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# 1 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

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## Strange Days at the Bureau Office

Like most of us, the Chicago Bureau of the World Watch One Network was ill prepared for a pandemic. That's not to say we were unprepared of course—our offices wouldn't pass muster with the Institute if we started flailing like turtles on our backs at the first sign of a global emergency. *World Watch One* has essentially operated as a network of work-from-home offices since the newsletter was revived in 2004. In short, we were built for this particular flavor of catastrophe. But the truth is that nobody is ever fully prepared for calamity when the moment comes, despite forewarnings and our best efforts to the contrary. The staff may work on the newsletter from their homes, but rarely have any of us been so confined to our homes as we are now.

The *World Watch One* staff is a volunteer outfit, which means we all have day jobs as well. Everyone on staff dealt in some measure with work disruptions, major shifts in homelife as offices moved to people's houses, and the daily routines that, mere months ago, we all took for granted. For ace staffer Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattson, that meant serious changes to his daily work conditions as a paramedic and his usual availability for the newsletter when off-duty. How Steve was able to contribute anything to this issue while recovering from long shifts and enhanced work stress is anybody's guess, but he still got the job done in style.

You can bet your last nickel we weren't alone in dealing with the chaos.

That is why, for this issue, our first reflex was to document the experiences of Blue Blaze Irregulars on the pandemic's front lines. We are undeniably living through a pivotal moment in history; to let it slip away without comment while in that moment seemed a wasted opportunity. In May, we sent out a request for Blue Blaze Irregulars to send us their personal accounts of life during the pandemic. Their responses came in a variety of shapes and sizes; from first responders to blood donors, corrections officers to retail workers from all across the land, with a healthy dose of the gritty "Get 'er done" ethos that binds friends and members of Team Banzai together across all boundaries of human description. If this crisis has confirmed anything, it is that we are here for Buckaroo to "help him help us" when the chips are down, and that helping him means helping each other.

Of course, this is a *Buckaroo Banzai* newsletter, so we made sure to get in touch with the Institute for an interview with Reno and Perfect Tommy by way of Earl Mac Rauch; to keep abreast of the COVID-19 situation there. And we didn't forget that people might want some relief from COVID-19 news, the current political divisiveness gripping our nation, and all of the other mean, nasty, and ugly things preoccupying our social media feeds these days.

Folks, you're in for a treat. For reasons that still remain unclear, the stars hinting at a deep dive into *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*'s began to align for us sometime in Spring. Several phone calls and a whole bunch of typing hours later, we have a little something to show for it. We reached out to Doug Drexler, Adam "Mojo" Lebowitz, Mike and Denise Okuda, and Messrs. W.D. Richter and E.M. Rauch to gather the most complete behind-the-scenes tale of Team Banzai's aborted journey to the small screen to date. Hard to believe that near miss at a weekly television series was two decades ago now. We've even included a recap of Kevin Smith's more recent brush with Banzai TV in 2016, just for good measure.

We continue our perennial dig into the docudrama's origins as well. The current layer under archaeological consideration is the collection of excerpts from early *Buckaroo Banzai* scripts and script treatments known as the *Buckaroo Banzai Sampler*. Sean Murphy reveals in detail how the *Sampler* explores the characters and their adventures in some unfamiliar ways, as well as how some of those ideas evolved into the docudrama itself.

So, leave your cares behind for a spell. Find an appropriately distant spot and hunker down for a bit as you survey the latest issue. Be safe, be well, and remember: no matter where you go, wear a mask.



## WORLD WATCH ONE

NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

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**WORLD WATCH ONE** is published irregularly by The Banzai Institute for Biomedical Engineering and Strategic Information. This edition originated in World Watch One's Chicago Bureau office: c/o Dan Berger, 507 Drake Street, Libertyville, IL 60048.

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## 2 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

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### By the Oath of the Flying Fish!

By Sean Murphy

It's funny how things can slip right past you and then, one day, BAM! There they are, staring you right in the face. This happened to me recently while researching the "A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler" article found later in this issue. I noticed that W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch signed a letter they wrote in a 2016 [Facebook](#) post like this:

By the Oath of the Flying Fish, we remain...

Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter

Oath of the Flying Fish? Where did that come from? A quick web search revealed several results. The first one I checked was the Yoyodyne page on the [Blue Blaze Station #23 website](#), written in a summary of the Buckaroo Banzai novel:

"The final conflict between Bigbooté and Whorfin comes as a result of Bigbooté's desire to continue on as the head of a Fortune 500 company with lucrative defense contracts, rather than return to Planet 10 under Whorfin. Secretly, Bigbooté yearns to eat Lord Whorfin's brain and assume leadership of the Lectroids on this planet; by the Oath of the Flying Fish, he swears it will be so..."

The novel, of course! Sadly, there's no eBook version of the novelization, so I searched the text of the novel using [Google Books](#). This turned up three mentions of the Flying Fish.

On page 108, Lizardo appeals to his fellow Lectroids with a fiery speech. "My wisdom can err! My knowledge is small compared to the Flying Fish." (The god they idolized—Reno) "But the Flying Fish is never wrong, and the substantial terrors of my mind are laid to rest when he speaks to me, as he has. Gather closer, closer." The beasts came nearer so he could lay his hands upon them with a certain tenderness. "I have a message from the Flying Fish."

On page 134, John Bigboote says, "By the Oath of the Flying Fish, that bloodthirsty winged beast, he would have Whorfin's three brains!"

The last appearance occurs on page 240, when Bigboote says, "Then let's take the oath of the Flying Fish."

But the Flying Fish mentions did not stop with the novel. On pages 24 and 25 of the Revised First Draft (December '99) of the *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries, Supersize Those Fries* script, we find this exchange:

RENO (INTO PHONE): Look, you overgrown orangutan...(softening) Tommy, I don't have time for this. I need a favor—like the time I saved your skinny haunches from the Diablo Brothers, remember? Only you gotta swear not to blow the whistle on me, you gotta swear to secrecy...

PERFECT TOMMY: Sure, man—Oath of the Flying Fish. You got it.

This same exchange also appears on page 6 of issue number 2 of Moonstone comic's *Buckaroo Banzai: Return of the Screw*, since the *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* script was the basis of the comic.

Then I discovered something that caught me off guard. The original *World Watch One* newsletter sent out a document called "[Some Hard Facts and Persistent Rumors Concerning Buckaroo Banzai](#)" by W.D. Richter, and it included this entry from Professor Hikita's diary:

"It was there that Masado Banzai crossed swords with a villainous wretch known throughout the Orient by the pathetic nickname he had given himself: 'The Herald of Peace/The Scourge of Burma.' Hanoi Xan. Sworn to walk in hidden ways by the Oath of the Flying Fish, this Xan would say proudly to the smallest child, 'All my days have I done evil.' He tried to murder Masado Banzai and Sandra Willoughby when they refused to teach him the secrets of science they knew. He failed, perhaps his only failure in those heady dark days when evil ruled this planet."

How did Xan learn about the Flying Fish? Was he already in contact with the Lectroids when they first arrived from the Eighth Dimension? While I don't have any answers about Hanoi Xan, I was able to gather some new information about the Flying Fish. Earl Mac Rauch had this to say:

"As best I recall, the Oath of the Flying Fish derives from the constellation named Piscis Volans, about which Lectroids constructed numerous myths involving their gods. Maybe think of it as analogous to Mount Olympus, but with a difference: the constellation itself as not just a holy place but a sentient body and object of worship."

Once again, I am left with more questions than answers. A "sentient body"? If Piscis Volans is analogous to Mount Olympus, are there more Lectroid gods out there? Do the Black Lectroids worship the Flying Fish, or do they have their own god(s)/goddess(es)? Further study is surely needed. I've applied for a grant at the Institute to see if I can dedicate serious time to uncovering more of these fascinating questions. 🐟

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### Oh, Those Pesky Dimensional Barriers...

By Steve Mattsson

One of my jobs at the Institute is to scour the internet for news of Buckaroo Banzai and the machinations of Hanoi Xan. Sadly, the signal-to-noise ratio is a very low and I must slog through mounds of chaff before I find something interesting. Recently, I came across a scientific paper titled:

#### ***“Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension”*** **A Strategic Assault on the Dimensional Barrier**

Richard L. Amoroso

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Here is the abstract to Professor Amoroso’s paper:

“Additional dimensions (XD) have been proposed for a hundred years; recently synthetic/artificial XD have been discovered in quantum Hall graphene bilayers, suggesting empirical discovery is imminent. With current supercollider technology the CERN LHC proposes a series of experiments called ‘gravities rainbow’ to detect compact dimensions; it is suspected however that the LHC will not be sufficiently powerful. The Chinese have proposed a collider twice the size of CERNs; however, Nobelist C.N. Yang suggested this would be a waste of money, for which he was criticized. We agree with Yang in principle, but not in detail; we propose a low-energy tabletop device putatively taking a higher dimensional cross section.”

If the abstract has piqued your interest, you can [download a pdf of the complete paper](#), you can [watch Prof. Amoroso’s lecture](#) regarding dimensional barriers, and you can find more information about the Noetic Advanced Studies Institute [at its website](#).

I confess that, even with the benefit of the lecture, the paper’s concepts are beyond my paygrade. Fortunately, The Banzai Institute is not without its own resources. Cary I. Sneider, Ph.D. Science Education and Joseph Bisognano, Ph.D. Physics collaborated on the 1984 paper “Moving Through Matter with Buckaroo Banzai.” I contacted them for their take on Amoroso’s paper and they were kind enough to provide the following.  $\Omega$

$\Omega$  **The staff at *World Watch One*** would like to thank **Dr. Bisognano** and **Dr. Sneider** for their efforts. **Dr. Banzai** was not available for comment in time for this publication.

### Response to Richard Amoroso’s article “A Strategic Assault on the Dimensional Barrier”

By Joseph Bisognano and Cary Sneider

We read Professor Amoroso’s article with great interest. It sparked a dive into the recent multi-dimensional literature, and we’d like to share with fellow Buckaroo fans what we came up with. Here are a few key points:

- Many current physics papers advance ideas about extra dimensions and are pointing the way to experiments that may provide the first evidence of their reality.
- The Kaluza-Klein theory of a 5<sup>th</sup> dimension, in addition to the usual relativistic 4-dimensional spacetime, was developed early in the twentieth century. This was just the time of the first experiments, by Masado Banzai and his collaborators on the Oscillation Overthruster.
- Today, the expanded notion of many extra dimensions is alive and well in the physics community with people actually talking about doing experiments to see it at CERN and its Large Hadron Collider. Typically, these extra dimensions are cylindrical and are of a very small diameter, down to almost a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a meter in early research. However, now it is expected that the size of these extra dimensions are “much larger,” only roughly a billionth of a billionth of a meter! Such distances are accessible with machines such as the Large Hadron Collider at CERN and will be cutting edge research of the next decades.
- Finding new dimensions might explain why the gravitational force is so much weaker than the electric and nuclear forces, as gravitons are sucked into the extra dimensions. **Or**, discovery of extra dimension might be the first concrete evidence that String Theory, where fundamental objects are not point particles but two dimensional strings, has something real to say about our universe. **Or**, this discovery might show the existence of superheavy siblings of our current menagerie of fundamental particles.

We appreciate Professor Amoroso’s efforts to call attention to the controversy surrounding proposed new experiments on multiple dimensions using the CERN LHC technology, and his outside-the-box thinking about alternative approaches. Whatever new experiments turn up, it is clear that the notion of extra dimensions is at the forefront of today’s physics research and we might be at the threshold of surprising discoveries. 🦋

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### What's Crushing The Watermelon?

By Dan Berger and Sean Murphy

Ever since *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai's* theatrical release thirty-six years ago, a conundrum has reverberated through the cosmos to confound generations of Blue Blaze Irregulars in the years afterwards.

“Why is there a watermelon there?”

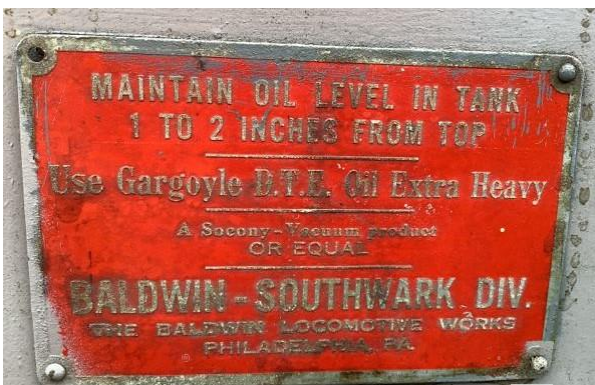
Luckily, W.D. Richter answered the [What exactly is the Watermelon doing there?](#) riddle in the April, 1986 edition of *World Watch One*.

What we didn't yet know was [What type of machine was holding the watermelon?](#) The question lingered on the Buckaroo Banzai FAQ for almost twenty years. Then, on May 26, 2020, the FAQ received an email from Blue Blaze Irregular Dirt-Dog about the exact machine that held the watermelon in its vice-like grip.

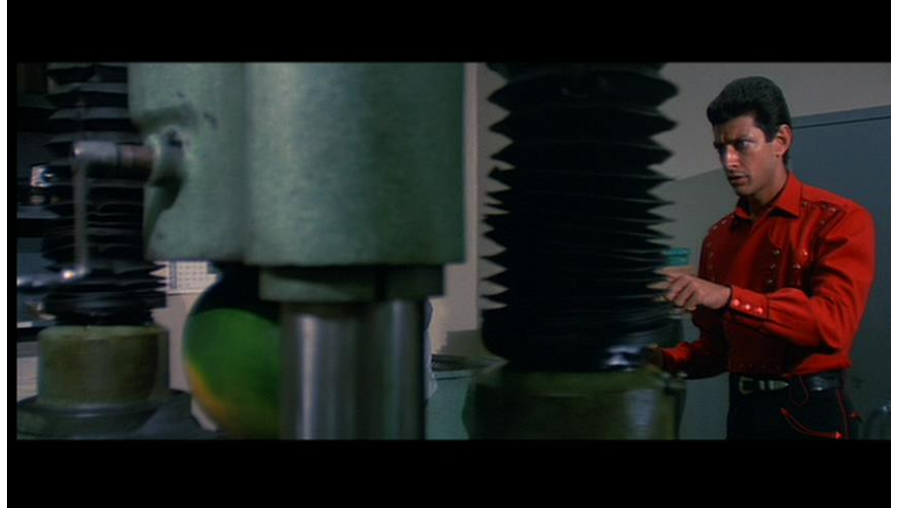
Dirt-Dog wrote, “Since BB is one of my favorite movies, I felt I needed to set the record right. It just so happens that, before I retired, I used this same machine at the testing facility where I worked. The machine in question is a Baldwin Southwark Universal Testing Machine made by the Baldwin Locomotive works in Philadelphia. I have included a couple of photos for comparison, one of the machine and one of the name plate on the front of the loading deck.”

Had the mystery finally been solved?

*(Continued on next page)*



Images (L) and (R) provided by BBI Dirt-Dog.



“Why's there a watermelon there?” Source: MGM



**Pressing Matters:** Sharp-eyed BBI Dirt-Dog was able to identify the elusive “Watermelon Machine” based on a testing machine at his place of work. Photos of the name plate (L) and machine (R) appear above.

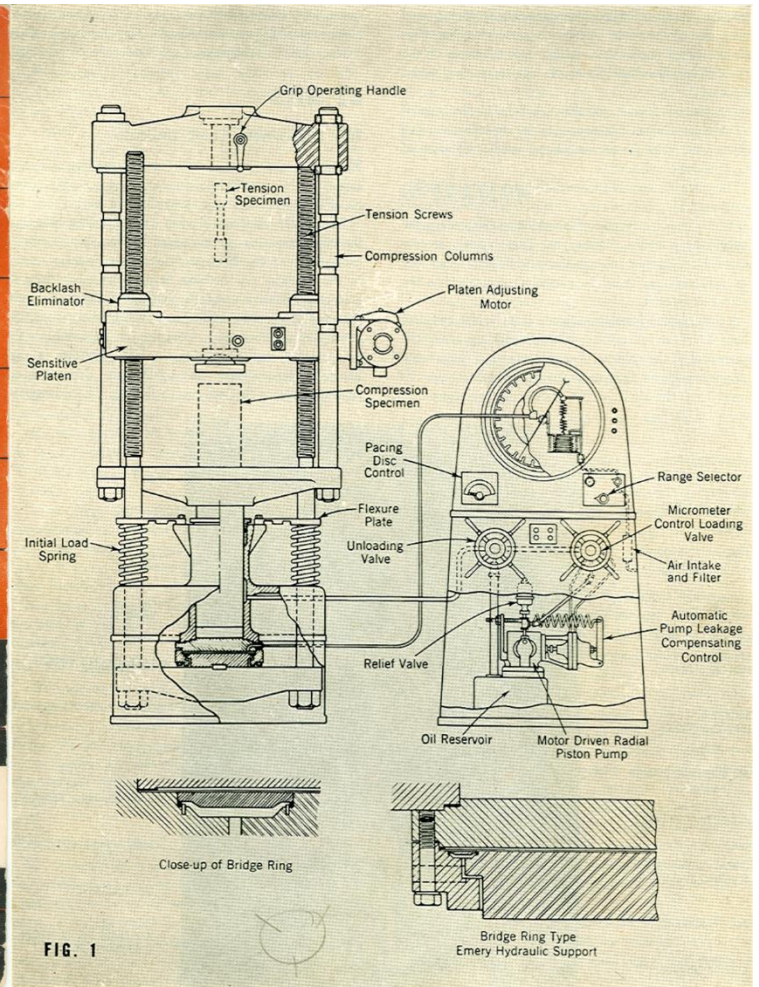


FIG. 1

**Mid-Century Modern in all its glory:** Mrs. E. Johnson was kind enough to send a copy of a manual for an older model of the universal testing machine as reference. Behold the sumptuous early 1960s graphic design and detailed mechanical drawings.

*(continued)* As part of *World Watch One's* standard fact-checking procedures, we reached out to the Banzai Institute for confirmation. They were only too happy to validate Dirt-Dog's information. Institute Archivist Mrs. E. Johnson was able to provide even more.

"We were recently doing some spring cleaning in the basement of the Institute and what do you think we found? The 'watermelon press' itself! The machine was mothballed a few years ago. It's still in good condition. Used versions of this machine typically go for around six to eight thousand dollars through online auction sites. The Institute is in the process of donating it to a worthy non-profit as I type this."

As for the device itself, there is a long history of different company names attached to the hardware. "We found the following manual in the filing cabinets, which calls the device a Baldwin-Tate-Emery Testing machine rather than a Baldwin Southwark Universal Testing Machine. But notice the Baldwin Locomotive Works at the bottom. This led us down a rabbit hole about names of devices."

"When we did some digging on the differences between the various names of the company that produced this sturdy piece of equipment, we discovered the [History of the Space Age Testing Equipment Company \(SATEC\) PDF](#) that starts with Baldwin Locomotive Works in the late 1800's and ends with Instron today." Mrs. Johnson said. "So, at the end of the day, the machine that Dirt-Dog used was made by the same company, and was the same device, although the exact device name is slightly different based on the age of the machine. Consider this device to be confirmed for the FAQ!"

According to the manual, "The Baldwin-Tate-Emery Universal Testing Machine consists of a rugged hydraulic press and a sensitive weighing system. Both units are built to withstand punishment." Knowing the amazing pressures that the Universal Testing Machine can exert, one other fact shines through without question:

That must have been one hell of a watermelon.



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### The Essential Blue Blaze Irregular

Edited by Dan Berger

SEN. STROM THURMOND: Dr. Banzai, are you now or have you ever been, a Communist?

B. BANZAI: How do you spell that, Senator?

SEN. STROM THURMOND: Be my guest, sir.

B. BANZAI: If you are spelling it c-o-m-m-o-n-i-s-t, the answer is yes. I am a commonist. I believe in the celebration of the common man and woman, the sense that we all have far more in common than that which separates us—namely common sense and common decency.

*From an appearance before the United States Senate, courtesy of the Banzai Institute Archives.*

What does it mean for a person to be “essential?” Is essential a measure of value? An acknowledgement of indispensability? A recognition of one’s humanity? An appellation of virtue? A reserve for those possessing certain skills and knowledge?

It’s a strange sort of question. Five months ago people woke up, went to work, went home, rinsed and repeated. The vague hierarchy of blue collar vs white collar jobs served more as a way to determine distinctions by income level and kind of work than its cruciality. Imagining a bagger at a grocery store as “essential” when national economies rose and fell on the backs of corporations steeped in white collar education and financial resources simply didn’t happen, but “essential” wasn’t the first word to leap to people’s lips when describing a stock broker, either.

Depending on where you lived, that all changed sometime in March, 2020. It remains a work in progress in August, 2020 as of this printing.

Wading through the perils of the SARS-CoV-2 virus altered more than the definition of a safe distance between people. The spread of COVID-19 forced the world to reexamine exactly what the word “essential” meant as federal, state, and local governments wrestled with keeping their citizens safe through active self-isolation without disrupting daily life to precarious levels. Very quickly, the essentials came down to the basics: food, shelter, transportation, the movement of resources, and emergency medical care. The burden of keeping a nation’s lights on landed on the backs of people previously referred to collectively as “the common man.” The mundane was revealed to be essential, even heroic. Grocers became paladins, nurses doubly so; as thousands of suddenly elevated “essential



workers” were called to play defense against an invisible enemy, and at a severe disadvantage, in the service of keeping people fed, sheltered, and alive.

For others, Shelter-In-Place orders meant furloughs, layoffs, and a sudden excess of down time. Inaction was not the preferred choice for many sidelined by the pandemic. Volunteer opportunities began to present themselves almost immediately; some helping local and state health organizations ramp up additional treatment space for the expected rise in COVID-19 cases, others assisting those most vulnerable to or directly affected by the pandemic. Mental health institutions, meals on wheels programs, and very often friends and neighbors in our local communities became the focus of those with time and resources to spare and a burning need to do something to make things better for everyone.

