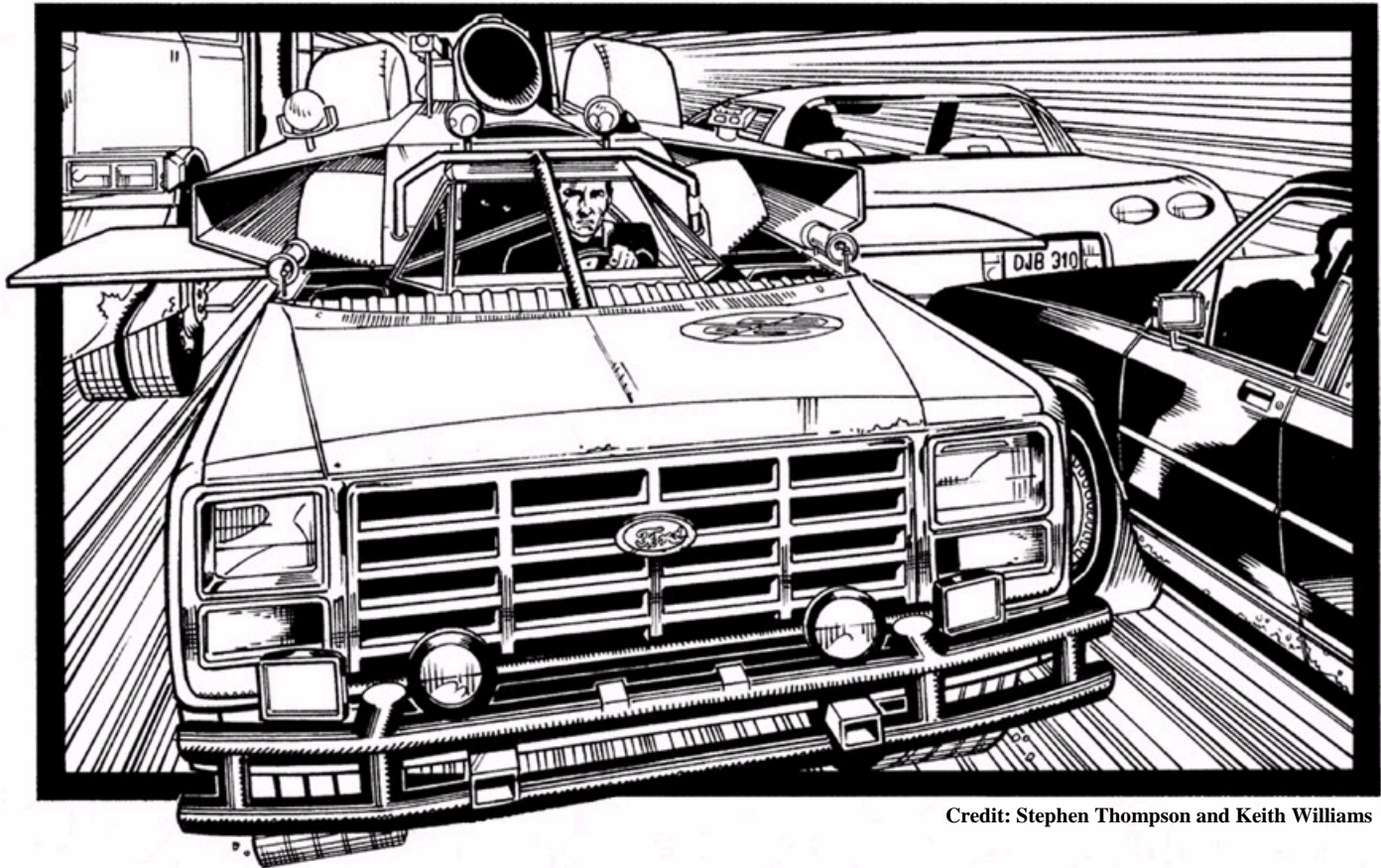




WORLD WATCH ONE

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Credit: Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams

IN THIS ISSUE:

Introduction from the Editor	Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger <i>Libertyville, IL</i>	Page 1
Team Banzai and DARPA	Sean "Figment" Murphy <i>Springfield, VA</i>	Page 2
"Heroes in Trouble"	Scott "Camelot" Tate <i>Alamosa, CO</i>	Page 3-5
Mike Neale Interview	Sean Murphy	Page 6
No Matter Where You Go...	Scott Tate	Page 7
John Tumble Dryer Cartoon	Chris Harris <i>Charfield, UK</i>	Page 7
Moonstone Contest Alert!	Moonstone Books	Page 7
Supersize that Franchise	Dan Berger	Page 8-10
Matt Haley Interview	Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson <i>Portland, OR</i>	Page 11-13
The Jet Car for Everyone Else	Sean Murphy	Page 14
Team Banzai Memorial	Scott Tate	Page 14
Dragon*Con '06 Volunteers!	Lynnea "Moto Mama" Stadlemann <i>Landrum, SC</i>	Page 14
Events Calendar	Staff	Page 15
World Crime League Watch List	Earl Mac Rauch	Supplement

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WORLD WATCH ONE

NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

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Terra Incognita or Bust

Hello, and welcome to another edition of World Watch One. If you can believe it, preparations for this issue actually began back in January 2005. Since then, we have been working our backsides off trying to keep up with it all. So, it is with great pleasure (and an overwhelming sense of relief) that this bad boy finally goes out the door and into the mail. We hope that you enjoy.

One change you may notice right off the bat is that World Watch One now comes in two flavors: the Chicago Bureau edition, as well as an issue under the direction of BBI Dragon in Portland. This is great news for all, as it has been literally years since multiple Banzai newsletters were in production concurrently. What hasn't changed is the newsletter's commitment to bringing you all things Banzai, particularly subjects of interest that fall under the general heading of "unexplored territory." In that respect, we can all count ourselves fortunate to live in very interesting times.

The return of Team Banzai to comic books is obviously of great interest for a number of reasons, none more so than the wait is finally over. "Supersize that Franchise" offers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the comic, while Steve Mattsson's excellent interview with Banzai cover artist Matt Haley adds expanded coverage of the comics beat.

Many of you know that the new comic book is an adaptation of the pilot script for the never-produced *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* television series. What you may not realize is that *Ancient Secrets* was actually the *second* attempt at BB TV. Now the tale of Buckaroo's first go at the small screen can be told in full. Beginning with the story as it appeared in World Watch One two decades ago, Scott Tate brings you an exciting look at *Heroes in Trouble*, from its twists and turns through development at ABC Television to an exclusive look at the pilot script itself.

Buckaroo has inspired many other stories in his time, several of which feature prominently in this issue. Sean Murphy tackles Team Banzai's foray into the world of autonomous land vehicles with a look at last year's DARPA Grand Challenge, as well as an interview with the docudrama's Location Manager, Mike Neale. Chris Harris proves that the Lectroids are as much a threat as ever, while Lynnea Stadlemann adds her report on the Team Banzai fan table at last year's Dragon*Con, along with information on how you can help out this year.

What does the future hold for Buckaroo and his Hong Kong Cavaliers? Hard to say. We could see several new Banzai novels, or more comic book adventures, or something entirely unexpected. There's no way of knowing for sure, but that's the beauty of Terra Incognita. Anything is possible. You may not catch sight of the next turn in the life and times of Dr. B. Banzai until you're right on top of it, but we're pretty sure you'll know it when you see it. Keep your eyes peeled.

Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to W. D. Richter, Earl Mac Rauch, and Joe Gentile for lending their time to answer our (nearly endless) questions and willingness to provide many of the materials that made the look and scope of this newsletter possible. Their kindness and generosity of spirit cannot be overstated. Thanks to Mike Okuda and Jim Van Over at the Banzai Institute website for their frequent assistance, as well the World Watch One seal graphic. Thanks also to Matt Haley for providing several of the graphic elements that appear in this issue, as well as his many fantastic drawings. A note of thanks as well to BBI Dragon for the use of the "Banzai Institute" header that appears at the top of every page, as well as the headband graphic on the events calendar. Many thanks to all of our contributors: Earl Mac Rauch, Steve Mattsson, Chris Harris, Lynnea Stadlemann, and the entire editorial team. A world of thanks to Lisa Chen from the Banzai Research Institute for her assistance, as well as Mike Neale, Stephen Thompson, Keith Williams, and Matt Haley for answering even more questions. Most of all, thanks go to all of you Blue Blaze Irregulars out there for helping to keep the Team Banzai torch a-burnin'!

Photo/Art Credits

Newsletter—**Page 2:** Photos of Dora appear courtesy of the Banzai Research Institute. **Pages 3-4:** Sketches of the WCL goon squad and Dr. Lizardo by Doug Drexler. Used with permission by W. D. Richter. **Page 7:** "John Tumble Dryer" cartoon by Chris Harris. **Page 8:** "The Wheel of Woe" painting by Doug Drexler. Used with permission by W. D. Richter. **Page 9:** Art from *Return of the Screw* by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams appears courtesy of Joe Gentile and Moonstone Books. **Page 10:** Art from *Return of the Screw* by Stephen Thompson appears courtesy of W. D. Richter. **Page 11:** Photo of Matt Haley by Big Norse. **Pages 12-13:** Sketches of concept art for *Return of the Screw* by Matt Haley. **Page 14:** Jet Car photo appears courtesy of Ron Patrick. Drawing of Dr. B. Banzai by Chris Harris. **Cover Art** by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams.

WCL Watch List—World Crime League Council Chamber painting by Doug Drexler. Used with Permission by W. D. Richter. Portrait of Hanoi Xan by Matt Haley. Portrait of Dr. Emilio Lizardo/Lord John Whorfin by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams. Portraits of Archbishop Derek Warlock and Henrietta Xan by Stephen Thompson. **All images used with permission.**

Submissions

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Team Banzai and Dora take on the DARPA Grand Challenge

By Sean Murphy

The crowd stood to one side of the sandy road, anxiously watching a distant hilltop. The desert stretched endlessly around them in all directions. Suddenly, a car crested the hill and a cheer rose from the spectators. They looked to see who was driving. Would it be Perfect Tommy, or maybe even Buckaroo himself? A stunned silence fell as the car pulled closer and they discovered that no one was driving it. Actually, no *human* was controlling the car because Dora was driving herself. The tryouts for the DARPA Grand Challenge were in full effect and Team Banzai was there.

