

OPUNTIA 391



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BEAKERHEAD 2017 September 13 to 17
photos by Dale Speirs

[2015 to 2016 reports appeared in OPUNTIA's #322 and 353.]

Beakerhead is a new Calgary techno-art festival that has become very successful since the first one in 2015. It now sprawls across the centre city, not just the downtown core, and quickly became the biggest street festival in Calgary. It is a fusion of art and technology, of avant-garde installation art. Having been to the first two Beakerheads and enjoyed them immensely, I looked forward to this year's event.

Southern Alberta has just concluded one of its longest and most intensive droughts since the Great Depression. No rain whatsoever from mid-July until the day before Beakerhead. Daily temperatures were at least 25°C and often over 30°C. The first day of Beakerhead it rained, which no doubt vexed the organizers mightily. The second and third days had occasional showers but it wasn't until the last two days that dryness returned.

The cover photo and the next few are of Serpent Mother, located in Fort Calgary Park. It was a real crowd pleaser and packed the park in the evenings. The photos on the next page show daytime views.





Meanwhile, a few blocks away at 12 Avenue SE and 3 Street were these oh-so-cute bunnies.



Top right: Alberta College of Art and Design had this piece called Love Bomb. Looked more like a crashed rocket.

Bottom right: Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, which despite its high-sounding name is a trades school busy churning out journeyman tradesmen.

Below: Directly across from the Centre Street LRT platform is the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #1, whose command agreed to this installation piece called Nucleation. Everyone agreed it looked more like overflowing beer foam, which was funnier to Calgarians because Branch #1 operates a tavern within.





At Kensington Crescent NW, across the river from the downtown core, is Calgary's narrowest alley. It is a leftover from pioneer days when two adjacent blocks of land were incorrectly surveyed. The City decided it wasn't worth the trouble to fix the mistake, so the alley became a sidewalk.

Beakerhead made use of this for the following fantasy comix. I had difficulty photographing them because there was no room to back up and get a properly composed shot.

#1 - below



#2 #3

#4 - below middle #5





#6



#8



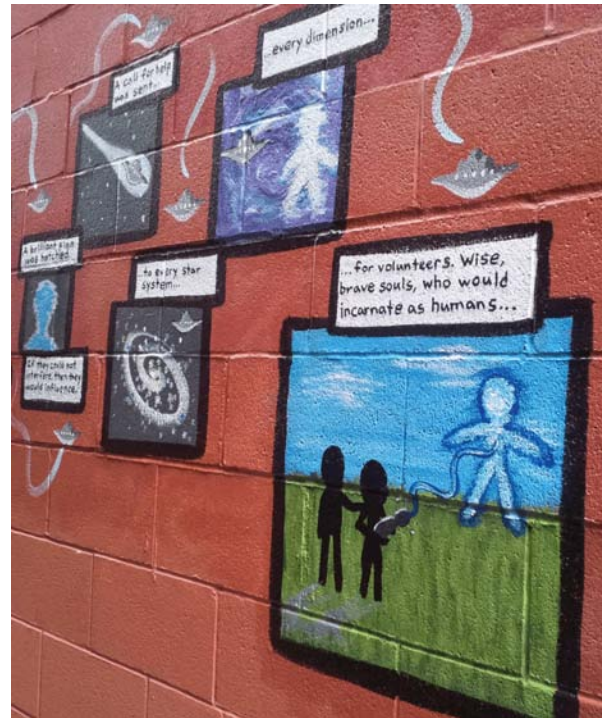
#10



#7



#9



#11



#12 - above

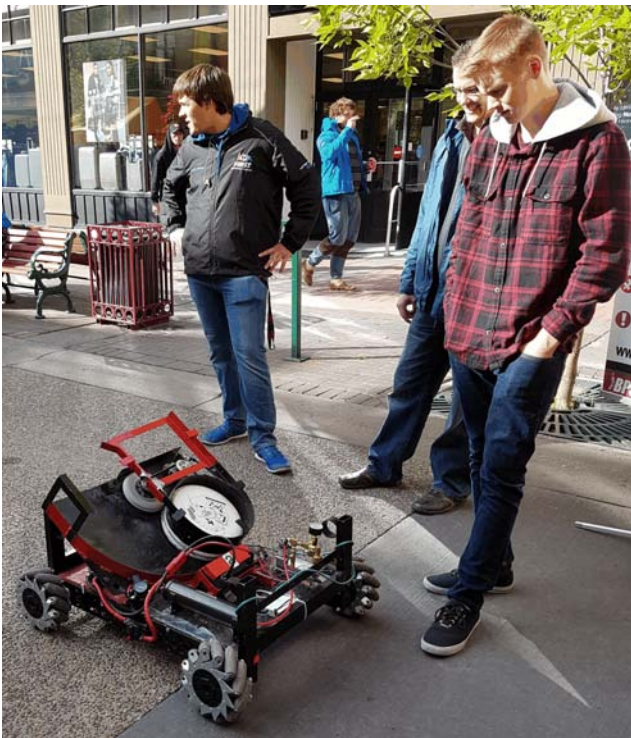


The Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall in the downtown core had a variety of kiosks and installations.