In the early part of May, *World Watch One* put out a call amongst Blue Blaze Irregulars, asking those who serve as essential workers to step forward and offer an account of life on the front lines of the pandemic. What follows is our [“Fanfare for the Common Man.”](#) It’s not exactly [Copland](#), but it is a testament to the enduring value of the “commonism” Dr. B. Banzai alluded to on the senate floor of the United States those many years ago. This collection of first-hand accounts goes out to everyone who saddled up to serve others at the expense of heightened personal risk to themselves, when a world that hardly knew they existed in February suddenly held its breath and realized that it would crumble to pieces without them.

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Richard “Khan” McAroy

Somewhere on the US/Canadian Border



Image provided by Richard McAroy.

This member of Team Banzai has been working on the US/Canada border non-stop since the COVID-19 virus appeared. My specific job is USDA Port Veterinarian. In a nutshell, we inspect cattle (and bison and poultry) coming into the US to enter into our agriculture system and food chain.

Although non-essential travel is now prohibited between the US and Canada, the food supply is vital to both countries and is protected by USDA, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), FDA, US Fish and Wildlife, and Border Patrol officers. We guarantee to US citizens that there will be no interruption and that we will man our posts and not leave.

Port Veterinarians screen incoming animals for Foreign Animal Diseases (FADs), like Foot and Mouth Disease, Vesicular Stomatitis, Bluetongue, and African Swine Fever. Any of these diseases, if accidentally introduced into the United States, would wreck our agricultural system and shut down US exports to other countries (affecting their food supplies as a second-order effect).

Many of the USDA Port Veterinarians received their training in the US Army Veterinary Corps, and we've seen these terrible diseases first hand in other countries.

We continue to stand our ground as essential personnel; as a matter of fact, not a single Port Veterinarian has stopped working during this national emergency, Blue Blaze Irregular or not.

Ted “Jay Clay” Haycraft

14 WFIE-TV, Evansville, Indiana

Though nowhere as important as doctors, nurses, paramedics, and all sorts of other related healthcare workers, I found myself being a so-called “essential worker” due to my current position at the TV station I've worked at for the last 40 years. My job title is Master Control Supervisor. Basically, what I do is make sure that the right “buttons” are pushed to keep programming running smoothly on a daily basis.

The corporate owners quickly moved as many personal as possible out of the station once the pandemic started. Some departments, like Sales, were totally emptied out of the building. Fortunately, the world of TV has been digital for a while now, so we were able to ebb and flow with the situation immediately. The folks that were booted out of the building are all working from home now, and jobs such as reporters and anchors communicate from different sites; in some cases, from their homes.

The “essential” part of my job really kicked in when we started to air the daily press conferences dealing with COVID-19. Since our coverage includes three different states, there were, in those first several weeks, a total of four different press conferences to get on the air during my shift. These conferences were vital, keeping viewers up to speed on what needed to be done to help combat the virus. As I was juggling all of these conferences—all airing at different times with our network and local programming—I imagined that this must be a lot like how the Hong Kong Cavaliers and Blue Blaze Irregulars, either at the Banzai Institute or at the World Watch One console on Buckaroo's bus, are scrambling to handle this worldwide crisis. It seems only fitting that there should be a press conference spearheaded by Dr. Anthony Fauci where Buckaroo and Professor Hikita, announce to the world that they have perfected a COVID-19 vaccine and are ready to distribute it! That certainly would be one press conference I would love to push the “button” to put it on air! If only...

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## 8 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

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Dan “Big Shoulders” Berger  
North Suburban Chicago Metro Area

I number among those dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak as an essential worker, employed at a homebrew supply shop in Libertyville, IL. We provide equipment and raw ingredients to those making their own beer, cheese, wine, and other fermented foods at home, but we are also part of the supply chain providing ingredients to local craft breweries in Lake County, IL.

People began speculating in the first week of March that the pandemic might force a Stay at Home Order by Governor J. B. Pritzker. From then on, all bets were off at grocery stores and warehouse clubs as the hoarding began in earnest. Business at our store was slow until the order was formally announced on March 20th. That’s when people realized that they would be working from home for the next two weeks or more, and they decided it was time to brew. Customers came in by the dozens to pick up ingredients. Our sales hit record breaking levels for non-holiday business. It was a blur.

The Stay at Home Order came with social distancing guidelines, which presented a couple of challenges for us. First, our homebrew shop is small. The building can accommodate very few people while maintaining six feet of distance between customers. Second, beer and wine are inherently social in nature. We can function as an e-commerce business, and probably do so more now than before the pandemic. But the real value of a physical homebrew shop is as a social hub for the homebrewer community. Homebrew club meetings, classes in beer and cheese making, sharing a beer with customers and talking shop; none of that was going to fly during a pandemic—be they core features of our business or not.

We quickly pivoted to what are now familiar strategies at stores everywhere; encouraging customers to place orders in advance by email and telephone, curbside pick-up, and limited delivery. Now we sanitize the snot out of frequently touched surfaces. Beer samples from our shop’s taps are discontinued. Our Chilean wine juice bucket event ditched the usual first come, first served policy in favor of scheduled pick-up times, and the traditional party at the end of the pick-up was cancelled. It was a brutal contrast to years past. Where once there had been celebration, things just kind of sputtered to a melancholy end.

Business is slowly returning to normal. My hours are coming back up in June after a slow May. When I do come into the shop, it’s typically during a spike in business; when the potential risk of exposure is at its most enhanced. Most customers follow the rules, wear

their masks, and keep their distance. But the scoff-laws and careless folks are out there.

I remember one customer who couldn’t keep more than two or three feet away from me, no matter how much I unobtrusively attempted to increase the distance between us. It was like some bizarre dance. It wasn’t malicious; his brain just couldn’t get around the idea that a comfortable talking distance between us might be unsafe. I empathized, but it still made me uneasy.

That discomfort is the real peril to workers like grocers and other retailers. Our training is in customer service and sales. Those two skills involve putting a customer at ease and doing our best to make them happy. Telling a customer, “Excuse me, could you please maintain six feet of distance between us?” runs contrary to the training and conditioning that molds us as employees. Our instincts are to bite the bullet when a customer doesn’t maintain proper distance, or decides masks are stupid, because “the customer is always right.”

“The customer is always right” is a terrible survival instinct just now.

Compulsive hand washing, mask wearing, social distancing, and short hours have kept me healthy so far, but I am hyper aware every time I work at the shop that my exposure level is about to increase, especially as a 52 year old man with high blood pressure. COVID-19 is not kind to people of my years and pre-existing condition. Afterwards, I go home to a wife and two sons who then become exposed to me. It’s a roll of the dice, every time.

It is past time for the United States to ramp up its testing and contact tracing efforts to take the fight to COVID-19. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, I filled out a survey from the Lake County Health Department to apply for a position as a contact tracer. In its most basic terms, “Contact tracing is part of the process of supporting patients and warning contacts of exposure in order to stop chains of transmission,” according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#). Social distancing and treatment of COVID-19 are the defensive game we are forced to play without the benefit of mass testing. Testing, contact tracing, and quarantining people we know were exposed to the virus are the offensive game.

Sadly, lacking a background in health care, I have yet to hear back from the county. It’s been good to be back at the shop more frequently now, seeing customers and coworkers again semi-regularly. But I still miss the club meetings and seeing more of my friends. And the longer the pandemic goes on, the more I want to be on offense. The distance this virus has placed between us has been exhausting, and I wonder when it will end.

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### Tab Richard Evo Southern New Jersey

I am a firefighter in New Jersey. A normal call for us generally includes motor vehicle accidents, “smells and bells” (alarms and odors of smoke), and the occasional fire. Rarely, we are called to assist Emergency Medical Services (EMS), either because of an obese patient requiring transport or because the 911 call is a cardiac emergency and the Fire Department gets called because they may be able to respond faster to begin CPR.

With the arrival of COVID-19, everything changed. A few days after the pandemic was declared, I responded to a call regarding a “cardiac emergency” with several members of my fire company. No guidelines had been issued yet, so we didn’t don masks. Paramedics and police were already on-site when we arrived at the residence. None of them were wearing a mask either. Myself and another member staged outside the bedroom while the paramedics attempted CPR, eventually utilizing the [Lucas machine](#) to continue CPR during transport. While waiting, we heard a paramedic repeatedly say she had “never seen phlegm deposits like this before.” Hearing this, one of our members brought us N95 masks. All of the members responding, and everyone with whom we came in contact, waited tensely for a few days until the Chief informed us the patient tested negative for COVID-19.

Since then there have been lots of new guidelines and PPE requirements. The changes specify protocols depending on the type of call received and stipulate that standardized COVID-19 related questions be asked for certain calls. Only the officer on-site can speak to the contact initially in those cases. The rest of the crew respond accordingly, depending on the answers. Possible results include the level of [PPE](#) and if “going on [bottled] air” is necessary.

Some other responses to the pandemic included the closure of the gym, prohibition against using the hand dryer in the restroom, and cancellation of monthly business meetings and drills. We have bunk rooms but do not currently use them except during natural disasters. Social distancing measures were put in place for crews responding to calls. The day crew also began systematic, scheduled disinfection of the station.

We must be doing something right. No COVID-19 cases at the station so far. One member’s 94-year-old mother got it and he self-isolated for two weeks. He tested negative. She recovered—tough old lady.

We also got lucky during the outbreak of social unrest related to George Floyd’s death on May 25th. We didn’t receive any calls related to property destruction or

rioting at our station, but we were issued a FEMA document titled “Fire and Emergency Medical Services Response to Civil Unrest” on June 5th. Other stations definitely weren’t as lucky as we were.

Several months into the pandemic, the General Order governing our operations during COVID have been revised twice. Most recently, the update allowed drills to resume. We’re still keeping the PPE and pre-incident questioning requirements but we’ve gotten used to the new routines. It’s the “new normal” now.

### Bill “Tex” Shearer Corpus Christi, Texas

I work at a Toyota dealership in Corpus Christi, Texas. When the state told us to stay home, I immediately became essential. One third of the dealership was laid off right away. The rest of us are working 60 hours a week to make sure our friends, families, and community keep their vehicles on the road and moving. Tomorrow the dealership is giving back to our community by donating 240 boxes of nonperishable food to help those in need.

Yes, it’s hard for us all during this time of dark shadows and doubts, but look for the bright rays of hope to shine thru those clouds.

You may notice I did not mention my dealership’s name. It’s not about being a promotion stunt. It’s about helping others. It’s what Buckaroo would want us to do. He would not expect anything else. So saddle up, we got work to do.

### Wendell Kirgis Central Ohio

I am a corrections officer in Ohio. I can’t tell you too much about the whole COVID-19 issue due to social media rules with the government, but I can tell you this much. At my institution, we are required to mask up. There’s not enough PPE to go around in a timely fashion, but we can wear our own. We have our temp taken every shift, and have to answer two questions about our health. Our sister institution, Marion Correctional, MCI, has been crushed with the Rona. The National Guard went there to back up the state officers. Our governor stated that all inmates and staff would be tested. After they found huge numbers of positives, they backtracked on that! If you test everyone and find a lot of positives, it makes the news and the National Guard shows up. Test only the super sick and the ones ready to go home, it’s fewer positives, no National Guard, and you’re not on the news! I reckon that there’s not enough National Guard to replace us all. Otherwise all is well.

## 10 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson  
Portland, Oregon



Steve chose the cloth mask above for its resemblance to Buckaroo's Jet Car headgear. For standard patient contact, Steve wears an ASTM Level 3 procedure mask. for COVID-19 patients he wears an N95 healthcare particulate respirator and face shield. Photo provided by Steve Mattsson.

In 1998 I made a mid-life career change and became an EMT-Basic. This led to becoming a Paramedic and even more school. I worked on an ambulance answering 911 calls and as a Firefighter/Paramedic, but the bulk of my career was spent as an administrator of a medical detox center that cared for homeless alcoholics and addicts.

I would like to say that I was directly inspired to go into the medical field by Dr. Buckaroo Banzai, but the seeds were planted much earlier. I loved the television shows *Thunderbirds* and *Emergency!* when I was a kid. Neither show featured good guys shooting up bad guys, but both had plenty of thrills and excitement. The Tracy family and Johnny & Roy dedicated themselves to rescuing those in trouble. Their adventures primed me to become a fan of Buckaroo Banzai.

A couple of years ago, I realized that scheduling, budgets, and writing policy was not my cup of tea, so I returned to direct patient care. I dusted off my paramedic skills and got a job working in the [ED](#) of a large hospital. I found this new job more fulfilling and less stressful than administration—until COVID-19.

Those involved in the healthcare profession are prepared to take care of highly infectious patients. This is the type of thing we signed up for, except we did not foresee the shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Now PPE is rationed. Scrub caps, exam masks, N95 respirators, exam gowns, and even rubber gloves are essential for caregiver safety. Most PPE is meant for

use with a single patient. Before COVID, if someone from infection control spotted you re-using PPE, you would get a lecture. Now, one exam mask must last an entire twelve-hour shift and one N95 mask must last for the foreseeable future. The staff tried to supplement their hospital issued equipment with washable scrub caps and cloth masks, but these were on backorder from all suppliers due to the world-wide demand.

This is where the public stepped in. With the type of “can do” attitude seen in the Blue Blaze Irregulars, the public began sewing cloth masks and scrub caps to make up for the shortfall. The color and patterns of the material used was varied. Some clinical staff, who had friends who could sew, began requesting specific patterns as a platform for self-expression.

I was fond of my Banzai Institute headband, but the truth is I seldom wore it. I asked [Leman Yuen](#), a talented tailor/costumer/cosplayer, to repurpose it into a surgical cap and he knocked it out of the park. I think Buckaroo would approve. Because I need to constantly launder my personal PPE, I alternate my Team Banzai cap with ones featuring Batman and The Incredible Hulk. I can clean my Team Banzai name-badge lanyard with an antiviral wipe, so I wear it every shift.

It wasn't until recently that I had a patient recognize my Buckaroo Banzai flair. He was a middle-aged male complaining of suicidal ideation. This was partly brought on by the isolation created by social distancing. He was required to wait in the ED for a few days until a psych bed opened up. Unfortunately, ED rooms are full of cables which could be used for self-harm. In a situation like this a member of the clinical staff must visually monitor the patient 24 hours a day. This is my least favorite job in the ED, but in this case he and I spent hours talking about Buckaroo, *Star Trek*, and Universal monster movies. Hopefully, Team Banzai helped him feel less isolated when he most needed it.

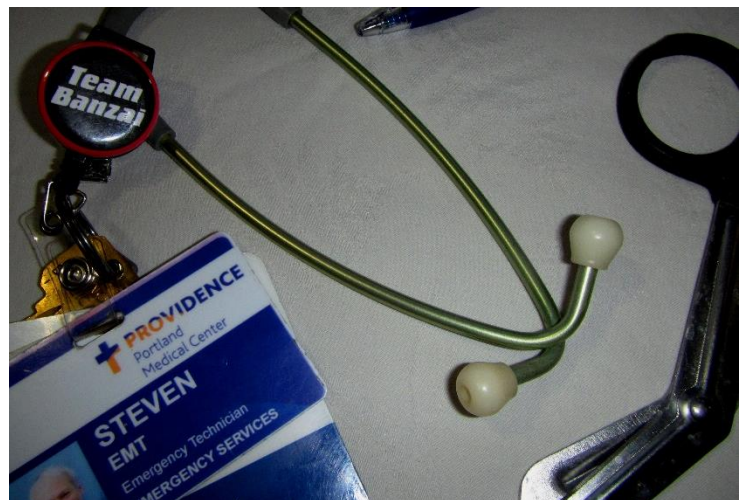


Photo provided by Steve Mattsson

Lynnea “Moto Mamma” Stadelmann  
North Central South Carolina

In March of 2020, I went on a *Star Trek*-themed cruise with my husband and adult daughter. On the last day of the cruise I could feel something happening in my chest. The next day we disembarked and waited at the Miami Airport for over three hours for our flight home. Two of those hours I slept, totally oblivious to the cacophony of noise going on around me.

I was sick for three weeks, and coughing for at least that long. My doctor told me she didn’t know if it was COVID, as they did not have the test kits here in South Carolina yet. I tested negative for the flu. Her diagnosis was that it was just another one of those nasty viruses.

Fast forward to May. I had been waiting in anticipation for the COVID antibody testing to finally become available. Now it was, for free—if I donated blood!

I had donated blood in the past, but because I had had a small melanoma removed from my arm years ago, was told at one point that I could no longer donate after having a form of cancer. Some time later, I asked a nurse about my experience and donating blood again, and was told it should be okay. “What the heck,” I thought. “I’ll donate blood and get the COVID-19 antibody test all in one shot.” I made an appointment at [The Blood Connection](#), a local SC office, and in I went.

There was, of course, paperwork to be filled out. I had filled the preliminary forms online and was barraged with many health questions. The most critical questions involved asking if you were HIV positive or had STDs, had been with someone with same, or were a drug user. No surprise with those questions, but they asked other questions as well. It was a thorough screening.

When I arrived, I was met with a sign at the main door asking to wait outside until a nurse could check you in. She came to open the door, wearing a mask. All employees I observed wore a mask, as well. I, too, was wearing a cloth mask.

I filled out one more form and took a chair in the waiting room. A nurse arrived and we went to a private office for her to finalize forms, take my temp and blood pressure. We then proceeded into a large room with many reclining chairs, each with their own small television, placed at intervals along the wall, all with equipment for the process. There were only three other people donating at the time. Soon my blood was slowly making its way through a long tube into a plastic bag.

As I looked around the room, I observed one man with a very interesting machine next to his chair. I read one of



Photo provided by Lynnea Stadelmann

the brochures I was handed when I came in and learned a few interesting facts. It was likely he was donating plasma, a much longer, drawn-out process. I was donating “whole blood” which is generally what most people donate. Here is [an excerpt from their website](#):

“There are four ways to donate: plasma, platelets, red cells, and whole blood. Those different components in our blood have many uses. During and after a donation, we are able to separate those components, to give a recipient exactly what they need.

“Keep in mind, the process can vary based on the type of donation. Eligibility varies too. We require certain qualifications to give plasma and platelets, compared to red cells and whole blood.”

I asked the nurse about donations at this time, and she said they were actually up. Her reasoning was that since people were not working or are having to stay home, they were probably bored. I’m not sure how accurate that assessment is, but it sounded reasonable! At any rate, it only took about 20 minutes for the entire blood-letting process, which was entirely painless.

Once I was finished, I went into a nice sitting area where they had several tables set up with snacks and beverages so one could replenish oneself and not leave light-headed. They did recommend waiting twenty minutes before driving, but I had never had any episodes of being dizzy or light-headed when I donated

in the past, so I pretty much grabbed a few snacks and made my way to the exit. Before I left, I was stopped by the gentleman who had signed me in and he handed me a \$10 Visa gift card and a few restaurant coupons—bribes to get more people to donate! However, this is not with the Red Cross, and only applies to The Blood Connection here in South Carolina.

Overall, my visit went very well. Oh, and one last thing: I received the results of the antibody test a week later—negative!

**Editor's Note:** According to [an April 2 statement issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#), "The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges to the U.S. blood supply. Donor centers have experienced a dramatic reduction in donations due to the implementation of social distancing and the cancellation of blood drives." It is unclear how much blood donations have increased as restrictions on social distancing measures have decreased, but it is certain that keeping blood supplies adequately stocked is challenging even in less difficult times. Consider donating blood to a national or local organization near you. Saddle up and save lives!

### **Karl "Spider13" Lundstedt Merrimack, New Hampshire**

I am the owner/artist of "The Dark Arts studio" in Merrimack, NH. As anyone could tell you, art is a fickle mistress. I also drive a school bus to help connect the dots financially.

I found myself with a little extra time once the order was given to close the schools, even after helping my kids with their school work at home. I remember discussing ideas with my wife about how to help our community. Since she has severe asthma, she brought up that a lot of immunocompromised people won't be able to shop for food or supplies due to exposure risks. After a little research and people reaching out to our bus terminal looking for assistance, I began shopping for a number of elderly and compromised people. Word of mouth spread from these families, and soon I found myself shopping almost every day. With the food and supply shortages and people's food requirements due to allergies, I was traveling up to 50 or 60 miles to go to stores that had certain items in stock. As the word got out, I came across a single mom who was battling cancer. She had no way of buying groceries, never mind going to a store to buy them for her family. My wife and I donated enough food and supplies to get her through a couple of weeks, and then my supervisor donated an additional couple of weeks to them as well.

The school district began a food distribution program to get lunches and homework out to the school kids, so I began delivering lunches and homework on a daily

basis. As more needs were made known to us, my wife and I donated food and supplies to anyone we found in need. We also learned that our local doctors' office was short on PPE, especially eye protection. We donated enough eye protection so everyone working in the office got a new pair of safety glasses.

I have to admit, this experience has made me grow as a person in ways I never imagined, especially being somewhat of a recluse. I now thrive on helping people! I have never felt better about myself which in turn has affected every other aspect of my life for the positive, and in no way am I belittling the pain and misery that others are going through. Even after we get through this, I plan to continue volunteering and helping others. To tie this up in a nice little bow, I feel I'm truly living up to the BBI motto of "Helping him to help us."

### **Matt "Wacny" Kitler Washington DC Metro Area**

I work in a call center as a telephone banker, so I'm probably the least essential of all essential personnel, but I do my part the best I can. As Dr. Banzai has said: Nobody is nobody, everyone has something to offer.

Most of my co-workers are working from home these days. I'm part of the minority which still works at the building each day. We were given a choice to stay on site or work from home, although the latter was certainly encouraged. Many opted to work from home as soon as equipment became available. I gave my boss many reasons why that wasn't feasible for me, but the biggest was that my house is my safe space from the world. I really like to keep work and home separate. Besides, my cat would pester me all day.