In 2001 Congress passed the Defense Authorization Act mandating that one-third of ground combat vehicles be unmanned by 2015. The Department of Defense tasked DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) with achieving this goal as it is responsible for the development of new technology for the military. Thus was born the DARPA Grand Challenge (www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge), a 131.2-mile road race held on October 8th, 2005. The purpose of this event was to have teams create a self-controlled vehicle capable of driving itself over a predefined course in the Mojave Desert. A two million dollar prize was awarded to the first team to complete the course under the ten hour limit.



Meet Dora: Team Banzai's entry in last year's DARPA Grand Challenge.

Team Banzai's entry in the DARPA Grand Challenge was a 2004 V6 Touareg named Dora. The project was sponsored by the Banzai Research Institute of Irvine, California, which was founded in 1999 by Dr. John Choi and nicknamed the "Banzai Institute of the West." Team Banzai's approach to the challenge was best summed up by their motto, "Beyond Automatic. Fully Autonomous." The DARPA website houses an extremely cool, easy-to-read technical paper on Team Banzai's approach to Dora and her inner workings at www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge/TechPapers/TeamBanzai.pdf.

How was Dora capable of driving unmanned? Dora's "brain" was built on the foundation of three Apple Mac Mini computers running custom software developed by Team Banzai. Each computer served a different function. The Navigator computer processed data from the GPS (Global Positioning System) and LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) sensors and sent the information to the other two Mac Minis. The Tactician computer, using the preprogrammed route map and the sensory information from the Navigator computer, determined the best course of travel. The Driver computer managed the vehicle control actuators and monitored the internal systems



Look who's driving: The VW Touareg was chosen to provide a stable, climate controlled environment for Dora's sensitive electronic equipment, including the three Mac Minis and drive control actuators pictured above.

using information provided by the other computers. An interesting byproduct of this system developed by Team Banzai was a 'cooperative driving' mode allowing a human driver and the computer to share control of the vehicle. They are currently exploring the technology for potential consumer use. Many excellent images and movies of Dora in action can be found at the official Team Banzai website (team.gobanzai.com/media).

Twenty-three teams met all of the requirements to run their self controlled vehicles the day the DARPA Grand Challenge was held. Team Banzai was, unfortunately, not among them. Only five teams actually completed the course that day, with four finishing under the ten hour limit. The Stanford Racing Team, with the shortest time of 6 hours 53 minutes, took the two million dollar prize.

What happened to Dora? According to the Team Banzai website, "[We] went 1 for 4 during the regular rounds to qualify for the special fifth round on the last day. We had a near perfect run in the morning and just needed to finish the afternoon run to qualify for the Finals. Unfortunately, our over-conservative driving strategy caused Dora to think she was boxed in by a single traffic cone, thus ending her run for \$2 million." Although this result was extremely disappointing to Team Banzai and everyone following their progress, there are some potentially great applications for the 'cooperative driving' mode that they created while working on the challenge.

Perfect Tommy was asked to comment on the Grand Challenge and stated, "The first Jet Car we rolled out onto the tarmac wouldn't even start. I stood there with my head hanging down and didn't even notice that the Boss had sidled up next to me. In a quiet voice he said, 'Minor setbacks are just steps on the long staircase to success.' If the Banzai Research Institute decides to continue developing Dora, we'll all be hearing more about her, probably sooner than we think. We look forward to their future successes." 🐎

You've come a long way, Shakey

The principles behind a fully autonomous driving machine were first explored 30 years ago in artificial intelligence experiments conducted at the Stanford Research Institute International in Menlo Park, CA. Six foot tall Shakey the robot, so named for its herky-jerky style of locomotion, was built in 1966 by SRI and was the first self-directed machine to successfully interpret and navigate its environment based on data collected from previous interactions with its surroundings as well as real time data inputs. Its sensory array consisted of a triangulating range finder, TV camera, and bump sensors; all linked via radio to a room-sized computer. Shakey currently resides at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA. --DB

“Heroes in Trouble”

The Story Behind the *Other* Attempt at Banzai TV
By Scott Tate

New and Even More Outrageous

Two years after Buckaroo Banzai crossed the eighth dimension in theaters, a bold headline in the April 1986 issue of *World Watch One* clamored for attention: “W.D. RICHTER CALLS STRIKE TEAM ALERT!” He warned of “a new and even more outrageous force of evil...the most scurrilous multinational conglomerate on the face of this (or probably any other) planet.”

“ABC-TV has a serious hand deep in this business,” Richter added. “They care. And I know they’d be fascinated to hear that you do too. HEROES IN TROUBLE. Who are they? When are they? Ask Brandon Stoddard or Stuart Bloomberg at ABC-TV...”

What was afoot? How was ABC involved? And if Buckaroo wasn’t going to handle this himself, who would?

Old Problems, New Solutions

Bringing the unique world of Buckaroo Banzai to television back in the era of *MacGyver*, *The A-Team*, and *The Misfits of Science* seemed like a natural fit. The film wasn’t exactly a smash hit by commercial standards, but its fandom was active and eager for more, so it wasn’t long before talks were underway to bring Buckaroo into people’s homes on a weekly basis.

Unfortunately, there was a familiar obstacle, the one wall of rock Buckaroo had always had a hard time driving through: David Begelman.

“Begelman owned all the rights, and he was really disgruntled,” Richter explained to *World Watch One* in 2004. “He thought we had screwed him over somehow [and] he was going to do everything in his power to kill Buckaroo.” When ABC expressed interest, Begelman refused.

Richter and Earl Mac Rauch faced a frustrating dilemma. An offer was on the table, the fan base already existed, and ABC was a promising platform from which to present new adventures. But how could they circumvent the intractable Begelman?

Richter and Rauch, along with Dan Lupovitz (a production assistant on the film), hit upon a plan that was elegant in its simplicity: reinvent Buckaroo from the ground up. Starting with a vaguely similar tone and premise, they could rework the details into something fresh. By introducing new Banzai-like characters and situations, they could effectively create a whole new property – *Heroes in Trouble* – which could then take on a life of its own.

“We conceived it entirely for television after being unable to get the TV rights at that time for BB,” Richter recently elaborated. “In other words, there was nothing on paper and no plot worked out when Mac Rauch began the *Heroes* pilot script. I don’t think we had the foggiest idea of how one develops a TV pilot.” But uncertainty and improvisation have always been part of the Banzai way of doing things.

Rough and Ready

With the basics in place, Richter was ready to tantalize fans in the April 1986 *World Watch One*. Billing the show as “the spirit of the Banzai universe reincarnated in a different form,” a list of colorful characters followed: Dick Ready, Boron Boy, Euro Showgirl, Solo Rocker, Hen, Max Von Seven, Woo Pig, Doktor Wanko (later revised to Generalissimo



Evil gets a face-lift: The Buell Tool Corporation takes its place amongst the pantheon of villainy, joining the likes of these World Crime League goons. The sketch above was made for the *Supersize those Fries* pilot. Art by Doug Drexler.

Wanko), and others. Groups were also mentioned: Ichiban Ltd., the Destructo Force Special Tactics Unit, the all-volunteer Ready Rider Rapid Action Force, and the menacing Buell Tool Company – the latter being “an organization so malevolent and pervasive and powerful that alongside its transglobal reach the machinations of Hanoi Xan seem puny indeed!”

From these scattered details, a picture began to emerge. Team Banzai and the World Crime League were reimagined with a Wall Street edge, as likely to fight it out in boardrooms as hand-to-hand. The show reflected a new sensibility dictated by rapid and profound changes in the cultural climate between 1984 and 1986. The Cold War tensions and consumer-driven cult of personality referenced in TABB were still present, but they were joined by new buzzwords like “junk bonds” and “Ivan Boesky.” A year before the film *Wall Street’s* notorious “greed is good” speech, *Heroes in Trouble* was already positioned to comment on America’s renewed corporate obsession.

The November 1986 *World Watch One* included an excerpt from an early draft of Rauch’s script. In it, Dick has just survived an unusual ambush. A woman named Hen expresses concern, and though she may not be sincere, Dick’s still willing to schedule a date with her. As Hen leaves to meet a corporate raider named Wanko, she reminds Dick to be careful, but that’s not his style: “The word’s not in my vocabulary.” Elsewhere, Max Von Seven – a striking individual with a prosthetic hand that can be replaced by various deadly weapons – supervises a gang of thugs as they place an ominous gas tank outside a warehouse owned by American Ichiban... (This excerpt, along with the rest of the newsletter, is available for download courtesy of ArcLight at www.worldwatchonline.com.)

Since 1986, those early hints have remained virtually the only information ever made widely available about *Heroes in Trouble*. Now, we’ve been granted a rare peek at the full script for the proposed pilot episode.

Keep in mind that, even if the pilot had ever reached the point of being filmed, the script would almost certainly have undergone further revisions. But here is our best understanding of what *Heroes in Trouble* might have looked like had it made it onto television screens circa 1987...

The Lost Pilot

The show begins as Dick prepares for a typical day's work. His sarcastic robot valet, Boron Boy (one of American Ichiban's many fine products) lays out his suit, cleans his Colt .45, and recaps the latest *Wall Street Journal*, which includes news that the mysterious new owners of the Buell Tool Co. have appointed a man named Wanko to run it. Dick knows both Buell Tool and Wanko by reputation, and takes neither of them seriously.

But over at Buell Tool, the new management is very serious indeed. Wanko's representatives – beautiful Hen and sinister Woo Pig – inform Buell's board of directors that the company has an aggressive new agenda. Initially, some executives express reluctance and outrage. Among them is Peter Abbot – also known as Max Von Seven, whom Hen seems to consider a rival who has fallen from grace. But any objections are quelled by Wanko's enforcers: the Double Deathheads, a cyborg squad of bizarre infantry/cavalry hybrids, troops with menacing hydraulic arms who ride into battle on the backs of even larger musclemen with powerful artificial legs.

