



# WORLD WATCH ONE

January 2022







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## Acknowledgements

Every issue of *World Watch One* is its own adventure. Some are voyages of discovery. Others are flights of fancy. This edition was what we in the business affectionately refer to as a “grind.”

What happened exactly? *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*, that’s what happened. During a pandemic. On the cusp of the holidays, exactly when a volunteer staff is at its most susceptible to additional demands on their time.

I want to thank the staff of regular *World Watch One* contributors: Barry “Rolo Tomasi” Chan, Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson, Sean “Figment” Murphy, Steven “Green Town” Silver, and Scott “Camelot” Tate for continuing to perform exceptionally and without complaint during what was arguably one of the more weighty chapters in this newsletter’s history. My friends, I salute you.

**In the hot seat:** There are two particular gentlemen who receive more than their fair share of prodding, poking, and grilling from the staff of this publication; burdened as they are with a curse of indispensability. I am speaking, of course, about Earl Mac Rauch and W. D. Richter. It’s no overstatement to say that you wouldn’t be reading this newsletter if it wasn’t for them. Gentlemen, this is all your fault, and I thank you for it.

We also extend our gratitude to Dave Baker, Chris Chapman, Ed Dale, Matt Haley, Jonathan Lawrence, David Lipton Ph.D., Tommy Mack, Andrew Price, Pepe Serna, Elkin Tat, Charley Todd, and Brendan Wahlberg. Many thanks to Denise and Mike Okuda at the Banzai Institute Facebook page for their continued generosity in getting the word out about *World Watch One*, as well as their many other contributions to Banzai fandom. We extend our appreciation to Dan Berger, Barry Chan, Matt Haley, and Mike Okuda for creating the graphic elements that appear in this issue. Thanks also go out to Chris “ArcLight” Wike for hosting the newsletter’s presence on the interwebs at the [World Watch OnLine library](#) and Sean Murphy for doing the same at the [Buckaroo Banzai FAQ](#). Special thanks go to Clayton Barr and Julie Bozza for contributing two wonderful articles to this issue, and to Bonnie Jones for a wonderful article that necessity has earmarked for a future issue. Particular thanks to Sean Murphy and Steven H Silver for their proofing of this issue’s contents.

**Commendations** are difficult to pick out this time around. Each and every contributor and member of the staff was under the gun at least once during the shepherding of this issue. Well done, one and all.

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**Submissions** to *World Watch One* are strongly encouraged. Really. I am dead serious. People, we know you’re out there! All are welcome. Please contact us at [dan.berger.2@gmail.com](mailto:dan.berger.2@gmail.com) for details.



**Front Cover:** Matt Haley and our very own BBI Rolo Tomasi are this issue’s featured artists on the cover. Matt is a long-time friend of both the Banzai Institute and this publication, appearing in an interview about his cover art for Moonstone Books’ Buckaroo Banzai comic miniseries, *Return of the Screw* back in 2006. Matt also has an interesting connection to the *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* novel that you may not know about, discussed later in this issue. Matt is responsible for the pencil and ink version of the front cover (L). BBI Rolo Tomasi took on coloring duties for Matt’s drawing, adding sparkle effects to John Emdall as well as background sky elements and additional touches to Team Banzai’s cast of characters.

Questions? Comments? Need a sympathetic ear and a kind word? That’s why we’re here. Contact us at [dan.berger.2@gmail.com](mailto:dan.berger.2@gmail.com).

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# 1 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

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## Banzai!

Well, 2021 was some year, huh?

Looking back from 2022, last year had a whole lot of Buckaroo Banzai goodness erupting over those last twelve months. January 2021 kicked off with the announcement that a certain *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.: A Compendium of Evils* was approaching imminent release sometime in 2021. What month exactly became changeable as the year progressed, but it didn't really matter. The Reno Kid write book. We get book. Book Good.

Then on May 12<sup>th</sup> I received one of the best birthday presents ever when the folks at the Deep Cuts Podcast released a Buckaroo Banzai episode where I got to blather for a while AND THEN PINKY FREAKIN' CARRUTHERS AND THE RENO KID CRASHED THE PODCAST. No lie. It was epic.

In October, the long-delayed *Buckaroo Banzai Collector's Compendium*, written by *World Watch One* staffer emeritus DeWayne "Buckaroo Trooper" Todd, finally materialized. Two Banzai books in a single year? The deuce you say!

And the hits kept on coming. In the desperate November hours that found your dedicated editor wildly flailing—and failing—to finish this issue, *Samurai Errant* editor Julie Bozza popped by via email to reveal the beginnings of a long-awaited sixth issue in honor of The Reno Kid's latest literary extravaganza. You know, that *Against the World Crime League et al.* thingy. And more *Samurai Errant*.

Also, The Reno Kid write book. Book get released in November. No more wait for *Against World Crime League*. Book Good.

I'm not going to lie, and it would be foolish to warn you in advance if I did. We released two issues of *World Watch One* in 2021. This was supposed to be a third issue for that year, but the avalanche of things Banzai rolling towards the Chicago Bureau offices during Autumn and Winter made that impossible. So we brandished our plastic snow shovels and growled "bring it" with the grim determination of those prepared to dig their way back to freedom. A clever cheese metaphor might fit better here, but I live on the Illinois side of the "Cheddar Curtain" shared with Wisconsin, and it just isn't coming to me. Because of the avalanche.

Speaking of avalanches, you may have noticed that the extraordinary talents of Matt "Avalanche" Haley, in tandem with our very own Barry Chan, are responsible for this issue's cover. If you didn't, you need to start over from the beginning. Don't worry, we'll wait until you're done.

Ok, for the rest of you who actually did notice the cover, get ready to spend some time reading.

All of the items above receive further exploration in the latest issue along with a few additional choice bits, including a fascinating interview with the man responsible for bringing Reno to life on the screen, none other than actor/writer/artist Pepe Serna. Speaking of Reno, we couldn't very easily let the publication of one of the most eagerly awaited sequels in the last 37 years pass without presenting another in a long series of behind the scenes articles, so prepare for a deep dive into the writing of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.: A Compendium of Evils*. Contributor Clayton Barr of [PopApostle.com](http://PopApostle.com) explores the continuity of Team Banzai's adventures in comic books with "Banzai Classic Adventures: The Moonstone Years," Steve Mattsson interviews author Earl Mac Rauch about his exploits beyond the Buckaroo Banzai dimensional barrier, and your editor checks in with musician Tommy Mack and filmmaker Jonathan Lawrence about the making of their award-winning music video/science fiction media mashup/Buckaroo Banzai tribute, *Nice Shoes*.

So, let's get to it! The holidays may be over, but consider this the stocking stuffer to accompany all of the other Team Banzai gifts last year brought us. May you and yours find peace, light, and joy in 2022.



## WORLD WATCH ONE

NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

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Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson  
Sean "Figment" Murphy  
Steven "Green Town" Silver  
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### *Samurai Errant*: A 'Zine Going in Several Directions at Once

By Julie "Stew" Bozza

I can't remember exactly when I first watched *Buckaroo Banzai*. It was probably at Electric Shadows in Canberra, Australia—an independent cinema that programmed quality, quirky films, often for only one or two screenings per season. Luckily for me, they were open to encouragement, so I often lobbied for *Banzai* to be scheduled again. This was essential, because they showed the widescreen version. My only copy on videotape was an ex-rental in 4:3 format—and there's a lot more *Rawhide* in the widescreen version!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Not to mention distracted.

Like many, I hardly knew what to make of the film the first time round—but I was hooked, nevertheless. By the third watch, I felt I was starting to grasp how it all hung together. And I was a total fan.

Fan fiction ensued. And my fannish Aussie friends were creating *Banzai* fic and art, as well. We tracked down copies of the novel, and that inspired more fanworks.

Finally, I knew the moment had come. I'd been wanting to publish a fanzine of my own ever since attending a panel on producing 'zines at a 1987 con. I didn't feel very confident, but Dr. Banzai insisted, and *Rawhide* gave me an encouraging tip of his hat, and there we were.

### Titles and Concepts

The full title for this new 'zine was *Samurai Errant: Cavalier Tales Quixotic and Profane*. I nicked all the clever bits from my sister Bryn "Faux Pas" Lantry, who was considering titles for a possible *Blake's 7* 'zine. (I still feel bad, thirty-some years later.)

Right from the start, I knew the 'zine would emulate *Buckaroo* himself, who "began life as he was destined to live it...going in several directions at once". My group of fan-friends had a love of *Buckaroo Banzai* in common, but were creatively inclined in very different ways. I felt this was entirely appropriate for a *Banzai* 'zine; in fact, I considered it a strength! We ended up with various types of fanworks, including comedic vignettes, a graphic comic series, "gen" adventures and drama, romances both straight and gay, and some sexually explicit material, too.

I've always been into "slash" fic, which places characters of the same gender in a romantic or sexual relationship. I was planning this 'zine back in the days when slash 'zines were kept strictly under the table at conventions, but I



**Cover to cover:** The cover for issue one of *Samurai Errant* features fan art by Tim Howe who would go on to become the 'zine's resident cover artist for every issue. Source: Tim Howe/Julie Bozza

was determined to be as inclusive and open as possible. Again, this felt to me to be in keeping with the *Banzai* vision. And luckily my friends were either also into slash, or were prepared to shrug off my foibles.

### The First Issue

1988. "Can you imagine what it must have been like then...then...then..."

In those pre-internet days, much use was made of snail mail. Geoff "Downtown" Tilley helped spread the word about this potential 'zine. Almost all the early contributors were living in Australia, with small groups of BBIs based in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, and elsewhere. There were huge distances involved, so we would meet up at the annual national fan conventions, and once we ate together at the Khan Mongolian Restaurant in Melbourne—but otherwise Australia Post benefited from the extra business.

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Somehow—probably thanks to Downtown—I found fan artist Tim Howe, who provided a striking portrait of Buckaroo for the front cover. I’m still proud of how that looks! Classic. Unfortunately, you can tell from the title text that I was relying on a dot matrix printer at the time. Affordable for the home, but not exactly high resolution! Though it all fits with the anarchic handmade vibe, I guess.

The back cover featured nothing but the film’s last words: “So what. Big deal.”

The inside front cover was headed “You received this ‘zine...” with a list of reasons below, a practice originating in the SF ‘zines of the ‘50s and ‘60s. In this first issue, the reasons were quotes and misquotes from the film itself—starting with the obvious “because you’re perfect!”

Page 5 was headed “A BBI by any other name would smell as sweet”. Elsewhere in the ‘zine we were all referred to by our BBI names, but here I included the real names of those who didn’t mind being known.

And then we were into a three-page editorial and disclaimer...(I wonder if anyone actually read it? Heavens, I did natter on!). One interesting point was that—due to the small nature of the fandom itself, and the global isolation of Australia—we had all seen the film at least once, but we hadn’t all read the novel, few of us had read the official newsletters, and fewer still had seen the official comic books. So, the fanworks in the ‘zine were often based on partial knowledge of the Banzaiverse, and at times made assumptions that were

later disproved. Again, I don’t think this was such a bad thing even in retrospect, and it meshed with the hectic, confusing style of the film. The slice-of-life approach from Earl Mac Rauch provoked us into imagining all kinds of things to fill in the gaps, and frankly I’m fond of the results!

The editorial also noted that this first issue of *Samurai Errant* was rather Rawhide-centric. There was plenty of Buckaroo, too, and the other Hong Kong Cavaliers all appeared, but...well, I was always a huge fan of Rawhide—and I wasn’t the only one! As I pointed out, if anyone wanted to see other team members featured, the remedy was to submit a contribution to Issue #2!

I signed off with, “So, please read on, and enjoy yourself. This is, after all, a growing excited fanzine.”

#### The Contents

We had contributions from eleven BBIs, starting with “origin” stories of Buckaroo meeting Rawhide, or recruiting Flyboy Johnson. A short evocative piece by “Bepo” was inspired by Perfect Tommy’s stint in the French Foreign Legion.

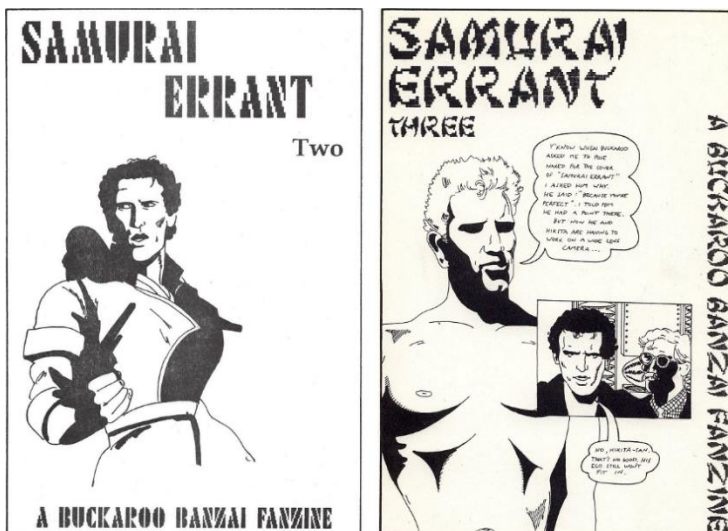
The romance began with my fic “Hopes and Dreams”, featuring Buckaroo/Rawhide. They were (and still are!) my One True Pairing in the Banzaiverse.

Crossover fic had Buckaroo inventing time travel, taking the Cavaliers back to Arthurian times, and taking tea with the Black Dragon...Another fic implausibly suggested that the Kurgan of the *Highlander* film (also played by Clancy Brown) had been hiding out as Rawhide these past years...(OK, yes, that fic was mine, too.)

Tim Howe contributed the first installment of his graphic comic, “Find the Jetcar,” said the President.” While BBI “Arcane Annie” produced “The Andersson Report,” examining all the evidence relating to Penny Priddy’s identity.

One of my favorite items is a round-robin story written by eight of the Oz BBIs, telling of our adventures dealing with an infestation of Red Lectroids and Death Dwarf teddy bears in Australia.

Other fic suggested answers to New Jersey’s “Why is there a watermelon there?”; or pondered a career change for Pinky Carruthers as he followed his musical calling and formed a new band; or had Perfect Tommy mobilizing a strike team for the sole purpose of provoking a smile from Rawhide. All this, along with lovely illustrations by “Buckskin Brenda,” limericks, and a list of our favorite quotes from the film.



**SO WHAT. BIG DEAL.**

**Famous last words:** Covers to issues two and three, including some familiar words from the back cover. Source: Tim Howe/Julie Bozza



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### Design Elements

Each of the internal pages were printed with a border around the text in various minimalist designs. These were, for better or worse, created by me. One response was that this “unique look [is] a bit Oriental, in a very Occidental style...OK, I can’t describe it.”

I also appropriated Japanese kanji lettering—no doubt inappropriately—from advertising text, menus, and such. Later issues included Japanese-influenced motifs, such as a segment of bamboo with leaves, or a stylized butterfly.

All the above were drawn with sharpies! There was much physical cutting-and-pasting as well as typing-and-printing to create the “master” pages—which were then printed or photocopied, depending on what equipment was available at the time, then collated, and bound with coil binders. It was a real hands-on process!

### The ‘Zine Evolves

Another three issues of the ‘zine were published in 1989 and 1990, with the fifth issue belatedly appearing in 1996. †

Many of the elements of the ‘zine evolved, while some—such as Tim Howe’s bold illustrations for the cover—remained delightfully constant.

The “You received this ‘zine...” list continued to draw on the film quotes (“sined, sealed and delivered by your oscillating editor” in issue #2) and then segued into quotes from other fandom favorites (“We apologize for the inconvenience” in issue #3) and wisdom that seemed fit for the Banzaiverse (“because we relish news of our heroes, forgetting that we are extraordinary to somebody, too—Helen Hayes” in issue #5).

We unofficially adopted [Fido Dido](#) as our mascot, and “Arcane Annie” took the artwork in yet another direction with her “Banzai Dido” cartoons.

Despite me writing less fic for Issue #2, the ‘zine remained Rawhide-centric, and even included three different versions of his “real” name in that issue alone! (My own choice was Gabriel, or Gabe.) One response was, “Who cares if the ‘zine is full of Rawhide stories! We love it!!!” On the other hand, Narrelle “Wookie” Harris eventually declared herself “tired of all the Rawhide stories and I want to try my hand at writing a BB story for you. What’s my deadline?” I was perfectly happy to receive her contribution featuring New Jersey.

† Interested parties can find links to the *Samuri Errant* stories still available on line at the Fanlore website:

[https://fanlore.org/wiki/Samurai\\_Errant](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Samurai_Errant)

Other new contributors joined in the fun. Perfect Tommy featured more and more (I’m sure he felt it long overdue). Fic riffed off intriguing details in the novel, such as the disagreeable week Reno and Rawhide spent in the sea off the coast of Japan, or Reno’s brief note that Rawhide had a wife. “Arcane Annie” sent Rawhide on sabbatical to Nepal, where he found an adventure as well as peace and wisdom. Later she wrote an intriguing solution to the mystery of exactly who killed Peggy. I attempted haiku. BBI “Dreamspinner” contributed a fun fic with a terrific title: “The Bizarre Bazaar; or, A Fete Worse Than Death.” BBI “Akimbo” wrote a fascinating story turning everything we thought we knew about the Black Lectroids topsy-turvy.

Tim Howe not only continued his comic, but offered more graphics-based stories and one-off images. Other art was contributed by “Blades” and Steve Scholz, all helping to really bring these typewritten pages to life!

From Issue #2 onwards, I printed Letters of Comment (LoCs). Most responses were positive—enthusiastic, even—but of course some were baffled, or didn’t like the everything-*and*-the-kitchen-sink approach to my accepting submissions. Responses to individual stories could be...bracing. Even harsh! Perhaps feedback to fanworks has mellowed a bit since those days?

### Disclaimers and Warnings

Back in the day, before it became clearer that not-for-profit transformative works are “fair use” under the copyright laws, it was customary to include a disclaimer. I tried to make a blessing of this necessity, using the disclaimer to state our philosophical approach on broader issues and to add a bit of (alleged) humor. “This is a nuclear-free fanzine,” began the disclaimer in Issue #3, “which believes in the basic freedoms of human beans everywhere. LAND RIGHTS FOR GAY WHALES!”

The disclaimer concluded, “So please don’t sue us, because we’re loving, harmless, loveable people who don’t deserve to be disillusioned.”

It also seemed necessary at the time to declare that none of the slash stories were meant to imply that the actors or anyone else was gay. Me being me, I added that none of the straight romance fic was meant to imply that anyone was straight, either.

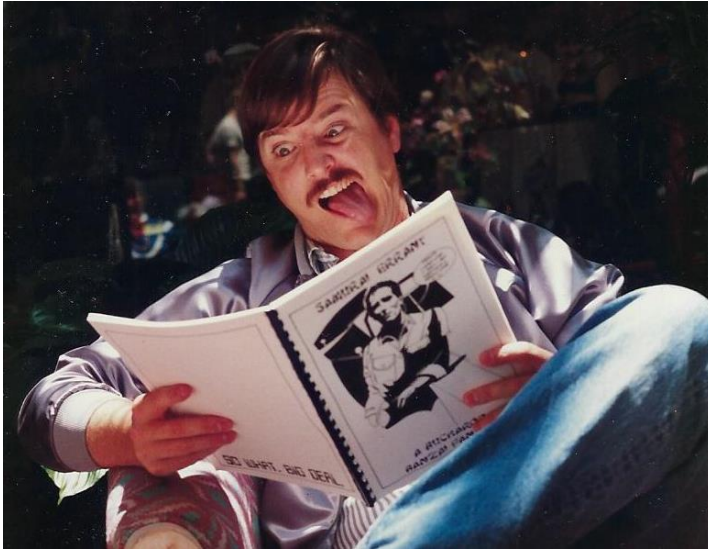
I promised readers that there was “nothing too offensively squidgy involved” in any of the mature stories. Each fic began with a “Samurai Aberrant Rating”, in which the slash and straight content was marked as mild/none, romantic, sensual, or torrid.