Our employer is doing an excellent job of trying to keep us safe. For starters, they've implemented social distancing as company policy. Those of us who stuck around at our desks are spaced apart pretty well. We used to have weekly team meetings and monthly reviews with our supervisors, all in person. These are now conducted remotely at our desks by phone, or a group call for team meetings. Our custodians are quite diligent in keeping surfaces clean, and we also wash our hands quite frequently. We even get some extra money for still working on site, which is nice. There's much more, but you get the idea.

Things haven't changed all that much at home. I'm a huge introvert, so the closing of public places hasn't affected me too much. I used to meet up with friends on Sunday nights and visit my dad on Tuesday nights, which has naturally been suspended. While I miss them, we still check in and try to keep each other in good spirits. I guess that's about it. BBI Wacny, signing off. 🐦

# 13 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

## 3D Printer Project: 3M Mask Modification

By Bryan E. Winner, BBI #136, aka "Cyclone One"

This is a set of simple instructions for a cosmetic filter replacement modification for the 3M 6200/6300 series of filter masks. All the parts (with the exception of the cotton makeup pads) were 3D printed and cause no actual modification to the mask itself.

### Required Tools:

3D printer of your choice

Filament of choice

Paint/Paintbrushes/Markers as desired

### Other Parts:

Round Cotton Makeup Pads (I purchased mine at a local discount retailer for \$1.00USD for 50). You should be able to find them almost anywhere makeup supplies are sold.

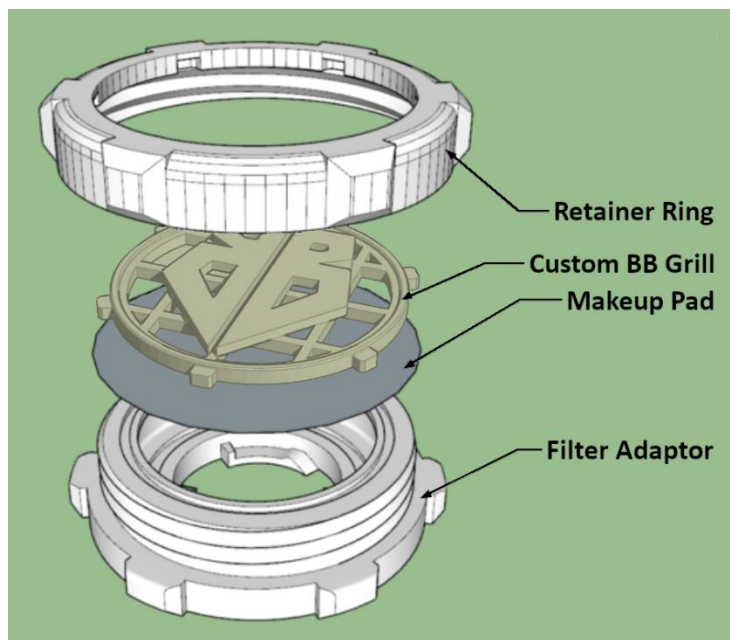
### Instructions:

1) Remove filters from the main mask unit per manufacturer's instructions

2) Print out the following parts

[Mask Ring 3M-6200](#) by [William Tang](#)

[My Grill Design](#)



**The Assembly Stack with Custom Grill.** Original Images by William Tang and Bryan E. Winner.

3) Lock the adapters into the correct position on the mask as if you were changing the filters.



4) Place one makeup pad on the base

5) Place your custom printed grill cover into the top screw-on part.

6) Assemble by screwing the retainer ring and grill onto the threaded adapter already installed on the mask.

7) Wear in public to show your pride of your new creation!

Parts should be printed in your filament of choice. I used PLA with no problems, ABS should also work but I would not recommend Flexible, 20% infill minimum. I printed with a nozzle temperature of 200 degrees Celsius and a bed temperature of 60 degrees Celsius. Make the correct adjustments for your printer as these are just what works for mine.

I recommend painting the logo before assembly. In addition, test fit the screw-together parts before installing on the mask. They will be tight but with a little work, will loosen up and be easy to install and change pads as necessary.

To restore your mask to its original configuration just unlock the adapters from the mask and re-install your factory filters

Can it filter out viruses? I have no idea; I am not qualified to make a conclusion concerning its fitness to filter anything but Red-Lectroid bacteria. 🦋

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## INTERVIEW: Reno and Perfect Tommy

Vetted for publication by Reno of Memphis

**Editor's Note:** In preparing this issue for publication, it became clear that the Banzai Institute's response to the current pandemic would be a matter of interest to you, our gentle readers. I reached out to Earl Mac Rauch to arrange a Zoom meeting with an Institute representative and was delighted to receive the happy news that two members of Buckaroo's inner circle would be joining me for the call.

What follows is a short excerpt from my recent interview with Perfect Tommy and Reno appearing in *The New Yorker* later this month. Special thanks to *The New Yorker*, Earl Mac Rauch, the Banzai Institute, and Reno and Tommy for making this timely interview possible. -DB

**Dan Berger:** So, guys, finally...first of all, thanks for your time. I know things must be pretty hectic over at the Institute, operating with only a skeletal crew these days.

**Reno:** Right, Dan. Except for Buckaroo and us Cavaliers and Mrs. Johnson, everyone pretty much scattered to the four winds in December, per Doctor's orders.

**Dan:** Sounds like Buckaroo, as usual, saw this whole thing coming.

**Reno:** Probably before anyone, he knew it would get pretty bad. As far back as November, when Jackson got sick, he said, "Ignore this at your own risk, fellas. Sunny days are over for a while."

**Dan:** Jackson? Your great sideman Guitar Jackson?

**Reno:** Incredible player and session guy, someone who had toured with us for probably a decade. He had been over in Europe and showed up at the ranch, not feeling well. We put it down to fatigue or maybe a bad cold but Buckaroo tested him for chemical exposure and parasites, toxoplasma gondii, and put him in isolation right away. At first he wasn't sure what it was because toxoplasmosis couldn't account for so many of the confusing symptoms we've come to know about, so he guessed an RNA virus piggybacking on the parasite. He passed the info along to the Center for Disease Control but never heard back, and in the meantime Jackson was fading faster than his fader effect, so Buckaroo did what he always does. He didn't get his feelings hurt, didn't whine about it. He just... (We're rejoined by Tommy, who apparently has lost something and is searching for it.)

**Tommy:** He just grabbed the damn bull by the horns, relying on science and the evidence because that's what Buckaroo does. He faces the truth because he's made of steel.



Reno (L) and Perfect Tommy (R). Source: MGM Universal.

**Reno:** Steely as a first responder.

**Tommy:** Hell, he was the first responder to the whole damn virus, not hiding behind his keyboard and plastic devices like a lot of these lizard-like human butt plugs, corrupt dummies out to make their first trillion.

**Dan:** "Corrupt dummies"...? "Butt plugs"...?

**Tommy:** Vibrating butt plugs with lizard-like tongues.

**Dan:** Care to name names, Tommy?

(Reno whispers something to Tommy about legal liability.)

**Reno:** I think Tommy means the business model of the World Crime League.

**Dan:** You mean the rumor the WCL invented the virus so it could profit off drug treatments and a vaccine?

**Tommy:** Yeah, took me way too long to realize that. I could name names that would knock your socks off, magical names dispensing pearls of wisdom, but not too many down in the deep doo-doo rolling up their sleeves and wrestling the beast, getting their hands dirty. Jack was one sick bag of meat when he showed up.

**Reno:** The point is this virus just swooped in out of nowhere, dropped on Jack like a hammer and right into Buckaroo's lap, and he went to work, leading by example and using the Institute's own bio research assets. But first he had to stabilize Jack who was talking about accidentally shooting himself.

**Dan:** Had to be an emotional time.

**Reno:** Jack said, "Tell me how it ends, Doc." And Buckaroo said, "I'm not saying I can fix you up good as new. This bug has broken into your house and needs to pay for what it's done. We need to knock the sonofabitch down, but it's a tough mother made worse by your toxoplasmosis and chemical exposure, so brace yourself because it might get even rougher. My goal

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right now is to slow the spread and not let you go out worse than when you came in.”

**Dan:** First, do no harm.

**Tommy:** The Hypocritical Oath. Glaringly obvious.

**Reno:** There’s a secret here and it’s hidden, let’s say. He wants to know the secret, but above all it’s the patient in front of him. In this man Jackson is the whole world, and in restoring his physical well-being, Buckaroo may find the clue to cure the world.

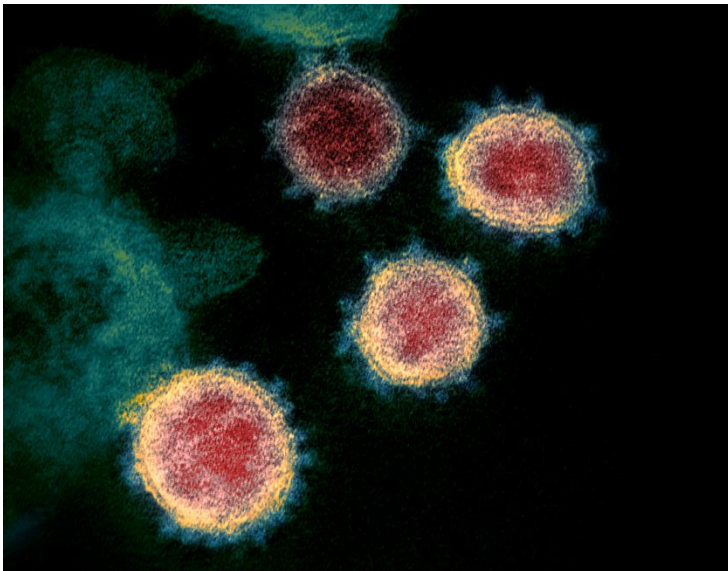
**Dan:** That’s very apt, very poetic. He’s in a very unique position, with a unique opportunity, faced with a virus he’s never seen. I can imagine a part of him might enjoy the work.

**Reno:** That’s the deal. He knows this virus is wanting more, doesn’t know where it came from or how many people out there are carrying it. All he knows is it wants more. But, first, there’s Jack, who he has to keep from going any further down, so he puts him on an extreme vitamin regimen, plus time in the sweat lodge, purgative detox teas to blow him out and daily exosome injections.

**Dan:** Exosomes loaded with what? Stem cells?

**Reno:** Special killer T cells, white blood cells bioengineered by Buckaroo to carry a compound to defend major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules from the virus’s secret weapon, a protein called ORF8 that attacks markers in infected cells.

**Dan:** Sure, why not...in other words the ORF8 destroys the road map for killer T cells to follow.



**Meet “Public Enemy #1”:** There’s a new menace in town, even less visible and more menacing than the World Crime League itself! Dr. B. Banzai is hot on the trail of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Source: [NIAID-RML](https://www.niaid.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/2020/05/2020-05-14-niaid-researchers-identify-sars-cov-2-virus-structure)

**Reno:** Exactly. The virus is just that sneaky. Of course in addition Buckaroo prescribed a cocktail of antiviral drugs and a Mexican flower called *toloache*, a powerful anti-inflammatory.

**Dan:** Is there even a professional guideline for that?

**Reno:** That would take a very long time and there is no time, but almost in no time Jack’s turning the corner.

**Tommy:** Jack’s one helluva stud.

**Reno:** Yeah, but in a lost situation mentally in a lot of ways, with issues. And as Buckaroo teaches, the mind is one of the greatest medical resources. Healing depends upon the mind as well as the body, so as soon as Jackson’s a little stronger, they go up to this active vortex, an Apache holy place—I can’t tell you where—and have a mushroom rite with the tribal shaman, during which Jack meets his totem animal and pulls it into this dimension.

**Dan:** Holy cow. How does that...how does that even work?

**Reno:** You call your totem animal. Ask it to come and it comes. A spark jumps from the fire and suddenly you feel frisky.

**Dan:** Wow. Sounds like we could all use some of that. And Jack?

**Reno:** Jack is back. In fact we’re working on some new tunes in the studio and Buckaroo is hard at work on a vaccine that shows a lot of promise.

**Tommy:** God bless America and Santa Claus.

**Dan:** Amen, Tommy, and thanks for dropping by. See you on the podcast.

**Tommy:** Next time I’m in Chicago. If you run into Martha Nussbaum over at the university, tell her Tommy still has that lovin’ feeling.

**Dan:** I sure will.

**Tommy:** And a couple of her items I’ll trade for my old Red Wing boots.

**Reno:** (interrupting): Take care, Dan.

**Tommy:** Flip this virus.

(Tommy flips two middle fingers and the interview is over.) 🖕

**Our heartfelt thanks** to **Earl Mac Rauch** for making this interview possible, and to the **Banzai Institute** for their continued contributions to the betterment of humanity.

## An Oral History of the Birth of Banzai

Compiled by Sean Murphy

Buckaroo's beginnings were humble, with just one friend telling another a story idea over a meal. That initial concept was creative enough in its embryonic state that both participants wanted to know more. This sparked a business and creative partnership between Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. "Rick" Richter that started in the early 1970's and has kept the Buckaroo Banzai flame alive up to the present day.

This oral history gives us the chance to hear, in their own words, how the process of creating *Buckaroo Banzai* unfolded. You may notice some inconsistencies in what's recounted here because memory is a fickle thing, and that's just the nature of oral histories.

Note: The quotes in this oral history are all from different interviews and timeframes. The following interviews or article sources were used to create this article: [Across the Eighth Dimension: Remembering the first adventure of "Buckaroo Banzai" Retrospective](#) (Sci-Fi Universe, 1995), the [Banzai Institute FaceBook page](#), the [Buckaroo Banzai Press Kit](#), [Empire Magazine](#) (February 2015, Issue #308, Page 90, [Film Buff Online](#), and [The Front](#).

The birth of Banzai began, according to the retrospective article, when "W.D. Richter...first discovered the work of Banzai creator, Earl Mac Rauch, while he was still a student at USC. At the time, Richter was toiling as a script analyst for Warner Brothers, and taking classes in film theory and screenwriting. He glimpsed a review of Mac Rauch's second novel, *Arkansas Adios*, in a campus newspaper, then sought it out to read. He was so impressed with the book that he contacted Mac Rauch through his publisher for permission to adapt it into a screenplay (for a school project). Mac Rauch was enormously flattered, and agreed. Richter returned the favor by offering him an open-ended invitation to visit him in California. Years later...Mac Rauch paid him a visit."

Rick (*The Front*): "We were all sort of stumbling around at the time [the early 1970's], trying to figure things out. Films were changing. We came in at the beginning of *The Godfather*, so the movies were getting edgier and more interesting. I did a lot of rewrites. I did adaptations that didn't get made. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Dracula* almost occurred back-to-back, not that they were wildly successful movies, but it raised my visibility. At the same time Susan, my wife, and I were looking around for talented writers to see if there was any way we could push them forward."



**Banzai Institute**

@DrBBanzai · Nonprofit Organization



# EMPIRE

# the FRONT

The *Buckaroo Banzai* adventure began when Rick and Susan invited Earl Mac Rauch to come out to LA to try his hand as screenwriting.

Rick (*Empire Magazine*): "When we said 'Come out here,' I felt like I could introduce him to a handful of people, and I did, like Irwin Winkler and Jay Weston, producers of that time...[Mac] would come over for dinner a lot and tell us things he was thinking about writing....He had this idea for a country western, action adventure serial in effect, and that it would have sci-fi elements."

Earl Mac Rauch (Press Kit): "He was fascinated. I wanted to write this pulp adventure inspired by serials and seventies' kung fu movies. Rick's eyes sort of lit up."

Rick (*Empire Magazine*): "You can't say, 'Oh that's interesting' and then move on to other things. 'What are you talking about?' I don't know if he had it worked out or if he just started improvising stuff verbally... He started developing this story that he described as being like an old movie serial action adventure. Back then the character was called 'Buckaroo Bandy', who was a cowboy."

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Rick (*Film Buff Online*): “It got to some point where it sounded intriguing enough, and we knew he needed money, that if we optioned it for I think initially \$1500, unwritten, that would subsidize his writing it...This first script was going to be called *Jet Car*. When he first retitled it, it became *The Strange Case of Mr. Cigars, A Buckaroo Bandy Mystery*. He kept starting and stopping these things, even though we would say ‘That’s great, here are some thoughts. If you want to incorporate these fine, if not, just keep going,’ he would come back with something different.”

Rick (*The Front*): “Mr. Cigars was a villain who was going to kill a lot of world leaders by planting exploding cigars at a big conference. I knew where he was going, but he never got there in the script...”

Rick (*Empire Magazine*): “Mac’s always changing things, so [Buckaroo Bandy] became ‘Buckaroo Banzai’. He apologized and said, ‘Nah, it’s stupid, I’m going to get rid of it,’ and I said, ‘Don’t, that name is great!’”

Rick (*The Front*): “...He started *Lepers From Saturn—A Buckaroo Banzai Adventure*, which he started in a treatment form. He did finish that, a fifty-seven page treatment...And then it just kept rolling. ‘OK, are you going to write the script for that?’ He said, ‘Let me start it,’ and it came in with a title page *A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller—Find The Jet Car, Said The President...*He only got sixty-seven pages into *Find The Jet Car*.”

Earl Mac Rauch (Retrospective): “I got about eighty or ninety pages into that one and just quit, for some reason. It’s so easy to start something and then—since you’re really not as serious about it as you should be—end up writing half of it and convincing yourself the whole thing stinks. You shove the hundred pages in a drawer and try to forget about it. Over the years, I started a dozen Buckaroo scripts that ended that way.”

Earl Mac Rauch (Press Kit): “[Rick] has everything I’ve ever written. If I can’t find something, he’ll always have it right there.”

According to the Retrospective article, “W.D. Richter recalls having in his possession, at one point, three hundred pages of notes and dozens of incomplete scripts. Mac Rauch’s own file drawers were said to be overflowing with hundreds of tales about Buckaroo Banzai.”

Earl Mac Rauch (*Empire Magazine*): “Not only were they half-finished, they were half-hearted. I think it’s accurate to say that I am better at creating universes than writing scripts. I have a lot of trouble focusing, much less sitting still for more than a few minutes.

Lately, I have gotten my hands on a neighbor’s Adderall, which seems to help.”

Rick (*The Front*): “*Shields Against The Devil—A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller...*That [one] he actually went to the end of. It’s a 109-page screenplay. He finished that in ‘75...But through all this, the context of the world was being enriched. Whether the narrative was abandoned or not, there were ideas in there that we did hang on to, like the World Crime League”

Earl Mac Rauch (Press kit): “I like to hear other people’s ideas and incorporate them. Rick kept me in line and brought some common sense to the project. Although he likes crazy things, he is a very sane and pragmatic person.”

Rick (*The Front*): “All that stuff got us to a point where we put together what we called ‘A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler’ which was about ten or fifteen pages of each one of these things, which in some cases was all the pages he had written. A thirteen-page teaser which said ‘To be continued.’ We had, in effect, a selling tool, a marketing tool.”

The following extract is from the [Banzai Institute FaceBook page](#): “Producer Sydney Beckerman received from W.D. Richter and Neil Canton a bound volume they called ‘A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler’ consisting of extracts from no fewer than five separate Buckaroo Banzai adventures. Beckerman read the Buckaroo Sampler and the next day took Canton and Richter into MGM to give studio chief David Begelman a detailed presentation of Rauch’s wholly original, multi-episode saga. They left behind a copy of ‘A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler’ for Begelman’s perusal.

One day later, on Friday afternoon, March 27, 1981, Begelman told Beckerman that he had taken a shine to one episode in particular, ‘*Lepers From Saturn—A Buckaroo Banzai Adventure*.’ It had been presented to him as a 57-page treatment in which Buckaroo squared off against grotesque aliens from another planet who were moving amongst us disguised as Earthlings! MGM wanted to hire Mac to turn that into a screenplay.”

Earl Mac Rauch (Press kit): “The *Buckaroo Banzai* movie is hard to put into words because there are so many different elements in it. You have to emphasize the comedy, the totally bizarre nature of a couple of the characters, like Lizardo and Bigboote. And then there’s the plot level, which reads like an adventure movie. It’s a romp, but not a light-headed romp.”

And the rest, as they say, is cult movie history. 🐉

## A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler: Evolving the Banzai Universe

By Sean Murphy

Most legends aren't born, they're created, and this creation process can be messy with false starts and second guesses. This is true of the life of Buckaroo Banzai as his past is surrounded in rumor, myth, and ancient secrets. A key to unlocking some of those mysteries are found in a document called *A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler*.

The *Buckaroo Banzai Sampler*, which runs over seventy pages, contains roughly the first fifteen pages of five scripts and prose that Earl Mac Rauch wrote between 1973 and 1975. The *Sampler* was put together and used by Rauch and W.D. "Rick" Richter to pitch Buckaroo Banzai to studio chief David Begelman. This document gives us a peek behind the scenes of how Buckaroo evolved over time. Some elements were there right from the beginning, while others morphed from script to script and eventually gave us the world we saw in the film and novel. Interestingly, some scenes found in these early scripts actually ended up in the film, in somewhat altered form.

The scripts in the *Sampler* show that Rauch likes to introduce characters and ideas over and over again, such as the character of Penny Priddy, the fact that Buckaroo is a surgeon, and the Jet Car continually popping up. He then likes to move these ideas into new places and configurations in the story. It's as if bits and pieces of characters and ideas get caught in his imagination and he keeps developing and rearranging them until he gets them right. Maybe, in a way, the stories in the *Sampler* aren't really five separate stories, but the evolution of one story over time, told by different narrators, from different perspectives. In any event, the stories contained in the *Sampler* continue to expand and enhance Banzai's world.