"Is that the game?" one exec continues to protest. "Like the old World Crime Cartel that went belly-up thirty years ago?"

This outburst doesn't go over well with Hen. "Generalissimo Wanko operates on a need-to-know basis. And you no longer need to know. I hereby order you terminated. Anyone opposed?"

"Okay, fine. I've had it. I'm vested in this company. Just give me my golden parachute and I'm out of here."

But Hen's idea of termination is more literal. She whips a handgun from under her skirt and blasts the executive from his chair. "Anyone else want their severance package?" she asks rhetorically.

Woo Pig goes on to explain to the rest that they now have information which will give them an edge over their main competitor, American Ichiban.

They've recently identified several members of Ichiban's undercover security team, Destructo-Force (including, of course, Dick Ready). This is a surprise to Hen, who is romantically involved with Dick.

And the game is afoot. A Deathhead named Jito unsuccessfully ambushes Dick, who arrives safely at the Ichiban offices where he discovers that several other employees have been similarly attacked. The formerly anonymous members of Destructo-Force have been compromised, and the evidence points to the supposedly defunct World Crime Cartel.

As Dick pieces together the details, we meet a varied cast of characters along the way. Other members of Destructo-Force include the glamorous Euro Showgirl, a maintenance man called Switchblade Waiter, and Solo Rocker, a gorgeous investment banker with a penchant for rapping. We also meet security chief Yoshi "Tiger" Tanaka, research scientist Professor Mozabi, and Ichiban's mysterious and elderly chief executive officer, referred to only as the Founder.

The Founder believed he had destroyed the WCC many years earlier by arranging a plane crash which killed their leaders, the Council of Twelve (a.k.a. the Apostles). In the face of this renewed threat, the "Cloak of Anonymity" which formerly protected Destructo-Force by allowing them to function independently and incognito, even from each other, is moot. For the first time, the team will have to operate together.

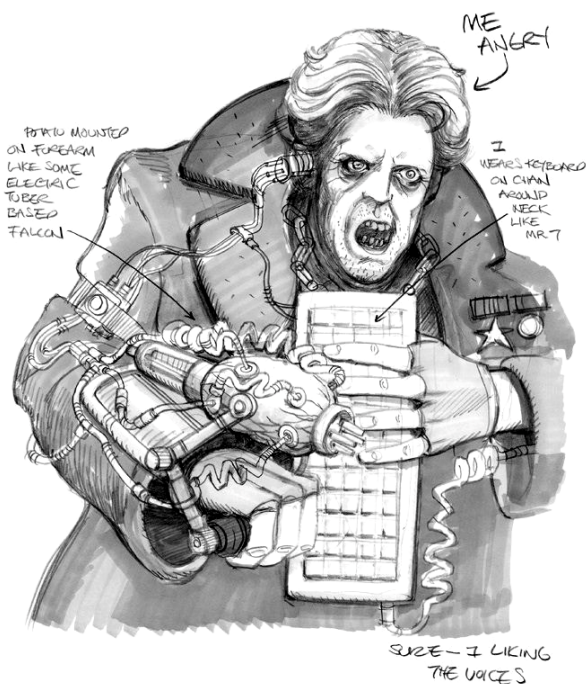
Meanwhile, Max strikes at Ichiban on a second front by looting platinum from one of Ichiban's own warehouses, which in turn will fund a hostile takeover of Ichiban's stock shares. Max's heart isn't entirely in it, but neither can he refuse his instructions. We get our first look at Wanko, eccentrically concealed behind "a white beekeeper's jacket and those yellow pongee silk pedal pushers, his face shielded from view behind an extraordinary 17th century Japanese warrior's helmet replete with primitive goggles." In turn, Wanko receives *his* orders directly from the Twelve via a video-phone, where the screen displays a large, inverted pair of computer-generated lips that speak in a dozen eerily synchronized voices.

Dick, Solo Rocker, Switchblade Waiter, and Euro Showgirl move to intercept the stolen platinum before it can be converted to cash. This culminates in a direct clash with Hen, Max, Woo Pig, plenty of Deathheads, and Wanko himself. As bullets fly, Euro Showgirl tries to exploit Max's self-doubts about his job. Meanwhile, Dick and Hen use the tense and chaotic backdrop as an oddly appropriate setting for a bitter discussion about their relationship, complete with guns in both their hands. When the dust settles, Hen has fled. Woo Pig and Wanko are captured, and Wanko is revealed beneath his padded costume to be "a skinny hairdresser in Bermuda shorts and surfer thongs." Max, having wavered in the end, is given a job application at Ichiban despite reservations on both sides.

(The script consulted for this article is the second revised first draft, dated December 1986, and is the version that was most fully developed for ABC's consideration. It was written by Earl Mac Rauch, with the series creators acknowledged as Mac, Dan Lupovitz, and W.D. Richter.)

Like any good pilot, the story raises as many questions as it answers. How will Dick react when Hen eventually reappears? Will Wanko and Woo Pig remain in custody for long? Can Max ultimately be trusted by either side?

Richter admits that whatever resolutions were under consideration at the time are now long forgotten. "If I could actually remember all those details, I would have failed to have had a life since then," he quips good-naturedly.



A tale of two Generalissimos: Lizardo inspires Wanko as the Banzai universe evolves. Wanko's Deathheads later made their way into the *Supersize Those Fries* pilot script, for which this sketch was made. Art by Doug Drexler.

"I'm sure whatever we were up to was exceedingly clever, maybe even brilliant, and now lost forever."

That's all part of the process, though. "We would have had fun figuring it all out," Richter says. "Mac and I tend not to know what's going to happen next so that the writing itself is an adventure. Write yourself into a corner; write yourself (and the audience) out!"

Heroes, In Trouble

So what happened? Why didn't development continue? The answer lies largely in the sudden appearance of a new contender. "There was some genuine interest," Richter stated years later, "but then ABC purchased *Max Headroom*."

The pseudo-computer-generated Headroom (actor Matt Frewer), originally a UK veejay, was already popular in the U.S. as a Coca-Cola spokesman. His quirkiness and pre-existing fanbase were what ABC originally hoped to tap with Buckaroo before the substitution of Dick Ready. ABC Vice-President Stu Bloomberg cast his lot with Max, and the network followed.

"I think the script [for *Heroes*] came in close to their pilot-decision deadline," Richter recalls. "While Mac was writing it, they made the Headroom acquisition. ...[*Heroes*] was truly well-received, but Max Headroom, an established success in England, was purchased by the network and filled their 'originality' slot."

Ideally, both shows could have complemented each other, offering multiple insights into the zeitgeist of 1980s American consumerism. But primetime slots on broadcast networks have always faced stiff competition, as hotly contested as any boardroom transaction faced by Dick Ready. ABC felt it couldn't justify airing two such experimental series simultaneously. The die was cast, and *Max Headroom* debuted in March of 1987. By October, it was gone after only 13 episodes, although Bloomberg says he still "holds a tender spot for *Max Headroom*" even today.

Headroom may not have been the only factor in ABC's decision to rethink *Heroes*. A recent film-to-TV property, *Starman*, landed on their 1986 fall schedule with a resounding thud. *Heroes* was still under consideration when *Starman* was cancelled in 1987 after one season. Some executives may have felt that gambling on a similar venture so soon was too risky.

Richter, though, holds no personal animosity. "I got a lovely hand-written letter from Stuart Bloomberg [at the time of the decision]. Stuart is a tremendously nice fellow, and he wrote that turning down the *Heroes* script was the saddest decision he'd ever had to make."

Richter can't recall with certainty if *Heroes* was shopped around to other networks, although he assumes the matter was discussed. However, they were mindful that the show was "extremely radical for network TV...and there was no vibrant cable market [yet]." Without ABC's support, the conflict between American Ichiban and Buell Tool would go unseen.

Heroes for Today

Could *Heroes* still be dusted off and made to work for modern audiences? Was its tone too firmly grounded in the 1980s? Would today's viewers be at ease with characters who carry concealed weapons into office buildings and on the subway? Do we perhaps need such heroes more than ever?

"We are exploring the matter," Richter revealed.

Although monolithic corporations remain heavy players in modern culture, in some ways more than ever, today's world is also significantly different

from when *Heroes* was first pitched. Richter readily acknowledges that a new take on the story would have to reflect that. "The concept certainly isn't dated. The execution certainly needs 'polishing'." Still, it might work. Shows like *Alias* and *24* have done well in recent years, and they tap into the same general vibe that *Heroes* could capture.

It might have an easier time finding a niche, as today's options are more varied than in 1987. Richter speculates that "a movie or cable channel willing to let us make it really credible" might be the way to go if *Heroes* were being filmed today. He further muses, "Perhaps a graphic novel that mutates into a feature? Who knows?" With the upswing of commercial and critical success in recent years for graphic literature being adapted into onscreen media, that might be a distinct possibility.

For now, any future development remains mere speculation. But, as Richter said, who knows? Maybe Dick Ready's still out there somewhere. Is it conceivable he might yet turn up? It may be a long shot, but nothing's impossible when men like Dick or Buckaroo are involved. Perhaps Dick Ready is out there fighting the good fight at this very moment...and, as always, in trouble. 🐾

KINDRED SPIRITS UNSEEN ON TV

Heroes in Trouble and *Global Frequency*

Dick Ready and his team aren't the only heroes who faced trouble from both sides of the camera as they struggled to reach a TV audience. Several points of comparison to *Heroes in Trouble* can be found in *Global Frequency*, a pilot commissioned by The WB circa late 2004.

Based on writer Warren Ellis' comic books of the same name, a pilot episode for *GF* was filmed but never aired or pursued further due to changes in management at The WB. The *Global Frequency* is a self-appointed team that doesn't wait for official sanctioning before dealing with dangerous threats such as malfunctioning super-weapons from classified paranormal experiments. They are described in the pilot as "a group of spies, experts, and ordinary people [who] save us from threats that no one else sees or understands." In short, they're a team not unlike *Destructo-Force* or the *Blue Blaze Irregulars*: a loose confederation of people from all walks of life, banding together to lend their individual talents for the greater good in situations where more conventional tactics might be outclassed, slow to respond, or otherwise disadvantaged.