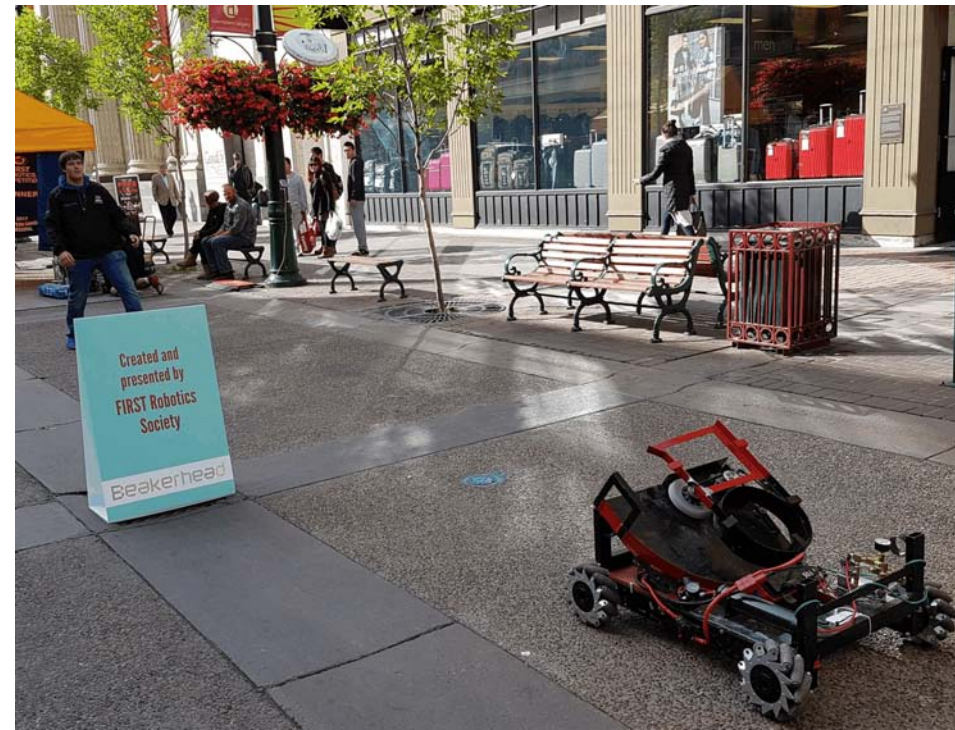
#13 - below





Top two photos:
Frisbee-tossing robot.

