

2004 Worldcon Masquerade Report

by John Hertz

This report of Noreascon IV was written for *Chronicle*, although not printed there. Since instead the December 2004 issue (No. 254), which did have “Worldcon Masquerade Report” on the cover, carried four full pages of Charles Mohapel’s color photos after my main con report, I don’t complain. But the text of my Masquerade Report wanted a home. It was published in Sandy & Pierre Pettinger’s *Costume & Masquerade* No. 20 (Autumn 2004); *File 770* is its first general appearance. For *Chronicle* I write to a wide audience, whom I do not expect to know as much as you.

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The Masquerade at a science fiction convention was a costume party once, decades ago; today, a competition on stage, with a panel of judges and a full house. Entires in the Original Division are things we haven’t yet seen, from s-f, or legend, or the entrants’ imagination. The Re-Creation Division is faithful to existing sources, in film, television, graphic novels. Novice, Journeyman, and Master (plus often Junior) Classes are based on experience. Review by a Workmanship Judge backstage is optional.

It’s a grand event. I know nothing quite like it. Drew Sanders (Masquerade Director for the ’88 Worldcon, Nolacon II) calls it a cross between *kabuki* and Little Theater.

At Noreascon IV this year, as a friendly gesture, standing outside Registration was “Irving”, the 50-foot dragon that closed the show at the Millennium Philcon Masquerade (’01 Worldcon, see *Chronicle* 220). But this year’s Masquerade was held the night *after* the Hugo Awards, as if they were its warm-up act, perplexing the costumers.

Masquerade Director was Richard Hill; Master of Ceremonies, Susan De Guardiola; judges, Rae Bradbury-Enslin, Laurel Cunningham-Hill, Terry Pratchett, Julie Zetterberg; workmanship judges, Heidi Hooper, Kevin Roche, Carol Salemi, Andrew Trembley; 35 adult entires, 12 juniors. Pratchett’s publisher gave \$500 as a prize for the best entry from Pratchett’s work; Pratchett kindly added \$100 of his own to make three prizes of \$100, \$200, and \$300; all this was generous but distortive.

The auditorium had been built by the con committee. Large video screens at either side of the stage helped. Audio was troublesome all weekend. Hill delayed starting half an hour after his published time, then actually began half an hour after that. Video was fed to some hotel rooms, and to the Mended Drum tavern

in the Concourse (central hall of the convention). This year John Maizels and his crew were able to show two freeze-frames of each entry after it left the stage.

De Guardiola, the fine M.C. of the LoneStarCon II Masquerade (’97 Worldcon, *Chronicle* 195), was largely free from her personal plague of sheep, perhaps because she kept a stuffed Vampire Sheep mascot conspicuously on the lectern. There was baa-ing in the audience, which she eventually invited; at Closing Ceremonies, when next year’s concom as a stunt replayed the weekend, a caption read *Maaah-squerade*. Her voice is like burnt honey.

Sara Weinstein in “Do Your Magic” (Best Presentation, Junior; Workmanship Award for tailoring) showed timing and focus placing a basket and raising a ball she made glow. Talis Thorndike Love showed poise as “Star Sprite” (Judges’ Choice). Stephanie Kastan was the night’s first Pratchett joke, “Death of Rats Goes to Worldcon” (Best in Class; Workmanship Award for papier maché), promptly topped by Eric Weingart, “The Grim Sweeper” (Most Humorous; Workmanship Award for props).

“A Pale Rider” (Chris Kramer, Matt Ragsdale) won Best Master, Best Workmanship of Show, and the 2nd Place Pratchett prize. The rider was Death, a hooded skeleton from *Discworld* – on a motorcycle, followed by the Luggage, a trunk with two dozen human feet. The Luggage, under remote control, had been all over the con, so was technically ineligible, but rules get exceptions.

Sionna Klassen for “Dragon Priestess” wore floor-length white chiffon sleeves (Most Beautiful, Journeyman; Workmanship Award for precise re-creation). David Ramsay for “Eight Seconds” (Master) rode a bucking cockroach, with Kimberley Ramsay as a rodeo clown. Gadgetry of the night was “Adventures in Time” (Best Journeyman; Workmanship Judges’ Choice; Clinton Alvord, Brian Culver, Amy Johnson, Bonnie Kenderdine, Cheri & Karl Walker, Carol Zelman), a tall time machine that flashed and revolved, as Louisa May Alcott, Amelia Earhart, Annie Oakley, Mary Shelley, Mark Twain, H.G. Wells, and the police all got into the act.

For a pageant it’s the Pettingers. Their “FutureIkons”, following four Hannah Shapero paintings – displayed in the Art Show – brought a new Raphael, in yellow, angel of Biotechnology; Uriel, in green, Ecology; Michael, in red, High-Energy Physics; Gabriel, in blue, Telecommunications (Best Re-Creation,

Master; Best Workmanship in Class; John Blaker, Jeannette Holloman, Sandy & Pierre Pettinger).

What could be next? Mountains could; in the cold, a ritual dance, a brandished sword, a woman in spring gold, and the summoned Sun. This was “Arctic Circle” (Best Workmanship, Journeyman; Carol Botteron, Jill & Don Eastlake, John Hatch, Rob Hupp, Janet Johnston, Allan Kent, Pat Vandenberg, Kate Waterous), winning Best of Show. And Don Eastlake chaired the Business Meeting. It’s fannish to swim in many waters.

Best Novice was David Agro, “Blight, Unseelie Fey” (Workmanship Award for hair, make-up, prosthetics), dark with strange hands and rags, bending, reaching, grinning, crouching, fluent and eerie. A Masquerade entry needs a sense of event, usually contrast, or change; it can, with exceptional posture and movement, be character. “Blight” was wonderful. I hear Agro acts him at a local fantasy fair. Yvette Ciancio’s “Chimera” (Master), in a feathered headdress, scales over her body, was pensive: what does the Chimera think?

A boy with a book knelt outdoors. As he read “the Old Ones” or “Cthulhu”, a monster behind him came more and more to life. Something horrible might have happened, but just then “Howie! Time for church!” This was “Lovecraft’s Inspiration” (Most Spellbinding, Novice; Workmanship Honorable Mention; Joanne Bruno-Miller, Donna Drapeau, Tam & Deale Miller, Will Pett, Adam Tuchman). A similar lot had won the 3rd Place Pratchett prize, “Inside the Mind” (Novice; Workmanship Award for three-dimensional costume craft; Matthew McNally, Jennifer Michalicek, Nicole Smith) of Pratchett, who sat in thought while a turtle with four elephants and a disc crawled by.

Finally, in an ecstasy of Pratchettizing, “Not the Usual Unusual”, with Cohen the Barbarian and a dread cargo which, opened despite warnings, proved to be Tom Jones (Most Humorous, Master; Workmanship Award for construction and distressing techniques; Jennie Faries, Bobby & Marty Gear, Jeff Poretsky, Ron Robinson, Mark Van Name, Vicki & Ken Warren). This cracked up many, won the 1st Place Pratchett prize, and was the end.