The proposed series would have starred Michelle Forbes (recently seen on *Battlestar Galactica*) as the enigmatic Miranda Zero, the driving force behind the *Global Frequency* and one of the few constants amid a constant turnover of mission specialists.

In June 2005, the *Global Frequency* pilot became unofficially available online, where it met with enthusiastic approval. As *GF* screenwriter and producer John Rogers remarked on his blog (kfmonkey.blogspot.com), there is "...a fan base which exists and is trying to organize for a show which has never appeared on television. Not a canceled show – a show which has literally never aired on broadcast television." Rogers observes that the spirit of *GF*'s fans is much like that of the *Global Frequency* itself: "ordinary people subverting the establishment and getting things done." The same could be said of *Heroes in Trouble*. In the end, though, the saddest parallel between the two shows is that ultimately, twenty years apart, neither was brought to fruition by their respective networks. --ST

Location, Location, Location

An Interview with Buckaroo Banzai's Mike Neale

By Sean Murphy

Only a chosen few have had access to the highly restricted Yoyodyne facility or a behind-the-scenes tour of the Banzai Institute. One person privileged enough to do both was the docudrama's location manager, Mike Neale. If you've ever wondered how closely the sets featured in the film match the actual places where those events took place, you need wonder no longer.

Mike Neale is a veteran of the movie business, with over thirty years of experience and eighty productions under his belt. His resumé as a location manager includes such diverse films and TV shows as *Blade Runner*, *Love at First Bite*, *Thelma and Louise*, *CHiPs*, and *The L Word*. Neale worked tirelessly on the production of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* to find locations as authentic as possible, with only a few omissions due to national security concerns. He graciously took time out of his busy schedule to answer some questions about the film.



World Watch One: For those that don't know, can you describe what a location manager does on a film?

Mike Neale: A location manager is one of the first below the line hires on a show. Their initial responsibility is to scout locations as called for by the script and to present several choices for each set to the production designer and/or director. These choices must be within the budget allowed by the individual project as specified by the studio, line producer, and production manager. Once the locations have been decided upon, after many surveys by the creative/technical teams, the location manager is responsible for making a financial deal with the location owner and adjacent affected neighbors, and then supervising the shooting company's use of that location through the preparation, filming, and restoration phases. He or she is also responsible for securing the necessary permits from the many government jurisdictions (i.e. city, county, state, federal) as well as hiring and/or coordinating police, fire, and security. This brief description is just the beginning of the many duties a location manager may be called on to perform as he "brings the circus to town."

WW1: How did you get involved with *Buckaroo Banzai*?

MN: I had just completed the film *Mr. Mom* for Sherwood Productions and was asked to do *Buckaroo*.

WW1: Were there any things that you did for the film that fell outside of the role of location manager?

MN: There is nothing that falls outside a location manager's realm. That's the fun part of the job. I will do anything asked of me by the producers. Well, almost anything.

WW1: How early in the process of making the film do you start scouting and securing locations?

MN: As soon as the show is "green lit" or given its funding go ahead. Sometimes money is budgeted for scouting even before the show is a go. I spent 8 weeks looking at historical locations for a circa 1705 pirate seaport on a Columbia Pictures film that was never made.

WW1: How involved were other people in the scouting and securing of locations (like Rick Richter, etc.)?

MN: Rick, and most directors, have the final say on how they want their picture to look, so they are totally involved in scouting locations. Securing the location is the location manager's duty unless it's a particularly sensitive spot. Then the studio affairs department and the producer(s) may become involved.

WW1: A 1984 interview with Rick indicated that his "overall scheme included shooting 90% of the film on location." How does this compare with your typical workload?

MN: The range of practical locations can be from 0-100%. Of the more than 110 shows I've been involved on in the last 30 years, many have been all location shows.

WW1: What was it like working on the *Buckaroo Banzai* film?

MN: It was a great group of people having a wonderful time creating a bizarre movie.

WW1: What was David Begelman like?

MN: An interesting and powerful man in Hollywood. Sherwood Productions was in part funded by the Hunt family of Texas. Around the time of the show, they were attempting to corner the silver market.

WW1: Were there any locations that you really wanted to shoot for the film, but simply could not secure permission for or logistically accommodate given the shooting schedule?

MN: No, everything came together well.

WW1: El Mirage Dry Lake seems to come up in several vintage TABB interviews as being the single most painful location on the entire shoot. Exactly what were the conditions there during filming?

MN: We were first troubled by the dust devils which are common on dry lake beds. One traveled straight down the black line that had been painted on the lake bed test track, blowing all the tempera paint onto the faces of the crew. Made everyone look like Indians with war paint. Knocked all our props and set dressing over, causing cancellation and rescheduling of the location. Upon our return weeks later, we were hit the night before shooting by a tremendous rainfall that flooded the lake. Only the quick thinking of security by moving the pre-positioned trucks to higher ground saved us from a very costly dilemma.

WW1: Once the shooting is completed, is your role on the film finished?

MN: I continue until all locations are wrapped and restored. Often I will return for any additional scenes to be shot if I'm not working on my next picture.

WW1: Looking back two decades later, what is your sense of TABB's impact on sci-fi/action/adventure films in general, if any?

MN: It's under-appreciated.

WW1: Do you get the impression that *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* has influenced many people working in the industry today?

MN: Only those filmmakers in the know. 🐎

No Matter Where You Go, There They Are

By Scott Tate

Have you spotted some of the cast and crew from TABB lately? Wondering where they might crop up next? Here's a quick round-up!

Peter Weller (Buckaroo) joined *24* this year in a recurring role. He's currently on location in Africa filming the movie *Prey*, and his sci-fi series *Odysey 5* is coming to DVD on April 25th. **Ellen Barkin** (Penny) had two films in 2004, *Palindromes* and Spike Lee's *She Hate Me*. Look for her next in *Trust the Man*, coming this July. **Clancy Brown** (Rawhide) drew acclaim as Brother Justin in HBO's *Carnivale*, had an uncredited cameo as a reporter in *King Kong*, and is always busy doing voiceover work for animation, with roles such as recurring villains Lex Luthor on *Justice League Unlimited* and Mr. Freeze in *The Batman*. Listen for him as Prince Olmec in a direct-to-DVD animated Conan film *Red Nails*, currently in production. He also recently appeared onscreen in the "One of Them" episode of ABC's *Lost*. Will he be seen there again? The way that show works, you never know. In 2004, **Jeff Goldblum** had a cameo in *Incident at Loch Ness* and a substantial part in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*. In 2005, he guest-starred on TV shows ranging from *Will & Grace* to *Crank Yankers*. In 2006, look for him in upcoming films such as the Parker Posey thriller *Fay Grim* and the Robin Williams comedy *Man of the Year*. **Lewis Smith** (Perfect Tommy) has been active in independent films lately, including *Seventh Veil* and the upcoming indie horror flick *Sin-Jin Smyth*. **Pepe Serna** (Reno) appeared in the 2004 action flick *Latin Dragon* and the 2005 romantic comedy short *Manejar*. Coming up, he'll appear in the comedy *Big Dreams*, *Little Toyko*, he'll have a small part in the real-life thriller *The Black Dahlia*, and he'll have a supporting role in the noir-ish *Double Tap*, where his character just happens to be named Reno. **Billy Vera** (Pinky Carruthers) still frequently jams with his longtime band the Beaters at gigs throughout the greater Los Angeles area. They can often be found blues-ing it up at Cozy's in Sherman Oaks. Did you know they also performed over the opening credits of the CBS sitcom *The King of Queens*? (That's one of Pinky's 47,000 unknown facts!) Billy's also a prolific record producer, specializing in re-issuing classic R&B.

The Lectroids have been staying busy as well. **Dan Hedaya** (John Gomez) appeared as Father Frank in the short-lived and controversial TV series *The Book of Daniel*. **John Lithgow** (Lizardo/Whorfin) has penned several children's books in recent years, has recently appeared in television and print advertisements for Campbell's Select Soups, and is a hit onstage in the musical version of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, which he continues to perform at the Imperial Theatre in New York. **Christopher Lloyd** (John Bigboote) appears regularly in Pamela Anderson's sitcom *Stacked*, and (as usual) will crop up in many different movies currently in various stages of production. It's not just those pesky Red Lectroids who are hogging all the glory. **Carl Lumbly** (John Parker) has continued his role voicing the Martian Manhunter in *Justice League Unlimited*. Also, look for him to star in *Nujoma*, an upcoming biopic about the first president of Namibia.

Of course, it's not just the cast of TABB that's still in circulation, but also the crew. Director **W.D. Richter** is also a writer for works such as *Stealth*, in theaters last summer and now on DVD. He and **Earl Mac Rauch** have also been busy coordinating information between the Banzai Institute and Moonstone Books for the new Banzai mini-series, as has been widely discussed elsewhere.

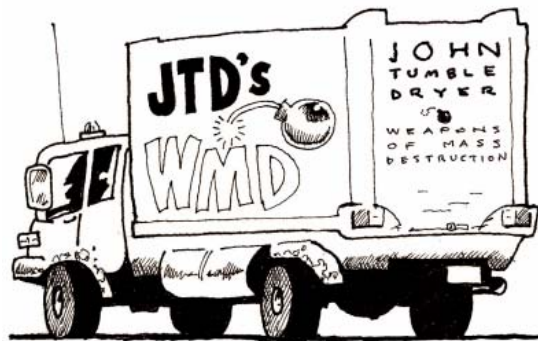
Neil Canton and **Dennis E. Jones** (producers) worked together last year on George Romero's *Land of the Dead*. Mr. Jones is currently producing *Ecstasy*, based on a work by author Irvine Welsh (of *Trainspotting* fame). **Dan Lupovitz** (TABB production assistant) has long since become a producer in his own right, starting with W.D. Richter's film *Late for Dinner* in 1991 and working on several projects since then. He's currently developing *Death Defying Acts*, set to star Guy Pearce as Harry Houdini, and is also planning *The Marvelous Mabel Stark*, about a scandalous and well-known tiger trainer of the 1920s.