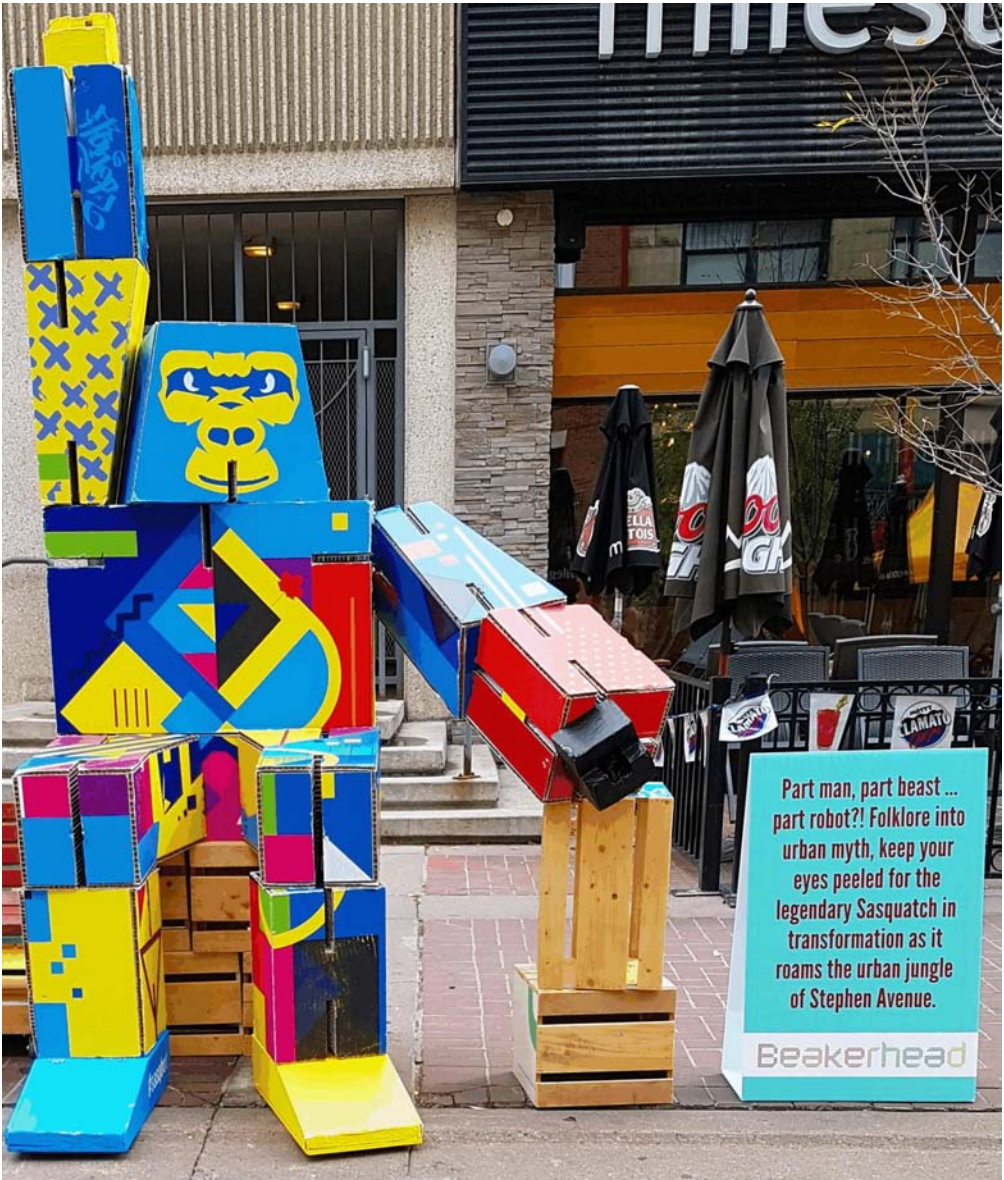
Bottom photo:
Yeah, right, as if
Calgarians would
ask a Torontonians
for advice.



This project was at an abandoned construction project in the Victoria Park district. The eyes moved and followed pedestrians as they walked past the site. Loudspeakers projected dinosaur roars from behind the hoardings.



Back at the Stephen Avenue Mall.



CRIME AND PUBLISHMENT: PART 2

[Part 1 appeared in OPUNTIA #61.1.]

As any professional author stiffed on royalties can tell you, crime and publishing go together. But not always in that manner.

Vexations Of Publishing.

“The Decline And Fall Of The Bipartisan Review” by Les Dennis (1966 August, THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE) covers the events in the final days of a small-press magazine BIPARTISAN REVIEW. With 427 paid subscribers, it is a typical literary magazine, run on a shoestring budget that finally snapped. It published poems no one read, short stories quickly forgotten, and reviews of obscure books that would never go into a second edition.

The three-man staff are preparing the final issue before dissolution. Brick Saunders bursts into the editorial office, waving a gun. He is a murderer who is the object of an intense police search, and is on the front page of every newspaper in the city. He spent the last few days holed up in the Current Periodicals section of the public library. For lack of anything better to do while hiding, he read through everything in the Periodicals racks, including all the back issues of BR.

The DAILY NEWS newspaper offers a steak dinner to fugitives who surrender first to them and provide an exclusive story before the police are called. Saunders wants something more dignified, which is why he came to BR, thinking they had more of a cachet than a yellow-sheet rag. It doesn’t work out though, because all that the impoverished BR editors can offer him is pizza. He’d rather have steak, so he goes to the DAILY NEWS.

“Murder On The Train” is a 1944 episode of the old-time radio series LEONIDAS WITHERALL, written by Howard Merrill, based on a series of novels by Alice Tilton. (This and hundreds of other OTR shows are available as free mp3s at www.archive.org) The series only lasted a year, and not without reason.