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### Responses to Banzai Slash

The LoCs revealed some unease about slashing the characters, and comments along the lines of “I’m not too fond of the slash stuff, but everyone is entitled to their own reality.” Another LoC remarked that the ‘zine was “popularly known down here as *Cavalier Couplings*.” One of my favorite responses was simply a photo showing the horrified BBI “Sharkey” discovering Banzai slash. BBIs “Dragon” and “Abacus” were “a bit surprised” by these fics, but generously concluded, “Thanks for showing us yet another way of expressing the Team Banzai spirit.”

Double-edged reactions were quite common, with one of the main contributors definitely uncomfortable with the slash, but still declaring *Samurai Errant* to be “The World’s Greatest Fanzine.”



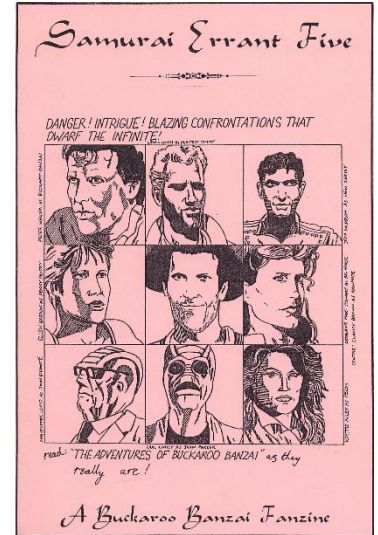
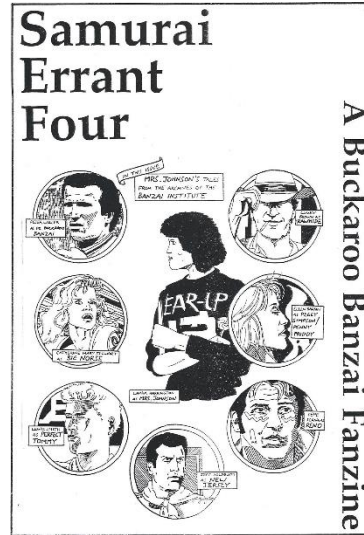
**Hack and Slash:** Jim “Sharkey” Van Over reacts to a slash offering in *Samurai Errant*. Source: Julie Bozza/Alan Smith

### The End, or is it?

Eventually our collective creative energy ran out, and I declared that the fifth issue, published in 1996, would probably be the last. “It was fun while it lasted, this planet-wide daydream of ours,” I opined in the editorial, “but it’s over now, and that’s all there is really to say about that.”

Fast-forward to the announcement (a quarter century later!) that we could look forward to a new Banzai novel from Earl Mac Rauch. Talk about a dream come true! The beautiful sort of dream that had long seemed improbable, but you still clung to the hope that something might eventuate...maybe someday...

I watched in agony as the release date kept getting pushed back, week by week...But then at last it seemed firm. Something to be relied upon.



**End of an era?:** *Samurai Errant*’s initial eight year run came to a conclusion in 1996 after five issues, only two years before Banzai fandom would reignite with the commission of a *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* television pilot script and the launch of the [banzai-institute.com](http://banzai-institute.com) website. Source: Tim Howe/Julie Bozza

And only then I dared to think...No doubt this will reinvigorate the fandom, and result in new fic and art. Maybe I should try to pull together *Samurai Errant* #6!

Technologies have changed since this began, of course. Also, I am a huge fan of the Organization for Transformative Works and its fanwork archive, the Archive of Our Own (AO3)—which currently hosts 148 works tagged with the Buckaroo Banzai fandom. This isn’t a massive amount, and I am not sure just how many creators will want to be involved with SE6. I am out of touch with most of the original *Samurai Errant* team.

What I’ve decided to do is create a *Samurai Errant* #6 collection on AO3, and call for contributions. Then, if/when I receive enough fanworks, I’ll pull them together into a PDF-format ‘zine, and make it freely available.

So, please consider this a call for submissions to *Samurai Errant* #6! You can post your works to the AO3 collection—or send me a link to them posted elsewhere, and I’ll bookmark them. (If all else fails, just email them to [juliebozza@gmail.com](mailto:juliebozza@gmail.com).)

You can find the AO3 collection here: <https://archiveofourown.org/collections/SamuraiErrant6>

I would love to see more Banzai fanworks of all sorts! Fic, art, doodles, meta - whether in response to the new novel, or picking up on older cues. Bring the characters into the present, or stick with that mad ’80s vibe...

“You want it, Artie?” Heck, yeah, we do. “You got it!” 🐾

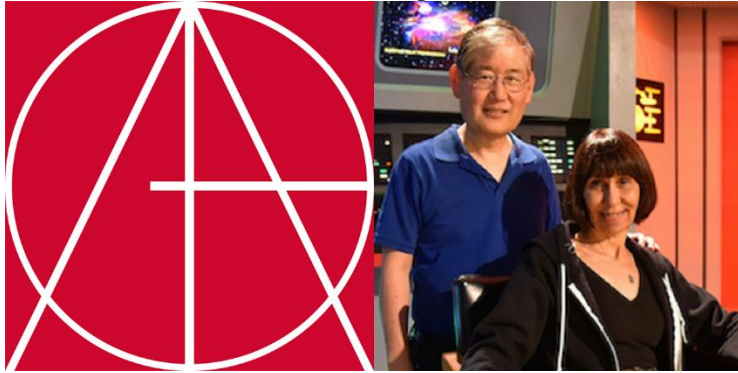


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### Short Takes

WWO Staff

#### A Shared Lifetime Acknowledged



Source: [Art Directors Guild/Star Trek Original Series Set Tour](#)

Those longtime friends of the Banzai Institute, Michael and Denise Okuda, will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Scenic, Title & Graphic Artists at the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Art Directors Guild Awards.

The Okudas have shared duties on many movies and television series, but their longest association and greatest impact remains the Star Trek franchise. Michael has served on various Treks as graphic designer, scenic artist, scenic art consultant, and scenic art supervisor, and Denise as scenic artist and video supervisor. One, or more often both of them, have worked on *Star Trek IV* (1986), *Star Trek V* (1989), *Star Trek VI* (1991), *The Next Generation* (1987-94), *Deep Space Nine* (1993-99), *Generations* (1994), *Voyager* (1995-2001), *First Contact* (1996), *Insurrection* (1998), *Enterprise* (2001-05), and *Nemesis* (2002). They worked on the remastering of both the original *Star Trek* series and *The Next Generation*. They've also each appeared onscreen in the background multiple times, starting with Denise as a Vulcan extra in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979).

Whenever a visual reference to Buckaroo Banzai appears in the background of Star Trek, like a commission plaque crediting Yoyodyne as the ship's builder, or a computer display listing the Starfleet vessel U.S.S. Whorfin, that's Michael's handiwork. Denise helped answer Buckaroo's fan mail at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox offices and served as one of the vital forces who helped pull together the nascent *World Watch One* back when she was "Catnip" Tathwell. (Read that very first [1985 WWO](#) for yourself, or take a look back at those hectic early days in the [2004 WWO](#).) Denise contributed to the ten minute *Banzai Radio* featured extra on the 2002 special edition DVD release, while both Okudas provided a commentary track for the 2016 Shout! Factory Blu-ray.

The ceremony will take place on March 5, 2022 in Los Angeles. Congratulations, Mike and Neezee!

#### Banzai Institute Assesses Lunar "Mystery Hut"

The far side of the moon inhabits much of history as an elusive *Luna incognita*, investigated only by the human imagination. Lunar exploration programs of the 1960s and 70s did much to demystify the Moon's cratered vistas, but it appears that our closest neighbor in space still has secrets to reveal.

On lunar day 36 of China's Yutu 2 mission to the dark side of the Moon, the uncrewed rover spotted a cube-shaped object on the horizon to the north while traversing the Von Kármán crater. The Chinese science outreach channel Our Space reported the sighting as part of an ongoing Yutu 2 diary of the mission, referring to the object as a *shenmi xiaowu* or "mystery hut."



Source: [CNSA/Our Space](#)

The designation is only a temporary nickname for the object, but one suggestive enough to attract the attention of Banzai Institute scientists monitoring local space lanes for traces of Lectroid activity in the wake of the catastrophic Battle for Rome. Current theories range from classifying the object as a mundane boulder to speculation that it is in fact a long-forgotten roadside attraction for ancient visitors curious about the explosive origins of the Earth's lone natural satellite.

#### Bad Gas

While researching articles on various DVD/Blu-ray releases for the [June 2021 issue of World Watch One](#), we uncovered some photos not found in the film that were new to us. We reached out to W. D. "Rick" Richter to get more information about these intriguing images.

"This is a remarkable, thought-lost photo of Lectroids using ShockStik electroprobes to convert incinerated and crushed car batteries into bomb-grade lectrium, a prized 'short-burst' fuel intended to power Whorfin's Great Ship into the Yoyodyne wall on its journey to the 8th Dimension," said Richter, "But that didn't work out (bad Great Ship design). The lectrium onboard in the 'gas tank' was a woefully inadequate propellant for long-distance travel and was unable to lift the mammoth



John Smallberries on an Aqua-Trike? Source: MGM Studios

vehicle into deep space for a long, non-stop flight to Planet 10. It has since been calculated by Banzai Institute trajectory experts that a crash landing somewhere around [The Knickerbocker Country Club](#) in Tenaflly was inevitable if Banzai and Parker hadn't clobbered Whorfin & Co. out of the sky first."

When asked if that was John Smallberries appearing on the Aqua-Trike in the image, Richter responded, "I think Smallberries was always stationed at the front gate. Could be his brother John Bigberries."

And just when we thought there wasn't anything more to say about the helmeted Lectroids, a second image surfaced with two of them looming in the background while a Lectroid carries a bike in the foreground.



Source: MGM Studios

Are the helmeted Lectroids taking a break? Waiting for replacement ShockStik electroprobes? The world may never know.

### One Well Endowed Chair

*World Watch One* is an organ of the Banzai Institute. Non-profit thought experiments like *World Watch One* are encouraged as much as more lucrative practical research by Team Banzai.



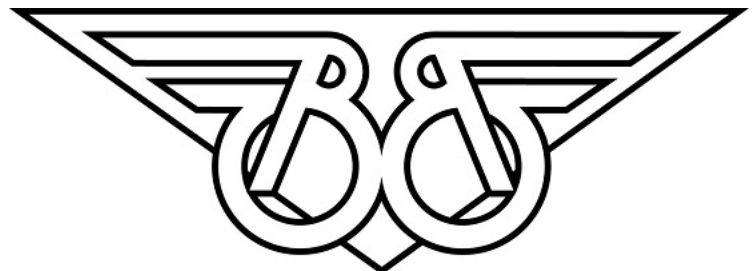
Source: E. M. Rauch/Banzai Institute

To defray costs of "moonbeam" projects, like the newsletter, living conditions at the Banzai Institute are Spartan. Interns and newsletter staff are lodged in small cells furnished with a futon atop a wooden bunk. Occasionally, other creature comforts are provided for deserving Blue Blaze Irregulars.

Recently, newsletter editor Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger received the following message from Earl Mac Rauch, "Dan, I'm shocked to hear the BB newsletter doesn't pay all the bills. If it's any consolation, an endowed chair has been established in your name at the Banzai Institute". (See photo above). Big Shoulders, humbled by the gesture asked, "Am I worthy of such a recognition?" To which Mac replied, "Humanity demands it."

Congratulations, Big Shoulders. Now go forth and exceed the standards you set with each subsequent newsletter until all pixels fade.

**Editor's Note:** I'm not worthy! —DB





## 8 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

### Buckaroo Banzai Podcasts

By Sean Murphy

Sometimes it can be easy to forget just how many Blue Blaze Irregulars and Banzai fans are out there in the world talking about Buckaroo at any given time. And, as folks try to go about their normal lives during these abnormal pandemic times, everyone is looking for a bit of distraction. The team at *World Watch One* thought it was an entirely reasonable question to ask how many Buckaroo Banzai podcast episodes are actually out there for everyone to enjoy. While this may seem like an entirely innocent query, the journey to an actual answer takes a few twists and turns. Fortunately there is a wide variety of approaches that podcasts take when discussing Buckaroo Banzai.

Recording a podcast is a great way to reach out to other people with similar interests. A not-so-surprising side effect of the pandemic, with everyone stuck in their homes, has been more and more podcasts popping up and taking off. The [Deep Cuts podcast](#), discussed elsewhere in the newsletter, is a great example of this.

Understanding the scale of the overall number of podcasts is helpful to set the stage. According to the [Podcast Insights](#) website, there are over two million different podcasts on every imaginable topic and over forty-eight million episodes spread across them as of April 2021. This is an overwhelmingly large amount of information to sort through when trying to find podcast episodes specifically about Buckaroo Banzai.

The first, most logical step is to go to Google and see what's available when searching for "Buckaroo Banzai Podcast". This quick search pulls up a respectable twenty-nine podcasts episodes dedicated to talking about Buckaroo Banzai. A good start, to be sure, but the number feels small. More searching will lead to the discovery of [Ivy.fm](#). This website is "a new way to discover podcasts" where you can connect "325M dots between 850K podcasts, 47M episodes, and over 1M tags."

Searching for "Buckaroo Banzai" on the Ivy website brings up a lot of podcasts that may mention the film or do a short review, but the episode itself is not dedicated to only discussing the film. To get the most bang for the buck, refining the search to "Buckaroo Banzai across" brings up 208 episodes going back to 2011, with a 1h 10m average duration. That works out to about one episode every other week. Not all of these episodes are focused solely on the film as some are duplicates and others are false positives, including podcasts that only briefly mention Buckaroo Banzai or do a short review.

While the numbers that Ivy.fm provides are encouraging, the links that the search provides to actual podcast episodes only go back to late 2018 (and, if searching now at the time of this writing, only goes back to early 2020 as new podcasts are released). This means that the total of verifiable podcast episodes only increased from twenty-nine to fifty-seven. This was good, but the research team at *World Watch One* knew they needed to dig deeper. Now the question shifted to determining how to find the source database that the Ivy.fm website was using. With that information eventually in hand, it would be possible to see if the rest of the "Buckaroo Banzai across" podcasts could be verified.



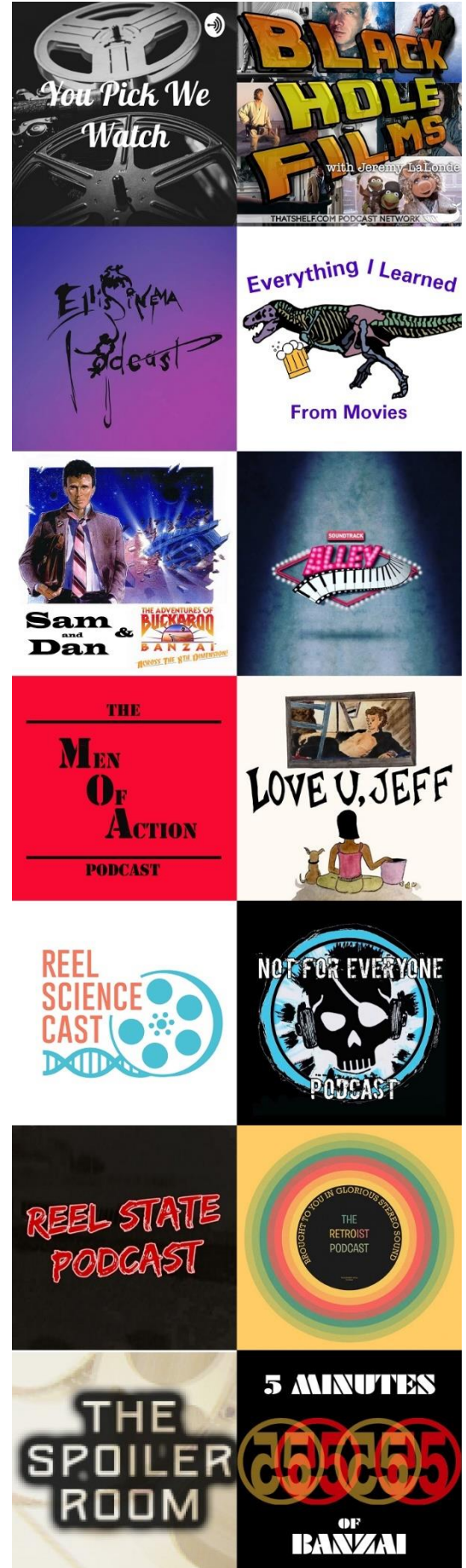
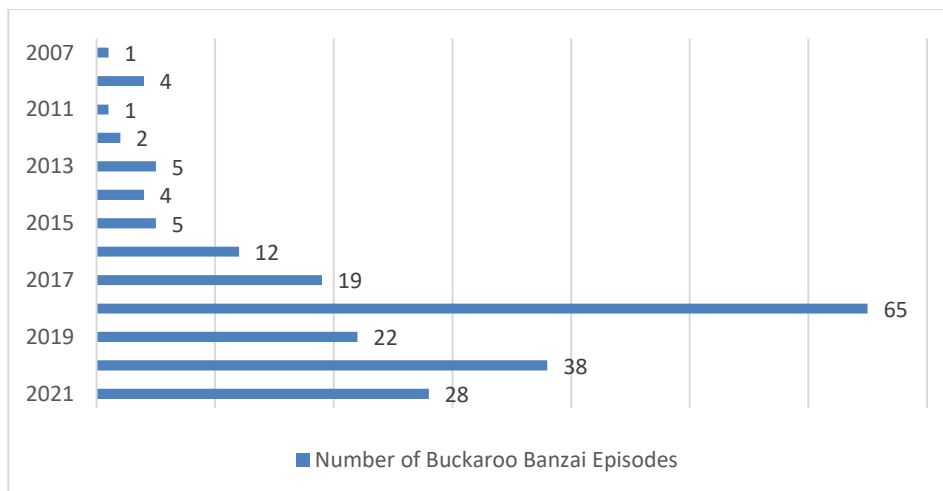
## 9 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

The *World Watch One* team is nothing if not determined and resourceful. Faster than you can say, “We’re in this search for the long haul, let’s rustle up some pizzas,” the [Listennotes.com](https://listennotes.com) website was uncovered. This site bills itself as “the best podcast search engine. It’s like Google, but for podcasts.” Their claim to fame is stripping out the duplicates, and episodes deleted long ago, to come up with an “accurate” count of 2,631,251 podcasts and 112,545,949 episodes. Executing a quick deep dive through the “Buckaroo Banzai across” search data showed that Listennotes had 347 podcast episodes, more than listed on Ivy.fm, and their data went back to 2007. For the low price of twelve dollars it was possible to download the complete “Buckaroo Banzai across” podcast list. After paring the database down to episodes actually dedicated to the film, the “final” list of 206 episodes was achieved for this article. “Final” is in quotes because more research would most likely produce more accurate results but, due to the timeline for this article, it was time to pause and reflect. For those that are curious, the earliest verifiable episode appeared in 2007 as the “Kick Ass Mystic Ninjas Show #25: Buckaroo Banzai.” Just the title alone makes this podcast a very auspicious start to the list.

The original goals for the article, when there were only twenty-nine episodes, was to listen to each one and include the “complete” list in the newsletter. The first half of the goal was actually achieved by increasing the speed to 2x in the [Overcast podcast app](https://overcast.fm) in order to listen to the episodes in a timely manner. When the number increased to fifty-seven, and then 206, the plan to listen to the rest was abandoned.

The second part of the goal, to include the “complete” list of “Buckaroo Banzai across” podcast episodes discussed here also proved to be too long for the article. This information can now be found on the Buckaroo Banzai FAQ at [What podcast episodes are available that focus on Buckaroo Banzai?](https://www.buckarobanzai.com/faq) To be clear, these aren’t all of the episodes dedicated to Buckaroo Banzai but they are the ones that the *World Watch One* team verified exist and are readily available on the internet today.

