

Worshipping The Product

I-CON VII And The Iconography Of SF

Javits Lecture Center held within its carcinogenic bowels a vast, swarming hive of intelligence devoted to the veneration of a peculiar subsection of popular culture. The event was I-CON VII, and from Friday afternoon to Sunday night, fans of science fiction film, television, comics, and literature filtered methodically through corridors and lecture halls to see and be seen by the objects of their adulation. Films were shown, autographs signed, merchandise bought, and egos stroked: it was, in short, a typical science fiction convention.

Panels featuring actors, authors, scientists, artists, and filmmakers broke up the general chaos with fairly coherent discussions of subjects like "Designing Alien Cultures" and "Breaking into Filmmaking." Time not spent listening to these debates was easily occupied by exploring the two dealers' rooms, watching on going movies, or frequenting the various

specialty booths cluttering the hallways.

The I-CON guests were, like the science fiction field itself, a contradictory omniumgatherum comprised of differing sources and influences. There, alongside widely recognized authors like Harlan Ellison, James Morrow, Barry Malzberg, and Paul Anderson, were television actors Anthony Ainley (Doctor Who) and Adam West (Batman). Comics professionals Chris Claremont and Michael Kaluta jostled for complimentary sandwiches with theoretical physicists and low-budget filmmakers. It was a thematically undifferentiated convention (effectively organized by Stony Brook graduate student Ralph Schiano and a cast of dozens), welcoming best and worst, literate and illiterate, indiscriminately.

The I-CON crowd was largely composed of good-natured people hustling to show appreciation of their favorite creators, but to paraphrase Ellison, adulation is damn near the only thing these creators get. As the fountainhead

of all novels, films, comics, and merchandise, they are — with few exceptions — allotted a position in the financial hierarchy roughly equivalent to day laborers (and in the case of the Hernandez Brothers of Love and Rockets, who roofed their publisher's house for pocket money, they are day laborers).

The undiscerning embrace I-Con offers to the field of science fiction makes for variety, but keeps distinctions blurred, thus perpetuating — in its own innocent way — the same evils so graphically described by many of its guests. In a society ruled by the market dollar, science fiction will be forever trapped within its genre prison — not by exploitative corporate publishers, but by Star Trek fans eager to slap down another buck for the newest novelization or action figure based on the Hit Motion Picture.

"We has met the enemy, and it is us."

Article by Kyle Silfer