Witherall taught English literature at a Massachusetts private boys school, and on the side wrote the Lieutenant Haseltine police procedurals. Given how many murders he became involved with, he could just as easily been a true crime

writer. Like Miss Marple, one wonders why the police never investigated him for being around so many murders.

The story is set on a train bound for Chicago, where Witherall will attend a teachers’ convention. He is accompanied by his housekeeper, whose main duty is shaking her head and declaring “*Land’s sake!*”. Other train passengers include a man carrying a tell-all manuscript that will destroy someone’s career, and a couple of people who know that, including the ghostwriter who resents being cut out of his share of royalties. There are mobsters in the express freight car, up to no good with a coffin.

There is a corpse though, which shows up in the compartment next to Witherall. He snoops about the train, and find the coffin has a dead body, but not the one that’s supposed to be in there. Someone is up to sharp practice. Not to worry. He simply looks to see who stole the manuscript, and thus identifies the murderer, the ghostwriter.

None of that would be admissible in court, but as per usual, the guilty man blabs a confession to the police. Had he kept his mouth shut, and pointed out that there was no chain of custody for the manuscript, no court would have convicted him. Witherall could then have been prosecuted for obstructing police, and society would be better for it.

Someone better suited to murder investigations is BARRIE CRAIG, CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATOR. “Song Of Death” is a 1951 episode of this old-time radio series, written by Louis Vittes and John Roeburt. It begins with Craig wandering about the waterfront, as was his wont, when he hears a damsel in distress and rescues her. Susan Lane said she was thrown into the river by an unknown assailant. She blames the murder attempt on a mad songwriter named Marlowe.

Her publisher Samson and Marlowe are suing each other over the copyright of the current hit song “Sugar Loaf Mama”, which has sold \$100,000 worth of sheet music. Marlowe claims Samson stole the song. Lane will testify in court that Samson never saw Marlowe’s manuscript and was the true composer.

Craig has to sort out a fair bit of complicity in crimes. He gets along well with police, and together they deal with a myriad of events. Samson is shot in his office, a flesh wound fortunately, and claims Marlowe did it. Marlowe says Samson did it to himself to get Marlowe into trouble. Lane is kidnapped and

later found alive, but both Marlowe and Samson deny having anything to do with that.

Eventually Craig and the police determine that Lane was paid by Samson to perjure herself, and that Marlowe was the true author of the song. The two culprits are so busy double-crossing each other that they trip up and are exposed. A somewhat intricate plot but listenable.

And Having Writ.

“Pulp Writer” by Cornell Woolrich (1958 September, ELLERY QUEEN) gives away the subject in the title. Edgar Moody is under intense pressure to fill blank pages in a pulp magazine when the original writer failed to deliver. Moody is given a hotel room where he can work without distractions and get the story written for the printer’s deadline the following morning.

He pounds away on the typewriter, drinking beer and churning out a first draft that will run as is without editing. The publisher shows up the next morning to collect the manuscript. Moody triumphantly hands him the pages. The problem is, they are blank. Moody forgot to put in a typewriter ribbon. A one-trick story, but the process of creating pulp fiction is realistic enough and holds the reader’s attention.

“Three Women” is a 1974 episode of CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATER, written by Elspeth Eric. (This series is available as free mp3s from www.cbsrmt.com) It is about Steven, a writer who becomes too involved with his female characters. A publisher read his book manuscript and loved it. He only wants one change. The heroine Clarissa is built up in a romance in the first 200 pages, only to die.

If Steven could rewrite the last part to revive her, the book would be a success and there could be a whole string of sequels with Clarissa. He refuses, saying that she has to die. The publisher naturally asks why, and gets a garbled answer. Steven refuses, to the dismay of the publisher, Steven’s pregnant wife Loretta, and her mother. He hears the voice of Clarissa suggesting she be allowed to live, and spends most of the episode trying to resist her wheedling.

It ends in fire; Steven is killed in a freak accident in the room where he did his writing. The publisher pays his respects after the funeral, and tells Loretta that he might as well publish the original version since there won’t be any sequels.

At least that would give Loretta a bit of income to tide her over. From Steven’s den they hear a ghostly wail, but shrug it off as the wind blowing over the chimney. Clarissa, never having lived, will now definitely die. Not a bad episode. A bit slow in the middle, but well crafted and worth a listen.

The Hard Life Of An Agent.

“Death Benefits” by Nelson DeMille (from the anthology THE RICH AND THE DEAD, 2011) is about Jack Henry, a novelist who has been living too high on the hog. His supply of pork is dwindling along with his book sales. Instead of cutting back expenses and living within his income, he decides to cash in on a \$5 million life insurance policy he has on his agent, Stan Wykoff. (It is legal to take out such policies on someone else.)