It takes a lot of people to make a movie – any movie. So remember, the next time you're watching the march at the end of TABB, don't forget to glance at the names on the screen as well. And remember: No matter where you go, there they are. 🐦



CONTEST ALERT!

I think we ought to call the boss for this one...



Cartoon by Chris Harris

Want to get your hands on some vintage Banzai film memorabilia? So would we, and the folks at Moonstone Books are just the people for the job.

When Banzai #1 hits the stands later this month, Moonstone will announce what Joe Gentile is billing as, "a Banzai contest of unbelievable wackiness!" Details will be revealed in *Return of the Screw's* premier issue, but this is what we can tell you now.

All entries will be judged by the film's director W.D. Richter. The winner(s) will receive one-of-a-kind signed Banzai stuff from the acclaimed 1984 docudrama, as well as kudos and a "shout out" from a special person in the guise of a special persona. Sounds good to us! So, spool up them noggins people, and good luck.

Supersize that Franchise

By Dan Berger

Buckaroo Banzai: The Franchise. Never did four simple words invoke such sublime mystery. What is it? Who owns it? Where has it been all of this time? And, dang nab it, who's gonna do something about it?

Answers have come fast and furious over the last half-dozen years. The Banzai "franchise," until only very recently, amounted to the 1984 docudrama, a novelization of the film, and a comic book adaptation of the movie. The status of ownership rights to the film itself were in limbo since the initial rights holder lost critical documents in the mid-nineties, but that hasn't stopped men and women of vision from opening up the Banzai Institute's voluminous archives to further dramatizations.

In 1998, Fox Television took the plunge and commissioned the pilot script *Supersize those Fries*, based on another declassified adventure of Dr. Banzai's and his quick thinkin', sharp shootin', ultra-groovy Hong Kong Cavaliers. Although the series bid failed in 2000, the event marked what would turn out to be a string of good news for the franchise. In 2002, fans were treated to a Special Edition DVD release of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*, as well as a re-printing of the novelization, the first time either had seen new editions in over fifteen years.

Both the DVD and novelization enjoyed critical and commercial success, but only "uncanny" describes the fate of the TV pilot script rejected by Fox. In true Banzai fashion, *Supersize those Fries* has returned to prove that the only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once. In January 2005, Moonstone Books announced their intentions to adapt the script as a comic book adventure in three issues titled *Return of the Screw*. A preview of the comic books was released in February 2006. The first issue is set to hit stores and mail order/on-line retailers in April 2006.

And let's face it; twenty years is a long time to wait for, well, just about anything. Second chances are rare enough as it is, but a second chance for a Buckaroo Banzai script many thought would never see the light of day is about as rare as a blue moon in a census year. When Moonstone announced their plans to supersize the Banzai franchise, World Watch One was there to follow the story. So saddle up! You're in for quite a ride.

Moonstone Rising

1995 was an unusual year in the history of the Banzai franchise. Chance finally conspired to remove one of the property's obstacles to further development, but the price for that freedom was the suicide of Buckaroo Banzai's principle rights holder—infamous Hollywood executive and latter-day Banzai detractor David Begelman. After initially helping Buckaroo and company by green-lighting the docudrama, Begelman turned against the film during production, and then actively blocked subsequent Banzai projects. With Begelman gone, the Hong Kong Cavaliers took a big step closer to getting back in the saddle as a popular entertainment.

1995 was also the year Joe Gentile, Dave Ulanski, and Rafael Nieves joined forces to form Moonstone Books. Gentile, Moonstone's editor-in-chief on *Return of the Screw*, is a Banzai fan from way back. "I actually saw *Buckaroo Banzai* in the theater when it was first released," he said. "My friends and I loved it instantly. We were more than crestfallen when that teaser for a second film was nothing more than smoke. After a couple years, it just became catch phrase in-jokes between us."



The Wheel of Woe: This chilling hot-seat at the heart of Xan's lair was the subject of a painting by Doug Drexler for the *Supersize those Fries* pilot.

So, it was only fitting when Moonstone expanded into the arena of titles licensed from film and television properties that Team Banzai came up for discussion. After several failed attempts to contact the rights holders, plans for a Banzai comic book moved from Moonstone's short list to the back burner. Years passed before a chance meeting between Gentile and Banzai fan Chris Wike set matters straight. According to Gentile, one thing led to another, and before long, "Chris offered to get us together with Richter."

Wike dutifully passed along Gentile's Banzai comic book proposal to Richter, yet troubles persisted. Difficulties establishing contact between Gentile and Richter continued. More time passed, and nothing happened. "I'd let things lay for a little bit and came up with some excuse to e-mail Richter, where he told me about the communication breakdown," said Wike. "I emailed Joe again and passed direct phone numbers one way or the other and they were finally able to get in touch with each other and eventually get the ball rolling from there."

This was not the first time Buckaroo faced troubles on the road to a comic book deal. Once again, the property's disappearing movie rights were the all too familiar gremlin in the gears. While Richter and Rauch could make no definitive legal claim to the film rights, they *did* retain control of the rights for the *Supersize* script. "I proposed to Joe that they could do a comic series based solely upon the pilot script," said Richter. "He was willing to do that when other 'big' companies (Dark Horse? Hint, hint.) would only go forward with the rights holder of the movie...and no one can claim to be that because the paper trail has gone cold. Absurd, yes, I know."

Richter and Gentile began to hammer out details. By May 2004, Team Banzai's return to comics began in earnest, and the proverbial rolling ball gained momentum. In December 2004, the 1999 draft of *Supersize* landed on Gentile's desk. With a deal finally in place and script in hand, both the reality and unreality of the situation set in. "The first challenge was to get over the excitement part," said Gentile regarding the adaptation process. "It's a very surreal experience to step into another writer's shoes. It can also be very intimidating. But, I eventually got down to business."



Familiar faces: Buckaroo Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers multitask in an opening scene from Moonstone Book's *Return of the Screw*. Art by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams.

It's the latest issue

As editor-in-chief, "getting down to business" for Gentile meant navigating a diverse range of responsibilities—not unlike assembling a Strike Team for a particularly sensitive mission, or directing and producing a small motion picture. In addition to adapting Rauch's teleplay for *Supersize*, he also set to the task of assembling the team of artists required to bring the script to life in pictures, as well as several cover artists to book-end the pages of the miniseries' three issues and preview issue.

Once the artists for the series began to generate concept art and, later on, full pages for the story itself, Gentile's focus shifted to checking art against the final script and making comments to tweak the look of the scenes and the "performances" of the characters where necessary. The pages were then sent to Richter for similar comments, at which point Gentile would serve as a liaison between Richter and the creative staff. Once final approvals were issued, the finished work moved along to the production team, pending printing and distribution.

If all of this sounds like a lot of work, it is. But not unlike the work necessary to bring Team Banzai back to comics in the first place, the process took on its own momentum once the gears began to turn. As penciller and Banzai newcomer Stephen Thompson noted when asked about the initial concept work for the series, "It wasn't too painful. Probably because I had the movie as a pretty strong guideline for the designs, which was easier than making it up wholesale. The established characters were fairly straightforward. They didn't want exact likenesses, which I was happy about because to get something that accurate would mean copying photo reference, which would make everything stiff and boring.

"When it came to the new characters it was a little trickier," he continued. "Hanoi Xan took a few goes as Rick had a specific look he wanted. A scary kind of intelligence. Also, sometimes, different people have different views of what a character should look like. Joe (Gentile) and Rick (Richter) would have separate takes on things. Matt Haley, one of the cover artists, even contributed a really great look for a character." (For an in-depth interview with Banzai cover artist Matt Haley, turn to page 11.)

One downside to gathering any large team together became apparent relatively early on in the process. Before pages in any comic book can be produced, they must first be drawn by the penciller on the project. In the case of the Buckaroo books, that presented something of a problem. "In the first few months on the project, I was finishing up some work for another company, so progress was slow," explained Thompson back in September 2005. "The workload has increased since then and now I'm working flat out."

Ultimately, the highly collaborative working approach led to many interesting details that might otherwise have been lost. "Like once I drew Buck wearing a standard belt and Rick remembered that in the novel there was a description of Buckaroo's family crest," said Thompson, "so he suggested we put that crest on Buck's belt buckle."

Another member of the artistic team, Keith Williams, is an old hand at Banzai comics. Williams did background inks on the original 1984 comic book adaptation of the docudrama. He didn't become a fan right away, but that didn't last for long. "Working on the comic book adaptation at that time was just a job that needed to get done," he remembered. "But once I saw the movie, which was at a special screening for everyone who worked on the book, I was hooked. I may not know all the names of the characters, but I watch it when it's on TV and have the video. It was a very different kind of sci-fi movie."

It is also a very different time than 1984 as far as technology in the comic books industry goes. Both Thompson and Williams have taken full advantage of the changes. Williams explained, "Stephen would send me a copy of his pencils on a CD. I would then copy them into my Photoshop program and turn them into non-reproducing blue and print them out on 11 x 17 inch art boards. I would ink the pages and then scan them into the computer, do touchups in Photoshop, and then send them to Moonstone."

Gentile would receive the pages and probably, though perhaps not quite literally, do a Happy Dance. The quote most often heard from Gentile when asked about the status of the comic book's completion boiled down to variations on, "I am anxious for some finished work." It was a sentiment with which a large number of Blue Blaze Irregulars, Hong Kong Cavaliers, and all good citizens of the world could completely agree.

Where are we going?

Fortunately, fans will finally have their chance to see the results of Moonstone, Richter, and Rauch's labors this month. After waiting twenty years for another glimpse at the inner workings of Team Banzai, many will



Devils and Angels: Archbishop Derek Warlock (l.) and Lady G (r.) are just two of the new faces Banzai fans will find in next month's premiere issue. Art by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams.

feel a bit nostalgic. Comparisons between the 1984 docudrama and the more current comic book adventure will certainly follow.