Graphing the data of the 206 episodes shows that the trend over time is basically more episodes than the previous year, with one big anomaly. 2018 is an outlier year because of the only podcast dedicated to the film (as of this writing), called [Five Minutes of Banzai](https://www.fiveminutesofbanzai.com), which has twenty-three episodes. Learn more in the interview with Josh Horowitz & Brett Stillo from The Five Minutes of Banzai Podcast in the [September, 2018 issue of World Watch One](https://www.worldwatchone.com/2018/09/05/five-minutes-of-banzai-podcast/).





## 10 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Some interesting trends begin to appear when listening to twenty-nine different podcast episodes about *Buckaroo Banzai* across the years. Some episodes are as short as 30 minutes. Others are as long as 2.5 hours. Most podcasters conducted research consisting mainly of trips to the Wikipedia page, which leads to a lot of repetition of facts across different podcasts. Sometimes the premise is a “guilty pleasure” episode, or falls on their 88<sup>th</sup> or 200<sup>th</sup> episode, or is the last episode of their podcast ever.

Some hosts review the film because of the cult status while others discover *Buckaroo Banzai* through references in other works, such as the *Ready Player One* book and film. One episode focuses on the soundtrack ([Soundtrack Alley 92: Revisit The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension](#), February 19th, 2021. Length: 36m) while another one imagines how the film could have been marketed differently at the time ([Another Pass at The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across The 8th Dimension](#), June 11, 2020. Length: 1 hr 3 min). Some episodes have special guests, like the team from the *World Watch One* newsletter on [Five Minutes of Banzai](#), or Mike and Denise Okuda ([The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension! With Mike and Denise Okuda](#), May 21, 2020. Length: 60m 25s).

Several different approaches are used to review the film, such as watching and discussing the movie live while getting drunk ([Drunk Cinema podcast—The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension](#), Jan 24 2021. Length: 2hr 30m), while another starts the podcast, then pauses to watch the movie, then returns to discuss it ([Film Sack 481: The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension](#), September 19, 2020. Length: 1h 38m). Many podcasters watch the film first, then record the episode afterwards. Some of the hosts have seen the film before while others have never seen it. Many have a host (or hosts) that love the film. Others dislike it, taking the film to task throughout the episode.

However, the most common theme that comes up over and over again is that most people find the film confusing. This response tracks well with **The Buckaroo Barrier** concept discussed by Steven H Silver in the [January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 issue of the World Watch One newsletter](#).

“...for many people, the first viewing of *Buckaroo Banzai* leaves them perplexed and not wanting more. We often look at the studio’s lack of support for the film’s lack of box office success, but part of the failure may also be that, much as we love the film, it puts up a barrier between itself and the vast majority of its viewers who may watch it once, but don’t understand the film’s genius. It is the second viewing that permits those viewers to fully grok the movie.”

Some podcasts even talk about the concept of the Banzai Barrier indirectly, discussing how much more they see and understand when they watch the film for a second time. Many people who discuss disliking the film on the podcast episodes say they don’t ever want to watch it again.

Luckily, no matter whether they liked or disliked the film, folks just keep on talking about *Buckaroo Banzai*. There were even four podcast episodes released in just the short time that this article was written, and the pace of releases doesn’t seem to be slowing down. So grab your favorite podcast player and dive in! The water’s fine and you never know what gems you’ll turn up along the way. Be sure to let us know what you discover. 🦊



## The Deep Cuts Podcast Dives into the World of Buckaroo Banzai

By Sean Murphy

Sometimes, when all the planets align and the correct words are intoned, a magical event can take place. One such alignment occurred recently when the Deep Cuts podcast dedicated an entire episode to Buckaroo Banzai. Luckily the correct words were also spoken behind the scenes, leading to the surprise that no one saw coming; a short Buckaroo Banzai audio drama at the end of the podcast, written by Earl Mac Rauch, and starring special guests Reno (Pepe Serna) and Pinky Carruthers (Billy Vera).

*World Watch One* spoke to Andrew Price and Dave Baker from the Deep Cuts podcast, as well as our humble editor Dan Berger who was the guest on the episode, to take an on-the-record look at how this episode of the podcast and audio drama all came together.

Like any good journey, it's good to start at the beginning and Andrew was more than happy to discuss the concept of their show. "The Deep Cuts podcast is a nonfiction deep dive explainer podcast, but it actually takes place in a narrative world where we (Dave and I) are two former television child stars who became adult boy detectives," explained Andrew. "We live in a secret headquarters called the Mystery Treehouse with our space demon roommate, we solve supernatural crimes when we aren't doing the podcast, and the show has this overarching storyline that plays out in audio dramas that pop up in various episodes."

Dave shed some light on the different approaches they take when creating their podcast. "The aspect that I'm most proud of about our show is how unique it is," said Dave, "Yes, we definitely do the Deep Dive aspect of the show and it's really fun, but we also have an extended universe of fictional characters who populate the world. We do bizarre Narrative Episodes, that are formulated like a 1940's radio show, and have even produced a full two hour musical. I'm so excited that there's literally NOTHING like our show on the internet. Which, in a world where every niche is hyper explored, is an accomplishment to me."

This approach to the Deep Cuts podcast seems very much in the same storytelling vein as Buckaroo Banzai. The fact that Andrew and Dave are both long terms fans of the film is not surprising.

"I think I first saw Buckaroo Banzai when I was in junior high," said Dave, "and it was an instant love affair. I'm a weirdo who was raised on Mack Bolan paperbacks and radio serials like *The Shadow* and *Boston Blackie*, so the



**Andrew Price (L) and Dave Baker (R)** of the Deep Cuts podcast. Source: Deep Cuts Podcast/Arby's

strange, stilted nature of the structure of the film instantly struck a chord with me. I loved it. I don't know that I fully understood it, on that first watch, but I loved it."

Andrew had a similar first experience with the film. "At one point I rented *Buckaroo* because the cover was awesome and it reminded me of *Star Wars*. I loved the movie. But I also ended up using the Buckaroo Banzai VHS case at the store to hide movies behind it that I didn't want anybody else to rent. I knew no one at a video store in Roswell, New Mexico in the mid-90s would be checking out *Buckaroo Banzai*."

This mutual love of the film made it an extremely likely candidate to tackle on their show. "The Buckaroo Banzai podcast was one of the Deep Cut episodes we've always had on the backburner to do and had talked about since nearly the inception of the show," continued Andrew, "but it stayed on the backburner because we got caught up chasing big episodes that we know will perform well or have some kind of stunt-like quality to them (like tricking Chris Hansen into recording an intro for our episode about how he's a con man, getting Mark Sargent—the leader of the Flat Earth movement—to come on the show and talk about early 2000s alt rock, etc). What finally pushed the *Buckaroo Banzai* episode over the edge was when Dave had the idea to reach out to [*World Watch One* editor] Dan Berger and, out of nowhere, we were talking about potentially interviewing Mac."



“I’m obsessed with Earl Mac Rauch,” said Dave. “This whole podcast episode sort of spun out of the fact that I was trying to track him down to interview him. I’m working on a book and there’s a segment where I wanted to ask Mac some questions and then use approximations of his answers as one of the character’s responses. He was so difficult to find that it kind of increased my fascination with him more. It’s kind of hard for me to remember the exact series of events now, but I feel like I reached out to Dan, because I wanted to interview Mac, and Dan seemed to be the only person on the internet that had actually talked to him at length.”

Dan’s involvement with the podcast started, simply enough, with an email from Dave. “Back on October 8, 2020 we were past the cooling-off period between *World Watch One* issues, and revving up for a possible Holiday Edition, when I got an email from someone named Dave Baker. Dave explained about the Deep Cuts Podcast and how they were looking to involve Rick or Mac somehow.

“This wasn’t the first time I’ve gotten an email of this sort. I had no familiarity with either Dave or Deep Cuts. Was this guy a crazy stalker fan or the real deal? Or maybe a bit of both? When it comes to these situations, the best I can do is respond to the person sending the email, pass the request on to Rick and Mac, and see what happens. Usually, Rick and Mac come back with a nicely worded variation on, ‘Mama always told me never to talk to strangers. No thanks.’

“That said, I’m usually pretty sympathetic to the people making these requests. I was in their shoes back in 2004 when we decided to revive *World Watch One*. Putting yourself out there to create something is hard enough on its own. Finding your way in when you need access to something like Hollywood talent is daunting.

“We are incredibly fortunate. Over the years our relationships with Rick and Mac have allowed us to ask them questions about articles we are writing, or interview them outright, or print brand new glimpses into the Banzai-verse by way of Mac’s associations with Reno. But Rick and Mac have only so much bandwidth. Their lives and interests extend far beyond Buckaroo Banzai. Answering every podcast or convention request would definitely start cutting into their quality time.

“Finding the middle ground between access and intrusion involves a little bit of creativity and a lot of empathy. That was definitely the case when approaching Mac about the Deep Cuts podcast.”

Fortunately, it turned out that Mac was open to discussing the possibilities and willing to do an interview, with a few stipulations. “Initially we wanted to get Mac ON the podcast,” said Andrew. “However, while

Mac eventually agreed to be interviewed, he’d only do an interview through email and wouldn’t record his voice.” This led to discussions about having someone else read Mac’s answers on the podcast in his place. Dan relayed this information back to Rauch.

“Mac wasn’t exactly what you’d call gung-ho about the ‘email interview read on a podcast’ idea,” Dan confided. “He was willing to entertain the idea, but didn’t think the end product would be very exciting.”

Luckily, Andrew had some interesting thoughts on how to address Mac’s concerns and “spice up” the interview at the same time. “I had the idea that we could take Mac’s emailed answers and pay [Peter Weller on Cameo](#) to read them out loud. Then we’d take the recordings of Peter Weller giving Mac’s answers and do a narrative segment where our characters, Andrew and Dave, cross over into the 8th Dimension and meet Buckaroo Banzai. We’d interview him about the movie and cut Weller’s recordings together like we were sitting and talking to him. Doing these kinds of narrative audio segments are a regular part of the show. And, for a while, that’s what we wanted to do.”

While the Peter Weller cameo interview concept was being bandied about, another possible approach was percolating in the background, one that would lead to a breakthrough with Mac. “As soon as Andrew’s Peter Weller idea came up, a plot began to form in my head,” Dan said. “I was reading a biography of Orson Welles at the time. Welles is often remembered most as a filmmaker and pitch man for wine, but his greatest success was actually as a radio personality performing audio dramas. That’s when I made the leap and thought, ‘What if Mac wrote a script for a short audio drama and we tracked down Buckaroo Banzai actors willing to read it on the podcast?’ I pitched the idea of an audio drama script to Mac. He found that concept a lot more appealing than an email interview.

“This was a ‘go big or go home’ idea, but there was a hitch to it. We couldn’t really ask Mac to develop a script until we knew who we could get to perform it. I tossed a few more audio drama suggestions into the hat for Rick and Mac to consider as alternates, but the thought of a brand new Buckaroo Banzai adventure performed by original cast members was kind of impossible to ignore. That’s where I began to exert my efforts.”

While it was a bummer that Mac didn’t want to speak on the podcast, preferring to express himself in the written word, having Dan as a guest on the show was a logical next step.

“I think that having Dan on was always part of the plan,” said Andrew. “Our show is very specific in its

construction, and it's not really conducive to having guests. Most of our attempts to get guests on the show who we think might attract attention, for one reason or another, fail. Either we can't figure out what episode the guest would work for because the topics are such hyper-specific things, or they come on and just kind of fall flat because they don't really know much about the subject and don't really know what to contribute. The perfect guest for us is someone who knows more about the thing than we do—which is rare 😊, but when it works it really works. Dan is among the small handful of guests that have elevated the episode they appeared on to greater heights than it would have been if we'd done it on our own."

Dan mused that, "Being a guest on a podcast is a little like being a guest musician on another band's album. Even if you know your instrument inside and out, you're never quite sure how you're going to plug into the chemistry of an existing partnership. Fortunately, we all clicked well together right from the start of recording. Andrew and Dave made it very easy to work with them."

"It's not always easy to prepare for interviews like this either. A lot of the time you'll be given the general topic for discussion and that's about it. Dave and Andrew had created a very detailed roadmap to the episode in the form of a script. That was key. Any specifics that interviewers can provide ahead of time really helps you focus your efforts and give your best answers."

### The podcast creation process

There are many steps in the process of creating, writing, recording, editing, publishing, and marketing a podcast. Andrew delved into the process of how they build an episode and the division of labor across the many tasks. "Dave and I both write the show, whether it be the explainer/true story elements or the narrative audio dramas. Typically we each write our own episodes, but sometimes we co-write them. We usually co-write any of the narrative stuff in the show—with one of us writing an initial draft and then the other doing a rewrite. Thankfully we had Mac to take care of that for this episode. Sometimes there are interviews in the show that either both or one of us conduct depending on availability."

"I engineer the show, but we record everything remotely so we each record ourselves on our ends and then Dave sends me his files. Once we've gotten everything recorded then I edit the show. Considering how in-depth and complicated these shows can be, how high a bar of quality I have, and how hectic our schedules can be, I pretty much have an entire day of the week blocked off to edit a show."

"Editing an episode typically takes me anywhere between 10 and 20 hours depending on how long and complicated it is. The Buckaroo Banzai episode, including the narrative sequence at the end with Billy and Pepe, probably took about 20. Those narrative sequences end up being really time consuming because of the sound design—adding all the sound effects and other design elements to make it sound real and not like some people recording their voices from their respective living rooms."

"I schedule and distribute the show, and I've handled the marketing of the show because of my background working in digital marketing for the last eight years. Long ago we realized that the listeners like Dave better so he posts all the links to the new episodes in our fan communities simply because I feel like they'll pay more attention to him."

"Because I'm so in the trenches of editing and marketing the show, Dave writes the lion's share of episodes. The Buckaroo Banzai episode more or less followed this formula. Dave wrote the episode, I did all of my necessary reading/viewing/research that each of us does when the other person writes an episode, and then we recorded with Dan. I edited the episode pretty much the day before it came out, and that was that."

### Securing the Talent

While the process to create the podcast was long established and clearly laid out for the Deep Cuts team, the road to the Mac Rauch written audio drama was a little more circuitous.

"The idea for doing an audio drama first came up on October 9, 2020," said Dan, "and it soon became apparent that tracking down cast members willing to perform, out of the kindness of their hearts for people they didn't know well at all, was gonna be a big ask and a slow process."

"The email discussions between Andrew, Dave, and myself ebbed and flowed thru October into November and then into the holidays. The *World Watch One* staff were deep in the weeds putting together what would eventually become the New Years' issue of the newsletter as well. It wasn't until January, 2021 that the Deep Cuts crew and I had a chance to revisit the podcast."

With everyone in the same headspace again, things began to heat up. "I got a few people's contact info from Dan, and then I did some internet sleuthing and discovered some other emails," said Dave. "So I emailed a bunch of Buckaroo Banzai actors...y'know, asking if they wanted to be a part of the show. And thankfully



both Billy and Pepe were sweethearts and agreed to come party with us.”

“When Dave mentioned that he had contacted Pepe, the possibility of convincing one or more cast members to join in the fun began to feel like a strong possibility,” said Dan. “As it happened, we were already in contact with Laura Harrington whom we had just interviewed for the [January, 2021 newsletter](#). Steve Mattsson had also interviewed Lewis Smith back in our [October, 2016 issue](#), so we were able to pass along contact information for both Laura and Lewis. For a hot second, it looked like Dave might have been able to get in touch with John Lithgow. Somewhere, in an alternate universe, Lord John Whorfin faced off against Reno and Pinky Carruthers in an epic audio drama for the ages. I’d have loved to see that come together.

“Even so, things were getting pretty interesting. We had Pepe on board, so at the very least it would have been possible for Mac to write an ‘interview’ between Dave, Andrew, and Reno; even if nobody else decided to join in.

“We released the [January issue of World Watch One](#) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and that turned out to be a crazy week. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, I sent Mac a quick email asking if he’d heard anything about a release date for the novel, to which he basically said, ‘Haven’t heard anything. Let me check.’ Then, on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, [Dark Horse announced that Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League](#) would be released on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Suddenly it looked like the audio drama could potentially be used to help publicize the new novel.

“I think I spent most of that week scaring my kids by shouting, ‘Yes!’ every time an email with good news about Buckaroo landed in my in-box.”

As all the good news around the sequel novel flew around the internet, the reality for the podcast was that Mac hadn’t actually written anything for the audio drama yet. The Dark Horse announcement did, however, add some urgency to record the Deep Cuts podcast proper, even with the audio drama still a work-in-progress. The podcast recording with Andrew, Dave, and Dan took place on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Dan made sure to keep the momentum for the audio drama moving forward in earnest. “The day after we finished recording the podcast, I sent an email to Billy Vera to see if he would be willing to be a part of the audio drama. We had just interviewed Billy about his new novel, [A Dollop of Toothpaste](#), for our [January issue](#). I could tell, from when I reached out to Billy about Buckaroo originally, that he has a real fondness for the film and the time he had making it. He answered the

same day with, ‘What you’re proposing sounds like fun. Count me in for sure.’ I’m positive that I screamed and did a happy dance after that email, too. Now it was time to go back to Mac and see if he was still willing to make this crazy thing happen.”

## Crafting the Audio Drama

Over the next four days, Dan emailed back and forth with Mac and Rick, trying to nail down a possible direction for the audio drama. The two “radio friendly” concepts Dan advocated for were either an interview or a joint statement from the Banzai Institute. “It seemed to me that at least one component of the script should acknowledge the new novel, either directly or in a more oblique reference of some sort.

“Mac thought it was cool that Pepe and Billy had signed onto perform something, but didn’t immediately have a clear idea what that should look like. So, I started tossing ideas into the hat. Maybe Reno and Pinky could talk about the making of the docudrama/comics/novels from the Institute’s POV, or what it’s like working with Mac and Rick. Maybe they could talk about bringing factual discourse back to the country by way of some joint effort between Pinky (a keeper of many unknown facts) and Reno (the great communicator for the Institute). Maybe they’re doing a cooking show, or debriefing the world on the latest Institute foray into realms of the obscure, exotic, and slightly ridiculous. I thought, ‘What in the world needs to be taken down a peg or two these days?’ That’s often a good place to mine some satire. With Pinky and Reno both being in the band, they could talk about the highs and lows of the Hong Kong Cavalier’s music catalogue. It’s Buckaroo, after all. It could be anything.”



**The Reno Kid rides again!: Pepe Serna** (active speaker) chats via Zoom with, from left to right in thumbnail view, **Dan Berger, Andrew Price, Dave Baker, and Billy Vera** during the recording of the Team Banzai audio drama for Deep Cuts. Source: World Watch One/Dan Berger

Mac spent a couple months thinking about what he wanted to do.

“Over time,” said Andrew, “the Peter Weller recording concept morphed into Dan asking Mac if HE wanted to write a script for a narrative segment for the show. And at that point it was like, ‘Fuck our idea. We’ll do what-the-fuck-ever Mac will write for us.’ The challenge was getting the insane script he wrote to fit into the continuity of our show.”

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Mac sent the audio drama script to Dan and it featured Reno and Pinky Carruthers as they invaded a live radio broadcast.

“Mac wanted to make sure we understood that the script was something for the newsletter, and if we happened to do something else with it, that was our business,” explained Dan. “The end result is that the audio drama reads a bit differently on the page than in the performance, but it adapted pretty well into the spoken word.”

About a week later on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, Pepe and Billy joined Andrew, Dave, and Dan to record their parts. “Pepe and Billy were immediately ready and willing to do pretty much whatever we wanted to do,” said Andrew. “Originally I wanted Billy to sing on the song that’s in the episode (‘Lectroids Better Run’), but the technical logistics didn’t work out. But otherwise it was a breeze and they were ridiculously amazing sports.”

The [Deep Cuts podcast featuring Buckaroo Banzai](#) episode was released on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. You can read Mac’s original script in the **Reno and Pinky return via Podcast!** article and compare it to the audio version.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the [Cult Obscure Media Appreciation Society](#) on Facebook posted a 13m 5s behind-the-scenes video called ‘[Buckaroo Banzai](#)’ Cast Talk About Making the Movie that features Pepe and Billy along with Andrew, Dave, and Dan.