The problem is that Wykoff is still alive and healthy, so Henry plans on how to remedy that defect. It works both ways though. Wykoff has a \$5 million policy on Henry, and also has a plan. Both men execute their plans simultaneously, and both are executed simultaneously. A neat twist ending.

From the same anthology is “The Sadowsky Manifesto” by Karen Catalona. Sadowsky is a mass murderer with 42 bodies to his credit. Literary agent Max Bergen had received a manuscript from him which could be the basis for a best-seller but for the fact that it was incredibly boring.

Digging through the slush pile, Bergen comes up with a substitute manuscript full of blood and gore. The author is Sigmund Cerletti, locked up in an insane asylum. Bergen publishes it under Sadowsky’s name, and the money flows in. Then Cerletti appears, mad as hell as if he wasn’t already, threatening a plagiarism suit. Bergen settles the matter out of court with a blunt instrument.

“The Sequel” by Jeffery Deaver (2012 November, STRAND MAGAZINE) opens with a letter received by Frederick Lowell, a lawyer who handles the estate of Edward Goodwin, a long-departed author whose only novel is still in print. The letter is an advice that there may have been a sequel to Goodwin’s novel, but no one knows where it is.

That starts Lowell off on an odyssey to find the sequel. Along the way he deals with Goodwin’s heirs, two lazy children who have never held gainful employment since they began receiving royalty cheques. The plot twists and turns as the search for the missing manuscript continues. It flushes out greedy

people everywhere, including the survivors of the executed criminal who may have actually written the novel that Goodwin took credit for. That would explain why Goodwin only ever had the one success.

The story's twists are a string of false conclusions, so much so that it becomes annoying. Each time it appears that the story has ended, an epilogue becomes a new twist and re-starts the story. A single twist is okay, but whenever it seems the story will close, it turns a right-angle. It is as if the author had several endings and couldn't decide which one to use, so he strung them together one after another. The final conclusion dribbles to an end, when the sequel is read in manuscript and deemed unpublishable because times have changed.

There Are No Statues To The Memory Of Critics.

"Casting The Runes" was a 1911 short story by Montague R. James, available at Project Gutenberg. It was produced as a 1947 episode of the old-time radio (OTR) series ESCAPE. The basic plot of the ESCAPE episode follows the story fairly closely.

It is a story of revenge by an author against his critic. Prof. John Dunning, a medievalist, wrote a review of the manuscript of THE TRUTH OF ALCHEMY by a man named Karswell. The review was merciless, as a result of which the manuscript is rejected for publication. It seems that previous unfavourable reviewers died in mysterious circumstances, and now Dunning is next in line.

Karswell begins harassing Dunning with unsigned notes and stalking, putting him into a state of continual fear. Karswell used messages written in runes to cast spells on his enemies. Dunning meets up with the brother of another critic who died after Karswell cursed him. The two of them get their revenge by using his own spells against Karswell. They manage to pass the curse back onto Karswell without him being aware of it.

The story was used again in the CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATER. The episode was broadcast in 1974 under the title "This Will Kill You" by Murray Burnett. The revised plot is that Theodore Rukotski, the author of DEMONS AND DEMONOLOGY, had his book savaged by a journalist Robert Anthony in a newspaper review. In his anger, Rukotski wagers his wife's soul to kill Anthony. The accursed manages to deflect the curse back to Rukotski, who dies differently but just as finally. James's story is a good one, and could easily be adapted as a modern movie.

MATTHEW 24:6: PART 2

by Dale Speirs

[Part 1 appeared in OPUNTIA #389.]

Mayan Calendars.

As the Mayans themselves pointed out prior to that fuss in 2012, their calendar was cyclical, not terminal. That didn't stop doomsayers from stirring up trouble. Hollywood latched on to it with a plethora of movies.

One of the entrants in this category was a 2008 movie written and directed by Nick Everhart, titled 2012: DOOMSDAY. It was produced by Faith Films, and mixes Christian eschatology, Mayan calendars, and very bad astronomy. The movie begins with one of the phoniest SFX I've ever seen. A group of vulcanologists in the Mayan jungle are drenched by a torrential downpour in bright sunlight, obviously done with shower heads from overhead cranes.

It isn't the worst one, as later in the movie there are repeated views of Earth from space, showing it as a blue and white ball with no visible continents whatsoever. At the very least, they could have used a stock photo from the NASA Website.