While the newsletter has discussed the *Sampler* previously in the "From Mr. Cigars to Lepers from Saturn" article from our [October 2016 issue of World Watch One](#), this article dives deeper into what we actually know about the content of the different scripts. In a stroke of good fortune, three of the script fragments discussed here are available on the old [Banzai Institute website](#). And, while we were sadly unable to get our hands on the complete *Buckaroo Banzai Sampler*, we were allowed to review the full sixteen page sample of *A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller—'Find The Jet Car,' Said The President* and seventeen page sample of *Shields Against The Devil—A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller* to report on for this article.

## Appetizer #1—Mister Cigars

Right from the word go, the Jet Car has been a part of Buckaroo Banzai's world. The first Banzai script Mac ever worked on was literally supposed to be called *Jet Car*, but he changed the name to *The Strange Case of Mister Cigars: A Buckaroo Bandy Mystery*. This is the first script present in the *Sampler* and is a rough first draft that is dated "Christmas Eve 1973." The script is written by "John Texas," although on future script fragments we'll see that the true author is revealed as Earl Mac Rauch. Luckily, you can read roughly seven pages of *Mister Cigars* script fragments on the [Banzai Institute website](#) right now. What follows is a summary of those fragments.

The *Mister Cigars* script begins in Arlington, VA at the CIA with a mysterious man whose hands and feet are the only thing we see. He gets a bottle of Coke from a machine and finds the word "Go" under the bottle cap. "Go. At last." he says. This is followed by the words [PAGES MISSING] and then to a scene where the Hands and Feet Man is speaking to Patricia Pembroke, who he asks to decode something. He tells her that he'll be in the White House, in the office of Mr. Hall, where she'll need to bring the report.

The next scene introduces us to the prototypical and embryonic Buckaroo. In this story, Buckaroo's surname is Bandy rather than Banzai and he is more of a cowboy who wears a "white Stetson hat" and is "wonderfully suave and soft-spoken." He's dining with a woman named Luz Cenicerros, who he seems to be involved with as he kisses her during the meal. When he requests a knife to cut out a newspaper article, she produces a switchblade from her garter belt. Buckaroo's mother is still alive in this script and she collects newspaper clippings of her famous race car driving son, such as BUCKAROO BANDY FAVORED TODAY AT DAYTONA. Luz asks him to tell her something about his life. He replies, "I'm afraid I'm a simple fellow who happens to believe in a few simple things, that's all. Some people might accuse me of being a bit old-fashioned in most departments." Luz replies, "You, old-fashioned? Ha, ha, don't make me laugh, Buckaroo. Why, your exploits are legendary! The people in far-off Cairo know your name."

While this discussion continues and Luz attempts to pry more information out of Buckaroo, a "gorgeous white yacht of immense displacement" sits a hundred yards off the beach. On this boat is "an odd-looking fat man with bulldog jowls [who] is taking movies of Buckaroo Bandy through a five foot telescopic lens, a sinister smile on his face, a cigar between his flabby lips. He is dressed in a white linen suit, a Colonel Sanders bowtie, and a plantation owner's broad-brimmed white hat. He

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is none other than MR. CIGARS, the meanest man in the world.”

Buckaroo and Luz walk to the balcony where they look out towards the boat where they hear music playing. Their conversation is cut off mid-sentence as we are greeted with [PAGES MISSING].

According to Richter, the rest of this script involves a gigantic, Godzilla-sized robot that’s operated from a control room within the creature’s head. Buckaroo is racing to defeat the villainous Mister Cigars before he assassinates dozens of world leaders at a global conference, using exploding cigars.

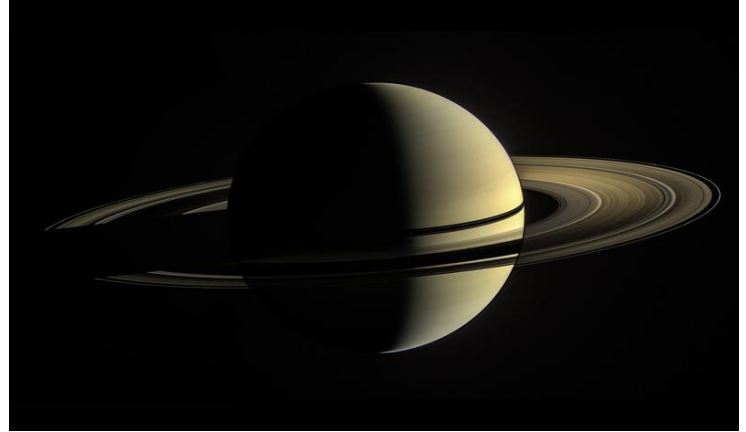
Sadly, this script fragment is all that’s available for *The Strange Case of Mister Cigars*. Richter described this as an incomplete story and the full length of the unfinished script is unknown.



“...a gigantic, Godzilla-sized robot...” leaves much to the imagination. Here the leviathan robot is envisioned as the sinister recreation of [Big Tex](#), the iconic statue that presided over the Texas State Fair from 1952 until its fiery destruction in 2012. Always keep an eye on your contractors. Photo credit: Kevin Brown/State Fair of Texas

### Appetizer #2—Lepers from Saturn

It turns out that *Lepers from Saturn—A Buckaroo Banzai Adventure*, the second “script” in the *Banzai Sampler*, is not actually a script at all but a fifty-seven page treatment for a proposed screenplay. Film treatments are typically longer, and more detailed, than a one page synopsis or outline and tend to read like a short story. While fifty-seven pages is unusually long for a treatment, this is the story that caught David



Before they were “Lectroids,” Buckaroo faced off against insect-like alien “Lepers from Saturn.” The red/black distinction between Lectroids in the final film is an artifact of this creative avenue. Photo credit: NASA

Begelman’s eye in the Sampler. He ended up choosing *Lepers from Saturn* as the story he wanted to use as the basis for the film version of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Why was the name of the treatment changed? According to Richter, “Begelman deemed the episode’s original title, *Lepers from Saturn*, in poor taste.”

Unfortunately, there are no versions of this treatment available for review. Luckily, Richter did share some information in the “[From Mr. Cigars to Lepers from Saturn](#)” article. “Buckaroo Banzai carried a six-shooter, first encountered the beautiful Penny Priddy, and was forced to marshal his trusted legion of volunteer crimefighters, The Shields, to prevail against an otherworldly sci-fi threat to Earth: hordes of alien Lepers from Saturn disguised as ordinary human beings!”

As you can tell from the name of the treatment, this is where Earl Mac Rauch changed Buckaroo’s surname from “Bandy” to “Banzai.” This treatment also reveals that Banzai is not only a Jet Car driver but Chief of Neurosurgery at a large hospital. He is the founder of “The Institute,” which Richter described as “his own mysterious think tank” and is a confidant and trusted advisor to the President of the United States. Finally, Buckaroo’s band is called The Hopalongs.

It’s amazing how much of what is found in this treatment made it into the final film. This includes, in slightly altered form, Buckaroo as a brain surgeon, the introduction of the Shields (who would eventually become the Blue Blaze Irregulars), an alien threat that can disguise themselves as humans (like the Lectroids), the Institute, and the Hopalongs (who would become the Hong Kong Cavaliers). This treatment really shows the Banzai universe starting to take shape and it’s probably not too surprising that this is the sample that appealed to Begelman the most.

### Appetizer #3—Find the Jet Car



Photo Credit: [Sean Charlesworth](#)

The third script in the *Sampler, A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller—“Find the Jet Car,” Said the President*, is an incomplete, sixty-seven page script from 1974. The first eight pages of the script were provided by W.D. Richter for the article. Luckily you can read the next seven pages of the script on the [Banzai Institute website](#). All sixteen pages are included in the summary below.

*Find the Jet Car* opens, like the actual film, at the Jet Car proving grounds in Nevada. Buckaroo is in the Jet Car and the countdown has already begun. And then, like a shot, the Jet Car is flying across the desert, quickly reaching speeds of 900 miles per hour.

At the same time that this amazing feat of speed is unravelling across the desert (but not across the eighth dimension in this version of the script), the Secretary of Defense, Henry Slater McKinley, is worried and sweating. However, he’s not concerned about the Jet Car test. He walks out of the control room and into a corridor so he can find a pay phone. He needs to make a collect call to his bookie, Johnny “the Red” Beaumont. The bookie’s office in Baltimore answers the call and someone hands the phone to Johnny, but he isn’t interested in taking a collect call. Secretary McKinley and Johnny talk over the phone, ignoring the operator, until McKinley convinces Johnny to take the collect call. He’s very concerned to find out if the “fifth race at Yonkers” has come in yet. It has, and the news isn’t good. Even so, McKinley bets on another horse.

Back in the control room we’re introduced to Professor Rister (an early predecessor of Dr. Hikita), one of the Jet Car’s principal inventors. He says that the enemy won’t have time to react to the Jet Car and, to prove his point, orders a counter attack. [Note: If you’ve seen the Production Documents’ storyboard article in the [August 2019 newsletter](#), you’ve seen some of this sequence already.] Eight remote controlled Army tanks roll onto the proving grounds. The Jet Car is up to 2,000 miles per hour at this point and Buckaroo rockets past the

tanks as they open fire. He presses a button marked “Weapons System” and shoots rockets from the rear of the Jet Car, destroying the tanks.

McKinley finishes going through his list of horses and complains to Johnny “the Red” that “I had a sure thing, damn it, I’m trying to tell you! I had a tip! I couldn’t lose! I couldn’t!” Johnny suggests that he lay off the ponies for a while and warns him that the folks he works for, the “faceless ones,” are the people the Secretary really needs to worry about. McKinley begins to berate Johnny, who merely hangs up the phone. The Secretary then re-enters the control room as Professor Rister describes the “Jet Car’s tactical invincibility. Due to its speed, no artillery or tank on earth can impede it. Due to its electronic force field and its body constructed of high impact Gardol, we have also witnessed its immunity to air attack.” The Jet Car then enters the “final target run”, which involves destroying a large cardboard city with more rockets. [Note: You can see a Russian looking cut-out city in the [Production Documents Storyboards article](#).]

At this point, the [script fragment on the Banzai Institute webpage](#) begins with the Professor telling everyone that the Jet Car has now entered the outskirts of Las Vegas. The script cuts to the Jet Car zooming past buildings and people in Las Vegas to stop suddenly in front of the MGM Grand Hotel, where a sign reads “NOW APPEARING—BUCKAROO BANZAI.”

The script moves inside to the nightclub dressing room. “Buckaroo Banzai, now in his traditional trademark, the flowery cowboy shirt with fringe on the sleeves and a bucking bronco emblem over his pocket, stares at himself in his dressing room mirror, his image framed in Hollywood lights as he drags a comb through his slicked-back hair. He is handsome, his teeth are bright, there is no doubt.” It’s five minutes to show time and, according to the usher, the band is ready. Just like in the film, the band goes on stage and plays, only to stop when Buckaroo asks if someone is crying. We are introduced to Penny Priddy, who “won a crazy contest” and ended up in Las Vegas with her Mother to paint the town red. Unfortunately, they quickly spent all the money they won and ended up in debt to the casino. She worries that she’ll have to become a prostitute to get her Mother back because she is being held “in an old abandoned mining camp twenty miles west of here.”

Outside the MGM Hotel, Buckaroo gets into the Jet Car and helps Penny into the cockpit with him. He tells his band, made up of Chinese country and western musicians and called the Hong Kong Cavaliers, to give him thirty minutes. “If I’m not heard from by then, you know what to do. Exercise Plan 3.” As Buckaroo presses

a button to start up the Jet Car, Penny asks “Aren’t you afraid someone will steal it?” Buckaroo responds, “Not really. It wouldn’t do them any good unless they knew the ignition code and could duplicate the exact pressure of my fingertips. As it happens, I’m the only one who can operate this car.” At this point the script fragment ends, but the longer script provided for this article goes on for one more page.

While in the Jet Car, Buckaroo questions Penny about how she won the contest. It turns out that neither she nor her Mother entered a contest and, when the “big, angry looking men” showed up on her doorstep, they told her she had an all-expense paid vacation to Las Vegas. Her father was a tycoon of some sort, had fallen in with some shady associates near the end of his life, and was dead. And at this point we are left with TO BE CONTINUED...

According to Richter, this script was important for introducing more foundational details about Banzai’s world such as the first appearance of the Hong Kong Cavaliers (replacing the Hopalong) and a villain named Dr. Lizard, starting us on the path to Dr. Lizardo. It’s also interesting to see an early version of a scene that ultimately found its way into the film, where Buckaroo interrupts the band’s set to find out that Penny Priddy is crying in the crowd.

### **Appetizer #4—Shields Against the Devil**

The fourth script in the Sampler is *Shields Against the Devil—A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller*, a 109-page screenplay completed in 1975. The first seven pages of this script are available on the [Banzai Institute website](#) but we were given access to all seventeen pages of the script to review for this article.

The story begins in Washington, D.C. where a young systems analyst named Sloan Berger is at the Pentagon. He needs to get the Jet Car blueprints ready since Professor Rister is coming over from the Institute to get them. This is odd since it’s late at night. As it turns out, Professor Rister is in his car with a hoodlum named William and two others who are forcing him to go to the Pentagon. When the Pentagon guard questions the Professor, William shoots the guard.

The script then cuts to Buckaroo and we are given “our first look at the great man, BUCKAROO BANZAI, well known expert in every field, renowned brain surgeon, as he rinses his hands in antiseptic and slips on his rubber surgical gloves.” Sam Lin, a close associate of Buckaroo, lets him know about the shooting at the Pentagon. “The Deuce, you say! Anybody we know?” asks Buckaroo. “I wouldn’t be surprised.” says Sam. Buckaroo heads off for surgery.

Back in the Pentagon, William grabs the Jet Car plans and escapes without Professor Rister in tow. A policeman arrives and Rister tells him the fiends have escaped with top secret information and are headed towards the roof. The policeman is unconcerned as there is no escape from the roof. Little does he know that a helicopter is, at that moment, whisking the villains away into the night.

In the hospital we see a scene familiar to anyone who has seen the film, where Buckaroo operates on an Eskimo. George Carroll observes the operation and Sam tells Buckaroo that the President wants to see him. Outside of the hospital is a limousine with President Sanchez and Professor Rister that picks up Buckaroo and George. The President asks if Buckaroo has a few minutes to spare. At this point, the script fragment online ends and the full seventeen page script we were provided continues the story.

It turns out that George and Buckaroo have worked together on several cases for the Bureau for Special Affairs. Buckaroo asks Rister what happened. Rister reveals that someone knocked on his door and told Rister that he’d won a free trip to Las Vegas (sound familiar?). Rister opened the door and they jumped him, forcing him to drive to the Pentagon. While there, the hoodlums stole the Professor’s cigars along with the Jet Car plans. The limo pulls into a hamburger stand so the President can fill Buckaroo in on some details. They discuss the Jet Car, which Buckaroo only knows about from reading scientific journals. It turns out that everything about the Jet Car was stolen that night. Now the President must accelerate work on the Jet Car, at all cost, to get it done before those who stole the plans. He wants a prototype in a week and needs Buckaroo’s help. They move to a picnic table where the President can show Buckaroo a manila envelope. They order milkshakes from Katie, who is apparently more than mere friends with Buckaroo, and he has to rain check a movie date with her on Saturday.

While all of this is going on a gang of Nazi motorcycle riders arrive at the hamburger stand, led by a man named Cabrera. On his bike is a drugged Penny Priddy and her Mother is on another bike. They are obviously hostages and the bike gang is all packed up for a long trip.

The President shares drawings of the Jet Car with Buckaroo and he is impressed. He discovers that as a battlefield combat weapon the Jet Car is useless but that it’s been designed to carry a ten megaton nuclear rocket that can be fired from a launcher on the hood. Whoever stole the plans must also have access to radioactive material to build the nuclear rocket.

The bike gang gets into a fight with the Secret Service guarding the limo and start to drag off the Professor. Katie screams at them to stop, bringing Cabrera's attention to her.

The President explains how the supersonic speed of the Jet Cat theoretically renders all existing defenses obsolete. It could get into an opponent's capital in minutes, and deliver the nuclear payload, before they could even scramble their forces since anti-ballistic missiles can't stop a fast car. However, there are still some wrinkles in the design that need to be ironed out. Buckaroo says, "I'm thinking about those cigars. I wonder why." Suddenly Buckaroo hears Katie's cries and runs towards the hamburger stand after telling the President to hide under the picnic table, which he does. And then we are told that the script is TO BE CONTINUED...

The "[From Mr. Cigars to Lepers from Saturn](#)" article revealed that, "Two major plots are entwined in the script, with the first concerning a gigantic weaponized robot steered by crude gears, levers, and sophisticated computers being operated by villains from a cockpit in its head. This King-Kong-like robot is owned by a vicious cartel that Buckaroo has battled before, 'The World Crime League,' whose headquarters is a 'Fascist Fortress...a super-secret hideout in an unknown Asian land' and whose 'sinister members' are 'like a criminal United Nations,' their 'reigning chairman' in this episode 'the semi-Oriental villain, HOT FAT FROM SINGAPORE.'"

"This second narrative thread concerned America's race to finish the prototype Jet Car before The World Crime League, who had stolen all its plans, built one of their own and used it for evil purposes," Richter said. "The melodrama played out against a second interwoven plot as Buckaroo figured out that Adolf Hitler never died in that Berlin bunker but escaped disguised as a woman and is now possibly hiding in a forbidding Ecuadorian jungle populated by gigantic, hairy humans."

If some of this storyline sounds familiar, it's because the first plot takes the gigantic robot from the *Mister Cigars* script and the second plot takes the need to build the Jet Car quickly from the *Find the Jet Car* script.

Several other things evolved in the *Shields Against the Devil* script, such as the fact that The Shields themselves, who make up Buckaroo's larger team, became the Knights of the Blue Shield and, in subsequent scripts, changed to the Blue Blaze Irregulars. Hot Fat from Singapore is introduced and would later become Hanoi Xan (See the "[From Mr. Cigars to Lepers from Saturn](#)" article for the origin of

Hanoi Xan). Finally, we learn from Richter that Buckaroo spoke Quechua, an Indian language of South America. "I learned it when I worked on a case once involving some priceless jewels," Buckaroo says—much like Sherlock Holmes often alluded to his own earlier adventures.

It's interesting to note that the second draft of the actual film script, from September 17, 1982, was called *Shields Against the Devil—Another Buckaroo Banzai Thriller*. This was subtly different from *Shields Against the Devil—A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller* with Rauch swapping out the single "A" with the word "Another". However, from the third draft in 1983 onwards, the film script was simply called *Buckaroo Banzai*.

### **Appetizer #5—Forbidden Valley**

The only thing we know about *Forbidden Valley* is that it was not a script but a short prose piece found at the end of *Shields Against the Devil* that detailed Buckaroo's next adventure. This involved Buckaroo setting off for Ecuador in the Jet Car, heading toward that mysterious, remote jungle locale in search of Adolf Hitler.

### **After the Sampler Platter is finished**

The Sampler gives us a wonderful peek into how the character and world of Buckaroo Banzai evolved over the five different story approaches and shows us that there is much fertile ground available for more. The beautiful thing about the evolution of the world created by Mac and Rick is that it doesn't end with the film.

The novelization written by Mac delves much deeper into the world of Banzai and really fleshes it out. They both continued to evolve the world through their contributions to the original *World Watch One* newsletter and fan club materials. They attempted to continue the adventures with the *Super Size Those Fries* tv script, which spawned the official Banzai Institute website at the same time. The world building continued in the special features section of the DVD as well as the Moonstone comic books which, based initially on the TV script, continued beyond with more adventures. The evolution continues to this day, with postings on the Banzai Institute Facebook page, and into the future when we'll finally get the much anticipated *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* novel by Earl Mac Rauch to be published by Dark Horse.

The wonderful thing about evolution is that it keeps on going because life finds a way. The fandom around *Buckaroo Banzai* is living proof of that and the *World Watch One* newsletter is proud to contribute some small part to the world building. 🦋

### A Buckaroo Banzai Aperitif: The Fan Attempt to Extend the Banzai Feast

By Dan Berger

#### Bad Days for Banzai

When *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* finally opened in the summer of 1984, it represented the culmination of a long and somewhat tortured path to the silver screen. There are a relatively small number of movies where the person most responsible for making a film possible also became its most recognized bogeyman, but such was the case with Producer David Begelman. Begelman both degraded and elevated *Buckaroo*, working against the best version of the film with actions like firing its first cinematographer, Jordan Cronenweth; but also championing it by greenlighting the production in first place and swooping in after the film was in the can and out of money to fund a final credits sequence that has arguably become one of the most iconic in film history.

Begelman, of course, had bogeymen of his own to contend with, accompanied by a Harryhausen-esque phalanx of skeletons in the closet. According to *World Watch One's* original editor, Dianne Wickes, those skeletons would catch up not only with Begelman, but with *Buckaroo* in August of 1984. Dianne explained, "I was hired as the assistant of the manager of Feature Publicity at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. The first two films I was put to work on were *Revenge of the Nerds* and *Buckaroo Banzai*. I fell in love with the latter just reading the press kit and knew fandom would love it.

"The producer on *Buckaroo* was David Begelman, who had a three-picture deal with MGM. The first film of the package was *Mr. Mom*. Somehow, he moved to Fox for the second and third pictures. *Buckaroo* was the second film and *Gleaming the Cube*, a skateboarding film, was to be the third."

It is at about this time that the advance forces of Begelman's closeted skeleton army arrived on the scene. Most of these skeletons are documented in David McClintick's book, *Indecent Exposure*, about Begelman's time as head of Columbia Pictures during its modern glory days. Dianne continued, "The short version of the story is that [Begelman] was discovered by Cliff Robertson to have been forging Robertson's



Dianne Wickes' cartoon memorialization of mail call at the Banzai Institute's West Coast Offices in Building 89 at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, drawn November 1985. From the *World Watch One* Archives.

name on checks and cashing them. Big conflict ensued with Columbia's CEO, Alan Hirschfield, who wanted to fire Begelman; and Columbia's Board of Directors. Hirschfield was overruled by his board and left, eventually landing at Fox. Not long afterward, here comes Begelman's company onto the Fox lot, bringing *Buckaroo* with him.