## The Final Word

A total of seven months elapsed from the first email between Dave and Dan to the release of the Deep Cuts podcast Buckaroo Banzai episode with accompanying audio drama. A lot of time and energy went into making everything happen, and it was well worth the investment.

Andrew reflected on the experience and said, “Deep Cuts is a show about delving into the deepest crevices of obscure stories that we find a lot of passion for. We’ve experienced a lot of growth and success, and built a really cool audience so far, but we’re by no means at a Joe Rogan or Marc Maron level of success with our

podcast (yet). So I find it very fitting that a lot of the takeaways and experiences this show brings us are similarly weird, obscure little personal victories that only we would appreciate. Those are my favorite things that happen as a result of doing this show.

“And probably the weirdest, most obscure, most satisfying and fulfilling thing of all is that Dave and I now have a running email thread with W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Fucking Rauch where we trade puns and weird jokes back and forth. It’s such a low-stakes, lopsided version of the dreams you have for yourself when you’re a kid, and for some reason I love it so much more than any of the other bigger successes I’ve had in my career.”

Dan highlighted all those who pulled together and contributed to the project. “I can’t say enough how much I was honored by the graciousness and generosity of Mac, Rick, Pepe, and Billy in making the audio drama possible,” said Dan. “And to Andrew and Dave for having me on the podcast. It’s not every day that we get a window back into the world of Buckaroo Banzai, and the fact that this came together at all still kind of astounds me. Playing producer, with a budget of zero dollars, is par for the course putting together the *World Watch One* newsletter from issue to issue. Leveling that up to an audio production and professional voice talent...well, it’s kind of humbling. I think the world of all of those guys. Thanks, fellas.”

“I was skeptical at first,” said Rauch about the podcast and audio drama experience, “but I’m glad we did it.” 🐉

Thanks to Andrew and Dave from the Deep Cuts podcast, and to Dan, for making this article possible.

**Andrew Price** was working as a screenwriter and living in LA in 2013 when he helped co-found a social media startup company with a bunch of other guys he was working with. He’s been working in social and new media as a career ever since. When he’s not doing that, he’s either hanging out with his beautiful wife and two sons, or hanging out with Dave and trying to build this media empire so he can ditch his day job so they can just make weird bullshit all the time forever.

**Dave Baker** is a writer and illustrator, living in Los Angeles. He has published a bunch of comics and ‘zines and recently released *Everyone Is Tulip*, an original graphic novel published by Dark Horse Comics. You can see more of his work at [www.heydavebaker.com](http://www.heydavebaker.com).

**Dan Berger** is a craft beer industry drone working in the Chicago suburbs and the editor-in-chief of *World Watch One*. When he isn’t busy flailing at the next issue, he is riding Lake County’s bicycle trails or volunteering for either the local science fiction convention scene or the Medical Reserve Corps, answering phones and screening vaccination patients during the odd pandemic or two.



## Reno and Pinky Return via Podcast!

By Earl Mac Rauch with Sean Murphy

*World Watch One* proudly presents the original audio drama script written by E. M. Rauch for the Deep Cuts podcast. We highly recommend that you listen to the [Deep Cuts podcast version of this script](#) (starting around 1h 51m) first, to get the full effect.

As per the Deep Cuts Podcast show notes, “Andrew & Dave meet Pinky Carruthers & The Reno Kid” was written by Earl Mac Rauch. It features Andrew Price, Dave Baker, The Reno Kid played by Pepe Serna, and Pinky Carruthers played by Billy Vera. The song heard during the podcast, “Lectroids Better Run,” was written and performed by Andrew Price.

Some differences between the script and the final version, such as splitting the host dialogue between two characters occurred while adapting the written word, through performance, into the spoken word. Enjoy!

**Host:** Hey, hey, in here, guys! Look out, everybody--look who just crashed into the studio and knocked over a couple of chairs! I'll be a monkey boy's uncle if it's not the Reno Kid and Pinky Carruthers! I almost didn't recognize you guys in your hats and bandanas...

**Reno:** That's cool. I almost didn't recognize you either, Alex.

**Host:** That's because I'm not Alex, Reno. Sorry,...most nights I'm across the hall, but...

**Reno:** I thought this was The Alex Jones Show. We're looking for Alex.

**Host:** Gotcha. I'm Dave, filling in tonight because Alex got wind you guys were in the building and decided to take a personal day off to study other opportunities.

**Reno:** Opportunities? Para pendejo no se estudia.

**Host:** Yeah, his coffee cup's even still warm. Be that as it may...what brings you guys out tonight, as opposed to fighting to save Mother Earth from that Lectroid mothership, not to mention the World Crime League?

**Pinky:** Funny you should mention it. Going through Alex's garbage, we found his name on a bunch of World Crime League documents...

**Reno:** ...including a 100-year personal management contract with Hanoi Xan.

**Host:** A hundred-year...?

**Pinky:** Right. Alex may be a Lectroid or else Xan shared his secret of immortality in exchange for Alex's loyalty.



Source: Deep Cuts Podcast

That's why we need to ask him some questions, especially seeing how we made him so nervous he bailed in the middle of his show.

**Reno:** Probably afraid we'd hand him his butt.

**Host:** Right, what you Cavaliers do best...hand people their butts. And it looks like you guys might be packing heat. I sure hope not, because guns aren't allowed in here. C'mon, boys, let's be responsible before I...

**Reno:** You gonna pat down the Reno Kid, Dave? And Pinky Carruthers? Seriously...?

**Host:** Man, oh man, you guys are funny...haven't lost a step. But as long as you're here, why not pull up a chair? Can we get you fellas anything to drink?

**Pinky:** Pinky Carruthers here. I'll see what's in Alex's fridge.

**Host:** Reno, what are you having?

(sound of refrigerator opening)

**Pinky:** Oh, my God...

**Host:** Oh, my God...is that real? I need a doggy bag. (throwing up)

**Reno:** Yeah, get wind of that. I'll have the Jack Daniel's Sinatra Select.

**Host:** The Sinatra Select? Kind of pricey but, hey, I'll send somebody out. So just chill, guys, and spend some



**Alex Jones:** Radio show host, conspiracy theorist, and possibly a Red Lectroid. Heaven help us if Xan shares the secret of immortality with him. Source: [Michael Zimmermann/Wikimedia Commons](#)

time with your many fans out there in Alex land, the real world.

**Pinky:** Did you say the 'real world'?

**Host:** Sure, Pinky. What's wrong?

**Pinky:** Reno, did we somehow pass through the Eighth Dimension?

**Reno:** Santos...puta madre...last thing I remember, we were power-washing the Jet Car and Buckaroo gave us the spare key to cue up the OSCILLATION OVERTHRUSTER...

**Pinky:** You were cleaning the headlights when my knee knocked the Jake brake and we started to roll. You ran to jump in the cockpit and accidentally triggered the ramjet...and we rocketed off the cliff...

**Reno:** Directly down...straight through the earth into hell itself.

**Host:** What?

**Reno:** What radio station is this?

**Host:** XWCL, clear channel 100,000 watts...The Flamethrower.

**Reno:** XWCL...World Crime League radio. And you're a damn Lectroid...sonofabitch Dave!

(sounds of a violent scuffle)

**Host:** Hey, guys, luckily I just happen to have a copy of your new hit single. Let's give it a listen, whadda you say??

(Music comes on amid continued fighting, equipment smashing)

**Host:** It's a rocker, all right! I know you guys cut this track with Luke Short Junior and the Tumbleweed Boys and without Buckaroo, 'cause he's been crazy busy after the War of the Worlds in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican, when our planet came within a heartbeat of being wiped off the map by the big Lectroid mothership that's still up there somewhere...a very scary, highly volatile situation...and we're not out of the woods yet, but at least Buckaroo's on the case since he and Empress John Emdall got down and dirty on Planet 10...

**Reno:** Be sure to get all the details in my new book 'Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League,' published by Dark Horse, coming to your local bookseller in July!

**Host:** The Reno Kid, everybody...hardest working man in show business...! Maybe working a little too hard...

**Reno:** I pay my way all day.

**Pinky:** I'm here for you, brother. Pinky Carruthers here...

(Fighting and singing along to the music...equipment failure, fade out...) 🐉



**Billy Vera** as Pinky Carruthers (L) and **Pepe Serna** as Reno (R), at the Sepulveda Damn during the end credits shoot for Buckaroo Banzai. Source: Bruce McBroom



## INTERVIEW: Pepe Serna

### The Reno Kid & Born Storyteller

By Steve Mattsson

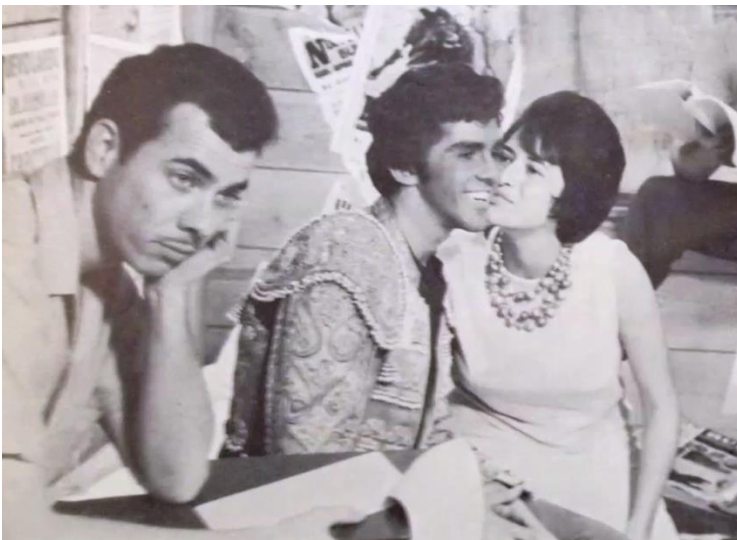
Mexican-American actor [Pepe Serna](#) has appeared in more than 100 feature films and 300 television shows, but he is most recognized to readers of this newsletter as Reno, the Hong Kong Cavaliers' most literate member, and the leader of Strike Group Apache.

**Steve Mattsson:** When did you know you wanted to be an actor, Pepe?

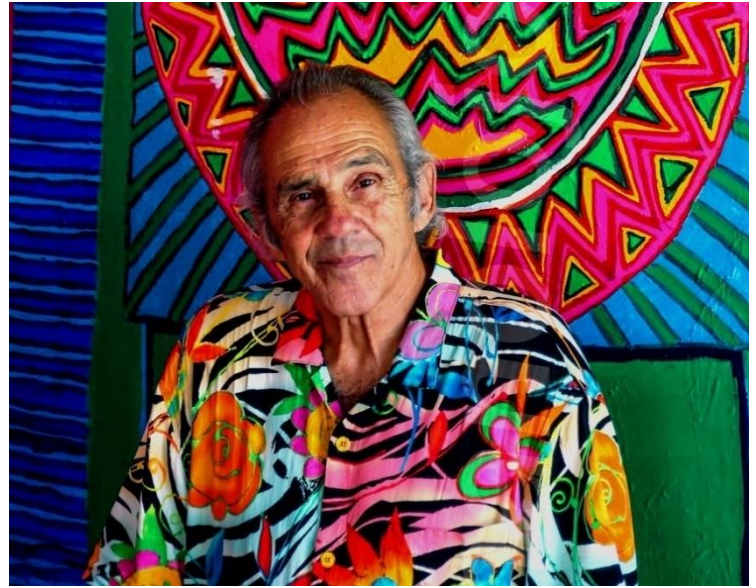
**Pepe Serna:** I knew, since I was three years old, when I jumped up in my godfather's boxing ring and pretended to spar and accidentally knocked myself out. I got a big laugh from the boxers. I tried to do it again, but I didn't get the laugh and realized that I needed to do something new every time.

**SM:** [laughter] Lesson learned.

**PS:** [laughter] Yes, it was. I grew up watching the Mexican movies that my mother would take me to and I always loved the actors' performances. I made a performance out of whatever it was that I was doing, whatever interaction I was having, whatever sport I was playing. I went through high school and college like that. Then, in 1964, I did a Mexican movie called *Jacket of Blood and Gold*. I played the lead, a bullfighter, and thought this was my ticket to bigger things. Unfortunately, the only print of the film was destroyed in a hurricane and nobody got to see it. Later, I went to Mexico City for a couple of years and got into the Acapulco production of [Hair](#).



**Lost Gold:** (L to R) Asst. Director **Kemper Stewart**, **Pepe Serna**, and **Olga Castillo** warm up to the first day of shooting on *Jacket of Blood and Gold*. Source: Corpus Christi Caller-Times



**Artist in residence:** Pepe Serna poses in front of one of his many artistic creations. Source: [Manolo Jolinsky](#)

**SM:** Your background in improv seems unusual for someone known primarily as a film actor.

**PS:** After Mexico, I came to Hollywood where I landed in [The Synergy Trust](#), which was an offshoot troupe of The Committee. They were players from [Second City](#) and were incredible. We did improv and tried to keep it going long form. We did the exercises created and taught by [Del Close](#), who was the guru of Second City. You can Google him.

**SM:** I've heard of Del Close.\*

**PS:** Then I started working in films. I was doing The Synergy Trust and attending another workshop, the Mexican-American Theater Workshop with Latino actors. You have to be in the mix so you know what's happening in town, so you can get to the interview or audition, right?

**SM:** You were networking.

**PS:** And working on my acting. We did scripted sketches, but I liked pure improv. One of the workshop rules was that we didn't repeat a character, which I think was a mistake now. I would have liked to develop some of those characters more fully. I've been working on my one-man show [El Ruco Chuco Cholo Pachuco](#) for 20 years now and it has gone through many, many changes. One of the improv characters that I created was a superhero called "Happy Head." I'd come out on stage with two "H"s on my chest. This was 1969, 1970. And I'm selling a \$15 lid of pure air from Big Bear, because the

\*Del Close co-wrote the horror anthology [Wasteland](#) for DC Comics 1987-1989.

smog was so bad in LA. Happy Head came from my adventure in Mexico with magic mushrooms. I have been a "happy head."

**SM:** Adventure in Mexico?

**PS:** I haven't smoked grass since '83 and never took drugs or anything, but I did magic mushrooms back then with [María Sabina](#). I don't know if you know who she is...

**SM:** I don't, but I'll look her up.

**PS:** She's a *curandera*, a shaman. She became world famous after [Gordon Wasson](#) wrote a [big article](#) about her in *Life Magazine*.

**SM:** When was this?

**PS:** You're going to love it! The article came out in 1957. Wasson was a banker and his wife was a doctor, and they were both amateur ethnomycologists. They had been studying how people all over the world used mushrooms for 30 years before they ended up in Mexico. You'll see when you read about it. It's really, really interesting. It wasn't good for María because she wasn't doing it for the fame and she got too famous. The other *curanderas* didn't like it because it was against the grain of why they were doing it. Wait, I've answered 158 questions in one. I'll stop talking and let you ask another.

**SM:** No. I appreciate it. You're a born storyteller and that's what this is all about. So, one of your early movies was *The Student Nurses*. Like so many in Hollywood, you got your start in a Roger Corman film. Do you have a good [Roger Corman](#) story?

**PS:** Really, I never met Roger Corman. It was [Stephanie Rothman](#) who was the director and I actually worked with her on two movies. The next one was [Group Marriage](#) that she also directed. It was also a Roger Corman production. But I didn't even realize they were Roger Corman projects at that time. A friend of mine from The Synergy Trust actually wrote *The Student Nurses*.

**SM:** The networking pays off.

**PS:** Yeah. He got me and another friend who was in the Synergy Trust and the Mexican-American Theater Workshop into the audition. We both got parts. So, that's what got me in the union, *The Student Nurses*. Then [Hal Wallis](#) discovered me in *Red Sky at Morning* and *Shootout*. And then for seven months, there I am working with [Gregory Peck](#) in *Shootout* and director [Dalton Trumbo](#) in *Johnny Got His Gun*. I was cut out of the final because the studio took it away from Trumbo, but that didn't ruin the experience of working with him.

**SM:** Big names.

**PS:** It was incredible to be working with people like that right off the bat.

**SM:** I really enjoyed your scene in *The Jerk*. Your character was so charming that I rooted for him over Steve Martin. What was [Steve Martin](#) like as a scene partner?

**PS:** He is very, very pleasant, but serious. I was really overacting at first, when the money came into the scene. I was pinching with my fingers, going up the panel of the car door to snatch the money away. And [Carl Reiner](#) said, "No, no. Don't do that. Just do the scene." So, it was great that he just taught me not to overdo it. Don't oversell your game plan. Steal the money when no one is looking. Don't let him know you're coming.

**SM:** A life lesson.

**PS:** It was great to be able to do that with somebody like Carl Reiner and Steve Martin, to be able to improvise in the scene. You know, looking back at it now, I look more like a rocker than a [lowrider](#).



**Nursing the networking.** Source: New World Pictures



**SM:** I thought Steve Martin's performance was very generous. He made you the most important character in the scene, which for a big star seems unusual.

**PS:** That all comes from improv. The way we did it in the workshops is called "Yes, and..." and I'm sure you're familiar with it.

**SM:** It keeps the conversation flowing.

**PS:** Right! "Yes, and..." which is opposed to "Yes, but..." "Yes, and..." is positive-positive. "Yes, but..." is positive-negative.

**SM:** Yes and...?

**PS:** [Laughter] And then you just go with it. When somebody tells you that you are a doctor, or whatever, you go with it. Then you give them their character. We just kept rolling. That way, you never have a brain freeze, because you're always giving the bit back to your partner. You're not thinking about making yourself look good, you're thinking about making the scene better.

**SM:** Well, that's what I was getting at with the scene in *The Jerk*. Steve Martin gave it back to you and it made the scene better.

**PS:** Exactly.

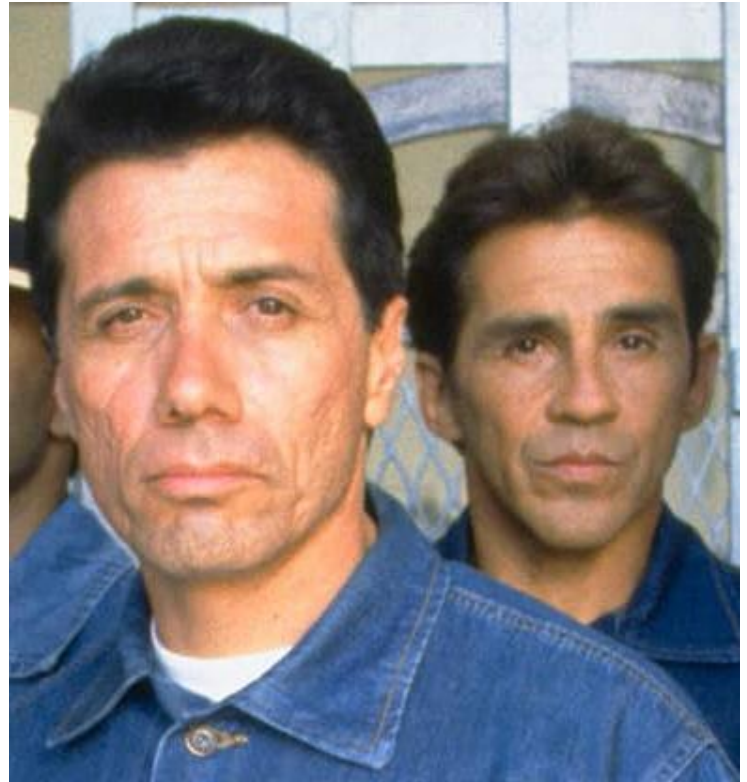
**SM:** A few years ago, you brought your severed arm prop from [Scarface](#)\*\* to the [San Diego Comic-Con](#). Can you talk about fans' reactions to that scene over the years?

