

GE News

Women talk Sci Fi

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What's inside this issue?

So what have we for you this month!

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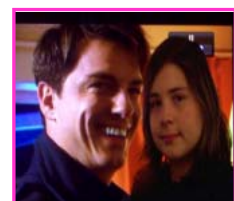
Part Two of our interview with Tim Vining



Confessions of a Colour Blind Make Up Artist



'Why I love Captain Jack Harkness'
by Deanna Black



GE look who we talked to!

Continuing our interview with Tim Vining creator, of the animated film, Star Trek Aurora.

GE News: How long does it take for you to do each episode?

Tim: My average for the first two parts has been about a year for each part, so about 10 minutes per year. Ouch, it almost hurts to say that, but animation is a very slow process. That said, I recently purchased a motion capture system that will--theoretically--speed up my production, but I'm still in the middle of getting it working. You'll know if I do if you see Part 3 come out this Summer.

GE News: Tell us how many separate shots does it take to make (for instance) 10 seconds of film?

Tim: The best analogy I can think of for how CG animation works is that the characters are like robots that you program using the software (in this case Poser) to make them go through a specific series of movements, which you then "render" as a series of still frames at 30 frames per second, then assemble into a movie, much like traditional animation is just a series of still drawings strung together. The beauty of CG animation is that I don't have to draw each frame by hand, since rendering the frames is really closer to "filming" these "robots" moving around.

GE News: Do you draw, paint, and sculpt etc in the traditional way?

Tim: I did all my life growing up, tho of course I really had no choice. That said, I think in many ways I'm fortunate to have learned art the old-fashioned way first, since there are no shortcuts when you use a pencil, paints or clay, so it really makes you hone your basic visual skills. These days--doodling aside--I work pretty much all on computer, but a lot of what I learned--anatomy, composition, design, color, etc.--I still use all the time. Contrary to what many people think, the computer is just another tool like a pencil or a paint brush: you still need some basic talent to produce something that looks good, and I'll point to a billion garish web pages and just about every PowerPoint presentation in existence as evidence of this truth.

GE News: You have had lots of very positive feedback has this inspired you?

Tim: Honestly it's what keeps me going. If I got only negative feedback on Aurora, or worse, no feedback, I think I would have given up a long time ago. Art--and I include animation in that category--is kind of pointless without an audience, so the emails I get from people telling me what they like (and even don't like) about Aurora are extremely important to me, since it helps me to know what is working and what isn't. Plus, it's just really nice to hear some praise for something you've put a lot of work into, and I even take constructive criticism as a kind of praise since it means that somebody felt that Aurora was worth the effort and time to consider what I might do to make it better.



GE look who we talked to!



GE News: You are getting close to the end of the film (I can hear you say, "No I am not!") what with episode 3 out in summer and 4 in winter (Northern Hemisphere) do you plan to do any more work in this area?

Tim: (laughing) Like I said, we'll see how close I am to the end by late this Summer. Finishing by this Winter is a best-case scenario, and depends on things going well with my motion capture system. As for the future, it's my intention to keep doing this kind of thing pretty much the rest of my life. What's really great about animation is that it utilizes just about every skill I have--writing, illustrating, animating, video editing, sound recording, acting,

directing, etc.--and even a few I don't have, like songwriting and editing computer code. I'm even contemplating learning to play the guitar. If you mean "specifically after Aurora", I have a number of stories in mind that I'd like to animate, including future episodes of Aurora, but for now I'm just taking this one day at a time and learning something new almost every time I sit down to work on it. That in itself is pretty rewarding.

GE News: What about your wife who has contributed her voice talents to the film. Has she acted before? She has done an excellent job, has she contributed in other ways?

Tim: My wife has been absolutely crucial to Aurora. I think her voice work for Kara is stellar, and most people can't tell that she is the voice for T'Ling as well, or for young Kara. Plus she sings the theme song. She did a lot of acting in high school, but never anything professional. She has helped me out in a number of other ways, mostly as a sounding board for ideas and dialog, and as a much-needed voice of reason when my ideas get a little too carried away. Just tonight she finished sewing a second motion capture suit (in addition to her own) for me to use with my new system, and she is always there to support me when I get frustrated or discouraged over yet another seemingly-insurmountable technical problem I'm having with my animation. "You'll figure it out; you always do," she tells me.