No matter, because the vulcanologists have a more serious problem; the volcano is erupting. To give credit though, for once the volcano spews genuine looking ash instead of the usual gasoline explosions. The ground is shaking and people can't stand upright. Notwithstanding that, the hero goes underground into a tomb and recovers a gold crucifix of Jesus. It is apparently a key that fits into a Mayan temple device.

From there, it gets really nonsensical. At the U.S. Geological Survey office in Baltimore, Maryland, (they have vulcanologists in Baltimore?), the chief scientist says Earth's rotation is slowing down and will come to a stop in a couple of days.

This is said to be because the Solar System is aligning with a black hole at the centre of our galaxy. Since it is rotating around the rim of the galaxy, there is always an alignment between the two points, just as every point on a automobile tire is always aligned with the axle.

There may well be a black hole, but at a distance of 50,000 light years away, its effect would be detectable only by advanced scientific instruments, and certainly would not suddenly cause trouble on December 21, 2012.

The chief does get one thing right. He notes that if Earth stops rotating, the west coasts of every continent will be flooded by the oceans. He recommends to the President that the American Pacific coast be evacuated immediately. Riiight. 30 million people there, and they will all get across the Rockies in one day.

Assorted disasters begin. Fish are cooked in overheated rivers. Earthquake fissures open up in the American Midwest. Tornadoes trash California. A huge typhoon forms in minutes and hammers Australia. Snow and -20° cold front sweep over the Mexican jungles. I won't even mention the several idiot subplots where characters run about putting themselves in harm's way.

Finally the movie gets back to the Mayan temple. The hero, who looks remarkably like a middle-aged version of William Shatner, inserts the gold crucifix into the lock of a secret chamber and opens it.

The walls of the chamber are covered with Mayan hieroglyphics which he translates out loud. They say that at the end of the Mayan calendar, December 21, the chosen messengers of Jesus will arrive and a woman will give birth on the altar to save the world. The Mayans were Christians? Maybe the Mormons are right.

Meanwhile, Doomsday begins in earnest. A giant tsunami sweeps over California. London, England, and Jerusalem crumble in flames and earthquakes. The heroine brings a pregnant woman in labour to the Mayan temple inadvertently. The moment the baby is born, Doomsday ends and the planet gets back to normal, minus the shattered cities and tens of millions dead.

This movie does so much violence to Christian eschatology that I'm surprised Faith Films let their name stand in the credits. One is tempted to believe that Mormon theology is mixed in, but I doubt they appreciate it either.

12 DISASTERS is a 2012 movie, written by Rudy Thauberger and Sydney Roper, possibly the silliest disaster movie ever made. The actors were magnificent in their ability to keep a straight face. The original television movie was 12 DISASTERS OF CHRISTMAS, the title shortened for the DVD release.

It was originally timed for television just before the Mayan calendar kerfluffle. My copy is in a 4-movie bargain bin DVD pack.

The movie is set in a small mountain town called Calvary, somewhere in the Pacific Northwest because there are volcanos nearby. The premise is that the song "The Twelve Days Of Christmas" isn't just a beloved holiday carol but a secret coded message of Mayan prophecy. Jacey, a teenage girl, has been given the gift of second sight by her grandmother through a magic ring. She'll need it, considering what happens next.

The movie redeems itself with out-of-the-ordinary disasters. Blood flows out of everyone's water faucets. Before anyone has a chance to complain to the Water Commissioner, an icicle storm sweeps over the town. Big icicles, spearing people to death. Next up is a giant tornado, which unaccountably avoids the trailer court and instead trashes a Christmas tree lot.

A force field then forms around the town and seals it off from the world. Anyone trying to cross it in either direction is de-rendered by 8-bit computer graphics and shattered into pieces. A super cold front sweeps through the town, instantly freeze-drying any town folk standing outside. Strangely, it doesn't affect buildings.

Next up is the sudden realization by Jacey's brother that the town is in a valley formed by a ring of volcanos. This isn't just a foreboding. The screenwriter is dancing about waving a red flag and firing a flare gun to make certain the audience notices. Yes, yes, we saw you. The volcanos don't erupt immediately but have the decency to wait several scenes before gasoline explosions burst from their cones.

Jacey is the woman of the hour, in fact, the Chosen One. She has a little Mayan blood in her from a distant ancestor, and was born on December 21. She has to collect five golden rings, the only exact reference to the Christmas song, in order to save the town and the world, in that order. Why the Mayans sailed up the Pacific coast and hid the rings in the rain forest is a puzzle.