**PS:** Oh yeah. At the time, it was the goriest scene in the history of film and it just stays so true to form. Even though I had no dialogue, you knew what I was thinking. I'm not one to look back and see my things, but that scene I have seen several times and I know what's going on in my head, with my imminent death. And it was phenomenal how the people react to it.

**SM:** [American Me](#) was an important film politically and sociologically. Tell us about making it and your relationship with [Edward James Olmos](#) over the years.

**PS:** I met Eddie on a pilot we did called *If Wishes Were Horses*, it was a spin-off from an episode of *Medical Center*. And he says, I've got a script with a part for you, but he didn't tell me what it was at that time. It turned out to be *American Me* and I would play the guy who killed him. That was the very first day we met. Fourteen years later we had done thirteen projects together and we wanted to do *American Me*, but there was no interest. It finally happened after he was nominated for an Oscar. He got the green light to direct it.

**\*\*FUN FACT #1:** According to *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*, *Scarface* is the Lectroids' favorite movie.



**Worth the wait:** After fourteen years of friendship, thirteen projects worked together, and an Oscar nomination, **Edward James Olmos (L)** would finally get his chance to be killed by **Pepe Serna (R)** on screen in *American Me*. Source: Hivemind/Olmos Productions/Universal Pictures

**SM:** Oscar nominations get respect.

**PS:** Eddie called me nightly the year before we shot *American Me* and he would redo the dialogue. I was his earpiece. We wanted that reality for what was going on. The educational system was failing kids then and now and it still doesn't want any of our history told. Those in power are afraid that something's going to be taken away from them. This is ridiculous, because we need to know the truth.

**SM:** I think that would be called "[critical race theory](#)" these days.

**PS:** Yes. There you go.

**SM:** I read in the manuscript for your autobiography that you prepared a detailed backstory for your character, Angel, in *Scarface*. Did you come up with a backstory for Reno in *Buckaroo Banzai*?

**PS:** When I met Mac, Earl Mac Rauch, the first joke he told me was in Spanish. And he told me he used to join [Chicano](#) clubs in Texas and, where was it? I forgot if it was Amarillo, maybe Amarillo. He would join the Chicano clubs and dye his hair black and pretend to be Latino. But his first joke was, I'll tell it to you in Spanish and I'll translate it for you. "*¡Mira nomas, tantas curvas*



**Sling shot:** An injured **Reno (L)** takes aim at Red Lectroids as **John Parker (R)** looks on during the climactic Battle of Yoyodyne in *Buckaroo Banzai*. Source MGM Studios

*y yo sin frenos!*” In English it’s, “Look at that, all those curves and me with no brakes!”

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** So Reno and I had the same sense of humor. Then my wife, with the sense of style that she had, she used to do leather outfits for Elvis and different stars. I didn’t know that much about style or anything. I was just an actor. But when I met her, she would always dress me up and I had the double belt thing going on because she already started initiating me and instructing me on clothing.

**SM:** The fans love Reno’s double belts and they’re your wife’s contribution?

**PS:** No. I think I just asked for them, but it would have never occurred to me without her influence.

**SM:** They were very cool.

**PS:** Did you read in the manuscript about how I auditioned for *Buckaroo Banzai*?

**SM:** I did. You wowed ‘em with your air sax skills.

**PS:** Yeah, because I played in the 8th and 9th grade. I knew a few notes, but mostly I was just improvising, acting like I was playing them. But later when they gave me the job, they wanted people who could really play instruments. They gave me some sheet music and said, “Go learn this song.” [Jerry Peterson](#), [Billy Vera’s](#) sax player, had to cover for me!

**SM:** Sounds like your improv background helped you get work.

**PS:** Yeah. I used it for an audition I had for [The Day of the Locust](#). [John Schlesinger](#) asked me if I knew any Mexican revolutionary songs from the ‘30s. I said, “No, but just give me a word and I’ll make one up.” And he says, [Pepe imitating an upper crust English accent] “Give you a word?”

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** So, even though I can’t sing that good, it didn’t matter because I had conviction. Schlesinger thought I could sing because I acted like I could sing.

**SM:** I understand.

**PS:** I worked on the back story for Angel in *Scarface* because he was different than me, came from a different place. Mac had some background stuff for Reno, but mostly I used my own life. Reno’s Mexican-American, I’m a Mexican-American. We’re the same age, and like I said, we have the same sense of humor...

**SM:** You didn’t need to do as much research because you lived a life similar to Reno’s.

**PS:** Yeah, I had grown up boxing and became a [Golden Gloves](#) champ in Texas.\*\*\* I was the only Chicano in the drama club in college, but I was the president because I was always schmoozing with everybody. I was making friends. I think all of that worked for Reno’s background. We’re both rock & rollers who couldn’t sing.



**There was this one time, in band camp....** A fresh-faced teenaged **Pepe Serna** poses with his saxophone as a member of the Corpus Christi Academy high school band photo. Source: Pepe Serna

**\*\*\*FUN FACT #2:** It is confirmed in *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* that The Reno Kid had been a boxer.



**SM:** [Laughter] Reno is the most literary member of Team Banzai and he's [Mac's alter ego](#) when he writes the novels. How do you incorporate something like that into your character?

**PS:** Reno's a writer and I'm an actor and a writer, so we have the same need to communicate. Reno's a lot smarter than I am, but I don't need to be as smart as the character. I just need to act like I'm smart. I'm not an intellectual kind of guy. I'm more organic. So, I just let it be. Now after the fact, I realized that I put a lot more into the role than I realized at that time. I was just taking things in and realizing that here I am in a movie with all the Hong Kong Cavaliers. I'm one of the contributors to the ensemble.

**SM:** Reno was one of your rare chances to play the good guy. Talk about that a little bit.

**PS:** You know, I was in the ballet sequence of a production of [Oklahoma!](#). So, everybody would call me ballerina. And then over a weekend, I won the Golden Gloves championship. I came back on Monday and by Friday, it went from "Hey ballerina!" to "Hey champ!"

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** And anytime there was going to be a Mexican-American fight against the Gringos out at the parking lot, the crowd would start off down the halls and I jumped out in front. Now it's a Latin march for freedom and I'm doing the whole Martin Luther King thing even before that had happened. And that would dissipate the whole anger vibe. I was always that peacemaker.

**SM:** So, you were a good guy in real life?

**PS:** Yeah. My older brother taught us how to fight and he was the badass. He could knock out people with one punch, so I didn't have to. Anyway it was great to play a character like Reno, to be the good guy. We were all kind of good guys, the Cavaliers.

**SM:** Absolutely.

**PS:** Yeah. And that was the name of my high school band at Corpus Christi Academy. We were the Cavaliers.

**SM:** So you played sax in two different bands called the Cavaliers?

**PS:** Yeah. Yeah, coincidental, but did you ever read *The Celestine Prophecy*?

**SM:** No. Tell me about it.

**PS:** It's interesting. I think the author's name is [Redfield](#), but [The Celestine Prophecy](#) is all about how there are no coincidences. So, when a door opens, if you



Getting the band back together: (L to R) **Damon Hines, Pepe Serna, Kevin Smith, and Lewis Smith** talk about the possibilities of a *Buckaroo Banzai* television series at the 2016 San Diego Comic Con. Source: [Joe Parrington](#)

don't go through the door then, it may not open again for who knows how long. And by the way, I got to meet Stan Lee at the Comic-Con in San Diego when they invited me to be on the *Buckaroo Banzai* panel. Is that where you and I met?

**SM:** Yeah. Exactly.

**PS:** Yeah. You need to check out that book.

**SM:** At the *Buckaroo Banzai* panel, the audience sang "Happy Birthday" to you.

**PS:** Oh, yeah. It made me feel good.

**SM:** It was a nice moment. I want to hear about the experience that you had at Comic-Con with your cast mates.

**PS:** Yeah. It was cool. There weren't that many of us. [Lewis Smith](#), Billy Vera, [Jerry Peterson](#), [Damon Hines](#), who played Scooter, and me. At that time, Kevin Smith was talking about doing a *Buckaroo Banzai* TV series.

**SM:** I remember.

**PS:** And so, we all wanted to be in that, right?

**SM:** Naturally.

**PS:** And of course, if anybody, Reno should be in it because he is the guy who has created the story.

**SM:** Of course!

**PS:** That was really interesting to be part of that and to meet [Stan Lee](#). He was such an incredible human being and to be as humble as he was. He was still child-like in that old body.



**Excelsior! Pepe Serna (R)** meets Marvel Comics legend **Stan Lee (L)** at the 2016 San Diego Comic Con. Source: Joe Parrington

**SM:** The fans were appreciative of you guys being there.

**PS:** Yeah. It was great signing autographs and meeting the fans, but I liked catching up with some of the other guests, people I hadn't seen in years, like [Cassandra Peterson](#).

**SM:** [Elvira](#)?

**PS:** Elvira, yeah, I hung out with her from before. She used to date a friend of mine, and my wife and I would go to parties at his place. Yeah, Comic-Con was a great reunion. It was great being the good guy in a movie like *Buckaroo Banzai*. It's such a shame that it didn't go on.

**SM:** The readers of this newsletter agree with you.

**PS:** Because I could have made some real money and Mexican-Americans didn't get a chance of real good money back then. I made mine by investing in real estate.

**SM:** I think the term you used in your autobiography, "[scale plus ten](#)" as your acting rate.

**PS:** That was a friend of mine, [Lupe Ontiveros](#). I don't know if you ever saw the *Selena* movie.

**SM:** Weren't there a couple of them?

**PS:** I'm talking about the movie with Eddie Olmos as her father. Lupe's the one who kills Selena. Lupe Ontiveros. But her joke was that "Scale Plus Ten" was going to be on her tombstone. Lucky I had invested, like I said, in real estate. I did a couple of TV series where I played [Jennifer Lopez's](#) father, [Second Chances](#) and [Hotel Malibu](#), but after that, the work from network TV and studio films dried up. Now I'm doing independent movies with more interesting roles, but less money.

**SM:** Sounds pretty good to me.

**PS:** I love the work.

**SM:** Back to Buckaroo. There's a line I've wondered about—Reno says, "*Soyez sage, mon ami.*" ("Stay wise, my friend." in French) to Mrs. Johnson when she mistook Penny for Peggy. Where did that line come from?

**PS:** The French came from Mac, because he's so suave.

**SM:** [Laughter] Understood. So, Reno knows the answer to a question that Banzai fans are curious about. What was that watermelon doing there?

**PS:** I'll tell you later.

**SM:** [Laughter] I deserved that! So, recently, you did the [Deep Cuts Podcast](#) where you and Billy Vera slipped back into your *Buckaroo Banzai* characters. Tell me about that.

**PS:** That was fabulous because Mac wrote the scene. They wanted to interview us and play the scene if Mac had time to write it. We weren't sure if he was going to, but he did.

**SM:** It was like getting the old band back together.

**PS:** Billy and I get along great. Well, I'm easy to get along with and, as for Billy, everybody wants to be friends with a rock and roller.

**SM:** True.

**PS:** And Billy's very open and has had an incredible life.

**SM:** Anything else about the scene?

**PS:** Part of the story is that [Alex Jones](#) is working on some evil scheme. We go looking for him at the radio station and he's hiding from us. And his assistant says, "He's not hiding. He's studying." And then Mac wrote for me, "*Para pendejo no se necesita estudia.*" or "To be a fucking idiot, you don't need to study."

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** *Pendejo* is a great Mexican word.

**SM:** [Laughter] Pepe, you're also a painter. You specialize in [super colorful paintings](#) with Mexican-American themes. Tell us about that.

**PS:** My wife's Caucasian, but she has a Mexican heart and soul. She would go to Mexico six months at a time before she even met me. And so [our house](#) was totally a Mexican décor with bright colors. She's always in colorful outfits. We live on Balboa Island and have created a Mexican jungle paradise. It's like I'm in





**Work in progress:** In addition to an autobiography, Pepe is also at work on a documentary about his years of experiences and endeavors, aptly named *Life is Art*. Source: Pepe Serna

Cancún, just stepping out the door. I don't have to go through customs or anything.

**SM:** [Laughter] It sounds like your wife is your muse.

**PS:** Oh. Oh, yeah. Definitely, I think. I mean we've only been apart 20 days in 52 years.

**SM:** Wow. Congratulations.

**PS:** Yeah. She's smart, a Scorpio, and I am a dreamer, so I needed her. It's been incredible what we've been able to do together and enjoy our lives like this. But what was that last question? I know I keep veering off.

**SM:** Your colorful paintings...

**PS:** Oh, yeah, the paintings. Yeah, the color came from my wife, but also from me. You will see in my documentary how I love bold colors, not only in my paintings, but in my acting and in my life. I paint with bright primary colors and that's the way I act.

**SM:** Pepe, you have two big projects coming out, your autobiography and the documentary, [\*Life is Art\*](#). Any idea when they might be available?

**PS:** Hopefully by the end of the year.

**SM:** Looking forward to them. So, I love the story about Mac telling you jokes in Spanish. Do you have any good stories about working with Mac on *Buckaroo Banzai*?

**PS:** I'd love to reconnect with Mac. His wife is from Costa Rica, but I haven't checked in with him over the years. We hit it off on set, I guess, because I was playing him and he knows Mexican-Americans are cool.

**SM:** And you are easy to get along with...

**PS:** [Laughter] Mac and Rick the director, both were just easy going. It was great to be around them. It's contagious, relationships like that.

**SM:** *Buckaroo Banzai* had an amazing cast.

**PS:** Oh God, you can imagine being in a sci fi movie like that and how seriously Peter Weller took his part?

**SM:** He's a serious dude.

**PS:** Have you ever spoken to Peter?

**SM:** I've never met him, but I have heard him speak. He used the word, "[panegyric](#)"\*\*\*\* unironically.

**PS:** [Laughter] Now that he got his PhD, you have to call him doctor.

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** Did you see the programs he was hosting? Stuff on the History Channel or whatever the hell it was.

**SM:** He hosted [Engineering an Empire](#) on the History Channel.

**PS:** That's it. Did you watch those?

**SM:** No, I just Googled it while we were talking.

**PS:** [Laughter] That son-of-a-bitch is smart. I don't wish that on anybody because that can really screw a person up.

**SM:** Pepe, is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

**PS:** I need to finish the story about Jerry Peterson covering for me on the saxophone. I learned how to play “[Rocket 88](#).” Then at the rehearsals, I thought I was the shit because I was hearing Jerry playing. So, I thought that it was us and we sounded good!

**SM:** [Laughter]

**PS:** So, I'm blasting away and Jerry kindly said, "Just pretend." I was screwing up his ears. My 8th grade music lessons weren't taking me as far as I thought.

**SM:** Did that crush the rock and roll dreams of 13 year-old Pepe?

**PS:** No. It was okay, because pretending is what I do for a living.

**SM:** [Laughter] Thanks for your time, Pepe. It's been delightful.

**PS:** *¡Hay nos veremos, Hasta la Proxima Caballeros!*



**\*\*\*\*FUN FACT #3:** Hanoi Xan uses the word “panegyric” and The Reno Kid uses the word “panegyrist” in the novel *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*.

**Editor's note:** We will post links in *World Watch One* when Pepe's documentary and autobiography are available.

### INTERVIEW: Jonathan Lawrence & Tommy Mack *Nice Shoes and Buckaroo*

By Dan Berger

On January 4, 2018 filmmaker Jonathan Lawrence and musician Tommy Mack unleashed a music video that was really more of an extended homage to every iota of science fiction goodness crafted for film and television over the last ninety years. The featured song, “Nice Shoes,” lays down a synth groove thumping beneath stream of conscious nonsense lyrics that tell the tale of...well, we’re not exactly sure what. But it is glorious. Best of all, the video features several nods to *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8<sup>th</sup> Dimension*, and is a feast for any discerning science fiction fan who takes joy in other people taking joy in science fiction.

Film festivals seem to dig the video as well. Over the last two years, *Nice Shoes* has been selected to appear in 152 film festivals, where it has racked up an impressive 32 awards and counting, at festivals as diverse as Los Angeles Film Awards, New York Movie Awards, Prague International Film Fest, GeekFest Toronto, and the Moody Crab Film Fest. We figured it was high time *World Watch One* found out what all the fuss was about.

**Dan Berger:** How did the two of you meet?

**Jonathan Lawrence:** When I met Tommy he was working EVS, at a place that sold video gear. I needed some stuff for an Indiana Jones fan film that I was doing and what better way to get people onboard to help than dress up like Indiana Jones. Tommy and I hit it off and he offered to help me out with post sound. Looking back, I think he was just luring me in to his strange universe...says the man with a hat and whip in public.

**Tommy Mack:** When he came into the showroom in full Indiana Jones regalia, I knew right then and there that he was cool as hell and we’d click.

**DB:** You’re both clearly broad fans of science fiction. When did you get into sci fi films?

**TM:** *Star Wars*. Nothing else in the world mattered after that. Even though I had seen older sci fi movies and shows before, I wasn’t “in” until *Star Wars*. From that point on, science fiction was a part of my life and it still is.

**JL:** Sci fi has been part of my DNA as far back as I can remember. When I was growing up there was always some black and white sci fi movie on TV, usually on Saturday afternoon. So, if I wasn’t watching SF I was out in the yard playing with SF toys or making 8mm SF movies. I was also addicted to Shows like *Star Trek*, *The*



**Nice dudes:** Tommy Mack (L) and Jonathan Lawrence (R) channel their inner selfies during the making of *Nice Shoes*. Source: Jonathan Lawrence/Tommy Mack

*Twilight Zone*, and *The Six Million Dollar Man*. My friend, Tim Minear, and I would spend hours making our versions of these shows, (We’d graduated to Super 8mm by this point). I was just getting into sci fi conventions, then my mom died when I was 13. That’s about the time *Logan’s Run* came out and I needed an escape from reality, so that became a huge part of my life along with old friends and new friends that were also into it at the SF cons

**DB:** What is the story leading up to making this video?

**JL:** I don’t recall how doing another video for Tommy started. But I remember listening to some of his vintage recordings and taking a liking to “Nice Shoes” because it was obscure and had a Rod Serling *Twilight Zone* reference...my standards of work I’ll accept are pretty low.

**TM:** We had worked on some other projects previously including another music video for one of my other songs. Jonathan actually came to me suggesting we do another one, but to really make it different. I sent him some of my material and I’ll be damned if he didn’t choose THE CRAZIEST “WTF?!?” song in my repertoire. Best part? It was a song I had written, recorded, and forgotten about long ago. The only copy of it was on a cassette!

**DB:** Who was creatively responsible for what in developing the video?

**TM:** Knowing the song’s lyrics were meaningless, it freed us up to do whatever the hell we wanted. Thus, over hamburgers and beer and our mutual love of sci fi, we decided that it was going to be centered around an alien. You know, as per usual, right?





**Nice coat:** Tommy Mack cases the [Bradbury Building](#) in full *Blade Runner* regalia during the filming of *Nice Shoes*.  
Source: Jonathan Lawrence/Tommy Mack

**DB:** Absolutely.

**JL:** Science fiction as the backdrop was a given. Originally, I wanted to do something with actual robots dancing because I'd seen some creepy robot videos on YouTube. But as Tommy and I went through ideas it evolved into a metric crap-ton of vintage sci fi references. Creatively we shared what we wanted in the video then Tommy got all the locations and costumes except for the *Blade Runner* coat—I had that custom made years earlier. Then I did all the shooting, editing, fx and compositing—but Tommy and I worked closely on everything. He built the foil room—and helped me create the *Twilight Zone* opening. . . that opening was one of the main things I was insistent on doing—I told Tommy that I wanted to do as much of it as possible with practice effects and he just let me run with it. But really Tommy did the heavy lifting.

**DB:** Music videos are often two very different creative endeavors rolled into one: Writing, recording, and producing a song married to writing, directing, and filming a video. How did you navigate the creative dialogue between both features of the project?

**TM:** The song was done and waiting. This whole enterprise (pun intended) was about making a sci fi video for it. We both had a lot of ideas we just started throwing at each other and between us.