As one might imagine, Richter has a unique perspective in this respect. When asked to compare his experiences between the making of the film and the making of the comic book, the “night and day” between the two became readily apparent. “No comparison for me,” he said by email in the summer of 2005. “Mac and I developed the movie from scratch, and he wrote [the script] as we did, taking it places I never imagined. Then I cast it with Mac always present so we both discovered together what it meant to actors. Then I tried to shoot it with some sense of purpose, but BB takes on a life of its own -- the watermelon being a case in point: It just showed up unscripted for work one day and completely improvised its part. Then we edited as we were making the effects. Then we scored the movie, etc., etc.

“The graphic novel was based on the TV script, which was created the same way the movie script was,” he continued. “So Moonstone artists went to work from a comic script written by Moonstone owner Joe Gentile that put into comic-book script style (much as I do when I adapt a novel into a movie) the narrative and imagery he deemed best suited to retell Mac’s story in his world. I was sent roughs of different artists’ work and commented as they polished the material. My job was easy on the comic, next to impossible on the movie.”

But part of the enjoyment for Richter this time around is that he is able to watch the evolution of the comic book in a way he, as director, was unable to watch the evolution of the film. “It’s all fun because the thing is definitely taking on its own identity,” he explained, “and I’m kind of in the audience, shouting at the screen.”

Many are likely familiar with the review for the pilot’s first draft featured on the IGN Sci-Fi website several years ago (still available at the Buckaroo Banzai FAQ: www.figmentfly.com/bb/q37.html). In short, Buckaroo is pitted against the combined forces of Emilio Lizardo and Hanoi Xan as they hatch a plot that will shake the very foundations of global security. Back for the ride are Reno, New Jersey, and Perfect Tommy, along with a few new faces. While not exactly *Against the World Crime League*, *Return of the Screw* is every bit the successor to *Across the Eighth Dimension* that fans have waited for these many years.

With the publication of the Buckaroo Banzai miniseries comes something that builds upon the successes of the DVD and the novelization’s second printing three years ago: validation. Validation that the Banzai franchise is not only alive, but growing. Validation that, in spite of the film’s turbulent



A quiet moment on the tour bus, shortly before things start to hit the fan at the end of *Return of the Screw*'s second installment. Art by Stephen Thompson.

history, Rauch and Richter are still able to get things done with the help of like minded individuals. Validation that Team Banzai has been out there the whole time; not hiding, but waiting for the right moment to return.

Should the series find a broad audience, even Hollywood might give Buckaroo another look given the current comic book adaptation trend filling movie theaters with films like *Superman Returns* and *Spider-Man 3*. But, for now, fans everywhere can take a moment to enjoy the first new addition to the Banzai franchise in over two decades and harbor some legitimate hopes for more to come. Second chances deserve nothing less. 🐎

ADAPTIVE RESPONSE

Adapting anything from one medium to another is rarely a matter of verbatim translation. Maintaining absolute fidelity to source material often leads to mixed results at best. Films such as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Sin City* received a number of detractors amongst critics in attempting to remain methodically true to their origins. In the vast majority of adaptations, the question is not one of how to avoid changing the source material, but rather how to make changes while remaining true to the original.

When we first contacted Joe Gentile back in January 2005, some changes were already in the works for *Supersize those Fries* transformation into *Return of the Screw*. “One challenge has been the sheer amount of dialogue that you can get away with in a screenplay versus a comics script,” said Gentile. “All of Mac’s script was hilarious, so it was difficult to edit where it was needed for physical space considerations on the comics page. There’s just not enough room for everything, but we did squeeze almost all of it in.”

Another order of business was to re-calibrate the mix of characters appearing in the story. “In the TV script, there are some very cool new characters, but some of the old favorites are missing,” Gentile explained. “We had to decide to ‘put in’ one or more of the HKC from the movie that are not in the script or to go with what was there. We decided to put one of the movie HKC into the script and omit one of the new characters.”

But the most difficult maneuver in the adaptation process was saved for the story’s conclusion. “The real challenge thus far has been that the script is made for TV, which means it’s also made ‘to be continued,’” he explained. “We need to tie things up a little.”

Easier said than done. Modifying the end of *Return of the Screw* led to some healthy debate between Gentile and the creative partnership of W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch. At the heart of the matter was a question of reader expectations vs. capturing the “feel” of Team Banzai’s very real exploits. “As a ‘mini series’ in comics,” noted Gentile, “readers expect some kind of ending and deserve some sense of closure.”

W.D. Richter felt otherwise. “I certainly don’t see these three books as a true serial with a cliffhanger at the end of each,” he said, “but with Buckaroo Banzai it seems pointless to wrap everything up at the end of three issues.” He further elaborated on his concerns that neatly wrapping up the story might be too “obvious” an ending for a Buckaroo adventure.

Suffice it to say that the fate of a character left unresolved in the original story is addressed differently in the comic’s script, while other dangling issues are allowed to remain lurking in the background. With luck, we will be treated to future installments addressing those threads. --DB

Avalanche!

An Interview with Banzai Cover Artist Matt Haley

By Steve Mattsson

**Photo by Big Norse**

Matt Haley (pictured above) and Steve Mattsson have both fought the good fight as Blue Blaze Irregulars. They have sat next to each other in Artists' Alley at the San Diego Comics Con. They both live in Portland, Oregon and they both have "Matt" in their names. They then walked different paths, honing their skills in the hope that The Banzai Institute would take notice. All is well.

Steve Mattsson: So, Matt where are you from and where are you going?

Matt Haley: I'm from Texas by way of New Mexico; I have traveled all over the U.S. and Canada and to the U.K.. Hoping to make it to New Zealand and Japan this coming year. I quit college when I was 20 because I got my first comics gig, and have been working steadily as a freelance illustrator since then (thankfully).

SM: What makes you tick?

MH: My turn-ons are tai chi, Guinness, and cigars. Turn-offs include rude people, traffic jams, and late checks.

SM: Listen to any music?

MH: I listen to a lot of stuff nobody's ever heard of, though I am a fan of Johnny Cash and Miles Davis.

SM: Did William Shatner meeting Ben Folds make the world a better place?

MH: Hell, yes! I can get behind that.

SM: When did you become interested in drawing in general and comics in particular?

MH: Like most of my peers, when I was a wee lad. I was the quintessential 5-year-old kid with a piece of butcher paper and some pens drawing *Legion of Super-Heroes* stories on the kitchen floor. It was always my career goal, though there are times when I wonder if maybe I shouldn't have aimed a little higher...

SM: How'd you break into comics?

MH: I drew some *Star Trek: TNG* comic samples and took them to the 1990 San Diego Comic-Con, showed them around, got some good (and bad) feedback, went home, drew a second set of Trek samples, sent those in, and got hired a week later. In short, I worked hard, but I got very lucky, as I was 20 when I got in.

SM: Yawn...that's my bad—ask a boring question and get a boring answer.

MH: Well, the entertaining part is that I had quit my job and had no place to live after the con, so I sort of laid it all on the line...

SM: Fortune favors the bold, my friend! Now, tell us about some of the comics you've worked on—is it true you drew *Phantom of Fear City*?!

MH: Yes, it's true, I worked with Steve Englehart and George Perez inked my covers on *Phantom*. I really was the wrong choice to draw that book—I hate pirates. Thankfully, Steve still speaks to me. *Ghost* was a blast. A beautiful woman with twin .45s? How can you beat that? Shame Dark Horse has lost interest in the character. Most of my work has been for DC Comics—*Birds of Prey: Manhunt*, *Batman: Batgirl*, *Tangent: Joker*, *Kingdom: Nightstar*, *Elseworld's Finest: Supergirl and Batgirl*, and lots of other books with colons in the title.

SM: *Star Trek: TNG* also has a colon. Interesting.

MH: Right now, the comic I'm most proud of is my own creation, *G.I. Spy*.

SM: Tell us a little more about *G.I. Spy*.

MH: *G.I. Spy* is basically "Indiana-Jones-meets-James-Bond with Nazi flying saucers." The first issue is out, and I'm working on getting more done. *G.I. Spy* is written by its co-creator Andy Cosby, and I provide the art. What I really like is the banter Andy writes between Jack Shepherd (our titular G.I. spy) and Kaitlin Hunter, his British spy counterpart. They're tasked with uncovering a secret German "wonder weapons" program, but as it turns out, their enemies are much closer to home... We're already working with a video game developer, but I'm keen on focusing on the comics.

SM: Now, here's a tricky one—how did you break *out* of comics?

MH: I was tired of the workload, frankly. I needed a break, and commercial illustration pays better, sadly. The lure of filthy lucre drew me into the commercial world. It all started from one post on craigslist, actually. A guy in San Francisco had posted looking for some color comps for a video game. He needed them ASAP, and I figured it would be a quick couple hundred dollars, but it turned into a six-month gig that not only paid very well, they flew me to E3 to be at their cavernous booth doing sketches and getting interviewed by NBC. It was all very surreal. From there the commercial work just sort of showed up. The ongoing consulting work I do for Nike likewise came from a random e-mail through my site.

SM: Let's hear about your work for TV.

MH: The one I'm most proud of is *Stan Lee's "Who Wants To Be A Superhero?"* for MTV. I was the comic-book art director, which means I provided a ton of comic-styled art for the show, designed the graphics and titles, and worked closely with the producer and director to ensure it 'felt' like a living comic-book. It's now at SciFi Channel, but I'm not sure what's happening with the pilot yet. I've been fortunate to do character design for cartoons like the "Seinfeld meets Superman" ads, and no, I didn't get to meet Jerry.



Cover to cover: Haley proposed several initial cover concepts for the first issue of *Return of the Screw* before sorting out the final composition. Elements from all of the sketches above were used to compose the cover as it will appear in comic book stores everywhere later this month.

SM: Do dreams really come true in Hollywood?

MH: Yes—just be careful what you wish for.

SM: Ever seen a movie star in the nude? I'm not talkin' freeze frame on DVD!