The movie would be bad all through, but it does have novelty value. The variety of weird disasters make for a change from the usual end times. Worth viewing once.

BWAH HA! HA!: PART 5

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 4 appeared in OPUNTIA's #371, 372, and 378, and 388.]

Whatever Happened To Herr Frankenstein?

Victor Frankenstein stands head and shoulders above all other mad scientists. He is the very archetype of those who fiddle about with things that were not meant to be known. The monster, by the way, never had a name, although after the Hollywood movies came out, the general public began referring to it by its creator's surname.

Countless derivative movies and television episodes have featured the monster. Picking one off my 50 Mad Scientists DVD box set from Mill Creek Entertainment, there is JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER, a 1966 movie written by Carl K. Hittleman. It is a B-movie but it isn't as bad as it seems, and was filmed in colour on location.

The movie is set in the American Old West of the late 1880s, where Victor's granddaughter Maria has moved with her weak-willed brother Rudolph. They made the move because the prairies have more lightning storms than back in the Old Country, and electrical supply was always a problem in those days. The title says 'daughter' but the screenwriter was smart enough to realize that if Victor lived in the 1700s, then any daughter would be dead by the 1880s, so within the movie she is always referred to as 'granddaughter'.

She brought along with her the grandfather's laboratory notes and a supply of artificial brains he had synthesized. That secret died with him, and she is worried because she is down to one last brain. She can't understand why her repetitions of the Baron's experiments have failed, not realizing that Rudolph has been sabotaging her experiments because he does not approve.

Jesse James and his musclebound henchman Hank Tracy ride into town to join up with Butch Curry's (sic) Wild Bunch gang. Since the script uses James's real name, it is puzzling why Butch Cassidy's surname was changed to Curry if the real name of his gang was still going to be used.

Jesse James was assassinated in 1882 in our timeline, but the script takes this into account. In the movie, Jesse is constantly annoyed by people who refuse

to believe he really is the man, because they all read the newspaper reports of his death. He has to constantly argue the matter with every stranger he gives his name to, an amusing running gag.

Meanwhile, back at the laboratory, Maria has been kidnaping children to experiment with, being careful to take only Mexicans. She knows enough that if she took a white child, the entire county would be up in arms searching, whereas they don't care about the Mexicans. After Hank Tracy is seriously wounded in a failed stagecoach robbery, she suddenly has a perfect specimen to experiment with.

Rudolph tries to sabotage that final experiment but Maria discovers his perfidy, and has the monster, formerly Hank and now called Igor, strangle him. From there, a lot of galloping back and forth between the laboratory and the town, and out on the range, takes place as all the excitement works itself out.

The casualty counts steadily climbs, including Maria being killed by Igor. The plot finally runs down, not for lack of ideas as is usually the case, but because there are so few characters left. Jesse rides off into the sunset.

LADY FRANKENSTEIN is a 1971 movie written by Edward di Lorenzo, dubbed into English from the original Italian version. My copy is on the Mill Creek Mad Scientists box set. The movie opens in the early Victorian era, judging by the women's hairstyles, with grave robbers providing Baron Frankenstein with a steady supply of corpses. The laboratory is the classic castle dungeon set, with retorts bubbling with coloured solutions and Jacob ladders sparking with electricity. The Baron is assisted by Dr. Marshall, about his age, and a young manservant Thomas, handsome but mentally retarded.

The lady is Tania, the Baron's daughter. Tania had just graduated from medical school. She tells her father that she was discriminated against more because she was a woman than because of her name, despite her father's reputation having preceded her.

Now she wants to help him with his experiments, but he is reluctant. One night, while she is sleeping, he and Marshall succeed in animating a corpse. "*It's alive!*", as Marshall actually says out loud, but the Baron only enjoys his triumph for a few moments before the monster kills him. Then it heads out to the village for the traditional murderous rampage, leaving Tania and Marshall to clean up the mess at the castle.

This being an Italian movie, there is more sex and nudity than had it come from the USA. Tania takes up her father's obsession, and does a bit of seducing and bosom flashing to get her way. What better method of experimentation than to transplant Marshall's brain into Thomas's body so that she can have both brains and beauty in her man.

It works, but in the meantime the monster is still roaming about countryside. The peasants take up their pitchforks and torches, and head to the castle to find the monster. Tania's beauty will not save her; everybody dies. There are some things womankind was not meant to know.