**JL:** Basically, I would shoot down every idea Tommy came up with then he would shoot all mine down—which was challenging. In the end, I was directing and editing so I always got my way—that's a triumph. But really, we just kept throwing ideas into a torpedo chute and whatever stuck to the wall ended up in the video. Tommy

had the most challenging part in pulling it all together and getting the right people to help. He's a good guy and makes friends with everyone so they were all happy to be a part of this for Tommy.

**TM:** We both had a lot of assets to draw upon. For instance, there's a standing spaceship set here in LA called "Laurel Canyon Stages". It's a gorgeous setup and a lot of productions have been shot there. Knowing the owners, we were allowed to shoot there at an extremely negligible rate. Whether it was crew, talent, or locations, we were very fortunate to have so many people in the industry work with us...basically calling in a lot of favors!

**DB:** How did you map out cramming over 43 science fiction properties into a single 3:47 second video?

**TM:** This one I'm going to have to have Jonathan answer. I still don't know how he did it. To this day when someone sees it for the first time, they are always stunned by the sheer quantity (or audacity) of references and locations. Jonathan?



**Fix it in post:** (Top) Tommy Mack (L) flees the TARDIS as [Andrew Elkins'](#) 4<sup>th</sup> Doctor shrugs in confusion (C) on location at [Geeky Teas & Games](#) in Burbank, CA. **Jonathan Lawrence** (R) captures the action from a comfortable angle.

(Bottom) Lawrence later digitally re-dressed the location, adding the first of several *Buckaroo Banzai* references to the video. Source: Jonathan Lawrence/Tommy Mack

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**JL:** We didn't really map anything out—We just kept adding sci fi references to the mix. Sometimes they even hit me in post so I'd just add a graphic to a wall in the background. We shot waaaaay more footage than what ended up in the final edit. The only thing that was mapped out—sort of—was the loose story of a government official (Tommy) taking compassion on an alien during an autopsy, then stealing it and trying to return it home.

**DB:** How long did it take to make the video?

**JL:** How long to make from concept to completion? It was a lifetime.

**TM:** You know the idiom of “Good, Fast, Cheap...You can only choose two?” This wasn't fast. When calling in favors and working in people's spare time, it tends to take longer. I'd say about a year. Hell, the first time we went to film at the Bradbury Building, it was Christmas time and they had all these decorations up on the inside so we had to come back a few months later when it was clean again!

**DB:** What were your introductions to *Buckaroo Banzai*?

**JL:** I was working on a stunt team and two of the guys had scored these alien masks when they were extras in a movie called *Buckaroo Banzai*. When the movie was released, I took my girlfriend to see it and I became mesmerized with the film. Everything about it struck me as a work of genius. I love it to this day.

**TM:** I was a 14 when I saw *Buckaroo Banzai*, and I didn't get it. To me, comedic science fiction was the *Hitchhiker's Guide* and “weird” sci fi was *Brazil*. I couldn't wrap my head around something that was a bit of both. It was later in life (late 20's) that I began to understand the genius of it. And now having recreated it, I actually feel a part of the overall lore!

**DB:** Tell us the story of recording at Sepulveda Dam.

**JL:** The Sepulveda Dam is ALL Tommy's doing.

**TM:** So, I went out there to scout the location, and noticed that there's actually nice parking available for explorers right off Burbank Blvd. I then walked the long berm to the dam and chatted with the security guard who was amazingly friendly. Look, I wish I could tell you an amazing story involving bribery and stealth shooting, but the truth is more mundane. He's there to make sure “stupid things” don't happen. If you are a photographer or a VERY small film crew with no lights and props, you can get on the dam and do your thing. Of course, if it looks like you are a large professional production, then that's when the security hammer will fall on you. We were “large” in only the sense we had a bunch of weirdos



**Marching onwards:** A set of Hong Kong Cavalier Irregulars give Team Banzai a proper send-up in *Nice Shoes*, complete with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (**Middle**) and *Escape from New York* references (**Bottom**) added to the Sepulveda Dam in post. Source: Jonathan Lawrence

dressed in the 80's finest clothes and our crew was Jonathan Lawrence filming it like a madman. We probably would have been flagged had we not gotten on the guard's good side, so I'll still consider ourselves lucky.

**DB:** Why did you shoot the video in the first place? Was there a goal beyond simply making a finished video?

**TM:** We both work in the industry and usually it's on other people's projects because that's what pays the bills. Being creatives ourselves, it's always fun to have a chance to stretch out and have fun on something that means something to us. And besides, ANY excuse to do anything sci fi is good in my book.

**JL:** Tommy has been a great friend and helped me out quite a lot. We've also worked together for many years. So when he mentioned he wanted to do a music video to one of his older recordings and he would pay me dozens of dollars and feed me—I said, “Count me in.”



**DB:** I see the Banzai March and Banzai Institute logo references. Did I miss any others?

**JL:** I think you got all the *Buckaroo Banzai* references. In retrospect—I should have added a watermelon.

**DB:** Did you have to drown any darlings that, in a perfect world, you would have kept in the video?

**TM:** Plenty. My favorite shot was what I call “The Blade Runner Tunnel.” Gorgeous. Never made it because of timing. Hell, even the alien autopsy scene could be a short film in and of itself! Jonathan would know more of the sordid details.

**JL:** As far as things we actually shot, most of the references made it in. We had many conversations where ideas were tossed in the hat but so many never came to be—too many to remember. And a lot of references I just pulled out of my butt in post. I’d look at a shot with a blank wall and think, “That’s visually dull. What can I add there? Hmm...*Logan’s Run*, *Roller Ball*, *Hitchhiker’s Guide*, the Banzai Institute...”

Other images were added to hide undesirable objects—Robbie Robot (on the *E.T.* street) is hiding a big green trash can. The time machine at Vasquez Rocks is hiding a car. We have so much that we shot of every reference that it was a shame to use so little in such short bursts and we could have come up with so much more—because let’s face it ...science fiction is life!

**DB:** Which science fiction reference is your favorite?

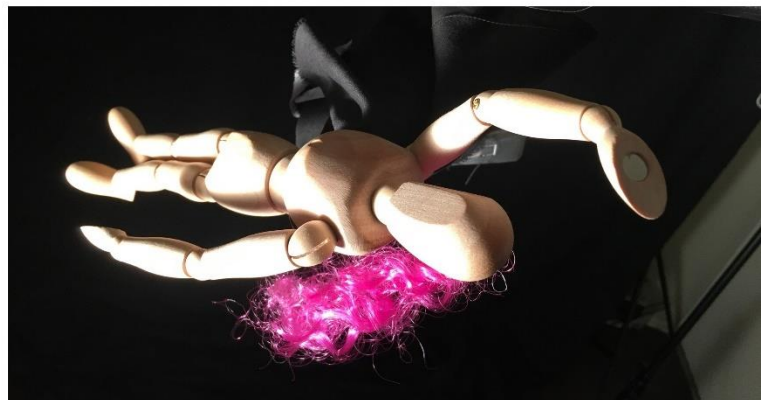
**TM:** The Dr. Who actor has by far been the most popular and talked about reference, but my personal favorite is in fact the *Buckaroo Banzai* one. And no, I’m not just saying that because of you, it’s because it was the most difficult to nail trying to get nine people who look the part, assembling the costumes, scheduling them all, and asking them to trudge out to a remote dam ...that’s some “producer’s kung fu” right there and I’m proud of it!

**JL:** I kind of love all the references, especially the couple that I don’t think any mortal will ever see, recall, or get. But as for the overt bits, I am partial to the *Twilight Zone* opening because we created half of it with miniatures and essentially replicated it frame for frame, *Blade Runner* because the Bradbury is my dream home, and *Buckaroo Banzai*—simply because I love the film and I have always wanted to shoot at that dam location. (Thank you, Tommy, for making that happen)

**DB:** Have any stories to share from making the video?

**TM:** We recreated the *Twilight Zone* intro so perfectly that we actually got a cease and desist order from CBS because they thought it was their footage! After proving to them that we shot it ourselves and it’s covered under fair use/parody, they relented, and WE WON!

**JL:** There were many strange stories and conversations, but the first story that comes to mind is me convincing



**In the Zone:** Jonathan Lawrence recreates a portion of the *Twilight Zone* intro for *Nice Shoes*. Source: Tommy Mack



**The mysteries of the Tin Foil Room.** Source: Tommy Mack

Tommy to turn his place into the tin-foil room (and green screen room). For several days we were loading props, costumes and equipment in and out and we would walk by one of Tommy's neighbors who was ensconced on a lawn chair with his shirt unbuttoned and smoking a cig. Every time we passed him he would say something like, "What'cha up to?" "Still at it, are ya?" "Have'n fun boys?" and then just take another hit and look away.

**DB:** Well, that's not creepy at all. How did the video fare on the festival circuit?

**JL:** Thanks to Tommy getting the video out to a lot of festivals that either loved it or took pity on us for being so strange—the video has done and continues to do quite well.

**TM:** Strange story: I was woefully ignorant as to how the festival circuit worked, so we released the video on YouTube and Vimeo...and nothing happened. After quite some time and hardly any views, I decided on a "Hail Mary" and sent it to the amazing sci fi short story website, [DUST](#). To my utter amazement, they accepted it! It was the only music video they ever broadcast and we racked up over 100K views in a few weeks. Then I discovered the festival broker sites like [FilmFreeway](#). Suddenly, it became a circuit darling being selected for 141 festivals, WINNING 29 of them, and being finalist for another 24. And it's still steaming along as we speak! Fun fact? Even the Sydney Science Fiction Film Festival used our video as a contest: the top five people who figured out the most references in our video won passes!

**DB:** Did the video's success impact your careers at all?

**TM:** Oh, I think my song has been downloaded dozens of times. Seriously though, it was less about the song and more about the video, to be honest.

**JL:** I think Tommy has resolved himself to doing Bee Gees covers from now on. I'm still waiting for Bollywood to recognize my genius at creating musical epics.

**DB:** What are you currently working on, and where can people find more of your work?

**JL:** During the industry downtime in 2020 I took to completing an [Indiana Jones fan film](#) that I got involved with in 2003—that is about to go to post sound. I also have an SF comedy/horror (ie *Tremors/Body Snatchers*) in my back pocket. Tommy and I are in development on an action/SF film as well as chatting about his next music video. And pre-production is under way on a fantasy-musical that producer/choreographer, Christopher Childers is directing. He has asked me to be his cinematographer. I directed and shot a short film with him, called [Carnival of Wonders](#), that has taken awards in some of the same festivals as *Nice Shoes*—but in different categories.

My work is somewhat scattered about the planet—Much of what I do is for other people. Re: personal work—pretty much everything my camera catches [ends up on Vimeo](#) when it spews out of my computer, or YouTube. Look up [Goddess of the Fire Dance](#) for more retro fun.

I've also been shooting music videos and promos for friends and clients and have another short that I shot hitting festivals at the end of the year. I really need to work with someone to make a website for me when I have time to gather my projects.

**TM:** I know Jonathan is working on a feature sci fi script to be produced this year, and also working on some shorts and hopefully a feature, but the real question is will there be another video in our future to follow up on *Nice Shoes*? You bet your asteroid! I'm writing and recording the song as we speak.

And for the record, we were told that W.D. Richter saw our video and said it blew his mind. I don't know about you, but knowing that blows MY mind! What an honor!



**Whip it good: Kenneth Gawne** appears as a young Indiana Jones in the fan-made *Treasure of the Templars* directed by Jonathan Lawrence. Source [Kenneth Gawne](#)



### Marching Onward: Banzai March Video Tributes

By Dan Berger

One of the most enduring and referenced elements of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8<sup>th</sup> Dimension* is the end credits reunion-cum music video that gathers members of the cast together for one last victory lap at the Sepulveda Dam in California's San Fernando Valley. Often referred to as the "Banzai March," the scene featured the film's cast parading to Billy Joel's *Uptown Girl* while composer Michael Boddicker wrote a suitable song to fit the same tempo.

In addition to the *Nice Shoes* video explored earlier in this issue, the Banzai March has cropped up in several other noteworthy tributes on film and video. Here are a few that you might want to check out.



Source: Touchstone Pictures

**Life Aquatic End Credits:** Fans of both *Buckaroo Banzai* and auteur Wes Anderson have long surmised that *The French Dispatch* (2021) director is a fan of the docudrama. Max Fischer, the protagonist of Anderson's *Rushmore* (1998), plays very much like a young Buckaroo, consumed as he is throughout the film with a vast array of interests that take his life in several directions at once. A 2015 [Film Buff On-line article](#) noted that *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) features a screen kiss reminiscent of the charged smooch between Buckaroo and Penny at the conclusion of *Buckaroo Banzai*.

[Actor Jeff Goldblum confirmed](#) this supposition in [Time Warp: The Greatest Cult Films of All-Time](#) (2019). Goldblum contributes an in-depth discussion of *Buckaroo Banzai* to the three-part documentary, including a brief anecdote about Anderson from the set of *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), saying, "...I think he told me, unless I'm misremembering it—unless I dreamed this—he said, 'We're sort of doing what you did in *Buckaroo Banzai* at the end.' You know—everyone parades, the characters come together and do an end credit parade to music. So we did that in *Life Aquatic*, too. How about that?"



Source : Haymaker Comedy

**Haymaker Comedy Intro:** Haymaker is a sketch comedy group from Los Angeles that has performed together since 2016. The lineup has changed over time, so, "At the end of 2018, Haymaker did a re-branding with their new members and cut a new Intro Video paying homage to Buckaroo Banzai (sic) that has over 20,000 views on Facebook and YouTube," according to the [SF Sketch Fest 2020](#) website.

SF Sketch Fest may have botched the spelling for "Banzai," but Haymaker nails the look and feel of the Banzai March as the troupe gathers at the Sepulveda Dam to the tune of [Art of Noise's Peter Gunn cover](#). The 1986 recording is a nice compliment to the 1984 film from which the video draws its inspiration.



Source: Nacional Records

**She's A Tease music video, Fiebre de Jack:** In October of 2010, Monterrey Mexico band She's A Tease released their *Millionaria* album, containing the single *Fiebre de Jack*. In October 2011, [Nacional Records](#), posted the official music video for *Fiebre* on YouTube. A year later, the folks at [thegeektwins.com](#) [noticed](#) that the video to *Fibre* bore a strong resemblance to *Buckaroo Banzai's* end credits. What was going on here?

As She's A Tease frontman Luis Gustavo Leyva Suárez (who answers to "Scott") explained in a 2011 [Austin Vida interview](#) on making the video: "It was actually a friend's idea. He is crazy and we always take his advice, his word. We thought it was really cool, the whole concept." Crazy or not, the *Fiebre de Jack* video perfectly captures a synthesis between the band's unique style and the iconic sequence. Could She's A Tease be the Hong Kong Cavaliers in some other dimension? All we can say is, if someone makes that movie, we're first in line to see it. 🐎

## Banzai Classic Adventures: The Moonstone Years

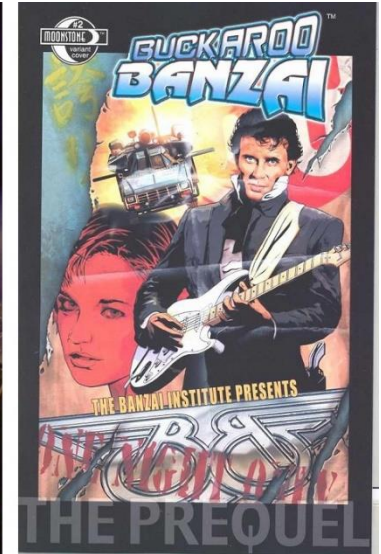
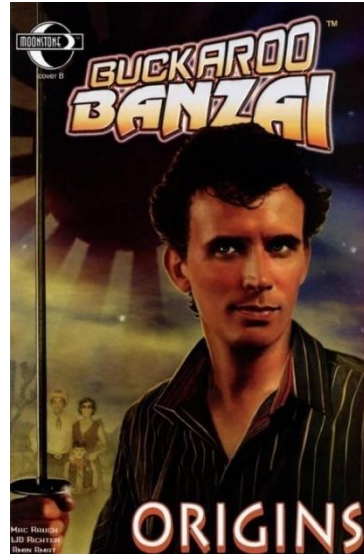
By Clayton "T-Bone" Barr

As all BBIs already know, the long-awaited sequel to 1984's *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* finally winged its way to our Irregular hearts. *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League, et al: A Compendium of Evils* arrived in November 2021, not as a docudrama film, but a prose novel by Earl Mac Rauch (as told to him by The Reno Kid) published by Dark Horse Books.

This novel is not the first follow-up to Dr. Banzai's exploits as depicted in the 1984 film. A number of Banzai adventures have previously been told in comic books published by Moonstone Books from 2006-2012, also written by Rauch. Does the new novel follow the timeline of the Moonstone stories? Or did it go its own way, ignoring the elements established in the comic books? As it is, the comics and the movie are replete with contradictions (one of the hazards of chronicling real life adventures in a fictionalized format, I suppose).

Let's review the Moonstone output and see if it gives us any clues as to where the new novel might head.

Taking things in chronological order of the stories, our first look is at the one-shot comic *Buckaroo Banzai: Origins* featuring a story titled "A Tomb With A View." The tale follows li'l Buckaroo shortly after his father's death in, let's say, the early 1950s (see my study of this story at [PopApostle.com](http://PopApostle.com) for the conflicting years in which the elder Banzai—and also his wife in some versions-- is said to have died). After Dr. Masado Banzai's death, some suspicious blokes from the Far East come to the Banzai family ranch near Silver City, Texas. They offer Mrs. Banzai a choice: either they collect Buckaroo to give him an education or to collect \$84,000 owed them for funding of Masado's experiments. It's not stated, but it seems likely these men are from the World Crime League working for its leader, Hanoi Xan. If so, it seems Xan already suspects Buckaroo's exceptionalism, even as a young boy. The men are turned away and young Buckaroo eventually saves the day by eliminating the family debt in his first (?) adventure. Mrs. Banzai decides to have Buckaroo stay on the nearby Indian reservation with the Chief and his family for his own protection. Buckaroo's age is not given here, but in "Of Hunan Bondage" he is described as having been 4 years old when he witnessed his father's death. The boy presented here seems at least twice that age. In *Across the 8th Dimension*, he is described as having been 5 years old at the time. This story also features the first appearance of Buckaroo's horse, Buttermilk, who appears in some later stories as well, though it's debatable whether it could actually be the same horse



Source: Moonstone Books/Lee Moyer (L)/Joe Corroney (R).

over the span of years from Buckaroo's childhood to adult career.

Next is *Buckaroo Banzai: The Prequel*, a two-issue mini-series with the story title "Of Hunan Bondage" that takes place shortly before the events of *Across the 8th Dimension*. The story opens on a late-night ride in the Hong Kong Cavaliers' tour bus as Buckaroo reflects upon his youth: his father's death; growing up on the Apache reservation with surrogate father Spotted Eagle; discovering his musical talent and going to Nashville, eventually signing a recording contract with producer-legend Audio Murphy; university studies at Harvard and then medical school at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, and then to M.I.T. for a doctorate in Jewish-Chinese Physics; and his Nobel Prize for the OSCILLATION OVERTHRUSTER (even though the device doesn't work yet!). After Buckaroo's reflections, his "real time" adventure begins, when he meets a man who is virtually his duplicate in looks and musical talent, Wilbur Turnbull. Wilbur then stands in for Buckaroo on stage with the Cavaliers while the big man himself recovers from a raw throat and works on the OSCILLATION OVERTHRUSTER. Buckaroo and his cohorts soon head to China, where he has a secret laboratory in a restaurant, and hires local workers to dig a huge tunnel secretly meant to test the OSCILLATION OVERTHRUSTER with the cover story that they are building a new theme park called Buckarooland. Buckaroo and friends soon find themselves pursued by the secret yak police and then attacked by the World Crime League's Deathheads, soldiers depicted as working in pairs, with one man (often a dwarf) riding on the shoulders of the other, thus making a two-headed, four-armed attacker! Buckaroo and his fiancé, Peggy Priddy, are captured, held, and tortured by Hanoi Xan for information about the OSCILLATION



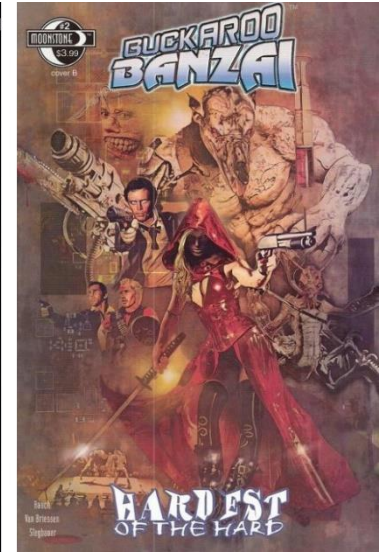
OVERTHRUSTER. Buckaroo builds a miniature overthruster and uses it to move partially through a wall and gets a glimpse of the 7<sup>th</sup> Dimension (also known as Seventh Heaven). Buckaroo escapes from Xan with the help of an undercover Irregular and a break-in by the Cavaliers, but Peggy remains in captivity, with BB and the Cavaliers vowing to get her back. Illinois Mongoose dies during the escape, though in “Return of the Screw,” Buckaroo claims that Mongoose died climbing the Himalayas on his honeymoon; perhaps that’s a cover story. Buckaroo’s double, Wilbur, also dies back at the Banzai Institute, having choked on one of Mrs. Johnson’s meatballs.