MH: No, but I have seen Gary Coleman pulling the "Don't you know who I AM??" bit on a hapless convention volunteer.

SM: Do you remember how you first heard about Buckaroo Banzai, the man or the movie?

MH: My dad was actually really excited when he saw it was coming out, as Dr. Banzai is very much a real-life version of the old Doc Savage pulp hero. I saw the docudrama 5 or 6 times in the theater, and then watched it every single damn time it was on HBO the year after. I was just totally taken by the richness of B. Banzai's world. I especially liked that he was portrayed not as a posturing, swaggering leader with a gun in his hand; he is a doctor, a scientist, and plays a mean guitar (sort of). B. Banzai and the Cavaliers just seemed like the kind of world-beating heroes you'd love to hang out with after a hard day of saving life as we know it, and I was hooked.

SM: Your website says you're a longtime fan of the 1984 docudrama *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*. What exactly does that mean? Do you live your life by the Five Stresses, the Four Beauties, and the Three Loves or are you a poseur who's just collected a bunch of Banzai movie tie-in crap?

MH: If more people lived by the Five Stresses, the Four Beauties, and the Three Loves, the world would be a much happier place.

SM: I just wish everybody could learn to help him help us.

MH: Well, I do think the Institute could stand to do a little more community outreach, honestly. Sometimes I think they're a bit exclusive.

SM: How'd you get involved with Moonstone?

MH: I heard through the grapevine they were doing the new BB comic, and I e-mailed them and asked if I could provide a cover; that simple.

SM: Where is your cover slotted?

MH: As far as I know, #1. I would love to do more if my schedule allows.

SM: Do you think Moonstone will be good stewards of the B. Banzai canon?

MH: Do you mean the new delivery system for Perfect Tommy's watermelons? Sure, but Joe (Moonstone's EiC) has an itchy trigger finger.

SM: Well, no. I mean canon as in "official body of work". Will they do a good job?

MH: Humanity demands it.

SM: How'd Moonstone's hard-chargin' hombres get the B. Banzai ball bouncin' after so many others have tried and failed?

MH: I have no idea, but I believe it's because they managed to locate who owned the publishing rights. The problem with BB is that the various rights are tied up all over the place, because some producer back in the '80s was miffed the docudrama didn't do as well as he thought it should, so he worked hard to make sure a sequel could never be made. Fortunately, good once again triumphs over evil.

SM: What can you tell us about the series?



She's got the look: Initial concept work for Lady Gillette's character (l) was complicated by Perfect Tommy when he slipped Haley an old high school photo of Ms. G for reference. A more current likeness (r) was provided soon after.

MH: Not much, although I have read the script. I can assure diehard BB fans that it reads and feels exactly like the first film, it is a proper sequel, the characters all look and sound as they should, and it will only make them hungry for more. The art is excellent, by the way. We also meet a few new characters, like Lady Gillette, who immediately feel as though they've been there all along.

SM: You seem to have been more deeply involved in the development of this series than the norm for the cover artist of one measly issue. S'up wit dat?

MH: Look, when Reno calls and starts asking me to design a character based on a real-life Hong Kong Cavalier, I say, "Yes." The people at the Institute have been great; I only wish I could qualify for an internship. He and Rick Richter have both worked very hard to make sure the book is as true to life as possible, and I'm honored to have been involved in a small way.

SM: Could you tell me who Lady Gillette is without needing to terminate me with extreme prejudice?

MH: I'm not actually sure. Like most of the Cavaliers, her name has been changed, and her true background is shrouded in mystery. However, Reno described her to me as "Little Red Riding Hood, all grown up after she'd killed the Big Bad Wolf," if that helps any.

SM: How much would you charge me for a drawing of Lady Gillette in the nude?

MH: \$1000, up front, and I'd be happy to accommodate you.

SM: We'll talk. I understand you've spoken to Rick Richter on the phone—why is a player like him still doing grunt work for the Banzai Institute after twenty years?

MH: Rick is a great guy, actually, and he and Mac Rauch both are held in high esteem by the Banzai Institute. I think Reno (and probably Dr. Banzai as well) likes to work with somebody he knows and respects, so why go to anybody else? Mac and Rick know these people intimately. I hear Rick has even beaten Pinky Carruthers at pinochle once.

SM: How much would you charge me for a drawing of Rick Richter in the nude?

MH: I think somebody needs a hobby to fill his spare time.

SM: Actually, the hobby filling my spare time is the problem! Anymore collaborations with Team Banzai comin' up?

MH: None I can talk about, but I can say I was given an honorary title as a Hong Kong Cavalier by Reno himself, they dubbed me "Avalanche." Nobody could be prouder of that than I.

SM: I just got my Team Banzai name changed from "Hardrock" to "Rainbow Kitty." Kinda a funny story really...

MH: Reno actually mentioned that. Something to do with desecrating poor Flyboy's ashes or something...?

SM: That is so *not* what happened! But we're here to talk about you—workin' on anything else these days?

MH: I'm currently drawing the *Superman Returns* movie adaptation for DC/Warner Bros., writing and illustrating a how-to draw book for Impact Books due out in '07, and, of course, working on more *G.I. Spy* issues. People can find out more about *G.I. Spy* by visiting www.gispyonline.com. You can also visit my main site at www.matthaley.com.

SM: Thanks, Avalanche. Billy Travers says all Blue Blaze Irregulars have been cleared to visit your websites—all systems are righteous! 🐾

Matt "Avalanche" Haley can't think of anything witty to put here; he's too busy trying to learn to play the triangle in the vain hope Buckaroo will take him out on tour. Contact him through his website.

Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson has worked as a comic book cover model and his most secret desire is to have Philip Jose Farmer write a description of his forearms. E-mail him at stmattsson@aol.com.

The pilot for *Who Wants To Be A Superhero?* continues to move ahead. On February 23, 2006, the series' producers began accepting applications from potential contestants. Official websites for the show can be found at www.whowantstobeasuperhero.tv and www.scifi.com/superhero.





The Jet Car for Everyone Else



Many of us wish we had a Jet Car parked in our driveway. Ron Patrick actually does.

His modified VW Beetle was inspired "by boredom of the other cars out there" and "because I wanted the wildest street-legal ride possible." The car is licensed in California and, although street legal presently, will most likely fail the next inspection. As Ron humorously points out, there are some exempt engine modifications allowed but "none that will allow you to add 1350 hp to a new car."

"I don't know how fast the car will go and probably never will," he added. "The car was built to thrill me, not kill me. That doesn't stop me from the occasional high speed run on the highway though."

A Google search on "Ron Patrick beetle" will garner further information.



Team Banzai Gearing Up for Dragon*Con 2006

By Lynnea Stadlemann

Last summer, a group of Blue Blaze Irregulars organized a fan table at a major science fiction convention to promote Team Banzai and Moonstone Books' Buckaroo Banzai comic. The result was a TABB table at Dragon*Con 2005, and it was a big hit! Now we're getting ready to do it all over again this year, but we need your help.

Dragon*Con is a multi-media Sci-Fi and Fantasy convention held annually on Labor Day weekend in Atlanta, GA, drawing over 20,000 attendees every year. One big attraction that I enjoy is the "Walk of Fame," where you can meet and get the autographs of many well-known actors. There are also well-known authors present, as well as artists. Last year's guests included Adam Baldwin and Morena Baccarin from *Firefly/Serenity*, game designer and *Star Wars* novelist Michael Stackpole, Brian Bailie, a senior illustrator for NASA; and many more. There are bands, robot battles, an enormous dealer area, an art show where one can purchase originals and prints, constant gaming of all kinds, and every genre movie and TV fan activity imaginable. And make sure to bring your camera, costume, or both. It seems you are either in a costume taking photos, or taking photos of people in costume!

Plans are in the works to do a table this year--but we need VOLUNTEERS. The table needs to be manned from 10-7 or 8 every day. If enough people can come, that would mean just one 2-hour stint each day. It's fun talking to people about all things BB! Last year we handed out flyers, pens, bumper stickers, and Chicken in a Watermelon recipe cards. Many people came up and told us how thrilled they were to see that TABB was still alive and kickin', and the watermelon with a BB headband on it made for lots of conversation!



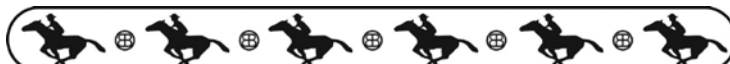
The Team Banzai Memorial

The Banzai Institute and World Watch One would like to take a moment to honor those members of the cast and crew of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* who are no longer with us:

- ❖ ROSALIND CASH (1938-1995), actress (John Emdall). Cancer.
- ❖ TOM CRANHAM (1938-1997), production illustrator. Cancer.
- ❖ SHERMAN LABBY (1929-1998), production illustrator. Cancer.
- ❖ RONALD LACEY (1935-1991) actor (President Widmark). Liver failure.
- ❖ TERRY LIEBLING (1942-2001), casting. Breast cancer.
- ❖ H. BUD OTTO (1926-2001), script supervisor. Lung cancer.
- ❖ R. J. ROBERTSON (1946-1994), animator. Cancer.
- ❖ JUDI ROSNER (1943-2004), production coordinator. Lung cancer.
- ❖ VINCENT SCHIAVELLI (1948-2005), actor (John O'Connor). Lung cancer.
- ❖ KEITH SHARTLE (1952-2000), production coordinator. Lung cancer.
- ❖ WILLIAM TRAYLOR (1930-1989), actor (General Catburd).
- ❖ ORSON WELLES (1915-1985), originator of the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. Heart attack.

We respectfully regret any individuals we may have overlooked.

"Such bonds as exist among those of us who live together and fight side by side cannot be torn apart by death. Anyone who doubts it does not realize the true power of the human will." --*Reno Nevada*



Buckaroo wants you for Dragon*Con 2006. Saddle up!
Art by Chris Harris.

Interested? Email me at rstadlemann@charter.net! We'd love to hear from you! Check out the full report on last year's table at www.banzai-institute.com/0601bunk.html. Scroll down to the 9/9/05 entry for details.