"Hirschfield was not pleased."

Sadly, Hirschfield's displeasure would have a direct effect on the release of *Buckaroo*. As *Star Trek* art department alum Denise Okuda remembered, "I saw *Buckaroo Banzai* the day it opened on August 10<sup>th</sup> 1984 and I thought the movie was brilliant. But I also knew that it was dying in the theaters and was not pleased about that."

The reason for *Buckaroo's* troubles were readily apparent to Dianne from her vantage as the assistant to the manager of Feature Publicity. "Fox had sole rights to TV advertising during the Olympics in the summer of '84," she said. "Hirschfield focused all the advertising on *Nerds*, and cut back promotion and distribution on *Buckaroo*."

"So, I watched as *Buckaroo Banzai* was sabotaged. I never talked about it to Rick Richter or Dan Lupovitz, but that's what I think happened."

#### Lighting the Torch and Leading the Way

Despite *Buckaroo's* struggles, Dianne was not content to simply watch the film die. She was not alone. "I was getting all of this fan mail, and the basement was full of promo material that was never going to be used," she said. "I was supposed to throw the fan mail away, but I couldn't bear to. I asked permission to send promo material to the fans and got it. So every Sunday I would go in and mail out packets of stuff to fans."

Fortunately for her, Dianne was about to get some help at the Fox lot from a fellow fan. Denise remembered going to the 1984 [Worldcon](#), an annual fan-run science fiction convention that hosts the [Hugo Awards](#) and travels to different host cities annually, “It was in Los Angeles that year, and in one of the booths I saw someone wearing a Team Banzai blazer film crew jacket. It was a blazer just like they wore in the movie. I went up to her and I basically said, ‘Oh my God I loved that movie!’”

“It turns out the woman in the jacket was named Dianne Wickes. She worked in publicity at 20th Century Fox, she loved the film, and they had been getting a lot of mail. People were just tossing the mail into the trash can and she was digging the mail out and answering it. [Dianne] said, ‘You know, people are asking about *World Crime League*. There’s all these people that really love the show that’s not seen in how the film did or anything.’ And I said, ‘Oh my gosh you know that sounds like something that I’d love to help you with!’”

Motoring up to the Fox lot for mail call provided additional opportunities. Denise remembered, “About that time, W.D. Richter still had an office at Fox. So, we all had lunch, and I really liked him a lot; and he said, ‘We would love to make *World Crime League* but, you know, the film didn’t do particularly well.’ So, Dianne and I created a *Buckaroo Banzai* ‘fan club’ for lack of a better word. We had all these wonderful publicity materials—headbands and buttons and printed material; so anyone who was writing us we would put together a little packet and send it to them. At the same time, Terry Erdman, who was the publicist on the movie and a big fan of the feature, started helping as well.”

Fortunately, the nascent fan club was provided with a small sum of funds by Fox, diverted from other film’s being marketed at the time. The rest was pure elbow grease. “You have to remember—this was before social media; way before the internet was a thing,” Denise continued. “So, having been a *Star Trek* fan for many, many years, I said, ‘Well, you know, Bjo Trimble back in the sixties helped do a letter writing campaign that helped to bring back the third season of *Star Trek* and really got people galvanized, and I have confidence that there are enough fans out there; and there’s certainly *Star Trek* conventions and other conventions where you can tap into the fan base.’”

“We built up this database with quite a few people in it. We started going to conventions and speaking on *Banzai* and there started to have this impact. Rick started getting mail from film backers, and it really looked like there could be a possibility of getting *World Crime League* made.”

Over the next two years, it is clear that the club’s efforts yielded results. As noted in the introduction to the [November 1986 issue of \*World Watch One\*](#), “Finally, we are pleased to include in this mailing the first edition of the Blue Blaze Irregulars Directory. There are now over 7,000 BBIs out there, and a number of you expressed interest in networking with your fellow teammates around the world.”

### Opportunity and Uncertainty

Building the fan club was rewarding as a fan, but it was not the sole purpose behind their efforts. Denise remembered, “Our goal wasn’t to create a fan club just to create a fan club, although that was a lot of fun and I met a lot of really nice people that way. Our goal was to find backers to go to Fox and say, ‘We’ve got some money, can you match it? We would like to see *World Crime League* get made.’”

“Eventually, we got some backers in New York and they had a meeting with David Begelman, who controlled the rights to the film. He did not understand, nor like, the film. Nor did he like the filmmakers. The meeting happened, and while I was not in the room, I was told soon after that he basically said, ‘It doesn’t matter if you have six million or twenty million. I am not making this film.’ So, overnight, the whole thing died. Dianne and I were like, ‘Well why are we doing this?’ I mean we loved *Banzai*, but our whole goal was to get the film made. By this time, Rick had moved off the lot. I think he went back to his home, which is out of state, and moved on to other projects.”

Dianne remembered things a little differently, saying, “I never heard of a New York meeting or a close call with a green light on *World Crime League*. Some months later, John Lithgow told me he couldn’t wait for the second film; he was to play Hanoi Xan. But as you know, it never happened.”

### Heroes in Trouble

So, was a *World Crime League* film ever in the cards? It is possible that the confusion may have stemmed from an aborted attempt at a *Buckaroo Banzai* television series with ABC Television. As related in a [2004 \*World Watch One\*](#) interview, W.D. Richter said that, “ABC stepped forward [in 1986] and said, ‘If you’re not going to do another feature, we’d love to do a series,’ and Begelman said, ‘I won’t do a *Buckaroo* TV show.’ And we said, ‘You mean to say you own this title, Sherwood Productions would be the beneficiary of this, and you’re not going to allow ABC to spend their money to develop it and maybe give you the good news that they want to order episodes?’ And he said, ‘That’s right.’”

### W.D. RICHTER CALLS STRIKE TEAM ALERT!

Now it must be told. While everyone was looking ahead to Team Banzai's hair-raising exploits against the dreaded World Crime League, behind our backs a new and even more outrageous force of evil was taking root on this fragile orb. On the Pacific Rim. Incubating in the rich soil of international commerce. An organization so malevolent and pervasive and powerful that alongside its transglobal reach the machinations of Hanoi Xan seem puny indeed!

**Ripped from the headlines:** In its April 1986 issue, *World Watch One* issued an arresting "Strike Team Alert" from W.D. Richter to members of the Buckaroo Banzai Fan Club. An organization so malevolent, pervasive, and powerful as to eclipse Hanoi Xan's World Crime League? The deuce you say! From the *World Watch One* archives.

That might have ended the matter for some, but not for Team Richter. As Scott Tate reported in his [April 2006 \*World Watch One\*](#) article "Heroes in Trouble," "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."

A rousing article titled "W.D. Richter Calls Strike Team Alert!" appeared in the [April 1986 issue of \*World Watch One\*](#), rallying *Banzai* fans to write ABC Television in support of *Heroes in Trouble*, much like Bjo Trimble's *Star Trek* campaign of old. The [November 1986 issue](#) included two pages from the pilot script's first draft, but it was not to be. *Heroes in Trouble* was edged out by *Max Headroom*, running a meager fourteen episodes from March 1987 until its cancellation in May 1988.

#### The End of the Trail

It was not a happy day for the crew at *World Watch One*. Denise remembered, "That was quite devastating, to be perfectly honest with you. We decided that we just couldn't put any more time into this after we had come so close, and it was a lot of time. Rick couldn't believe how close we had come. He really couldn't believe what we had done. And there were other people; Lori Oberscheven, a friend of mine who sadly passed away a couple of years ago, a gentleman by the name of Steve Lee who would come into Fox on Sundays and help stuff envelopes—we had a really great, enthusiastic group of people. It was a lot of fun. But our goal was to get *World Crime League* made, and when we discovered that's it—it wasn't going anywhere—we kind of just disbanded the fan club."

For Dianne, the memory of that time was particularly bleak, "When my boss changed [at Fox], no one wanted to support *Buckaroo Banzai* any more. A department shuffle lost me my job and I left the remains of the club to Denise and Terry, who had a brief arrangement with Starland Conventions to continue the newsletter and produce Banzai swag. I left LA a few months later."

The defeat, however, was not without its fruits. "I kept in touch with Rick and his wife Susan for years exchanging Christmas cards and once in a while touching base," Denise said. "Then Mike and I were married and he was a big *Banzai* fan—no surprise—and we would chat. Through the years we created a web page and then fast forward to when we were working on *Star Trek*."

The "web page" Denise talked about was the Banzai Institute website, which would herald the beginning of another attempt at a *Buckaroo Banzai* television series in 1998. A Banzai fanbase would be there to support it, in no small part thanks to the organizing efforts of Dianne, Denise, and the original *World Watch One* crew. The printed Blue Blaze Irregulars Directory would continue to keep *Banzai* fans connected for years before the technological revolution enabling broad internet availability. That access gathered a wave of grassroots fan networking in the form of fansites and listserv groups, waiting for *Against the World Crime League*, without quite realizing what they were actually waiting for might arrive as something entirely different.

Fortunately, there was more to come; but it would take over a decade and some serious sleuthing to get there. Lawyers would be required to untangle the knot of rights holder issues left in the wake of a of a studio bankruptcy and David Begelman's 1995 suicide as the creditors, and the FBI, began closing in on him. The aftermath was grim indeed, but there was still life in Buckaroo. 🐉

### An Oral History of Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries

#### Introduction

By Dan Berger

As the curtain raised on January of 1998, the last thing on the minds of most fans was the current fate of Buckaroo Banzai. The *World Watch One* newsletter's final installment had landed in mailboxes nearly ten years before, ending the official fanclub's five year run. In the States, Vestron's 1985 VHS and Laser Disc editions of the film were out of print and getting hard to find, with no signs of a new release on the horizon. The only connection to the film for most fans was either a chance encounter with Buckaroo on cable television, the odd brush with memorabilia vendors and fellow fans at science fiction conventions, or the constellation of *Banzai* fansites and listserv groups populating the internet of the time.

Little about 1998 indicated reasons to pay closer attention as the year marched forward. Simply put, in that moment, future prospects for the Banzai Institute had escaped most people's radars almost entirely.

Almost, but not quite entirely. That was all about to change.

In the Autumn of 1998, fans saw a message that took their breaths away as it exploded across the internet in all of their favorite places; from [Ain't It Cool News](#) to [World Watch On-Line](#), to [The Buckaroo Banzai FAQ](#):

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Banzai Institute for Biomedical Research and Strategic Information

#### **STATEMENT BY W.D. RICHTER CONCERNING A REQUEST BY THE FOX NETWORK THAT THEY MIGHT COMMISSION A PILOT SCRIPT FOR AN EXTENDED TELEVISION EXAMINATION OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DR. BUCKAROO BANZAI:**

"After all these years, one of course, expects the inevitable and amazed reaction, 'We thought it would never happen!' Let me simply share with you B. Banzai's own reminder when delivered the glad news by Earl Mac Rauch:

"The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once. That said, now on to the business at hand."

The email was signed by none other than *Buckaroo Banzai* director Rick Richter, dated November 3, 1998.



Series logo from the Foundation Imaging trailer

After years of forgetting to expect the unexpected, the unexpected had finally arrived. Unexpected, that is, except for two *Buckaroo Banzai* fans of note.

Nestled deep in the heart of the *Star Trek* art department, the husband and wife team of Michael and Denise Okuda were longtime fans of Team Banzai. Mike remembers, "I went to the movie when it came out, I was a fan, and I was aware that there was movement to bring it back, but Denise was the one who was in the center of that maelstrom. I loved it. It was a low budget film, but it was incredibly clever, it was incredibly fun, and there was obviously a huge amount of thought that went into creating its universe. Earl Mac Rauch did a brilliant job of implying that there was a whole culture and world and back story, and we only get a glimpse of it. But I believed that it existed, and that was fun, yet it didn't take itself seriously."

Denise continued, "*Buckaroo Banzai*, to me, is a world unto itself. Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter created this universe that—Michael's right—how can you take it seriously to a certain point; with Lectroids and spaceships and watermelons and so forth? But it actually, at its core, had a viable universe. The Banzai Institute for Biomedical Engineering and Strategic Information was a place where you could come in and you interview and it's not so much what you've done in the past but what you want to do with your life now and in the future and how you want to contribute that makes a difference. The past, in fact, could be completely erased. You can assume a new identity, a new name; and that always drew me to this place that they created. It's a wacky place, but it also an ideal environment for creativity and curiosity."

That creativity was about to burst into full bloom on the Paramount lot. As Mike recalled, "It was 1998, and we were working on *Deep Space Nine* when the first Banzai TV script was written. We got a phone call from Rick

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Richter with the very exciting news that he and Earl Mac Rauch had a deal to write a *Buckaroo Banzai* pilot script for Fox.

“There were a lot of legal hurdles that had to be cleared before getting to this stage; specifically, securing the rights to make a series. The fact that Rick and Mac were able to get it to this point was incredible. They put a great deal of work into it.

“So, this was very exciting. It’s not just that a studio was interested, but now—for the first time—it seemed to be a possibility.

“Once they sent us the script we said, ‘Well, what else can we do?’ So Denise and I told Jim Van Over, Doug Drexler, Anthony Fredrickson, and a couple of other people and we said, ‘Well, let’s come up with whatever wacky things we can to help make this more exciting.’”

The excitement at the *Star Trek* art department was infectious, and Mike and Denise immediately offered to lend a hand to W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch. However, the Art Department’s efforts sallied forward against a colossal tide of demands on the staff’s time. The *Star Trek* series *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*, and the *Next Generation* film *Insurrection* were all in various stages of production during the course of 1998.

Mike remembers, “Denise and I were among the relatively few people who were either lucky enough or crazy enough to be working on two simultaneous *Star Trek* weekly series. This was a very fertile period. Every other year we were doing a feature film, and when we weren’t working Denise and I did the occasional book like the [Star Trek Chronology](#) or the [Star Trek Encyclopedia](#). So it’s not as if we had a lot of time to get to devote to this. But we all love *Buckaroo Banzai*, and we all knew that—if we were successful—we might actually contribute to the possibility of that sequel—by whatever name it became—getting made.”

So, help they did.

What follows is a chronicle of the behind-the-scenes efforts to bring *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* to the small screen on Fox Television as told by participants in the proceedings. As is the nature of oral history, everyone interviewed had some memories to offer that others had forgotten or did not think to mention, or remembered events slightly differently than someone else. Twenty odd years on, memories, and some of those who made the memories in the first place, have faded or are gone forever.

It is for this reason that we wanted to capture the history while enough survives to make sense of it. The push to make *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* was an

amazing effort, particularly coming when it did during the most unexpected of times. While those efforts proved unsuccessful in their day, they were not without other fruit born of those labors; from comic books to the defunct [banzai-institute.com](#) website to this very newsletter. As *Buckaroo* has taught us again and again, if he’s not one thing, he’s another. For much of *Banzai* fandom as we know it today, this was where it all started. 🐦

### FOCUS: Michael and Denise Okuda



**Michael and Denise Okuda** at the 2013 WonderCon in Anaheim, California. Credit: Gage Skidmore

When Mike and Denise Okuda aren’t busy bearing the *Banzai* torch, they lead amazing careers in film and television. Their individual and combined body of work would constitute an article unto itself, so here is “the short form”:

Both Mike and Denise are probably best known for their work on various *Star Trek* series and films. This, in part, comes from a deep love of space exploration and knowledge of its history. Both currently serve as Technical Consultants on the Apple TV alternate history drama *For All Mankind*. In 2009, [Mike received NASA’s Exceptional Public Service Medal](#) for artistic contributions of logo designs to multiple missions.

Some of the unexpected places where you can find their work are the Netflix series *Space Force*, the pilot for The CW’s *The Flash* series, Clint Eastwood’s 2018 film *The 5:17 to Paris*, and the 2009 Steven Soderbergh film *The Informant!* If you are in more of a reading mood, you can [pick up one of their books](#) celebrating the continuity, history, and art of *Star Trek*.

For a more comprehensive view of Denise’s work, visit her pages at [IMDb](#), [Wikipedia](#), and [Memory Alpha](#). You can take a deeper dive into Mike’s accomplishments at [IMDb](#), [Wikipedia](#), and [Memory Alpha](#) as well. They also share a [Facebook page](#) where you can follow their many adventures together. Be sure to visit them at the [Banzai Institute Facebook page](#) as well.

### Creating the Banzai Institute Website, and What Became of It

Dan Berger



**Banzai Institute Banner.** Courtesy of the Banzai Institute.

With the “Supersize Those Fries!” pilot script written and submitted to Fox Television, the next order of business became two-fold: 1) Inform the fanbase about Buckaroo’s ongoing exploits, both at the Institute and at Fox, and 2) drum up fan support to keep *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* forwardmost in the minds of Fox Television executives. In the late nineties, that could mean only one thing: Build a website, and the fans would come.

Mike Okuda explained, “Our original web master was a visual effects guru named Tom Barron, whom we knew through our work at *Star Trek*. Tom goes back to the great [Robert Abel and Associates](#) team in the late seventies and was the owner of a visual effects facility called Image G, where we shot a lot of motion control work for the various shows. Anyway, Tom loved *Buckaroo Banzai* and he said, ‘Yeah, I want to help out. I’ll do what I can.’ So, he put together the first iteration of the website that went up in 1998 or 99.”

So it was that on January 1, 1999, an announcement for the Official Banzai Institute web page made its journey across the fansites and media hubs of the information superhighway:

Dear friends of Buckaroo Banzai:

In response to the many inquiries we have received regarding the possibility of a Buckaroo Banzai television series on the Fox Network, I am pleased to announce the official Banzai Institute web site. Like the Institute itself, this web site is dedicated to the betterment of the human condition through scientific research, public service, and rock-n-roll.

The Banzai Institute web site, available on the World Wide Web at [banzai-institute.com](http://banzai-institute.com), features the latest news of Institute activities interwoven with tantalizing hints of Buckaroo’s future adventures. Also available on the site are notes on Buckaroo merchandise, links to fan sites, and an exclusive interview with Dr. Banzai himself, written by Reno Nevada (with a little help from his friend, Earl Mac Rauch). Of special interest to students of

Banzai history is a never-before-seen video excerpt from the original director’s cut of the 1984 movie, *THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI ACROSS THE EIGHTH DIMENSION*.

As Dr. Banzai says in his introduction to the site, we hope that you “move with grace and leisure among these sundry offerings” which are being made available to all Institute members and other friends of Buckaroo Banzai, wherever they may be.

Faithfully yours,

W.D. Richter

Tom’s site was populated by a variety of fantastic content. The “About the Institute” section contained an engaging cross section of Institute life including a Playboy interview with Mrs. E. Johnson and a “Topics on the Table” section covering, amongst other things, a discussion about, “Dark Red Norlands, Frontier Russets, Swedish Peanuts & Bioelectricity.” The “Banzai Speaks” section provided a letter of welcome from Dr. Banzai, an interview between B. Banzai and Reno, and a series of short vignettes called, “The Buckaroo Banzai Book of Little Morals.” An “Institute Archives” section presented a form to fill out for security clearance to the archive materials, including fragments from some of Earl Mac Rauch’s early attempts to create a Buckaroo Banzai screenplay.

Some of the website’s contents took the form of breadcrumbs, winding a slender trail between the events of the film and the current shape of the Banzai Institute, including this sly reference to its new home in the desert southwest:

#### **Arizona Clears Sale of Desert Parcel**

Phoenix, AZ - May 1, 1993

Public records filed yesterday reveal that the Arizona State Department of the Interior has approved the purchase of 250 acres of desert lands, approximately 50 miles north of Phoenix.

The land, which includes two decommissioned nuclear missile silos, is currently owned by the United States Department of Defense.

The court filing includes approval for refit and usage of the facility as a particle accelerator, atrium, research lab, living quarters, a full medical facility, complete rehearsal hall, and a musical recording studio.

The name of the purchasing party is being withheld at this time.

Other entries, like these postings from the website's Bunkhouse message boards, gave cryptic hints about what was going on behind-the-scenes with the pilot script:

**Subject: Re: The Pitch**

From: Reno Nevada

Date: November 14, 1998

New Jersey wrote:

>>The photos from Middleman are posted on the bulletin board in the Main Hall. Please keep in mind, these are very early concepts.

>It's not that I don't appreciate their hard work, but don't you think the potato guns look too realistic? The actual one was more ... I don't know ... wacky.

Certain concessions must be made to the "creative" people in the film industry. I'll talk to Rick and Mac.

**Subject: The Pilot**

From: BBICatnip

Date: November 25, 1998

Just wanted to say congratulations on completion of the pilot script for the Banzai series. We're all behind you, Rick and Mac on this exciting new project. It'll be just like old times, right Reno? Can we get a real budget for photocopies this time?

**Subject: Re: First Draft**

From: Reno Nevada

Date: December 17, 1998

Rick and Mac: I'm forwarding our notes on the script for the Buckaroo Banzai Series pilot. Outstanding work. The Boss' comments are in blue. Mine are in red. A reminder to run this past the legal eagles at I.P.G. Again, great job!

Fans of the original *World Watch One* will recognize "BBI Catnip" as the handle of one Denise Tathwell, a member of the B.B.I. Directors running the newsletter and the future Denise Okuda, helping to lead the charge for *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* at the *Star Trek* art department.

In this case, "leading the charge" meant creating a stampede of fan support to show Fox Television just how ready fans were for more Team Banzai. A link to "Join the Television SERIES CRUSADE" featured prominently on the home page of the Bunkhouse,



Team Banzai Banner. Courtesy of the Banzai Institute.

directing Blue Blaze Irregulars to fill out an electronic form with some basic personal information to better leverage fan support in the future.

