literary programing for several decades. Mark Owings was a frequent program participant on panels at other SF cons including Worldcon. He served on the two Worldcon committees for Worldcons based in Baltimore. Mark is survived by his wife Jul. He will be greatly missed.

.....

mjw

*WAHF: John Purcell, Tom Feller, and Jeff Thompson, who shares this link:*  
<http://www.comicheronews.com/?p=5773>.