Another discrepancy regarding Illinois Mongoose is that while he is named Jimmy Oh here, he is referred to as Kawolski in “Of Hunan Bondage,” in which he died. Perhaps the “Illinois Mongoose” moniker was inherited by Jimmy Oh afterwards; maybe Kawolski had been Jimmy’s mentor and so Jimmy took the moniker in his honor.

The presumed rescue of Peggy is never depicted, but apparently she was rescued at some point, she and Buckaroo were wed, and she was killed by the WCL, all before the events of *Across the 8th Dimension*.

Moving on, the first story to follow *Across the 8th Dimension* is “The Love That Hath No Name,” a short back-up story in the otherwise-unrelated comic book *The Phantom Double Shot: KGB Noir* #3. In this rather depressing and light-on-whimsy story, an intern leaves the Banzai Institute to escape from the telepathic emanations of a baby alien held captive there. The woman gets kidnapped by Soviet KGB agents and the alien senses her distress, growing to tremendous size and breaking out of its acidic environment tank to rescue her. The rescue is successful, but the alien cannot survive out of its tank much longer and it asks to be killed as a mercy, which Perfect Tommy does with his gun.

Next up chronologically is “The Hardest of the Hard,” a two-issue mini-series. In New York City, a beautiful and tough young woman known as Lady G is down on her luck and falls in with an operation that is transforming fighters into half-animal soldiers for the World Crime League. Over the course of months, this woman becomes a partially cat-like being. After her heart is replaced with that of a baboon, she decides to escape, eventually coming into the company of the Cavaliers, who promise to use the Institute’s medical technology to try to help her become human again. Lady G (later more fully-known as “Lady Gillette”) leads the Cavaliers to the hidden base of the WCL’s humanimal soldier operation, where Reno winds up captured by the head of the operation, Dr. Longfeller, and forced into a fight-to-the-



Source: Moonstone Books/Dennis Calero (L)/ Malcolm McClinton (R)

death with the humanimals. The Cavaliers launch an assault and rescue both Reno and another cat woman, during which we see that Buckaroo’s two six-shooters (as described in the novelization of *Across the 8th Dimension*) appear to have been augmented to be able to shoot either bullets or some type of electric discharge at the flick of a switch! The guns carried by Perfect Tommy and Pecos also seem to have this capability.

Six months later, Lady G has been restored to human form and it seems the other cat woman is on the way to restoration as well at the Banzai Institute’s rehabilitation colony of Redemption, Arizona, where they attempt to rehabilitate “the hardest of the hard.”

“Return of the Screw” is a three-issue mini-series adapted from a script for the unfilmed Fox Television pilot titled “Supersize Those Fries” for the proposed *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets and New Mysteries* TV series. At the time of this story, Penny has already been killed by Hanoi Xan (the novelization of *Across the 8th Dimension* reveals that she was killed shortly after her marriage to Buckaroo in 1986). Buckaroo still seems to be tormented by her death, so it may have happened relatively recently, placing this story in 1986 or maybe 1987 (though a reference to ex-Sovietphysicists willing “to work for food” sounds like a humorous exaggeration to scientists formerly working for the Soviet Union after that country’s government collapsed in 1991). Also, Tumblin’ Tumbleweed broadcasts the weekly episode of *Buckaroo Banzai’s Radio Ranch*, live on TV and the worldwide web. The mention of a live broadcast on the web suggests this story takes place in the 1990s or later, not the ‘80s as might be imagined by Buckaroo’s continued mourning of Penny. The Russian *Mir* space station is said here to still exist even though it was intentionally deorbited at the end of its useful life in

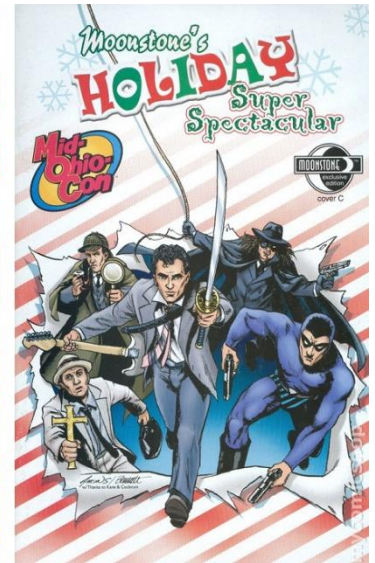
2001, again suggesting a much later timeframe for BB's adventures. And Sonny Bono, an entertainer and politician who died in 1998, is still alive here. That was before the Mir space station went down, so it casts a discrepancy in the timeline of this story; of course, in the Buckaruniverse, Sonny Bono may not have been killed in the skiing accident that ended his life in our world.

The story itself involves the not-quite-dead-despite-appearances Lord Whorfin (in collusion with the World Crime League) plotting the destruction of Earth via seismic resonators based on Tesla towers and potatoes. Buckaroo and his crew, of course, save the day. In the course of the story, we see that the Jet Car is now capable of flight and Hanoi Xan seems to be able to assume the forms of different bodies.

*Moonstone's Holiday Super Spectacular* of 2007 features a short BB comic book story called "Christmas Corral." As Buckaroo and the Hong Kong Cavaliers prepare for a huge Christmas rock and roll concert in the desert, they are suddenly approached by a slithering swarm of giant caterpillars called Wormen from the Andromeda Galaxy...they are here to meet Jesus Christ. Obviously, Jesus is not there to greet them, but Buckaroo decides to show them the sculpture of the baby Jesus from the manger scene which is part of the concert's decorations. But the Wormen seem more impressed with Perfect Tommy and Reno, who are both dressed in Santa Claus suits. They must think Santa is a real life holy figure.

Suddenly the grounds are attacked from the air by Earthly weapons, killing many of the Wormen, including the leader, their queen. The remaining Wormen also die with the passing of their queen, who has excreted a large egg in her death throes. The Cavaliers discover a dud bomb that is identified as a product of Wackenbush Correctional Logistics, a private contractor known to be rounding up aliens down on the border (note the initials of the fictional company). Buckaroo has a few of the interns hide the egg with a local desert prospector named Mose. On the night of the concert, Buckaroo is summoned to the old prospector's shack and he finds the egg has hatched. He thinks Wackenbush will be after the little tyke, so Mose, along with the interns, agree to hide the baby at an old silver mine. Buckaroo returns to the concert grounds and is about to start jamming with the Cavaliers when Wackenbush helicopters descend on the crowd, but the band plays on. And, up in the desert hills, Mose and Calico, with the baby caterpillar, witness more helicopters descending on the old shack. THE END?

From baby caterpillars we now go to "Wild Asses of the Kush" published in *Buckaroo Banzai: Big Size* #1. In the Kush region of South-Central Asia, endangered wild

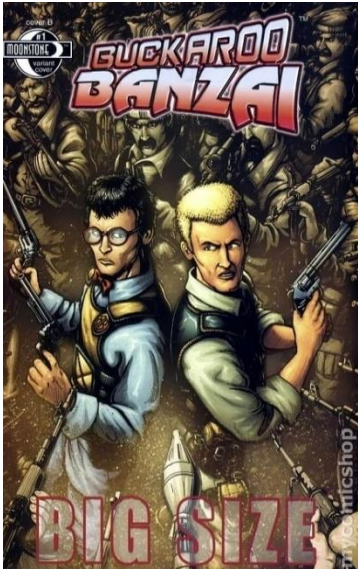


Source: Moonstone Books/Lee Moder (L) Dave Akins & Andy Bennett (R)

jackasses are being rounded-up for slaughter so their sexual organs can be sold as aphrodisiacs throughout the Orient. Buckaroo and the Cavaliers have assigned themselves to stop it, but find that the World Crime League is the major player behind the poaching. While Buckaroo goes undercover as the Blind Sheik to infiltrate the native poachers, it turns out another undercover agent is embedded with them, but Perfect Tommy's temper and recklessness almost blow the operation. Within this story: it would seem that the romance between Reno and Pecos hinted at in previous stories is no longer on, as Pecos intimates to High Sierra that she is in a relationship with Perfect Tommy. It is said that the World Crime League has its own musical band similar to the Hong Kong Cavaliers called the World Class Lotharios, signed with the White Culture Label; and we get the first Buckaruniverse appearance of Dick Ready, who originated in the 1986 pilot script of an unproduced TV series called *Heroes in Trouble* that was shopped by Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter.

"Mysterium" is a *Buckaroo Banzai* short story by Earl Mac Rauch that appeared in the *Phases of the Moon: Full Moon* TPB published by Moonstone in 2011. "Phases of the Moon" was a crossover story appearing in issues of comic books involving several of the properties licensed by Moonstone: *The Spider*, *Domino Lady*, *Honey West*, *Kolchak*, *Sheena*, and *Captain Action*. When the TPB compilation was published, it included the previously unpublished "Mysterium" *Buckaroo Banzai* prose story and the previously unpublished *Kolchak* story "End Game" as codas to the larger "Phases of the Moon" story. This story presents Buckaroo and his cast of characters existing on the same world as all the other licensed characters mentioned above. Should we now consider all these characters as part of the Buckaruniverse?

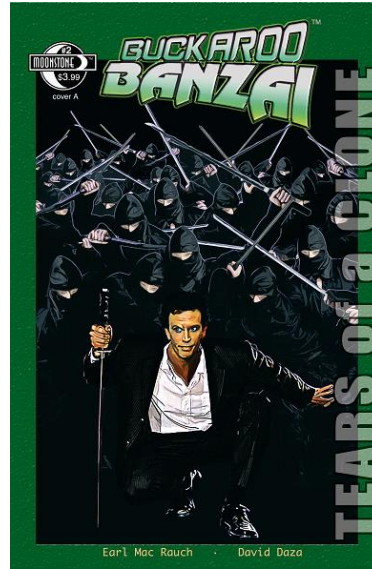




Source: Moonstone Books/ Paul Hanley (L)/ Andy Black (R)

In *Phases of the Moon*, an alien agenda for the human population of Earth (called the Red Mass) begins in the early 20th Century that spans decades into modern times. Buckaroo becomes tangentially involved in the alien plot in “Mysterium,” in which our hero converses with a reporter friend, Bill Mosely, about historical plots of U.S. intelligence agencies and related conspiracy theories. Mosely winds up murdered, possibly because he was getting too close to uncovering the Red Mass’s machinations (which aren’t fully revealed until the “End Game” story at the compilation’s conclusion). This story adds little new backdrop to Buckaroo’s adventures, being mostly conversation and wordplay.

In 2011, Moonstone announced that an ongoing *Buckaroo Banzai* comic book series would be coming from them soon, but it never materialized. Instead, they released a two-issue mini-series titled “Tears of a Clone” in March and October of 2012. Playing a show with the Cavaliers in Vegas at a world telethon for juvenile herpes, Buckaroo receives a clue to the possible whereabouts of Penny Priddy: a flyer for a strip club called the Foxx Hole featuring a hot new dancer named Penny Pretty. Investigating with the Cavaliers, he finds the club is a front for the World Crime League. There they meet the dancer Penny Pretty who seems to be a clone of Penny Priddy (or Buckaroo’s first wife, Peggy?). After a fight with the club’s robot bouncers, the crew takes club owner, Nix, into custody to show them where they can find the local WCL head honcho. On the road out to the location, the bus (World Watch One) is stopped by a Deathhead armored brigade, where a gunfight ensues. Nix and the Deathheads are revealed to be Lectoroids in human guise! Then the bus is forced off the desert road by a tank, down a steep hillside. The Cavaliers survive the bus crash, but are assaulted by a large throng of Lectoroids. World Watch One is sacrificed



Source: (L) Moonstone Books/ Malcolm McClinton, (R) A Team Banzai mech from *Battletech*. Topps/ [Doug Shuler](#)

to take down the horde. The Cavaliers then take out the aliens’ desert cloning facility, rescuing a simpleton clone of Buckaroo in the process. The young Buckaroo and Penny clones are taken back to the Banzai Institute, where they are cared for and the two fall in love with each other as they rapidly age. Penny-clone becomes pregnant with Buckaroo-clone’s baby. Soon, the Buckaroo-clone dies of old age and Penny-clone dies during the birth of her child, a daughter that the real Buckaroo names Polly.

In the course of “Tears of a Clone”: a Lectoroid is seen clinging to a ceiling *a la* Spider-Man (this may be a use of the small suction-cup-like growths on their fingers, as seen in “Return of the Screw”); at one point, Buckaroo refers to Lectoroids as “bugzoids”; Lord John Whorfin’s son is introduced, going by the name of Colonel John Babyjesus; it is suggested that Lectoroids, once having charged themselves full of electricity, are capable of virtually disintegrating a human being by touch.

There are no further official adventures to date in the *Buckaroo Banzai* timeline after this, though a Dr. B. Banzai and his associates and affiliated organizations are depicted in passing in the *Battletech* role-playing game universe set in the 31st Century.

So, do these earlier stories hint at what we may see in the new novel? Will we learn in flashback about Peggy’s captivity in the WCL? Her rescue? Her marriage? Her death (which was touched on in the novelization of *Across the 8th Dimension*)? Will we get closer looks at the expanded cast of characters such as Lady Gillette, Colonel John Babyjesus, Dick Ready, and Polly? In what year will it be set?

“Expect the unexpected. He does.” 🐎



## INTERVIEW: Earl Mac Rauch

By Steve Mattsson

Mac has written things other than [Buckaroo Banzai](#). I ask him about them.

**Steve Mattsson:** Your first novel, [Dirty Pictures from the Prom](#), was written while you were still in high school. What authors were you reading back then?

**Earl Mac Rauch:** I'm guessing you mean outside of English class where I was lucky to have a couple of great teachers who still live in my head. As far as fiction, my tastes were pretty standard for the times. [J.D. Salinger](#), [Ian Fleming](#), [Henry Miller](#) (if you could track down a copy), to name a few, and anybody appearing in the pages of *Playboy*—"come for the pics, stay for the lit"—and *The New Yorker* for its snarky cartoons and dry humor. Lots of names come to mind...[Graham Greene](#), [J.P. Donleavy](#), [Ken Kesey](#), too many to list. One day I saw a smart kid in my English class reading something called [The Sot-Weed Factor](#). I wanted to know what the hell was 'the snot-weed factor', so I went out and got it along with [Giles Goat-Boy](#). Hmm, what the bloody hell...

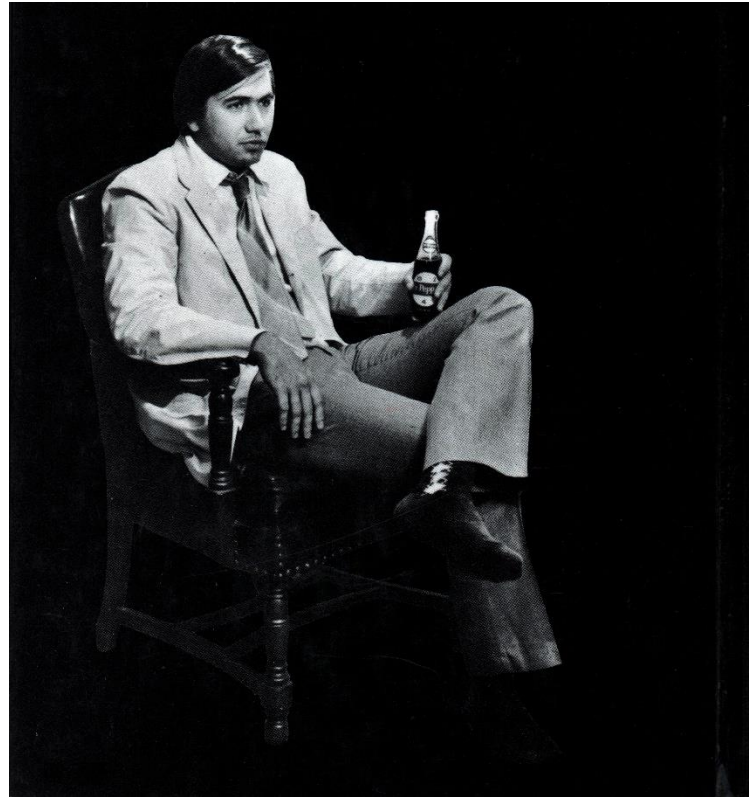
**SM:** What book is on your nightstand right now?

**EMR:** Nothing on the nightstand but a stack piling up on my desk. At the top of the heap a novel I've bought but haven't had a chance to get into yet, [Vasily Grossman's Stalingrad](#), a prequel to his [Love and Fate](#), a great book I read a few years ago. The last thing I read, actually reread, was [Nabokov's Despair](#), maybe my favorite Nabokov novel, made into a film by [Fassbinder](#) starring [Dirk Bogarde](#). The book is better than the movie, but anything with Bogarde is recommended viewing.

**SM:** Your second novel, [Arkansas Adios](#), was published the same year you graduated from Dartmouth. When did you find time to chase women?

**EMR:** Surely you jest. There were no females at Dartmouth until my senior year when Meryl Streep and a few other brave Xena warriors showed up. Mainly we took road trips looking for women as lonely as we were and unfortunately didn't find many. My longest road trip was to Oberlin in Ohio, where I hitchhiked with a classmate. Times were different, which is not to say they were necessarily better. There was a war on at home and abroad, and lots of angst in the air. Were we *Animal House*? Not really. My high school girlfriend and I actually wrote love letters in cursive, and I believe I mentioned *Playboy*.

**SM:** We've heard [W.D. Richter's](#) version of your move to Hollywood. How do you tell the story?



**A younger E. M. Rauch** hangs out on the back cover of *Arkansas Adios* sipping a Dr. Pepper and looking fancy. Source: Simon & Schuster

**EMR:** Rick tells a great story and probably rewrites it as he goes. He also writes great letters, which is especially impressive since his first language was Polish (little known fact\*). It is true he read a review of *Arkansas Adios* in the college alumni magazine and sent me a message in a bottle informing me that he'd found milk and honey in the promised land and that screenwriting was an easy hustle. Since I had dropped out of law school and was holed up on my grandmother's farm with no other offers, Hollywood sounded pretty good. So I flew out one day and he picked me up in his 1940s Cadillac with gangsta whitewalls, like something [George Raft](#) would drive. Then I met his agent, who drove a vintage Bentley so shiny I could see my reflection.

**SM:** I understand that you are a musician. Tell us about your musical influences and what you like to play.

**EMR:** Calling myself a musician sounds presumptuous. Even singer-songwriter is maybe stretching it. I like all kinds of music but can't play anything other than rock 'n' roll rhythm guitar. In LA you can't throw a rock without hitting a screenwriter, actor, or a musician, so I met a lot of different players. Before *Craigslist* there was *The Recycler*, a free weekly paper full of ads. You could put

\*W.D. Richter's birth name is actually Walter Danek Ryszard Korzeniowski. It was later changed after the discovery that neither side of his family was of Polish ancestry.