Time marched on. Two more notifications from W.D. Richter appeared on the Institute website and other corners of the internet. His July 28, 1999 message addressed rumors "...that the forces of evil have gathered to demand we 'dumb down' the great pilot script Mac Rauch completed in January ... and that Mac and I are 'fighting tooth and nail' against such madness." Richter's message soundly rejected that narrative, ending with, "Rumors? May I suggest we all chew on these last and not obsess about what might or might not happen in Hollywood? At least until it does."

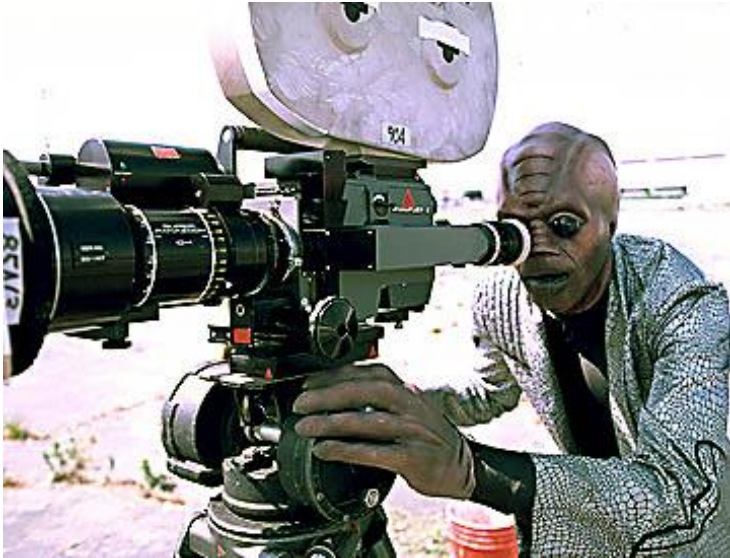
Richter's update of December 15, 1999 was more hopeful, saying how, "...Dr. Banzai wanted to tell me how much he had enjoyed reading Earl Mac Rauch's revision of the 'Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries' pilot script for the proposed Fox Television series." A year after launching the website, the pilot appeared to still have legs.

Then, silence.

The website continued to march forward with periodic updates, but further references to the pilot script and its fate ceased altogether.

As the months passed and momentum shifted away from a Series Crusade towards a still unknown next step, the nature of the website and its caretakers began to change as well. According to Mike, "[Tom] maintained [the website], but it reached a point within a couple of years that ... he had a business to run; so it became problematic for him to update it. So, I said, 'Tom, do you mind if we rebuild the site?' because Tom is a real gearhead. He put a lot of cool HTML bells and whistles in there that were beyond my limited means at the time, so I was unable to update the website myself.

"I rebuilt the website using some very primitive tool, but it was something that I could easily maintain. And the idea was we specifically wanted to maintain a level of interest and maintain an online presence against the possibility of ever doing another series, or a feature film, or novels, or graphic novels, or any anything else for that matter. And in fact, over the years, we got the pocketbooks novel and a bunch of stuff."



The website's Featured Photo section offered rarely-seen photos from the docudrama. Courtesy of the Banzai Institute.

With the rebuild came expansion as material began to collect over time. The Institute Archives were a particular beneficiary of this phenomenon, adding Jim Van Over's graphic designs devoted to Buckaroo Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers record album covers, as well as further interviews and other assorted contributions by various Banzai-esque characters. Additional sections included a "Featured Photo" gallery, a selection of "Recently Declassified" projects of Institute interest, and an FAQ section about the Institute that, appropriately enough, directed readers that still had questions about the film to the Buckaroo Banzai Frequently Asked Questions website.

Promotion featured prominently among the website's offerings. The news section came alive in 2001 and 2002 to promote the reissue of the Pocket Books novelization of the film as well as the Special Edition DVD. The return of *World Watch One* also received its share of notice on the site in 2004. When Moonstone Books began printing their line of *Buckaroo Banzai* comics, the website was there to boost the signal from 2006 until the final release of collected issues as hardcover editions in 2012.

Time continued to pass. The website received fewer and fewer updates as the prospect of additional projects related to the franchise diminished. With the lean times came an understandable measure of doubt. Mike said of these days, "I don't really know how useful [the website] was in promoting Buckaroo, but that's what we tried to do, and we would post stuff periodically—Rick and Mac would send us wacky tidbits from time to time—and that was a lot of fun. But it was very, very, *very* part-time. We would just basically update it whenever it occurred to us.

Then, at some point—I want to say 2015ish or maybe before then—our host went off line, so the website disappeared."

According to the [Internet Archive Wayback Machine](#), the banzai-institute.com website went silent sometime after January 26, 2017, but before April 21, 2017. By then, the internet ecosystem was a very different place in terms of how people transmitted and consumed media messaging on the internet. The glory days of websites were not exactly done and over, but sites involved with fan engagement were certainly running up against a new form of information consumption: social media.

"For a while we were thinking, 'Well, let's find another ISP and re-establish it,'" Mike recalled. "But it was around that time that Facebook and other social media were becoming popular, and we thought, 'Well, let's just migrate there. I don't actually know how many people we have following that page but there are a few people who like it.'"



## BREAKING NEWS

from the Banzai Institute  
for Biomedical Engineering  
and Strategic Information!

**Banzai Institute Breaking News: Facebook Banner.**  
Courtesy of the Banzai Institute.

A "few" people amounts to 6,899 people liking the Banzai Institute Facebook page as of this writing, with 7,011 following it. The promotional attempts appear to have done their work. And the work continues.

Fortunately, the second iteration of the banzai-institute.com website found a lasting home as part of Sean Murphy's efforts to archive the archivable at his [Buckaroo Banzai Frequently Asked Questions](#) website. Some older bits of the website linger on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. If fans ever wonder what lasting legacy endures from the effort to promote *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*, they need go no further than Facebook and the Banzai FAQ to find out.

But the website was only the beginning. The creative hivemind at the *Star Trek* art department had plenty more in store. 🐦

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## Visualizing *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*:

### An interview with Doug Drexler

By Sean Murphy

When an image of Emilio Lizardo with a “Midnight Special” potato gun, ionized slinky, and sweat collector appeared on Facebook, it was only natural to find out more about where it came from and why it existed.

The source of the image was Doug Drexler’s [Facebook page](#) and, as it turned out, so many more pictures. His seven (!) sketches of Lizardo, two of potato guns, two of evil World Crime League henchmen, and several computer generated images were used by director W.D. “Rick” Richter and writer Earl Mac Rauch to help pitch the proposed *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* TV show. All of these images are now hosted, with permission, on the [Buckaroo Banzai FAQ](#). *World Watch One* reached out to Doug and he graciously agreed to talk about his background and his experience working on the Buckaroo Banzai TV project.

### The Man Behind the Images

Doug has had a long career in the field of science fiction. “I’m a visual story teller,” he said, “I’ll pick up and use any tool close enough to grab. If all I had was a rock and a stick, I could still do it. I started my career in 1982 with Makeup Godfather Dick Smith, on the Tony Scott movie, *The Hunger*. My career just took off from there. I’ve made a pig of myself, doing so many things. I was a makeup artist, a graphic artist, an Illustrator, a visual effects CG supervisor, and VFX artist.”



**Midnight Special:** Doug commented on this sketch by saying, “Love the ionized slinky...where did I come up with that? And a sweat collector! Seems perfectly natural!” Sketch by Doug Drexler.



**Everything old is new again:** Doug poses in 1996 with shooting models of a recreated TOS-era Enterprise and K-7 space station from the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode “Trials and Tribble-ations.” Image provided by Doug Drexler

Doug worked on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as a make-up artist, on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager* as designer, digital artist, and effects artist, and *Star Trek: Enterprise* as a senior illustrator and CGI designer. [Memory Alpha](#) exhaustively details his career on *Star Trek*, which is only one of the many different shows he’s worked on.

“My career has been more than I expected. I think I would have been happy with just being a makeup artist. I have an Academy award for that [from the movie *Dick Tracy*]. But when you can change your arena, and still win awards, that’s incredibly fulfilling. I can die and be happy.”

### The Images Behind the TV Pitch

Ironically, Doug didn’t catch *Buckaroo* on the big screen when it debuted in 1984. “I missed it the first time around in theatrical release. I remember seeing trailers for it, but I never saw it until I came to *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*. Denise Okuda was a monster fan, so we played it in the [*Star Trek*] art department a lot. That’s how I became indoctrinated. Banzai became part of the *Star Trek* experience for me. We hid [overthrusters on the show](#) anywhere we could. Mike Okuda [Denise’s husband] would put Banzai quotes on [starship dedication plaques](#). Banzai was so attractive because it was so quirky. There is a lot of prepackaged, over processed fantasy. Banzai didn’t seem to be following anyone. It marched to the beat of a different drummer. I loved, and admired that.”

Although it wasn’t love at first sight, *Buckaroo Banzai* grew on him. “At first [the film] seems like low budget shlock, but it isn’t long before you recognize how clever,

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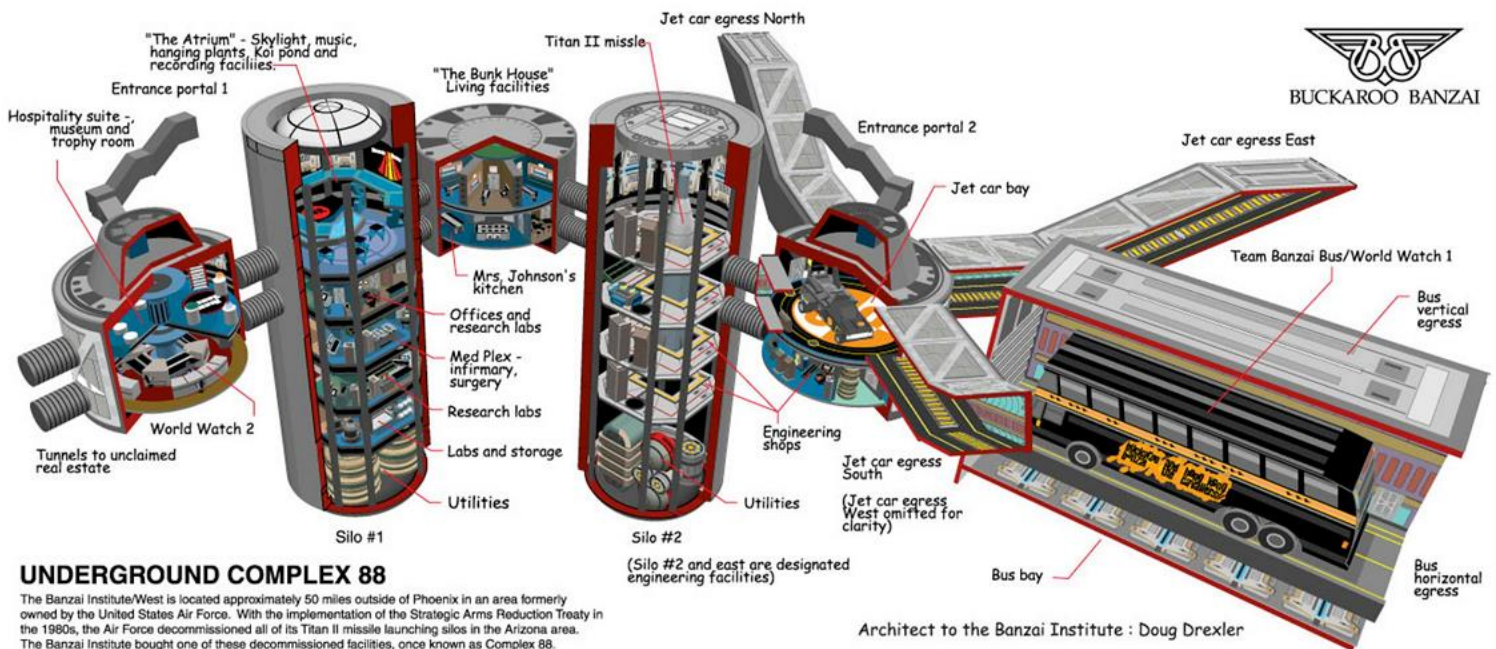
irreverent, original, nutty, and amusing it is...not to mention the charm of the actors. At first glance, it's easy to miss, which is why once you get it, you feel part of a private club. Not everyone gets it! Awesome! Mine all mine! Not for the masses!"

Doug discussed how he got involved with the TV pilot pitch on his [Facebook page](#): "When Mike first approached me about doing some developmental work for a proposed Buckaroo Banzai TV series, he had me at hello. I was stoked. Banzai is offbeat, irreverent, and one of a kind. Once I read the wacky script, "Super Size Those Fries!" I was nuts for it. Dr. Emilio Lizardo plans to steer the Earth out of its orbit like a big sailing ship, powered by the combined energies of the world's potato

fields (remember science class? Getting electricity from a potato? No kidding!)."

"This is Banzai at its best," he continued. "There is no money,' says Mike, 'we're just trying to give Rick all the ammunition he needs to sell the series.' Count me in, Mike! I'm there!"

All of this work on the *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* content was happening at the same time that they were actually working at their art department day jobs on *Star Trek*. "Looking back, it seems like we had a few weeks [to create content for the TV proposal]. We were ) very busy prepping *Star Trek* episodes, but when you are excited about something, you find the time."



### UNDERGROUND COMPLEX 88

The Banzai Institute/West is located approximately 50 miles outside of Phoenix in an area formerly owned by the United States Air Force. With the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in the 1980s, the Air Force decommissioned all of its Titan II missile launching silos in the Arizona area. The Banzai Institute bought one of these decommissioned facilities, once known as Complex 88.

(Above) **Underground Complex 88:** The caption to the lower left reads, "The Banzai Institute/West is located approximately 50 miles outside of Phoenix in an area formerly owned by the United States Airforce. With the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in the 1980s, the Air Force decommissioned all of its Titan II missile launching silos in the Arizona area. The Banzai Institute bought one of these decommissioned facilities, once known as Complex 88." Designed and drawn by Doug Drexler.

(Right) **The Council of Doom:** Henry, Warlock, Derek, and Bruce of the World Crime League, where Emilio Lizardo makes his "Big Pitch." Doug said, "Man, I love the oddball characters! To be perfectly frank, I'd rather draw this than a spaceship any day, so I was in heaven when Mike asked me to work these up." Sketch by Doug Drexler.



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In terms of who in the *Star Trek* art department worked on what, the project was pretty freeform. “We were like a big clubhouse, everyone threw in what they could do without being prompted. I don’t think anyone was given assignments. I jumped at the chance to do wacky sketches, which at the time was the way things were done, but I was also just getting into CG, so I created some images on the computer. Pretty early CG stuff for me.” Mike noted on Facebook that Doug made “cool CGI renderings of Buckaroo’s new underground headquarters (built in an abandoned missile silo)” called Underground Complex 88.

Doug worked with Rick, “...indirectly, through Mike and Denise. Rick loved my sketches, and gave me comments, from Lizardo, that he wanted me to add to the pictures. I loved that. It had that wacky voice from the movie. You know, like that tree chart that shows the hierarchy of Lizardo’s organization. It says: “Me, and everyone else.” It’s singular.”

Doug had several other resources to pull from at the time to inspire his sketches. “Of course, we had the [TV] script, and we had the original movie to draw inspiration from. I’ve been involved in doing free work for producer friends gratis before, and believe me, they will nitpick you to pieces, even though you are working for free. Rick was nothing like that. He was gleeful about everything we were doing. It was very gratifying. It makes you work harder. I can’t help but think what wonderful things we would have done for the show in an environment like that. My sense of irreverence was made for Banzai.”

Doug’s *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* sketch work lived well beyond the TV pitch sessions. The pilot script was eventually turned into the [Moonstone comic’s “Return of the Screw.”](#) Some of his work was included as “extras” when the three issues were collected into a graphic novel. The Underground Complex 88, Lizardo’s Rhizome-Tuber Accelerator and Projector Tower (above), the Council Chamber of the World Crime League, and The Wheel of Woe used by the dreaded World Crime League were among the offerings.

When Doug reflected on the experience today, he said “When the project came up, we all volunteered to do whatever Rick needed for the presentation, and did it gratis. We just wanted to see it happen. Theoretically if it did go to series, we would have worked on it.”

Although it’s sad that any chance for the *Star Trek* art department team to work on the Buckaroo Banzai TV show died when the pilot script was not picked up and shot by the studio, it’s good to know that there were true Blue Blaze Irregulars on the ground at the time, ready to go. 🐉



**Double barreled tuber trouble:** The plugs in the nose prompted W. D. Richter to add Lizardo’s afterthought, “Rethink this a lot”. You can see Richter’s comments on almost all of the [sketches](#). **Sketch by Doug Drexler.**



**Dr. Lizardo’s diabolical Rhizome-Tuber Accelerator and Projector Tower.** Computer generated image by Doug Drexler

### Creating the CGI Jet Car Trailer

By Sean Murphy

Note: If you've never seen the all CGI Jet Car trailer, which was created in 1998 by Foundation Imaging for the *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* TV series pitch, stop reading right now and check it out on [Mojo's Vimeo page](#).

Now that you're up to speed, you may be wondering how this amazing trailer came into existence. Fortunately, Adam "Mojo" Lebowitz was able to fill us in on the creation of this unique piece of Banzai content. Mojo's memories are presented here in his own words along with some additional quotes from Mike Okuda.

### Getting involved

"Richter and Mac Rauch were finally in a position where they could pitch doing the Buckaroo Banzai TV series to Fox. Mike Okuda probably told me about it because I didn't know Mac or Rick at that point," said Mojo. "Mike and Denise Okuda were so instrumental in keeping the Buckaroo Banzai flame alive over the years and getting people interested and excited about it. They are absolutely the unofficial gatekeepers of the fan world of Buckaroo Banzai."

Mike Okuda said, "We had worked with a friend at Foundation named Mojo on a bunch of *Star Trek* projects, so we gave him a call and said, 'Hey, would you be interested in participating in this Banzai project? There's no money and there's no guarantee that if this ever sells that we'll choose to put a contract in your direction, but we're all doing it because we think it's cool.' Mojo was very excited about it and came over to our house and we tried to figure out what they could do for what is called a 'sizzle reel,' knowing very little about what that show actually would become."

Mojo continued, "My thought, obviously, was that we would love to work on the series. Maybe we could even help get the series made. I knew just from working in Hollywood that when you did a TV show pitch, anything you could bring with you to spice it up was always a good idea. Any visual material you could have to show the executives in the room helps them get the concept of what it might look like from the ideas discussed.

"I talked to Mike and said, 'Hey, maybe you can put me in touch with Rick and we can all discuss doing something. Maybe we can put together some kind of simple trailer for *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*. Just with CGI, maybe something with the Jet Car.'

"It's fairly common in Hollywood, when someone's pitching a show, for people to want to pitch in on a



The Jet Car in the Foundation Imaging trailer.

project since that might help them get hired on it. Foundation Imaging was willing to do it on-the-house because we loved Banzai and we wanted to get the show made, but in a way this was also an investment. If we helped get the show made, it could lead to us having a job as the visual effects provider for the show, so it was a win-win for everybody. Rick and Mac were like, 'Hey, if you want to put together something for our pitch, that would be great.'"

### Brainstorming the trailer

"My first instinct was maybe we can put together some kind of a three part trailer. We didn't want to go out and film anything when we couldn't spend a lot of money on it. If Foundation Imaging was willing to devote its time, we weren't going to be able to go out and hire actors to shoot something. So, it was going to be an all CGI trailer of the adventures of the Jet Car to show the executives the range of what could be done on the show.

"The one part of the *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* script that seemed doable was the potato field because the pilot involved a field of potatoes that was used to harvest energy in order to send a message back to Planet 10.

"So we thought, 'Okay, we can do that all CGI.' We can show a field with potatoes and energy arcing and some crazy contraptions that gave you an idea of some of the science fiction stuff in Buckaroo Banzai. That potato sequence was done by [John Teska](#). He was one of the head artists of Foundation Imaging.

"Next we were looking at what existing CGI elements we already had laying around at Foundation Imaging from other projects that could be repurposed for the second sequence. Of course, one of the big aspects of the Jet Car from the film was the ability to go through a mountain. We had a bunch of assets from this other trailer we were

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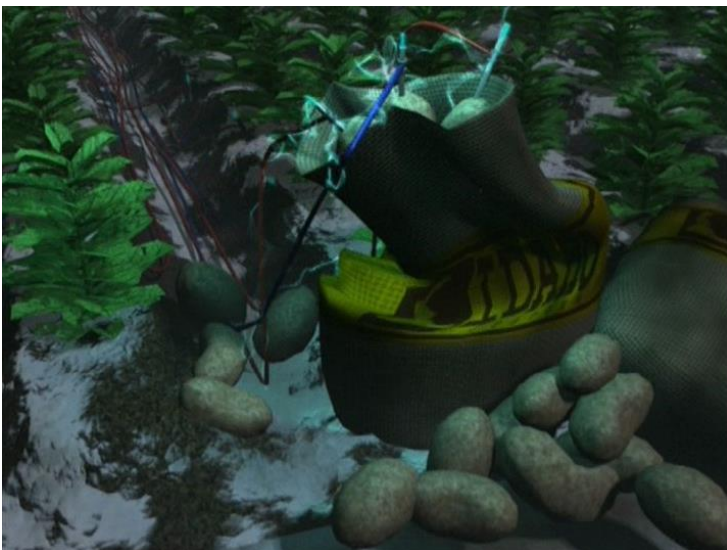
doing that we already owned, like an arctic ice field and some mountains and some alien spaceships. I thought, 'Let's just have the Jet Car being chased by a bunch of alien spaceships across the Arctic tundra and it gets away by actually driving right towards the mountain and going through it.' Obviously the alien ships can't do that so they get slammed into the mountain. I took the reins on the animation for that sequence along with [David Adams](#).

"When we were talking about what the third scenario should be, Mike suggested something that reminded him of *Thunderbirds*. I don't remember what episode it was, but there was a *Thunderbirds* scene where the Thunderbirds' vehicles helped a plane that's missing its landing gear to land safely."