GE News: Tell us also a little about the other members of the production team and how have they contributed?

Tim: The other members of the team are my good friends who were nice enough to take the time to do voice work for Aurora, and I think they've all done a great job. One thing about animation is that people tend to focus on the animation or story, but tend not to think about the voice work, which is sometimes the most important part of animation. There is a lot of animation out there on TV that would never win awards for the visuals, but good voice acting can make even simple animation work, and by the same token bad voice work can make even the best animation almost unwatchable. Japanese animation, for instance, is technically some of the best in the world, but far too often the voice work sounds about as engaged as somebody reading the back of a cereal box.

GE News: Is there anything else that you think that your viewers would like to know about your film?



Tim: First, that I am still working on Aurora, and am committed to finishing it, so for anyone anxiously awaiting the next part: I'm sorry that it takes so long, but it will come out!

Second, that it is a work in progress, and--though I hate the idea of delays--I do periodically go back and fix things from time to time, and for the next release there will probably be some substantial improvements to some of the existing sections, so when Part 3 comes out, you'll probably want to watch the first two parts again.

Lastly, I'll reiterate that I really do appreciate the comments I get from viewers, it makes it all worth it. And I'd also like to thank GE News for your interest, and for giving me this opportunity to sit down and really think about Aurora in the course of answering these questions. It's been fun!

GE look who talked to us!

Confessions of a Colour Blind Make Up Artist : "Dick Dale's Family Business" Marked Mark Nichols

A Michael Jackson impersonator, a multitude of 1980's era rap dancers, a brutal mob boss, a humpback monster chained up in the basement, an Uzi-toting, acid scarred, mask wearing woman.

This is not some strange flashback you are experiencing from watching too many 1980's films and overdosing on junk food.

You are in a suburb of South Australia in the dead of winter on the set of Dick Dale's current video project "Family Business". It is July 19, 2008.

Permit me to back track and fill you in on my friendship with Dick and the path that led me to this extraordinary day...

I met Dick when I was running an introductory workshop on Special Effects Make Up at the Carclew Youth Arts Centre in North Adelaide, South Australia in 1992. Dick had recently relocated from his home town of Queensland and was preparing his first S.A. video "Blue Dog". We clicked immediately because of our love for horror, science fiction, B-grade and exploitation films.

Three hours after meeting Dick and his friend, he was made up to look like an alien with bizarre almond shaped eyes created from sunglass lenses and home made play dough (as a short term substitute for more expensive mortician wax) coloured with pancake make up. He had bought along a plastic toy ray gun and wore a leather jacket to complete the look of being 'alien'. I was impressed!

At the end of the day Dick showed his appreciation and mutual respect by giving me a T-shirt he and his friend had designed and had screen-printed. It depicted a head being cleaved in half by an axe!

Dick's next video was 'The Beast From Bomb Beach' which came a close second in 'The Graveyard Shifty Film Competition' on the Arena Channel, Australia.

Since then, I have been involved in many Dick Dale projects including: 'Flies', 'Yowie', 'Creamy Love' and 'Pelican Boy' to name just a few.

...So it was that on Saturday, July 19, 2008, I went to the set of Dick Dale's "Family Business".

I had been asked to create a design for the make-up and mask of a character called "Mum" or "Mother". My brief of her character history (which is not explored in the actual story) was that she was once an extremely beautiful woman married to a mob boss who had gone insane and thrown acid onto her own face and horribly disfigured herself. She then took to wearing a mask similar to a doll face.

Initially Dick wanted me to capture the creepiness that the face and moving eyes of a real doll had. A small amount of research later and I soon realised that dolls on the current toy market have a face too small to cover the face of an adult woman. To sculpt one that would fit an adult sized face would not work either because they just don't make toy girl dolls that big.



Marked Mark Nichols applies Burn Make-Up to Natasha Keelan

GE look who talked to us!

From there, I whipped up a thirty-minute oil clay sculpture (plastidine as we call it in Australia). It was based on a discussion with Dick to try and capture the cherubic yet creepy face of the child mannequin puppet in Dario Argento's 'Deep Red'. But we soon both agreed it was not the path to take for the character of 'Mother' either.