The movie has good production values, filmed in colour in a genuine castle and suitable rural area. The plot, judged as a typical science fiction B-movie, is better than average. Tania was played by Rosalba Neri, an almond-eyed beauty who was perfect for Gothic movies. The DVD transfer had some faults with colour flickers at the beginning but these soon disappeared.

The following year, another Frankenstein movie came out of Italy but represented the exact opposite of quality. FRANKENSTEIN '80, written by Ferdinando de Leone and Mario Mancini, was set in contemporary times. Dr Otto Frankenstein, resident at an Italian hospital, has created his monster, but its organs are continually being rejected. Each night the monster goes out hunting for nubile young women to dissect and bring back fresh organs for Frankenstein for replacement.

The mad doctor steals a serum that reduces transplant rejection, if only because he doesn't want his monster roaming about murdering. That sort of thing is noticed by police, and eventually they would track the monster back to him. The police run about in circles while the monster keeps killing. It all ends in a living room brawl when the monster starts a fight it can't finish.

Lots of gratuitous nudity is added to keep the viewer's interest, because the tedious pacing and bad dialogue certainly won't do it. The lighting is either murky or glaring, indicating that it was either done by a first-year apprentice or a minimum-wage labourer hired off the street. The DVD transfer was badly cropped. The English dubbing was terrible, magnifying the lousy dialogue. One to avoid.

"Frankenstein Revisited" is a 1974 episode of CBS RADIO MYSTERY THEATER, written by Milt Wisoff. (This series is available as free mp3s from

www.cbsrmt.com) The episode is about promoters who want to put on a special show in a German castle for Frankenstein.

Supposedly it is for the 400th anniversary, which makes no sense because the original novel was set in the 1700s. It is difficult to believe that anyone was sewing together monsters in 1574, assuming the chronology was based on the air date of the episode. The German locals say that every 100 years the creator and his monster return for a bit of dismembering citizens and revenge. Well, they would say that, wouldn't they?

Be that as it may, it doesn't take long until people are screaming "*My God! It can't be!*". Frankenstein and his monster may have reappeared, or it may have been someone else. Not necessarily a prankster but a fanatic, a true believer. After various alarms and excursions, the episode concludes with a vague we'll-never-know ending.

Frankenstein: Scraping The Bottom Of The Erlenmeyer Flask.

Sub-genres tend to go in cycles in movies and television. They start off with a hit movie or series that inspires a flood of imitators. Most of the following movies are average. As audiences tire of the sub-genre and the box office takings dwindle, smaller studios with next-to-nothing budgets churn out schlock that ruins the reputation of the sub-genre. Finally, parody and bad comedy movies finish off the cycle. Years later, when a new generation of viewers has arisen, the cycle begins again.

The success of the original Frankenstein movie produced sequels and copies, particularly from Universal Studios. The parody movies by Abbott and Costello marked the low point of the cycle.

A final parody appeared in 1974. Gene Wilder and Mel Brooks wrote YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN and filmed it in black-and white in the stereotypical 1940s movie format. It had a good cast of comedians and is enjoyable. No gore and splatter in this movie.

Dr Frederick Frankenstein gets up to tricks in the castle he inherited from his grandfather Victor. The first running gag in the movie is that he pronounces the name 'fron- ken-steen' and becomes indignant every time someone says 'franken-stine'. His assistant Igor is miffed at this pretentiousness, and in retaliation insists that his name be pronounced 'eye-gor'.

There is also a pretty young laboratory worker named Inga. The housekeeper Frau Blucher was evidently more than just a housekeeper to Victor, just as Inga will become more than a lab worker to the grandson.

Having created his monster, Frankenstein the Younger faces hostility from the medical establishment, who refuse to recognize his achievement for what it is. To demonstrate its abilities, Frankenstein uses it in a tap dance act , but no one will take him seriously. The monster dances about the stage to the tune of “Putting On The Ritz”, which has to be one of the classic comedy routines.

The movie inverts the original. It is the monster that suffers instead of the villagers. The scene with the blind man ends with the monster getting a crotch full of hot soup. The monster stumbles about through various gags, more done to than doing against. The villagers take up the torches and pitchforks, but things turn out better than the original version. A funny movie well worth watching.

“Viktor Frankenstein’s Bar And Grill And Twenty-Four-Hour Roadside Emporium” by Michael F. Flynn (2017 Sep/Oct, ANALOG) is a vignette set in a tavern where the monster tends bar. Assorted creatures a la Hollywood shamble in and out. Nothing much happens.

COWTOWN UTILITY BOXES

I photographed this one at Elbow Drive and 4 Street SW in the Mission district.

