

I M P U L S E

LE BULLETIN D'INFORMATION DE L'ASSOCIATION MONTRÉLAISE DE SCIENCE-FICTION ET DE FANTASTIQUE, L'AMonSFF

January-February / Janvier-Février 2025 (Vol. 28, No./N° 1)

NEXT CLUB MEETING: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

1:00PM-5:00PM

Exclusively on ZOOM at: www.MonSFFA.ca

MEETING THEME: Which corner of your home have you set aside as a hobby workspace? Share photos of this workstation with your fellow club members!

FEBRUARY'S AGENDA INCLUDES:

- **WHICH GENRES MIX WELL WITH SF&F?**—*Romance? Mystery? Horror? We discuss which genres make for a good mix with SF&F?*
- **WATER IN SF&F!**—*Water is indispensable to life as we know it. We examine SF&F's use of water as a story element!*
- **MY HOBBY SPACE!**—*Nook? Workshop? Kitchen table? Where in your home is located your hobby workstation? Tell us about your hobbies, hobby space, and hobby work habits!*

REMAINING 2025 MEETINGS AND EVENTS

March 8
 April 12
 May 10
 June 14 (Field Trip)
 July 13 (Sunday BBQ-in-the-Park)
 August 16
 September 20
 October 25 (Super Sci-Fi Book Sale)
 November 8
 December 6 (Christmas Dinner/Party)
 December 13 (Virtual Holiday Gathering)
**Meeting Dates to be Confirmed;
 All Dates Subject to Change**

2024 HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The club celebrated the 2024 festive season with, first, our traditional downtown Christmas Dinner and Party, then a virtual get-together the following weekend.

The dinner was held on Saturday evening, December 7 at Le Nouvel Hotel's in-house restaurant, the Novella. Folk enjoyed a fine meal and drinks while our traditional fund-raising raffle provided each attendee with not one, but *two* prizes, beautifully gift wrapped for the occasion.

The following weekend, we closed out another year of MonSFFA activities with a casual, online get-together, via ZOOM, to allow out-of-town club members, and those who had been unable to attend the previous Saturday's dinner, to touch base and exchange Holiday greetings.

A festive time was had by all!

NOVEMBER 2024 MonSFFA MEETING

November's MonSFFA meeting, our last of the calendar year, was held a little later in the month than usual due to room-availability issues. We met on Saturday, the 23rd.

Club treasurer Joe Aspler opened proceedings with a report on October's fund-raising used book sale, which returned to the club's calendar after a five-year, pandemic-related absence. He provided an overview of the event, detailing sales data and, with an eye to making improvements for next year, pointed out that which worked well from an organizational perspective, and that which did not.

MonSFFA chimed in with their own evaluations of the sale, which the group gauged to have been a success, overall. While the final tally was not, at that juncture, available—several related eBay sales immediately following the sale had yet to be factored in—Joe informed the group that MonSFFA took in just shy of \$1000 in revenue. The final figure, ultimately, came in at a little north of \$1500.

With the season upon us, Brian Knapp offered a presentation on Christmas and Holiday-themed

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR ANNUAL MonSFFA MEMBERSHIP FEES?

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the club's normal operation for more than three years! During this period, our regular in-person meetings were suspended, and the payment of annual fees were deferred. The club has now returned to collecting those annual membership fees, this in order to insure positive cash flow, and so cover the monthly costs of MonSFFA's operations.

Standard membership remains only \$25 annually. We offer a family rate of \$40. Add \$10 to either of these to enjoy our premium "Platinum" membership level. Please complete the form below, include payment (cheque or money order made out to "MonSFFA"), and mail to:

**MonSFFA, c/o
 29 Harold
 Kirkland, Québec, Canada
 H9J 1R7**

MonSFFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please print legibly. Cut out form and mail as per directions.

AMonSFF FORMULAIRE D'INSCRIPTION

Complétez lisiblement. Découpez le coupon et postez tel qu'indiqué.

NAME/NOM: _____ AGE/ÂGE: _____ TEL./TEL.: _____ - _____ - _____

ADDRESS/ADRESSE: _____
 No. & Street/N° et Rue Apt./App. City/Ville

Province Postal Code/Code Postal E-MAIL/COURRIEL: _____

INTERESTS/INTERETS: _____

SF/F. Participating in the meeting remotely over ZOOM, he cited a variety of stories by genre authors, including several by such venerable writers as Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, and Isaac Asimov. Brian found that more than a few of the stories his research uncovered were, essentially, variations on or updates of Charles Dickens' Victorian classic "A Christmas Carol." Others provided a sci-fi interpretation of Santa Claus, while still others offered astronomical/scientific takes on the famous Star of Bethlehem featured in traditional Christmas lore.

Brian also listed several small- and big-screen examples, including a couple of classic *Twilight Zone* episodes. He covered in-depth a rarely rebroadcast, rather dark TV movie written by *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling. The 1964 production was called *Carol for Another Christmas* and starred Sterling Hayden as a rich industrialist named Daniel Grudge, the Scrooge of the piece. Unfortunately, technical issues with sound somewhat marred the various video-clips Brian shared with the group, but this problem was eventually resolved.