Dick and I then discussed his desire to make her a strong female character that could kick a man's butt if need be. Much like Tura Satana's portrayal of 'Varla' created by Russ Meyer in "Faster Pussy Cat! Kill! Kill!"



Natasha Keelan as 'Mother'. Notice the air tubes attached to the guns to eject empty Uzi shells

Dick wanted the mask "to be the most beautiful thing about her but also the most chilling". So I researched further...

My research then led to parallels with Jerry Hall's character in Tim Burton's 'Batman' as the unfortunate scarred wife of Jack Nicholson's portrayal of the Joker.

Another more chilling mask was worn by the angelic, yet faceless female lead of the French classic "Eyes without a Face". Wow, if you have not seen this film, try and find a copy and spare one hour and twenty minutes of your time...it is a great film and ahead of its time depicting face transplants from corpses.

We both agreed we liked the bizarre mechanical robots portrayed in the "Abominable Dr. Phibes" films and ended up using a generic mask made from paper pulp worth \$2.00 from a discount variety store. I painted it with acrylic paint and finished it with a gloss enamel varnish available from hobby shops. I hacked a hole by the side of the mouth with a knife because the character has a large cigar in her mouth.

For the bum make up I used a combination of Gelefects and latex. Because the Gelefects was mainly on the neck area of actress Natasha Keelan, constant maintenance was required to keep it adhered to her neck. It turned out that Natasha wore the make up for around seven hours in total. Once the final edit is done she will be seen on screen for approximately forty five seconds to a minute at the most.

A big back story for a such a small moment of Adelaide video history huh?

Dick's projects give me and many other people the opportunity to continue practicing our skills and working in the film genres we love so much.

Dick is the founder of the national Australian Trasharama-A-Go-Go Film & Video Festival, a tour which is now celebrating its eleventh year. Check out his site for tour dates.

I hope we can all be inspired by Dick's motivation and tell our stories / follow our dreams against all odds to get them told regardless, just like he has.

Bye for now fiends, er, friends!

'Marked' Mark Nichols
www.myspace.com/markedbymark



Natasha Keelan as Mother in Dick Dales Family Business. Notice the spent Uzi shells on the floor, a nice touch!

GE why I love...!

Captain Jack Harkness

Captain Jack Harkness has everything; he has the looks, the attitude, and the personality to go with it. He is a man of mystery, making his fans unsure of what to expect from him next. He can make you want to keep watching him for hours on end. This is what I love about him.



At first all you see of Jack is his flirty, sexy side, but slowly as he 'unravels' you notice that he is also serious under all his jokes, and pick-up lines, that there is more to him than meets the eye. We are eventually able to see that he is protective and really cares about the people that are around and close to him; in the *Torchwood* episode *Cyberwoman* he sacrifices and ultimately subjects himself to numerous electrocutions in order to give his team enough time to be able to get out of Hub. Jack routinely sacrifices his lives in order to save his loved ones, if he didn't he wouldn't be himself, his hero complex is a part of him, and so a part of the person that we insist on watching.

When we first met Jack in the *Doctor Who* episode *The Empty Child*, he is a con-man attempting to pull a sting on the Doctor and Rose. By the end of the next episode Jack was ready to die in order to save the Doctor, Rose, and the population of London, by teleporting both himself and the bomb into his ship at the last minute. However the Doctor, seeing his amazing turn around, saves him at the last minute and allows him to join the TARDIS crew. In the last of Jack's season one episodes he is shown to have dramatically changed from the con-man who would turn around to run and hide, to the one of a kind hero that fights until the death, which he does by sacrificing himself to the Daleks in order to give the Doctor more time to save the Earth. This mighty change is one of the things that melds Jack into the man that we all know and love, if he hadn't changed then I doubt that he would be as popular as he is today, well he wouldn't be popular for anything other than his looks alone.

Jack's whole past absolutely screams mystery. All we know is what happened whilst he was travelling with the Doctor and Rose, when and how he was first recruited by Torchwood and what has happened to him since, and little random comments that he has said in the few times he has talked about his past, even then we are not sure if what is being said is true. One fact that has kept being mentioned through *Doctor Who* is the missing two years of his memory. What could Jack have done to deserve his memories being taken? This feeds the mystery that is Captain Jack, the mystery of his life. This in turn makes us want to keep coming back for more of the Captain, wanting to find out little details of his past, even something as small as his name, at least it does for me.