According to Mike, "This was before DVDs were hugely popular, but I had just purchased a set of *Thunderbirds* laser discs. So I said, 'Well, if you have the space shuttle and you're building a Jet Car, why don't we steal that scene from *Thunderbirds*?'"

Mojo continued, "And we thought, we could totally do that. That was Mike Okuda's idea, which led to Buckaroo Banzai saving the space shuttle when its front gear wouldn't extend. [Emile Smith](#) did the space shuttle sequence because he really wanted to do that. We had different artists dealing with different aspects of the trailer and I supervised the whole project overall."

Mike remembered, "The funny thing is, and I don't know if this is true, but I'm told that a few years later someone else did a viral video called [405 the movie](#) that was inspired by the Buckaroo Banzai sizzle reel which, of course, was in turn inspired by the pilot episode of *Thunderbirds*."



**The power of the potato** or, "Russet something I said?" From the Foundation Imaging trailer.



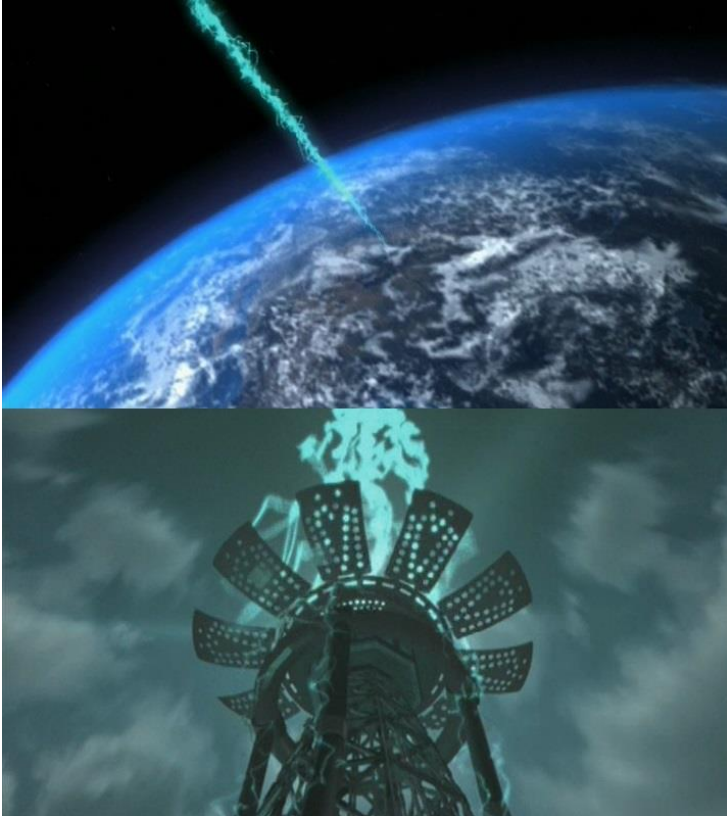
**The airplane landing rescue** from the *Thunderbirds* Season 1 episode, [Trapped in the Sky](#). The sequence starts 44 minutes into the episode.



**Shuttle rescue** from the Foundation Imaging trailer.



**Arctic alien attack** and overthruster escape, from the Foundation Imaging trailer.



**ET phone home:** Lizardo harnesses the power of the potato to beam a message to his Red Lectroid legions and steer the Earth out of its orbit. From the Foundation Imaging trailer.

### The Soundtrack

Once the new and existing digital assets were sorted out and the animation completed, there was still the matter of adding sound effects and a soundtrack. For Mojo, the particulars of the soundtrack were especially important.

“We wanted the soundtrack to have the *Buckaroo Banzai* theme in there, but also be something different, Mojo said. “I’m a big fan of techno music, so I went to my library and found a piece of music that I felt fit the flavor of the visuals. This original music trailer had my techno soundtrack because it wasn’t being published anywhere, it was just for the Fox pitch. We’ve showed it at conventions as well.”

Mojo’s temp soundtrack, however, would have run afoul of intellectual property rights use were it to be republished as a sellable commodity. “For the Special Edition of the DVD we realized, ‘Oh, we can’t use the original soundtrack because I used copyrighted music on there.’” Mojo said. “A friend of a friend, Adam and Jason Price, did something brand new so the trailer could be included on the DVD.”

Sound effects and vocal performances were also added to enhance the visuals, such as the electrical current sizzling from the potato fields in the trailer’s initial

sequence, or the mission controller talking over the action during the Jet Car shuttle rescue. The trailer was then delivered to Rick and Mac, ready for its moment to help sell the series.

### Final Thoughts

For the crew at Foundation Imaging, the work was done, filled with big hopes, no expectations, and zero regrets. “So we’re basically all doing this in our free time,” Said Mojo. “No one gets paid for anything but it was a labor of love because everybody at Foundation were big *Buckaroo Banzai* fans. We put the trailer together and it was there as part of their *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* pitch package. Unfortunately, the show didn’t sell but it was still fun to work on. It was great to create this little piece of *Buckaroo Banzai*.”

The end of *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* did not mean the mean the end of the road for the Jet Car trailer. The trailer found its way not only onto the Collector’s edition DVD as mentioned above, but the Banzai Institute website and YouTube as well, to excite the imaginations of Banzai fans hungry for more. 🐉

**Editor’s Note:** We’ll hear more from Mojo next issue, where we dive into the *Buckaroo Banzai* Special Edition DVD.

### FOCUS: Adam “Mojo” Lebowitz

Mojo is a senior Previsualization/VFX supervisor & artist with an extensive background in visual effects. He has two Primetime Emmy Awards for his work on *Star Trek: Voyager* (CGI Supervisor, 1999) and *Battlestar Galactica* (Sequence Designer, 2007) as well as three additional nominations. His industry experience dates back to 1992 with *Babylon 5*, the groundbreaking series that laid the foundation for the modern desktop CGI industry.

He served as Previz and CGI Supervisor/Artist for *Babylon 5* (1992-1997), *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1997-2002, Foundation Imaging) and *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009, Zoic Studios & on-site, NBC/Universal).

His previz work for features includes *Now You See Me* (2012, Persistence of Vision), *Men in Black 3*, *Battleship*, *Jack the Giant Slayer*, and *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island* (2010-2011, The Third Floor). In addition to multiple freelance projects, he also provided previz and VFX work for *The Brave* (2017-2018, NBC).

Mojo was the first employee at Foundation Imaging. He’s got a blog called [Darth Mojo](#), a [Vimeo page](#) with some of his CGI work, and more information about his career on the [Memory Alpha](#) website.

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### Creating the Jet Car Model, et al.

By Dan Berger

During the course of our interviews, it became clear that several lesser-known artifacts were created to help sell *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*. One model and several props were part of the inventory of Banzai goodness that was sent to Rick Richter for the series. As Mike Okuda remembered, “One of the key elements in the script was that Lizardo had put together these weapons that harnessed energy from potatoes, and a friend of mine, Jimmy Arakaki, is an industrial designer. We just talked to him about the [potato] guns ...he went off on his own and actually built a bunch of them. The late [Anthony Fredrickson](#)—he was a big car buff—he decided to build a scale model of the Jet Car. It was beautiful, I really wish we still had it.”

Jim Van Over remembered Anthony’s gift for “kit-bashing,” taking small pieces from different model kits and applying them in novel ways to create new models. “Anthony did all the kit-bashing for *Trek* in those days,” Jim said. “He was great at it. He built a version of Data’s emotion chip and the interior of Soren’s rocket all from his box of greeblies\* in the back room.

“I do remember Anthony built a [Klingon space station](#) for one episode. Using the Klingon design ethos, it was trilaterally symmetrical on the Z axis. When Herman Zimmerman mentioned that it was too symmetrical, Anthony grabbed one of the resin overthrusters we had laying around and glued it to the side of the station.

“When you see the shot and realize the scale, that is one big bloody overthruster!”

Finally, it was time to pull everything together and deliver it to its date with destiny, but not without one last Banzai-esque flourish. According to Mike, “Once Anthony finished the Jet Car model he built this very cool looking shipping crate. I mean, literally, it was a wooden shipping crate. We spent an afternoon making fake shipping labels and plastered them all over it. We figured out the history of it: starting at the Banzai Institute, then over to NASA, then to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and all other kinds of places along with ‘Danger, Radiation’ stickers on it, and things like that. The last sticker we put on it was to send it to W.D. Richter’s agent in Los Angeles.

“So, we had someone drive the crate over to the agent’s office. We called Rick and said ‘We’re gonna send you the models so you can have them delivered to the studio.’ We figured it was a bit of fun but, for some reason, his agent didn’t get the message.



**Boldly going where no Art Department has gone before:** (L to R) Jim Van Over, Denise Okuda, Michael Okuda, and Anthony Fredrickson proudly pose with Anthony’s model Jet Car and Banzai Institute crate, ready for shipping. Sadly, Fredrickson died following a heart attack on February 15, 2016 at age 62. His remarkable ability to create pretty much anything from whatever was at hand earned him the nickname "[King of Kludge](#)" in the *Star Trek* art department.

“Suddenly, this big old imposing wooden crate shows up on his agent’s doorstep saying ‘Danger, Radiation!’ It’s been to ‘NASA’ and the ‘Nuclear Regulatory Commission,’ and they’re not quite sure what to do with it. But it also says ‘Banzai Institute’, so they figure it had to be Rick. So they called him—quite worried—but he said, ‘Don’t worry about it, it’s just a prop.’”

Sadly, smart phones didn’t exist in 1998, so photo ops were at the mercy of someone actually having a camera with them at the appropriate moment. No potato gun prop photos were forthcoming. As for the props themselves, they appear to be casualties of time and the television development process. According to Mike, “I think the potato gun props went in the crate as well. I couldn’t swear to it, but I don’t recall seeing them after that. Those might have gone to Polygram and just sat there and got pitched at some point.”

Polygram, being the company that owned the TV rights at the time, was a likely candidate to receive the props once the pitching process was at an end. Considering the sheer number of pitches developed for television on a yearly basis, it is certain that the vast majority of materials produced to sell shows get scrapped once a pilot fails to get the green light. Such are the casualties of television production. 🐦

\***Greeblie** was a word originally coined by George Lucas, used in reference to things that cannot otherwise be defined. The term began circulating amongst model builders to describe the smaller mechanical parts layered onto a model to add detail, texture, and create the impression of a real, functioning object.

## The Final Word on Pitching

### *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*

By Sean Murphy and Dan Berger

It is abundantly clear that the *Star Trek* art department's efforts were as much about the journey towards making a Buckaroo Banzai TV series as they were about the destination. "It was really fun because the group of people that worked in the graphics department on *Star Trek* are all good friends of ours and they all got it," said Denise. "They all love Banzai, and so the *Star Trek* graphics department became the Banzai Institute graphics department, and we just had a really, really good time with it."

The artifacts created along that journey have had many different fates. Doug posted some of the materials that were created at the time, like official Banzai Institute ID badges and backstage passes on his now defunct [Drex Files website](#). Others, like the potato gun props and Jet Car model, are lost to the pits of Development Hell; a term often used to describe the process of cultivating an idea into a script that, with any luck, goes to pilot and, with even more luck, advances to become a series.

When it came to actually pitching the show to studio executives, *World Watch One* reached out to Rick and Mac to see what they recalled about the experience and learn how all of these materials were received during the process. They pitched the *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* concept during the summer of 1998 to ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. The studio interested in moving forward with a pilot script turned out to be Fox.

"I wish I could help you out," said Mac, "but my memories of the pitch meeting have grown faint and nothing about it really stands out twenty-some years later. As I recall, there were four or five people in the pitch meeting in Burbank, only a couple of whom had questions or did any talking...a very typical low energy affair (maybe too low in hindsight)...but, then again, studio executives are not known for expressing their true feelings about much of anything. What I most remember are a couple of restaurants and expense-account meals Rick and I shared during our brief stay at the swank Four Seasons. Sorry I can't be more helpful, but perhaps Rick's memory will serve him better. Yeah, Rick wears a body cam, so we'll see if he saved stuff."

"I looked at the footage," said Rick, picking up the story, "Disappointing because those were the early days of mandatory body cams on all writers and directors, and I misunderstood the concept, so I aimed it at my body and have hours and hours of extreme video closeups of my different shirts. Nobody told us we had to remember all this stuff!"



Jim Van Over Sr., from the *Trek* art department, mocked up a plethora of Banzai passes and identification. Image courtesy of Doug Drexler

Although the memories of the pitch meetings are lost to time, it's obvious that a combination of the *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* concept, visuals of the Jet Car Trailer, and materials created by the art department at *Star Trek* all contributed to piquing Fox's interest in the process. The Fox network officially commissioned a pilot script in November, 1998 (Check out the "[Banzai in Limbo—The Short Form](#)" article for a deeper look at what happened during this process).

Rick and Mac delivered a script to Fox in December, 1998 and received notes back that the script was too "dense." *World Watch One* asked if studio notes, during a pitch meeting or after reviewing a script, were seen as "marching orders" to follow without question or did they "creatively interpret them?" Or did it depend on the studio note?

"As far as notes given in pitch meetings go (or went)," said Rick, "I think we always execute them when they were coherent ideas. Often they were not, so we didn't. I don't ever recall being scolded for not doing something suggested in a story meeting because it was obvious we'd tried our best, and most of the time I suspect the 'creative' execs had forgotten what they'd said." In terms of the denseness of the first pilot script they created, Rick said, "They had the money. So we thinned stuff out."

A revised script was delivered to Fox in December of 1999. It was well received at Fox and made it all the way up to Sandy Grushow, the new Chairman of Fox Television Entertainment Group at the time. Unfortunately, that's where it stopped when Sandy passed on the project. As Denise put it, "So here again our hopes were sky high. We were really excited, and then it didn't happen."

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Luckily the story didn't end there. Mike remembered, "The only good thing that came out of it was that at least part of the rights from the original film now had a clear chain of custody. So suddenly it was possible to do new Banzai material. Pocket Books did a new edition of Earl Mac Rauch's original novelization, which is fun, and there was talk for a while of doing additional Banzai novels, but that never happened."

Pocket Books did indeed make good on a new edition of the novelization. Mike Okuda created the cover art for the project, featuring images from the docudrama, but it almost looked very different. According to Mike, "[Jim Van Over] even volunteered both of his sons, Jason and Jim, Jr. as models for photos on the cover of a proposed BB novel. Noted photographer Greg Schwartz did a bunch of great portraits of 'young Buckaroo' and 'young Perfect Tommy' for that one, and we even snuck a bunch of shots of them on the Paramount backlot! So much fun."



**Young Bucks:** Jason Van Over plays a young Buckaroo to Jim Van Over Jr.'s Perfect Tommy in these reference photos for proposed Buckaroo Banzai book covers that never came to pass. **Photo credit: Greg Schwartz, courtesy of Doug Drexler**

Unfortunately, that's where the fun ended for additional Buckaroo Banzai novels. Mac did, in fact, write additional manuscripts in the early 2000s, but, as Rick recalled in the Spring of 2006, "The first one turned out to be much too intense for the publisher's taste, so he wrote a second. It took too long, and they seem to resent that enough to not release it."

Rick continued, "[Publisher] Simon & Schuster has gotten cold feet about the economic viability of a new BB novel in a publishing climate where so many of their other usually reliable titles are doing poorly now. If they publish neither new BB novel, which is what I suspect will happen, it's not yet clear to me what we own from this fiasco."

History has proven the prescience of Rick's prediction, at least where Simon & Schuster's Pocket Books imprint is concerned with additional Banzai novels, but that wasn't quite the end of the story either. Mike Okuda explained, "Then, through some convoluted process that I don't actually understand, eventually [Rick and Mac] made a deal with Moonstone Books to do a series of graphic novels, the first of which were based on 'Supersize those Fries', which was the pilot script for the proposed TV series."

That initial graphic adventure, retitled "Return of the Screw" turned out to be Moonstone's most successful release up to the time of the book's 2006 publication. Moonstone continued to publish additional one-shot and mini-serial stories written by Mac through 2012, at which point the thread of Buckaroo's post *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* fortunes finally ran short.

When all was said and done, Buckaroo may not have ended up with a weekly television series, but he did end up with something perhaps more important to the longevity of Team Banzai: a chance to prove that there was life left in the franchise even in the face of repeated disappointments. In a very real sense, Buckaroo's failure to find his way onto the small screen was also his rallying cry to keep trying and, finally, succeed after a fashion in comic books.

Hollywood loves a success story. That above all should give fans hope of seeing Team Banzai on a screen—small, silver, flat, or otherwise—sometime in the future. When we do, it will be, in part, because the *Star Trek* art department banded together to help promote the best *Buckaroo Banzai* television series that we never had the chance to see. 🐦

Learn about the journey of the TV show to its unfortunate demise in the article [Banzai in Limbo—The Short Form](#).

Read about how the script became Moonstone Comics' three part comic book called [Return of the Screw](#) in the [Supersize that Franchise](#) article

Finally, a PDF version of revised first draft of the [Supersize Those Fries script](#) from December 1999 is available online. Just follow the links.

## Banzai TV: The Kevin Smith Experience

Compiled by Dan Berger

Given our coverage of *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*, it is very likely that fans are reminded of the most recent attempt to bring Buckaroo to the small screen in 2016. It is also likely that, after four years and a major global health crisis, memories may be dim on the subject.

Fortunately, the Buckaroo Banzai FAQ collected many of the announcements and articles chronicling both the rise and fall of [Kevin Smith's attempt](#) to create a Buckaroo Banzai TV series, and [the legal woes that killed it](#). What follows is a handy recap of these events.

### Summer 2016

The latest Passion of the Banzai began on May 16, 2016, when [Kevin Smith announced](#) that he had recently inked a deal with MGM to create a *Buckaroo Banzai* television series. For Banzai fans, it was the shot heard round the world and was immediately reported by a variety of outlets, including [FilmBuffOnline.com](#), [uproxx.com](#), and [Entertainment Weekly](#). This initial rush of coverage was followed quickly on [Kevin's Facebook page](#) with a more detailed, hashtag-ular announcement indicating the direction of the proposed series:

“My well-read copy of the film's novelization by screenwriter Earl Mac Rauch is my Bible. But I'm not gonna be directing this alone: it is my intent to assemble a dream team of cult movie directors for the 10 episodes of this #BuckarooBanzai series—folks like #DonnieDarko director Richard Kelly, #ShaunOfTheDead director @edgar\_wright and of course, the #Banzai director himself—WD Richter.”

After the uneven fortunes of Moonstone Books' *Buckaroo Banzai* comics and fifteen years of nothing since the demise of *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*, reception of the news was mixed. Josh Kurp at UPROXX gushed, “MGM executives wanted to know if Smith had any ideas on how to turn *Buckaroo* into a TV show. Boy did he! ‘Basically you just do the entire movie for season one, then season two you finally do the sequel we've all dreamed about, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*.” Oliver Gettell of Entertainment Weekly had a more measured response, noting that, “Smith is a longtime fan of *Buckaroo Banzai*, describing it as ‘one of my favorite movies in the world and largely responsible for the weird s--- that I make, because that movie was supposed to be one thing but it did it in another way. It just did it very off-center.’”



**Social Media Warrior:** Much of Kevin Smith's trip down the Buckaroo Banzai TV rabbit hole is chronicled in his copious social media output. Here he poses for his Instagram account with Clancy Brown at a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of *Highlander* in Edinburgh, Scotland. Clancy's advice to Smith regarding the reboot: “Don't fuck up our movie.” Photo by Kevin Smith.

Rich Drees of FilmBuffOnline was one of the rare voices of caution among the mostly positive reactions to the announcement, saying, “While I do love both [*Buckaroo Banzai* and Kevin Smith movies], I am not sure that they resonate on frequencies that are harmonious with each other. The fact that Smith is willing to reach out to Rauch is, of course, a good sign. I am concerned that this might not make the Reese's peanut butter cup of geekdom that everyone else seems to think it will be.”

As the summer continued, it seemed that all systems were still an enthusiastic “go!” with the series. On June 10th, [consequenceofsound.net's Michael Roffman reported](#) about Smith's recent success shopping a television series based on his 1995 film *Mallrats*. At one point in the interview, Smith went tangential, saying:

“However, I went and directed an episode of *The Flash*, and when I went up there, it was kind of a weird game changer for my career. I felt at home in the medium.

“And suddenly because I did the episode of *The Flash*, like MGM reached out about *Buckaroo Banzai* and suddenly that came together and we went out and pitched yesterday and found a home for it. I can't say who it is because that deal is not

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final, but yesterday we sold *Buckaroo Banzai* as a TV series.”

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, [Smith posted a photo of himself and actor Clancy Brown on Instagram](#), noting Clancy’s many fan favorite genre roles, including Rawhide in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*. On July 29<sup>th</sup>, he [opened up to superhero hype.com](#) about his wish-list of directors to shepherd Buckaroo’s adventures onto the small screen. By all indications, Buckaroo was back in the saddle and galloping towards a date with television history.

And then, like so many times before, suddenly he wasn’t.

## Fall 2016

It is somewhat apropos that the person to scoop Buckaroo’s sudden departure from the comeback trail was *FilmBuffOnline*’s Rich Drees, one of the few to mull over the potentially awkward fit of Kevin Smith with Buckaroo back on May 16<sup>th</sup>. On October 4<sup>th</sup> [Drees revealed the brewing legal troubles with Buckaroo](#) in an article where W.D. Richter unleashed the bombshell that, “...the rights to the actual character of Buckaroo Banzai actually lie with screen writer Earl Mac Rauch. And that could impact the television version of the film that writer/director Kevin Smith is currently developing with MGM for Amazon Studios,” according to Drees. Richter is quoted, saying:

“Mac’s original contract is about the shortest I’ve ever seen in the motion picture business,” Richter

states. “It’s about four pages long with a few lines going onto a fifth page. It’s for a draft and two sets of revisions based on an original idea by ‘The Writer’ which the contract calls ‘The Property.’ And [Mac] is hired to write and deliver a first draft screenplay and two sets of changes, based on ‘The Property.’”