We closed the afternoon with a group brainstorming session on programming ideas for 2025's meetings, as well as the lining up of a preliminary schedule.

Keith Braithwaite also offered a game in which folk raced against the clock to decipher sci-fi anagrams related to Christmas. Danny Sichel proved indomitably adept at this challenge!

JANUARY 2025 MonSFFA MEETING

Our first meeting of the New Year, an e-meeting via ZOOM, was held on Saturday, January 11. MonSFFen will recall that the club's recently instituted practice is to host our January and February meetings exclusively online, both as a cost-saving exercise, and to eschew winter travel conditions downtown in favour of the warmth and comfort of home!

This did we kick off 2025 on ZOOM, beginning with Joe Aspler's presentation on spoofing H. P. Lovecraft's monstrous, evil "Great Old One," Cthulhu! "Who dares to mock Cthulhu?" Joe asked; the answer: pretty much everyone!

Joe showcased a series of Cthulhu parodies, including musical plays, children's books, cookbooks, and an appearance in one of the perennial "Treehouse of Horror" episodes of *The Simpsons*. Tom Higgenson's pop song, Hey There, Delilah, provided the basis for a sing-a-long filk parody, Hey There, Cthulhu, which closed Joe's presentation!

Danny Sichel followed with a moderated discussion of SF/F villains, examining various examples and discussing what it was that made them engaging, well-written bad guys. The difference between an antagonist deliberately jeopardizing the protagonist of a story, and a deadly predator or some other natural hazard endangering him or her was discussed. Folk concluded that the former should be classed a villain, but the latter simply a threat, even though both imperil the hero or heroine.

A good portion of the discussion revolved around Tom Godwin's classic short story "The Cold Equations." Danny outlined the plot of the piece for the benefit of those who had not read it, and asked if the story's villain was the pilot of the featured spaceship, on an emergency medical



relief mission, the naïve teenaged girl who stows away on board, or in fact, the spaceflight protocols that doomed her? Or perhaps, posited Danny, there is no real "villain" in Godwin's story, and further, for a story to work, is a villain categorically necessary? Debate was lively!

Keith Braithwaite opened the post-break segment of the meeting with a video-clip from the 1970s sitcom *Happy Days*, in which character Fonzie, the personification of "cool," waterski-jumps over a live shark, precipitating the term "Jump the Shark." This phrase has become pop-culture shorthand for that moment in the run of a television or film series when quality precipitously drops to an absolute nadir.

Keith then asked his fellow club members to identify that moment in well-known sci-fi television, film, or book series when such a drop occurred—in other words, at what point did the series "Jump the Shark?"

Cited by several MonSFFen as a prime example of a genre series jumping the shark was *Lost in Space* (1965-1968), which began as a fairly respectable sci-fi show but soon began to drift from straight-up sci-fi and adventure to childish, stupidly comedic and silly tripe. Rock-bottom came in the form of "The Great Vegetable Rebellion" (1968), an episode from the show's fourth and final season, featuring a decidedly amateur and laughable man-in-a-carrot-suit as the alien menace (pictured, above)! The atrocious "Spock's Brain" (1968), the opening episode of the original *Star Trek's* (1966-1969) third and final season was another example that portended an end for the series.

Multi-episode, or -season story arcs that became increasingly convoluted, or strayed afar of the initial premise which drew viewers in the first place are frequently a sign of diminishing quality. Strong-out-of-the-gate shows like *Lost* and *The X-Files*, or film series like *Star Wars*, gradually wilted until their audiences finally abandoned them in frustration and disappointment. Effectively, they had jumped the shark.

The loss of a principal cast member, too, is often the point at which a decline begins, as with zombie-apocalypse tale *The Walking Dead*, which lost one too many major cast members about halfway through its lengthy run, their replacements not nearly as interesting to viewers.

Lengthy book series, too, notably of the fantasy genre, can jump the shark, with later volumes flagging to become not much more than filler.

The club's scheduled election of its Executive Committee for the coming year was postponed, on this occasion, by unanimous consent of those present in order to maximize the potential number of MonSFFen who might take part in the vote. The election will now take place in March, during our first hybrid meeting of the year, which will welcome club members *both* in-person and online.

We thank our presenters and discussion moderators for their contributions to our programming while saluting, as well, all who helped to plan and run these two recent meetings.

Visit MonSFFA on the Web / Visitez l'AMonSFF sur internet: www.MonSFFA.ca

Impulse is put together monthly by Keith Braithwaite of behalf of MonSFFA and is available on MonSFFA's Web site courtesy Cathy Palmer-Lister. Contact Keith in regards to this publication by any of the following means: In person at a MonSFFA meeting • E-mail: Keith1958@live.ca • Voice mail: 450-692-8831 • Via the Impulse mailing address: 125 Rue Léonard, Châteauguay, Québec, Canada, J6K 1N9

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