Captain Jack has many qualities and traits that make us love to watch him. Without just one of these qualities I doubt that the character would have received as big a fan base that he has. If he were to not have a single one of any of his traits, or flaws, whichever way you look at it, he wouldn't be the man that many people, including myself, have come to love and look forward to seeing every week.

Deanna Black

GE look where we went!



Sean Williams and Aron Eisenberg
TN6 Special Guests

Star Trek and Star Wars Fans Get Their Fill!!

Friday August 22nd marked the beginning of Terra Nova 6, a Sci Fi Con run by Terra Nova Events (TNE) in Adelaide, South Australia and GE were an active part of the three days. The two guests at the Con, Aron Eisenberg, "Nog" in Deep Space 9 and Sean Williams author of Star Wars novel adaption of the Star Wars Game "The Force Unleashed".

We eased into the weekend by attending 'Hanging with Aron' on Friday night. Where we had a chance to have an intimate gathering with Aron. After filling ourselves with great food (catered by the Police Club) and chatting with Aron we sat down to hear Aron talk about the love of his craft and how he prepared for his role in "Once a Paper Moon". TNE is well known for giving attendees an up-close and personal experience and all who attended were able to get to know Aron, talk personally with him and take away a feeling of having really met him.

After a late night of catching up with friends from all around Australia we arrived at the Con. The Room was buzzing as people arrived and then checking out

how much they would have less in their pockets after visiting the dealer tables for that must buy item.

It was a special time for GE News as we were part of the guest line up as well. To entertain convention goers GE News delivered a multimedia extravaganza on how 'Science Fiction has become Science Fact'. Look out for an abridged version in an upcoming issue. The session well received with many amazed to find out that Science Fiction writers are amazing because they really can predict the future!!



The Costumer's Guild of South Australia presented a parade of costumes that spanned the many incarnations of Starfleet uniforms and aliens with the Klingons being most intimidating (of course)! The oddest sight was a costume worn by frequent con attendee, Hartley, the tallest Ferengi we had ever seen, I guess that is what a Ferengi would look like on growth hormones!! Then it was time for the first of the special guests to arrive.

Sean Williams, internationally successful South Australian author, born in Whyalla. (*I was also born in Whyalla so I was very proud to meet a fellow Whyallian. E*) Sean had the room fascinated and laughing as he talked about being a writer in the Sci Fi genre. (Look out for our interview with him that will appear in the next issue of GE) Many a diehard Star Trek fan sneaked to the Dymocks stall, after his talk to buy his book to get it signed.



It was n't long before special guest Aron Eisenberg jumped on stage and from his opening words had everyone laughing, all loving being able to see this actor from Deep Space 9. The great thing is that not only does he love what he did on DS9 but he actually does love all forms of Sci Fi, reading, watching and writing it himself.



Sean Williams returned to the stage to join Aron and with Star Trek and Star Wars fans from the audience debated the issue 'Star Trek or Star Wars, which one is better?' After an hour or so the debate was called "a draw" with both sides acknowledging that Star Trek and Star Wars have there place and offer many hours of enjoyment to many people.

With an autograph in hand, events drew to a close but TN6 was not over. Changing into our "fineries" to attend a 'Feasting with the Ferengi' Dinner that night. More great food, (again at the Police Club) lots of laughter and guests getting even more individual time with Aron. There wasn't much we didn't know about Aron by the end of the night!

But wait there's more! On Sunday we drove to the National Wine Centre in Adelaide to join Aron for a Wine tour and more food as we sat down to have a lunch with other VIP ticket holders. More food, more laughter and finally exhausted by the time things finally wrapped up. Terra Nova rocks!! We had a WOW! of a weekend. This was not only meeting Aron and Sean but also catching up with other Sci Fi fans from around the country. Wonderfully tired, we went our separate ways with many memories of great guests, great friends and great food from the three days of Terra Nova 6.

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So let's be friends!

Click on the Picture to get there

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