Please Note: All dates and locations may be subject to change. Be sure to visit the URLs provided for expanded and up-to-date information.

5th ANNUAL COWBOY POETRY WEEK

April 16-22, 2006

Unanimously recognized by Congressional resolution in 2003, Cowboy Poetry Week is devoted to sharing and increasing awareness of Western arts, and cowboy poetry in particular, as part of Poetry Month. Rustle up more info at www.cowboypoetry.com/week.htm.

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ & HERITAGE FESTIVAL

April 28 - 30 and May 5 - 7, 2006

New Orleans, LA

Share the pride as the 36th annual celebration reclaims its traditional stomping grounds for the first post-Katrina gathering. More info at www.nojazzfest.com.

THE BUN FESTIVAL

May 5, 2006

Cheung Chau, south of Hong Kong

What began as a ritual among Chinese fishing communities is now an island-wide festival with everything from Chinese opera to temporary mandatory vegetarianism and climbing giant towers covered with buns. See for yourself at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bun_Festival.

MIKE'S FESTIVAL

May 19-20, 2006

Fruita, CO

A festival honoring a headless chicken? We're game. Car shows! Eating contests! A 5k "Run like a headless chicken" race! For more info on two solid days of crazy fun (believe us, you'll need it), go to www.miketheheadlesschicken.org.

BLOOMSDAY

June 16, annually

Dublin, Ireland

Re-experience the day described by James Joyce's character Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*. Learn more at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloomeday.

ROSWELL UFO FESTIVAL

June 30 - July 3, 2006

Roswell, NM

Conspiracy theory or a great excuse to party? Why not both? For further info visit www.dfn.com/festival.

SHUTTLE LAUNCH: DISCOVERY (STS-121)

No earlier than July 1, 2006 (Tentative)

John F. Kennedy Space Center, FL

The crew of the space shuttle *Discovery* will continue evaluating new safety improvements in this, the shuttle's second "Return to Flight" test mission, while also delivering supplies and cargo for future expansion of the International Space Station. For updated launch status, visit www.nasa.gov/missions/highlights/schedule.html.

THE MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL

June 30 - July 15, 2006

Lake Geneva, Switzerland

One of the biggest music festivals in the world, held annually since 1967. The festival has grown over the years to also embrace blues, soul, rock, and representatives of just about every musical style. Get hep at www.montreuxjazz.com.

BURNING MAN

August 28 - September 4, 2006

Black Rock Desert, NV

25,000+ free spirits expressing themselves through art, ritual, spontaneity, and a community that re-forms and disbands annually to create and destroy a giant wooden effigy. For more information, visit www.burningman.com.

STATE FAIR OF TEXAS

September 29 - October 22

Dallas, TX

The nation's largest state fair with 3 million attending annually. Attractions include top music acts, a Broadway musical, livestock, the nation's tallest Ferris wheel, and Big Tex, the 52 ft. tall cowboy who's been welcoming visitors since 1952. Learn more at www.bigtex.com.

AFRMA FANCY RAT & MOUSE SHOW

September 30, 2006 (Tentative)

Riverside, CA

Rats that are better groomed (and better trained) than Perfect Tommy? You bet! The American Fancy Rat & Mouse Association sponsors around a dozen showcases annually, such as this one at the Woodcrest Community Center from 10:30 am to 4:00 pm. Free admission. Find more shows and dates at www.aframa.org.

THE WEST SIDE NUT CLUB FALL FESTIVAL

October 2-7, 2006

Evansville, IN

This surprisingly large and diverse street festival has been wowing the heartland with its carnival-like atmosphere for over eighty years. Known mostly for street vendors offering truly exotic foods, with proceeds typically donated to various non-profit organizations. Buckaroo approves. Learn more at www.nutclub.org.

WHALE FEST

November 3-5, 2006

Sitka, AK

A favorite of intrepid marine biologist Steve Zissou! This annual event celebrates marine life in general and whales in particular by featuring academic lectures, sightseeing cruises, sea chanteys, a clam chowder cook-off, and more. Check it out at www.sitkawhalefest.org.

LEONID METEOR SHOWER

November 13-20, 2006

Predicted Maximum: November 17, 19:11UT

Predictions indicate that 2006 will be the last unusually strong Leonid shower for several decades to come. Find viewing tips for this and other meteor showers at comets.amsmeteors.org.

JOHN LENNON CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

Dec. 8, annually

New York, NY

A generation later, Lennon's fans still gather every year at the Strawberry Fields Memorial in Central Park to mark the anniversary of his death. The all-night vigil is chilly, but worth it. Get more details at www.johnlennon.com.

ZORA!

January 21-29, 2007

Eatonville, FL

2007 heralds the 18th annual celebration honoring African-American writer / folklorist / anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). The event centers on cultural contributions made by African-Americans, but also features such diverse fare as international cuisine, cinema, and educational speakers. You can find more information at www.zoranealehurstonfestival.com.

WORLD WATCH ONE'S NEXT ISSUE

To be determined

C'mon, give us a break. We only just finished putting this one together.



BANZAI INSTITUTE REPORT: **WORLD CRIME LEAGUE WATCH LIST** **PRIORITY DISPATCH: FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**



April 10, 2006

TO: Global WCL Monitor Network
FROM: Banzai Institute Operations
SUBJECT: WCL Operative Profiles

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION ENCLOSED

It should come as no surprise that the scope of World Crime League activity has expanded exponentially over the last ten years. Even as the Internet Age presents the world with rich and exciting new ways to explore the universal discourse, so does it afford Xan and his minions fertile new ground to sow all manner of chaos. Bogus lottery spamming. Internet chain letters. Phisher sites. Identity theft and dealings in stolen personal information. Tawdry "tell-all" celebrity news sites. These are only a few of Xan's more recent schemes, joining his usual diet of extortion, weapons trading (currently at an all time high due to ongoing military conflict in the Middle East), and reality-based television production. The vile tide of infamy spilling from the unholy sanctum of the World Crime League council chamber (pictured above) seems endless indeed.



World Crime League Council Chamber painting by Doug Drexler

Efforts to identify World Crime League operatives and their associates around the globe continue, but reliable intelligence is scarce. At Dr. Banzai's request, Earl Mac Rauch has provided the following biographical data to aid in bringing Xan and his cronies to justice. Mac assures us, "This is the best information that I have, mostly odds and ends."



Portrait by Matt Haley

Hanoi Xan

Hanoi Xan resists any traditional notion of biography, for the following obvious reason: he was born in 1957 and died in 1903, a paradox suggesting that he has enjoyed more than a single lifetime on this planet. This paradox goes to the heart of his legend, which has it that he has been around as long as human memory.

Despite evidence of his death in Trieste shortly after the turn of the last century, he is known to be alive today, dividing his time between a twenty-story underground palace in Mongolia and various luxury residences scattered throughout the world.

Like Buckaroo Banzai, he can trace his lineage directly back to the royal Mughal line of Genghis Xan (Khan); yet Mongolian legend also teaches that he was delivered into this world by a snake. Perhaps this legend is fancied because at least this much is true: like a snake, Xan is known to shed his skin periodically through special blood baths and secret wraps involving human embryonic fluid and yak butter.

His killing prowess and penchant for cruelty are of course legendary. He is said to keep many of his personal kills impaled on cork like butterflies (Peggy Priddy, Illinois Mongoose, inter alia). Other victims he simply enjoys dispatching in bizarre ways. He supposedly strangled Peggy Priddy with her own hair; and in the gruesome case of the much-beloved

BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Hong Kong Cavalier known as Illinois Mongoose, Xan reportedly handed him his balls (literally), before clubbing him to death with his own lopped-off limb (arm).

Among the villain's hobbies are fashioning primitive chopping tools from flint and collecting the DNA of celebrity blondes for cloning purposes. He is reported to have a singing trio of juvenile Marilyn Monroes and a Princess Di, born only last year. He is also assumed to have at least one Peggy Priddy, age unknown.

Xan's special powers are also well-known. Like Buckaroo Banzai, he has the ability to read minds and diagnose diseases telepathically. His true physical appearance is the stuff of much conjecture. He has a black tongue like a Chow puppy's and is generally thought to be missing a right eyelid, but this detail cannot be confirmed, since he generally wears a wrestling mask even in the company of his most trusted confidantes.

As a final tidbit, the secret of eternal life is supposedly tattooed beneath his foreskin, along with instructions on how to kill him.



Lizardo/Whorfin †

On the other hand, Professor Emilio Lizardo (inhabited by the brain of space alien John Whorfin) is a more traditional active senior, whose Playboy profile might read: enjoys running scams on the elderly and drives a Cadillac. Since surviving the crash of his spaceship (shot down by Buckaroo Banzai), Lizardo has methodically reassembled his team, literally sewing pieces of bodies together and growing new Lectroids. He supports his new team primarily through roofing scams in the Midwest. When asked by Xan why he came to Earth--and the story may well be apocryphal--Lizardo coolly answered, "Because I am a sun worshipper."

(Left) Portrait by Stephen Thompson and Keith Williams

Derek Warlock

The former Anglican Archbishop Derek Warlock is Xan's torture master, Minister of Misinformation and general all-around consigliere. Along with Xan's personal physician Dr. Hacken Kreuz Berndt-Ghoat and his international financial wizard Jack Matters, Warlock sits at the center of Xan's inner circle. Said to be castrated, he nonetheless is believed to enjoy watching torture and dressing up his menagerie of chimpanzees for monkey porn productions.



Portrait by Stephen Thompson



Henrietta Xan

Xan's "beautiful daughter" may well be neither. Said to be promiscuous with both sexes, she is fond of banana-eating contests and human pate. She has her own private army of Aryan bodyguards and is presently listed as Publisher of American Shooter and various other publications of Xan's World Communications Limited group. Attended Brown University.

† While not one of Xan's operatives, the unforeseen and troubling reappearance of Lizardo/Whorfin, particularly in connection with recent WCL activity, is deemed sufficient reason to include his profile with this report.

(Left) Portrait by Stephen Thompson