The essence of Richter’s argument appeared to be that the originator of the contract had purchased the rights to make *Buckaroo Banzai* only, and hired Rauch as the screen writer on the project. They had not purchased any further rights to the characters or future film or television appearances of the same. The topic is more fully discussed in an extensive [interview with W.D. Richter](#) published on *FilmBuffOnline* the same day.

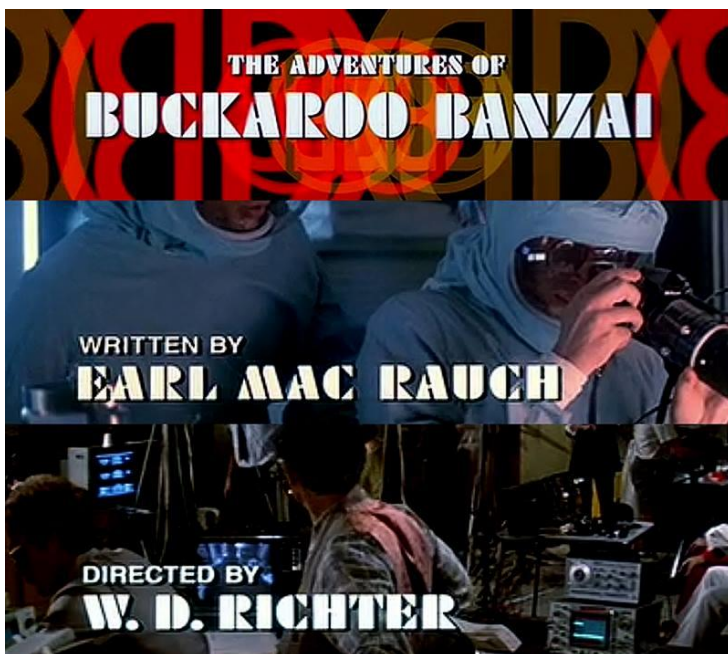
By October 16<sup>th</sup>, W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch were ready to make a formal statement on the [Banzai Institute Facebook page](#). It begins:

“As fans of Dr. Buckaroo Banzai’s adventures, some of you may have heard rumors or read in the latest issue of the Banzai Institute’s [World Watch One Newsletter](#) (10/16) that we are engaged in an ongoing battle with MGM regarding the ownership of rights to both THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI ACROSS THE 8TH DIMENSION and to the entire Buckaroo universe that Earl Mac Rauch began creating a full decade before the actual movie...

“A little history is probably in order. Come with us in the time machine back to March 25, 1981, when the producer Sydney Beckerman received from W.D. Richter and Neil Canton a bound volume they called “A Buckaroo Banzai Sampler” consisting of extracts from no fewer than five separate Buckaroo Banzai adventures.”

The statement goes on to describe how, of the five adventures written by Rauch, David Begelman chose a single treatment to pursue as a film. Richter described the crux of the dispute as follows:

“A problem arises (the root of the dispute) in that nowhere does MGM define in the contract exactly what underlying material was to be the source of Mac’s ‘work’. He was definitely not hired to write an Original Screenplay because the MGM contract specifically engaged him only to write a script based on what it called “the Property”, which the studio itself defined as “an original story idea by Writer”...an idea, as we know, that came to them in the form of an underlying treatment they never owned because its acquisition was never even mentioned in the contract. Instead, all of Mac’s fees



**Credit where it’s due:** The banner accompanying Richter and Rauch’s Facebook announcement of October 16, 2020. Courtesy of the Banzai Institute

were linked directly to his work only on the script itself!”

Over a month passed, during which emails between Team Banzai and MGM undoubtedly zinged back and forth as both parties attempted to size up the situation. On November 28<sup>th</sup>, [an article by Eriq Gardner](#) appeared in the *Hollywood Reporter* bearing the headline, “MGM Sues ‘Buckaroo Banzai’ Writer and Director Over Right to Make New TV Series.” This time around, we were treated to MGM’s version of the narrative:

“Naturally, in MGM’s lawsuit filed by Rotstein, the studio takes a different view.

“MGM contends that the services of Rauch and Richter were provided on a ‘work-made-for-hire’ basis,’ or alternatively, that it was assigned ‘all exclusive rights under copyright to the screenplay and motion picture, and the characters, plots, themes, dialogue, mood, settings, pace, sequence of events, and other protected elements therein.”

To add insult to industry, MGM further claimed that Richter and Rauch violated a publicity provision in their contracts by simply talking to *FilmBuffOnline* about the legal implications of the contract in October.

The fallout from the dispute soon materialized in another article from November 28<sup>th</sup>, this one written by Dominic Patten and Erik Pedersen for [deadline.com](#). The story’s first two paragraphs set the tone early, and it wasn’t cheerful:

“There hasn’t been a single ruling in MGM’s copyright lawsuit for a Buckaroo Banzai TV series, but there’s already two clear casualties: Kevin Smith and the show itself, at least for now. After the studio filed legal paperwork November 23 against the 1984 movie’s director W.D. Richter and writer Earl Mac Rauch, the *Clerks* creator went online today to declare ‘I’m no longer involved’ with the proposed Amazon TV series version.

“‘This is not what I signed up for,’” Smith said of the legal issues while praising MGM in other respects (watch the video below). ‘I was caught off-guard [by the lawsuit]. I literally had no idea. It blows, man, because that’s the closest I’ve [come] to having my own show so far.”

By this time, the year was late and winter was beginning to settle in for both Smith and Buckaroo. Richter and Rauch hunkered down to mull over their next move.

### Spring 2017

It wasn’t until March 16, 2017, exactly ten months since Kevin Smith’s announcement of the May before, that Team Banzai’s final move was revealed in another article by Eriq Gardner in the *Hollywood Reporter*. Not content to buckle under MGM’s legal weight, Richter and Rauch opted to go on offense. Gardner reports:

“According to original complaint filed by MGM in November, Rauch and Richter have gotten in the way of reprising Buckaroo’s adventures for Amazon Studios with Kevin Smith at the helm. After The Hollywood Reporter broke news about the litigation, Smith bowed out. Nevertheless, there’s still plenty to resolve, with both sides seeking declaratory relief on ownership and the creators also now adding a counterclaim for copyright infringement.”

At last, the lines had been drawn, and the stage set. It was finally time to get to the bottom of who exactly owned Buckaroo and when they were going to make a goddamned TV show already.

### Summer 2020

Or not.

In the three years since MGM and Team Banzai squared off against one another, media reports remain strangely mute on the subject. It is true that legal battles can sometimes drag on for years in the courts, but the complete absence of information regarding progress on either suit is worthy of note.

In the absence of information, we are left with the dubious option of speculation. It is possible that the resolution of the law suits happened in open court and were not deemed newsworthy, but that seems unlikely. It is equally possible that the matter was quietly settled out of court. A settlement would have the virtue of offering advantages to both parties—lesser legal costs come to mind—while keeping the matter “out of the papers,” assuming that newspapers are still being published in this day and age.

There is always the unsettling possibility that we may never know for sure. Life is filled with mysteries—Buckaroo’s life more than most. And where there is mystery, adventure is rarely far behind. Perhaps someday this latest mystery in Buckaroo’s long litany of legal side quests will be solved at last, and the adventure will, finally, be allowed to continue. 🐦

### “Evil, Pure and Simple, in the 25<sup>th</sup> Century!”

By Scott Tate

What does sci-fi icon Buck Rogers have in common with Buckaroo Banzai, other than a similar first name?\* Ask the Lectroids... and the Saurians.



**Look! A Saurian!** Photo Credit: NBCUniversal Media, LLC

Buck Rogers—a 20th century man of action who accidentally undergoes suspended animation and awakens five hundred years in the future—was created by Philip Francis Nowlan in 1928. The character has appeared in pulp magazines, comic strips, radio shows, movie serials, and other media, including the television series *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1979-1981).

One episode of that series, “Mark of the Saurian,” bears a loose resemblance to an aspect of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*, specifically Buckaroo’s post-ionized state enabling him to perceive the Lectroids’ true appearances when they are posing as humans. In Buck’s case it’s a group of lizard-like humanoid aliens who attempt to infiltrate human military resources in order to renege on a recent treaty and resume war. They appear as humans themselves by means of perception-altering electronic gizmos worn on their wrists. Buck, because of a combination of a high fever and his slightly different 20th century physiology, can see a shimmering green glow leaking through the illusion, and at times he can see their true form entirely. Buck’s attempts to expose them might remind fans of Buckaroo’s denouncement of the Lectroids at the press conference.

We’re not suggesting that this episode directly inspired any similar elements in *Buckaroo Banzai*. After all, the trope of alien invaders disguising themselves as humans goes back a long way and has been explored in many forms. But it’s a fun coincidence for fans of both Buck and Buckaroo.

“Mark of the Saurian” was scripted by Francis Moss and directed by Barry Crane. The sixth episode of the second season, it originally aired on February 5, 1981.

**\*For the record**, yes, we know that “Buck” is a nickname. His real first name is traditionally given as Anthony, but it’s William in the television series discussed here.

### Making Their Way in the World Today:

#### The *Cheers*/Lectroid Connections

By Scott Tate

Sometimes, as Gary Portnoy sang, you want to go where everybody knows your name...even if you work in a place where everyone’s named John. The next time you’re watching reruns of a certain sitcom set in a cozy Boston bar, see if you can spot the following Lectroids.

Dan Hedaya, who played John Gomez in *Buckaroo Banzai*, had a sporadically recurring role on *Cheers* as loutish Nick Tortelli, ex-husband of feisty waitress Carla (Rhea Perlman). Nick appeared onscreen in half a dozen episodes starting with “Battle of the Exes” (January 5, 1984) and was additionally referenced in dialog on other occasions. After Nick remarried, Hedaya starred in his own short-lived, and now mostly forgotten, spin-off: *The Tortellis*, lasting 13 episodes in 1987. After the cancellation of *The Tortellis*, he returned to *Cheers* one last time during the show’s final season (“Loathe and Marriage,” February 4, 1993).

A few months before *Buckaroo Banzai* hit theaters, Christopher Lloyd prominently guest-starred in *Cheers*’ two-part second season finale “I’ll Be Seeing You” (May 3 and May 10, 1984) as an eccentric artist named Philip Semenko. Bartender Sam (Ted Danson) initially wants his off-and-on paramour Diane (Shelley Long) to model for one of Semenko’s paintings, then changes his mind. He is subsequently irked when she poses anyway, sparking the latest rift in their tumultuous romance.

In some scenes, Sam pretends to have trouble remembering Semenko’s name, referring to him in one instance as “Smirnoff.” Fans might be reminded of Yakov Smirnoff, who played the National Security Advisor in *Buckaroo Banzai*...although it was more likely to make people think of vodka at the time.

After the summer break following that finale, *Cheers* returned in the fall to kick off its third season with another two-parter, “Rebound” (September 27 and October 4, 1984). These episodes introduced the soon-to-be-popular character Frasier Crane. But before Kelsey Grammer was cast in the role, it had originally been envisioned with John Lithgow in mind. What a different career trajectory for Lithgow that might have been! Frasier went on to his own self-titled spin-off that fared much better than *The Tortellis*, lasting eleven seasons (1993-2004).

Luckily, unlike *Buckaroo Banzai*, *Cheers* is a work of fiction...although I’d bet that no one’s seen a new original Semenko painting since Bigboote’s sudden disappearance around 1984. Hmmm

### **BANZAI INSTITUTE ALERT! FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!**

#### **NOTICE TO ALL BLUE BLAZE IRREGULARS**

*World Watch One* is pleased to announce the upcoming publication of ***The Buckaroo Banzai Collector's Compendium*** by fellow Blue Blaze Irregular, DeWayne "BuckarooTrooper" Todd.

Featuring exclusive interviews with Laura Harrington, Billy Vera, Bruce McBroom, Radford Polinsky, and other influencers within the *Buckaroo Banzai* community, the Institute was able to catch up with DeWayne to get the inside scoop on the book.

"I was a collector of all things related to *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* before I even saw the movie. So naturally, I wanted to write a book about all of these remarkable treasures." †

"The vision for the book," notes DeWayne, "is to create a single stop shop where a reader can appreciate all the great materials associated with the early promotion and marketing of the film. Domestic and international posters, lobby cards, press releases, photography, fanzines, and all the other assorted advertising materials. I have thrown everything I had access to into this book, which will be a large format (8 1/2" by 11") publication with nearly 150 full color images including some previously unpublished photographs."

"While assembling and studying images for this book, I began compiling notes and observations about the history of the film and how the studios handled the marketing of *Buckaroo Banzai*. There is an enormous amount of material that appeared in magazines, promotional press kits, advertisements, and merchandising that supported the release of the film and contributed to capturing the hearts of the amazing fandom that still remains loyal to the movie."

**DDT Publishing** has engaged Rondo Hatton and Pulp Factory Award winning artist, Mark Maddox, to develop an exclusive image for the cover. Mark is a recognized master of fantasy and horror illustration whose work can be found on many magazines and blu-rays including Shout Factory productions, *SCREAM Magazine*, and *Little Shoppe of Horrors*.

Known for his incredible fantasy and horror illustrations, Mark noted that he has enjoyed revisiting this classic hit. "When preparing art for a film, I begin with repeated viewings of the source material. I try to capture the impressionistic elements that rise to the surface for me. *Buckaroo Banzai* is a little tougher because I could sit and draw moments from the film for months. In this case, I am focused on trying to boil down a part of the essence of the film. The hero. The good side of the film. The bad side of the film. Lizardo. Pull in the energy. The quirkiness. And most of all, be true to the source material. I take the content of the film very seriously."

"I have probably seen this film ten or fifteen times, but in watching it again, I would say that there are lines and bits and pieces that I have discovered, that I never caught before but am catching now. There is still more to chew on. And that is great. It is layered concept. It is layered comedy. To me, the movie is still fresh, and it works very well in repeated viewings."

† See the interview with DeWayne Todd that was featured in in the [September 2018 issue of \*World Watch One\*](#).



Photo by DeWayne Todd

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You can see some of Mark's incredible art at [www.maddoxplanet.com](http://www.maddoxplanet.com).

DeWayne talked about some of the research that he did. "The book includes conversations with people like Bruce McBroom, who was still photographer for *Buckaroo Banzai*. Bruce provided his perspective into the developmental process of the movie and how the vision for the world of *Buckaroo Banzai* was conceived. Nearly every photograph associated with the movie was masterfully shot by McBroom. What resulted was a fascinating, contextualized world of iconic imagery that truly represents the film, much of which will be highlighted in the book."

In developing the material for the book, Bruce McBroom shared his photographic vision. "As a still photographer on a movie, my first duty is to be faithful to the director's vision. I am looking for that one still image that will get across the whole idea of the movie. *Buckaroo Banzai* was a gift from that perspective. Visually, between Rick Richter, Michael Riva, Aggie Rodgers, the cinematography crew, the lighting crew, they made it easy to find many great images to represent the film."

DeWayne reflected on Richter's compelling vision. "Within *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* we see the birth of geek culture populism. The ***Buckaroo Banzai Collector's Compendium*** was developed to remind readers just how wonderfully complex the world around Buckaroo Banzai can be. Whether it is a copy of the novel, a comic book, a tee-shirt or one of the thirty-five thousand promotional headbands, there is something in *Buckaroo Banzai* that appeals to every interest. Find your pleasure and let it inspire you to find 'beauty in everyday life'."

"There were many challenges in a project of this scope," DeWayne explained. "The biggest challenge was narrowing in on a specific aspect of the film. There are a host of fascinating elements that could be examined, but this book will focus on the visual promotional element. Navigating the copyright and trademark landscape associated with these materials was a significant learning experience, but I am very happy with how things have come together for the use of images in the book and am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute something insightful and meaningful to the world of Banzai fandom."

"This book is for fans of *Buckaroo Banzai* who enjoy seeing the visual aspects associated with the film and in having immediate access to the iconic images associated with the movie. As both fan and author, my primary focus was to create a book that I would enjoy and want on my shelf. That is what this is."

The ***Buckaroo Banzai Collector's Compendium*** will be available on Amazon.com and at select science fiction conventions when conventions return to operation. Mark and DeWayne will be offering a limited-edition poster of the cover in conjunction with the release.

Watch for the book release this Fall.

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# GEAR-UP

**They promised us a sequel. Now you can settle for the t-shirt.**

**Saddle up with this stylish bit of apparel and show your true feelings for Team Banzai's lost chapter in film history at the [TeeBungalow](#) store on the [TEEPUBLIC](#) website. Believe it!**

# TAKE OFF

## From the Bureau Office

**Editor's Note:** The effects of the pandemic on large gatherings has rendered our usual **Team Banzai Events Calendar** a perilous editorial enterprise at best this year. We decided to provide you instead with choice tidbits from the desk of the Chicago Bureau office after our third revision made it clear that "gatherings" are mostly "opportunities for cancelations" at present. Look for the return of the Events Calendar post-pandemic. -DB

### SOUNDTRACK UPDATE

The staff of *World Watch One* continue to hold out hope for an official release of the *Buckaroo Banzai* soundtrack. As discussed in the second part of Michael Boddicker's [Five Minutes of Banzai Podcast](#) interview, and covered in the [March, 2019 issue of World Watch One](#), the soundtrack is still on Michael Boddicker's mind.

Boddicker's first [Synthplex](#) event came and went in 2019 without any announcement of an official soundtrack release. The second Synthplex is postponed due to COVID-19 until October 29th, 2020. *World Watch One* and Josh Horowitz, from the Five Minutes of Banzai podcast, followed up with Boddicker as he suggested in his interview. This is his official statement:

Sean & Josh,

Hope this finds you well & safely navigating the state of affairs here on our current home planet. My friends at 5minutesofBanzai are always on my heart. Always.

Recording & remixing a real BB Soundtrack AND even the 'new' Banzai theme inches forward. Unfortunately for this issue I have nothing to report regarding a definite release date. I sincerely hope to have a better report for next issue.

Please stay safe, stay positive and keep those ganglia twitching!!!

Truly and always yours, Michael Lehmann Boddicker

So, no official date yet, but it sounds like the project is still in progress! Hopefully we'll have better news to report in the near future.

### CONGRATULATIONS!

The *World Watch One* staff extend their heartfelt congratulations to fellow staffer Steven H Silver on the publication of his first novel, [After Hastings](#). The novel is set in an alternate timeline in which, "The victory of King Harold over William the (Would-be) Conqueror at Hastings in 1066 sets in motion an ever-expanding cascade of events—beginning with a conflict with the Papacy. Rome's envoy to England, the papal legate Hildebrand, refuses to recognize Harold's right to the island kingdom's throne."

Steven proofed much of this newsletter during a busy month spent releasing his first novel, awaiting the results of Hugo voting as a finalist in the "Best Fanzine" category for editorial work on [Journey Planet](#), and updating the website for [Chicon 8's](#) successful Worldcon bid for 2022, thus disproving Dr. B. Banzai's aphorism, "Time exists so everything doesn't happen at once." Congratulations again, Steven!

### FOR ALL MANKIND

*World Watch One* would like to draw attention to the work of Denise and Mike Okuda as Technical Consultants on another alternate history story of note: The Apple + television series [For All Mankind](#). Set in an alternate history where the Soviets beat the United States to the first Moon landing, the series explores the consequences of that twist in history and the ongoing global space race it perpetuates.

At present, eight of the ten episodes in Season Two have been shot. The cast and crew are anxiously awaiting the time when the pandemic allows a safe return to production for the completion of the last two episodes.

Editor-in chief Dan Berger spoke with Mike and Denise about their work on the series during the preparation of this issue. Dan hopes to have an update on the series as part of an article exploring the Okuda's work on *For All Mankind* as well as COVID-19's recent effects on production. Look for the article in our next issue, sometime this Fall.

## Days of Note

[Buckaroo Banzai Movie Release Anniversary](#) (Aug. 10). Now's as good a time as any for another viewing or to introduce it to a first-timer. Believe it.

[DC FanDome](#) (Aug. 26, online). A free one-day virtual con showcasing upcoming content for DC comics, movies, TV, and video games, presented by Warner Bros.

[National Get Ready Day](#) (Sept. 15). The American Public Health Association encourages everyone to set aside one day each year—like the third Tuesday of September—to create or review your personal plans and supplies for emergencies affecting your household or community. We know you've already had more experience than you ever wanted with overhauling that already this year, but don't let it wear you down. *Sang froid, mes amis*.

**Autumn equinox** (Sept. 22). It's official: On this date we'll have made it past spring and summer of 2020 (or autumn and winter from the perspective of our Southern Hemisphere BBIs). Don't let your guard down but we'll get through this year yet.

[Draconids meteor shower](#) (Oct. 7). These are relatively low in frequency compared to August's Perseids or December's Geminids, but the Draconids have the perk of tending to be viewable in the early evening so you don't have to stay up late or get up early. Visible Oct. 6-10 but peaking on Oct. 7. Other October showers are the [Orionids \(Oct. 21-22\)](#) and the [Southern Taurids \(Oct. 29-30\)](#).

[Punk for a Day Day](#) (Oct. 25). Whether you express it through your playlist, your clothes and hair, or just in your heart, this is the day to reject conformity.

### CAST BIRTHDAYS

**AUGUST:** **Lewis Smith** (Aug. 1), **Kevin Rodney Sullivan** (Aug. 3), **Carl Lumbly** (Aug. 14)

**SEPTEMBER:** **James Keane** (Sept. 26), **Ronald Lacey** (Sept. 28)

**OCTOBER:** **William Traylor** (Oct. 8), **Leonard Gaines** (Oct. 13), **John Lithgow** (Oct. 19), **Christopher Lloyd & Jeff Goldblum** (both Oct. 22), **James Rosin** (exact date unavailable)