## Samuel F. Pickering Jr. is a Freakin' Hero!!!

Russell L. Caplan did okay

By Tim Monro

[Sam Pickering](#) was an assistant prof. of English in '71 when he reviewed Mac Rauch's second book, *Arkansas Adios* for the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*. W.D. Richter must o' had a subscription or something 'cause he read the review out in Californ-i-a. It's what gave 'im the idea to invite Mac to Hollywood. You see what I'm puttin' down here? Without Pickering's review, no Buckaroo! The Dude's name should be sung clear and loud by all members of Team Banzai.

So, what else do we know about Pickering? Well, apparently he knows tons about kid's books, nature writers, and old English lit. He also wrote a bunch o' books himself. But he's most famous for his wacky teaching style that really amped up the undergrads. This guy is cool enough to make a movie about. Oh wait, they did. Our man Pickering was the inspiration for Robin Williams' character in [Dead Poets Society](#). Good for him!

Russ Caplan was the regular book reviewer for [The Dartmouth](#) back in 1969. He wrote a review of Mac Rauch's first book *Dirty Pictures from the Prom* for the alumni magazine.

W.D. Richter didn't read this review and nobody made a movie inspired by Russell L. Caplan, but we're gonna link to his work anyway.

[Sam Pickering's Arkansas Adios review](#)

[Russ Caplan's Dirty Pictures from the Prom review](#)

out an ad for a drummer or a bass player and you might get some guy fresh off the Greyhound bus or fresh off a tour with a big name. Pretty amazing. Anyway, so we put a little thing together and played the 80's club scene, Hollywood and SF Valley, did some showcases and crossed paths with a couple of LA bands on their way up. [T-Bone Burnett](#) dropped by one day. One of our guys went on to play with [The Tubes](#) for a few years. The closest we got to a record deal was a demo session paid for by RCA. I also did a few amateur talent nights, solo, at the [Troubadour](#) and the [Palomino](#) in North Hollywood. I couldn't make a go of it but I envy those who do. Musicians are the most enjoyable people to be around because they're generally comfortable in their own skin.

**SM:** Do you listen to music while you write?

**EMR:** It used to be simpler when I had a record collection, which has unfortunately become depleted over the years due to carelessness and poor storage. Searching online for music gives you 10,000 choices and before you know it, you've spent an hour clicking on links and become more interested in the music than in the writing, more or less defeating the original purpose. *YouTube* is a divine curse.

**SM:** I enjoyed the movie [Two-Lane Blacktop](#). [Monte Hellman's](#) first movie after that was [Cockfighter](#) for [Roger Corman](#). [Hellman says he collaborated with you](#) (starting at 8:35 in the video) on an uncredited rewrite of the screenplay.

**EMR:** Maybe. It would have been the summer of '72. I had been in LA maybe six months and he came over to my stuffy apartment in an older building. It was hot, but down the corridor there was a hatch door leading up to the roof, where I liked to go to catch a breeze and enjoy the view, and that's where we went, right up the ladder.



Source: New World Pictures

We had a nice conversation, and he told me about *Cockfighter*, a novel and a screenplay by [Charles Willeford](#) he was going to film for AIP. Although the cockfighting bit turned me off, the atmospheric and people in that world interested me—and I genuinely liked Willeford's hard-boiled style—so I guess Monte thought I could be useful...and cheap. Even so, as it turned out, Corman didn't want to hire me, but Monte said he thought he could get me \$500, which in those days was three months' rent. But here's where it all goes fuzzy like a smoggy LA sunset. Monte was rewriting on his own, so I don't know what he was doing. Maybe I did \$500 worth of work, or maybe I just ran it through the typewriter. But if he said we did a rewrite, I'll take his word for it. He was a sweet, funny guy and a genuine auteur. Check out [The Shooting](#) with Jack Nicholson, written by [Carole Eastman](#).

**SM:** In the extras section of the *New York, New York* Blu-ray, producer [Irwin Winkler](#) says he met you through W.D. Richter and that you two sat down to develop a musical against the background of the big band era. How did this work?

**EMR:** I didn't see the Blu-ray but Irwin has always been very gracious to me. His door was always open, and I got to know him pretty well, spent many hours at his house, went to the Hollywood Bowl with him and his family. He likes to read pages and I like input, so we found a good rhythm. Same with Scorsese...easy to work with, respectful of the process and full of ideas, huge music buff. We met over dinner at his favorite Italian restaurant and screened a lot of Hollywood musicals, which he of course knew intimately. As everyone knows, he's a walking encyclopedia of actors, directors and films, and actually a likeable guy. I went to Vegas with him to meet Liza, then later to New York with him and De Niro for the premiere of [Taxi Driver](#). The studio put me up in the St. Regis with a typewriter but I don't recall doing much work.

**SM:** Were you into big band music and jazz or did you need to do a lot of research?

**EMR:** I didn't need to do much research. I'm a jazz fan and I've always felt connected to the big band era, the musicians, the vocalists, all of it, partly because my father was an aspiring big band singer before World War II cut short his aspirations. He had big band records, old 78s of lots of people, mostly the singers—Sinatra, [Dick Haymes](#), [Jo Stafford](#), [Helen O'Connell](#) and so on—and had seen many of the famous bands in person. Maybe I took a little of Johnny Boyle from him.

**SM:** Were you on set during the filming of *New York, New York*? Woulda been cool to see the musical numbers for the Happy Endings sequence being filmed.



Young **Steve Mattsson** (red arrow) makes an early Banzai connection in *Us* magazine. Source: American Media Inc.

## Team Banzai Synchronicity

The July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1977 issue of *US* has a couple of items of interest for readers of *World Watch One*. The cover feature for this issue is a story about Liza Minnelli and her new movie, *New York, New York* (screenplay by Earl Mac Rauch). Liza is photographed for the cover by [Bruce McBroom](#) who would go on to be the still photographer for *Buckaroo Banzai*. On the back page of this issue, a young BBI Rainbow Kitty makes his modeling debut with two of his high school art teachers, in a photo by Pulitzer Prize winning photographer [Brian Lanker](#).

**EMR:** Maybe if you have a day to kill and an ice chest. A studio sound stage is not cool in the LA heat, at least not in those days. Most of the time people in hot costumes are standing around in front of industrial fans, waiting for word to come down through the chain of command. I went over with Irwin a couple of times and he showed me some dailies on the kinescope. He's a good guy, a throwback to the creative producers of yesteryear before the corporate apparatchiks moved in. As an example, the studio had these high expectations for *New York, New York* to make a big splash, and in the meantime this little low-budget film called *Rocky* opened kind of under the radar and quickly became this megahit and cultural phenomenon, not to mention a billion-dollar franchise for Chartoff-Winkler, who had put up their own money to get it made. Gotta respect that.

**SM:** In an earlier interview you mentioned enjoying the movie [A Bucket of Blood](#) when you were young. I got a kick out of seeing Dick Miller as a night club owner in *New York, New York*. How 'bout you?

**EMR:** Whadda you mean, when I "was young," Steve? Ha, yeah, [Dick Miller](#) was great, and I see he just passed away fairly recently. Dick Miller and [Lionel Stander](#) in



the same movie...let's just say Scorsese knows how to cast a picture. He would mention his choices for this or that role even while we worked on the script. By the way I'm still waiting for [Rob Zombie](#) to remake *Bucket of Blood*. I wonder why it hasn't happened already.

**SM:** To me, De Niro's character in *New York, New York* is a close fit to his Travis Bickle and Jake La Motta roles. Did you initially write with Scorsese or De Niro in mind?

**EMR:** I wasn't aware of Scorsese yet and became aware of De Niro only when [Bang the Drum Slowly](#) came out, so, no, I had no idea. Early on when I was writing the script, I seem to recall the voices in my head were Bette Midler and Jack Nicholson.

**SM:** Why is the character's name Johnny Boyle in the novel and Jimmy Doyle in the film?

**EMR:** The character in the script was always "Johnny Boyle," but since De Niro had already played a character called Johnny Boy in Scorsese's [Mean Streets](#), he wanted to change the name. And, no, I hadn't seen *Mean Streets* when I was writing the script. Just a weird coincidence, I guess...or fate and synchronicity, if you believe in such things.

**SM:** Through the years, what's been your reaction to hearing the "[Theme from New York, New York](#)"\*\*

**EMR:** Bittersweet, I guess, wishing I had written the song...actually any of Kander and Ebb's songs. What an amazing body of work from those guys. Sinatra's not a bad vocalist, either.

**SM:** Did you see that Quentin Tarantino's [New Beverly Cinema](#) had three showings of *New York, New York* in 35mm after the theater reopened post COVID?

**EMR:** I hadn't heard that. Maybe he's a fan.

**SM:** I didn't get much of a Mac Rauch vibe from the movie, [A Stranger is Watching](#). What parts of your screenplay made it to the screen?

**EMR:** I have no idea. I never saw the movie.

**SM:** Talk about the proposed [Neuromancer](#) movie and your work on it.\*\*

**EMR:** You mean that really happened? I thought it was all a bad acid trip. I'll just say it's one of those wonderful reads that doesn't readily lend itself to the confines of a screenplay. Certainly I couldn't figure it out. The only

redeeming feature about the whole experience was getting to talk with [Timothy Leary](#), a big fan of the novel, including giving him a ride home from the beach one day. What would you ask Timothy Leary if you had him captive in the car with you? Mostly I just listened because he was bubbling with excitement about this new thing called the internet, which he really believed would change the world in a positive way. He was writing about it, even working on a video game. Keep in mind this was in 1985 or thereabouts.

**SM:** You wrote the screenplay for the 1989 John Belushi biography, [Wired](#). Describe the challenges of working on "the film Hollywood didn't want made."

**EMR:** I wouldn't say "Hollywood." It was more like one or two powerful individuals. But you're right. Hollywood is a small town, and there was opposition verging on intimidation, particularly against the producer. Probably in retrospect I shouldn't have touched it, but I couldn't take back the screenplay, which on paper was actually not bad and had its share of funny moments. But, let's face it, no one in the world can play John Belushi, so in retrospect a huge folly. The original director who had brought me into the project had the good sense to walk away, but as the writer I didn't have that option. The only saving grace was getting to know [Bob Woodward](#), visiting him at the *Washington Post* and his place in Georgetown, seeing him open a closet full of cardboard files labeled "Watergate." A little bit of history there.

**SM:** Tell us about your unproduced screenplays.

**EMR:** Unproduced screenplays are a fact of life. Even more numerous are the self-rejects, abandoned scripts or script fragments buried in drawers, which is where 99% of genius ideas go to die. On the bright side, I'm of the opinion that there's no such thing as wasted education or wasted writing. Old ideas pop up in new forms and I'm working on a couple now.

**SM:** Seen any good movies lately?

**EMR:** The best thing about streaming is the chance to see great stuff we would never see otherwise, particularly the documentaries—but I'm still a dinosaur. I miss sticky floors and hearing strangers cough without fear. I miss movie theaters.

Funny thing, I was sitting outside Scorsese's office one day at Warner Bros.—his *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* digs—when De Niro walked in. He spoke to Scorsese's assistant and sat down near me. I didn't really know him at the time and it was awkward. All I could think to say was, "Seen any good movies lately?" He laughed and smirked just like Robert De Niro.

\*Here is Liza Minnelli's version of "New York, New York" from the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge7NiJuSpac>

\*\*Rauch appears in this video produced to attract investors for the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kye37wiui2A>



### Broken Promises: Movies Which Teased Unmade Sequels

By Scott Tate

Despite complaints that Hollywood never does anything original, films sequels remain popular, and they always have been. Examples can be found going back a century or more. *The Sheik* (1921) and *Son of the Sheik* (1926) may have been the first feature films with the same cast reprising their roles to follow up on specific threads of plot and character development. *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Fall of a Nation* (1916) didn't share that type of consistency but were still meant as a thematic pair. If we look at shorts instead of features, a Danish series of Sherlock Holmes films ran between 1908 and 1910.

Somewhere along the line, the immediate anticipation of a sequel—knowing that what you just watched would definitely continue in the foreseeable future—became a selling point. For decades, the James Bond movies made a tradition of ending each film with the promise of the next. By the end of the second film in the franchise, 1963's *From Russia with Love*, the Bond films routinely ended with the reassuring printed phrase "James Bond will return," often revealing the specific upcoming title.\* In later years, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has made use of a similar ploy. In addition to their films' famous mid-credits and post-credits scenes that often hint at future plot developments, they often end with title cards tipping viewers to the next film in the franchise, such as "Thor will return in *The Avengers*" or "Captain America will return in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*." These guideposts are comforting, informational, and serve as inexpensive but effective early publicity.

Yet sometimes, as poet Robert Burns put it, the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley, and a promised future film fails to turn up on cue for a variety of reasons. Maybe the earlier film underperformed, or an attached star or director backed out, or the proposal lost financial support, or a key executive fell out of favor with the studio, or schedules simply couldn't be lined up, or everyone's gung-ho to do it but legal rights became tangled. Putting words on a screen telling people that *So-and-So Will Be Back* doesn't constitute a binding contract between filmmakers and fans, even when it's sincerely meant at the time.

Case in point: ***Buckaroo Banzai***, of course. In 1984, we were told to watch for *Buckaroo Banzai Against the*

*World Crime League*. 37 years went by before it finally materialized, not as a movie but in the form of the new novel from Dark Horse by E.M Rauch and the Reno Kid. Let's look back now at some other films that told us we'd be getting further installments which thus far haven't appeared...although as *Buckaroo* shows us, you never know what might happen someday, no matter how long the wait.

The comedy hit ***Airplane*** (1980) spawned one sequel, aptly titled ***Airplane II: The Sequel*** (1982). That one concludes with a post-credits scene—a common gimmick today, but less frequent back then—which teases, "Coming from Paramount Pictures, AIRPLANE III." This is followed by a snippet of footage of William Shatner's *Airplane II* character, Commander Buck Murdock, exclaiming "That's exactly what they'll be expecting us to do!" Just one last gag, or a sincere tease that never came through? In hindsight it became the former by default, but a third entry may have been under legitimate consideration at the time.

***Lady Street Fighter*** (1981\*\*) is a weird obscure action flick so badly made by any technical standard, let alone any creative one, that it has to be seen to be believed. Renee Harmon—who also wrote and produced the film, and filled it with students from an acting school she ran—plays a woman who comes to L.A. searching for her twin sister, whom she soon finds out has been tortured to death. For revenge she decides to steal some microfilm listing a bunch of criminals the FBI are looking for. Or something like that; the story isn't big on making sense or explaining itself. The movie ends by advising viewers to "Watch for *The Return of Lady Street Fighter* this fall" but unsurprisingly the sequel never happened. Something called *Revenge of Lady Street Fighter* eventually went straight to video in 1990, but it's really just a recut of the first film with some additional footage.

You can't label something as Part I without implying the existence of Part II. Mel Brooks never seriously intended to make a sequel to his satirical ***The History of the World, Part I*** (1981). The title was always meant as a riff on Sir Walter Raleigh's book *The Historie of the World, Volume 1* (1614), which also never received a follow-up since Walt's neck was introduced to the royal ax before he could carry on with the other four intended volumes. But Brooks leaned into the joke hard, ending the movie with a gag trailer for *Part II*. With *Part I* having already taken us from the Stone Age through the French Revolution, the hypothetical *Part II* promised everything from "Hitler on Ice" to "Jews in Space."

\*\*Many sources list *Lady Street Fighter* as 1985 or '86 instead, apparently going by its VHS release.

\*On a few occasions they didn't get it quite right. *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) promised *For Your Eyes Only*, but the creators decided to pivot to *Moonraker* (1979), with *Eyes* having to wait until 1981. *Octopussy* (1983) teased 1985's *From A View to a Kill* before dropping the preposition.



Plenty of comedy fans would have been happy to laugh their way through another round if it existed...and in a surprise update, it looks like they'll finally get that chance! In October 2021, streaming service Hulu announced plans for *The History of the World, Part II* as an upcoming series, with an eight-episode first season set to begin production in the spring of 2022. Brooks will serve as executive producer and contribute some of the writing.

*Time Walker* (1982), also known as *Being from Another Planet*, is about a deadly space mummy trying to recover its stolen crystals. It's about as cheesy as it sounds, which is why most people probably know it from a 1992 episode of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. It ends on a cliffhanger with an explicitly written "To be continued..." that never came to pass.

Another one that might be better known from MST3K than on its own is *Carnival Magic* (1983). It's an odd little low-budget offering, wildly uneven in tone, pairing Don Stewart—slumming at the time from his soap opera gig on *Guiding Light*—with a talking chimpanzee. MST3K described it as what happens "when a second-rate producer has access to a carnival so he writes a script in three days and pays all his actors in beer and cheesesticks." It was the last, and in many cases the only, screen credit for many of its cast and crew. Yet it ends with a bold promise inserted before the end credits roll: "See you next year for 'More Carnival Magic' ©"—yes, with the copyright symbol affixed right there onscreen, clinging like a tick. The only additional magic it pulled was a vanishing act.

*Doctor Detroit* (1983) stars Dan Aykroyd as a college professor accidentally roped into leading a secret double life as a pimp. It concludes with a swooping graphic that teased *Doctor Detroit II: The Wrath of Mom* ("Mom" being the Doctor's rival pimp). It was meant mostly as a joke for the sake of referencing the previous summer's *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. But if *Doctor Detroit* had done bigger numbers at the box office, you can't help thinking they probably would have run with it.

Having previously teased us in *History of the World, Part I*, Mel Brooks does so again in *Spaceballs* (1987). Yogurt, the Yoda-like character played by Brooks himself, makes a tongue-in-cheek remark: "God willing, we'll all meet again in *Spaceballs 2: The Search for More Money*." It hasn't happened yet but in recent years Brooks has alluded to the possibility of doing another *Spaceballs*, spurred on by how the proliferation of *Star Wars* prequels and sequels and side stories has made his parody feel a bit more relevant and viable again. Actor Rick Moranis mentioned in a 2013 interview that, many years earlier, Brooks considered following the first movie

directly with a "third" installment called *Spaceballs III: The Search for Spaceballs II*, playing off the title of *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* in the same way that *Doctor Detroit* played with *Star Trek II*. The first film did eventually manage to launch thirteen episodes of *Spaceballs: The Animated Series* in 2008-09, which featured some of the original cast returning to voice their respective characters.

*Mac and Me* (1988) was a commercial and critical flop, heaped with scorn for, among other faults, being a brazen and inferior knock-off of *E.T.* Right before the end credits rolled, a bubble appeared bearing a message to the audience: "We'll be back." That bubble seems long since deflated, unless you count how a short clip from the film became a years-long running gag between Paul Rudd and Conan O'Brien.

*Wicked Stepmother* (1989) is Bette Davis' final film, playing a witch...although she was so unhappy that she left early in the production, necessitating the filmmakers to restructure the story around a second witch instead. The opening scenes also feels oddly disconnected from the rest of the movie, featuring a police investigation led by actor Tom Bosley as one of the cops, discovering a family who have been magically shrunk. It's a token lead-in to the main plot, but one that isn't addressed again until the end. The final scene has Bosley breaking the fourth wall, facing the camera directly to ask the audience, "Does this mean there'll be a sequel?" Sorry, Tom, apparently it didn't.

Actor Danny Trejo's signature character, the man called **Machete**, originated as a supporting character in *Spy Kids* (2001) and its sequels. The *Spy Kids* franchise is family friendly, but a much grittier and more violent Machete appeared in a fake trailer for a nonexistent feature of his own in Robert Rodriguez's and Quentin Tarantino's immersive double feature experience *Grindhouse* (2007). Some of those fictitious trailers proved popular enough to go on and become real movies, *Machete* (2010) being one of them. *Machete* concludes by teasing two sequels, *Machete Kills* and *Machete Kills Again*. *Machete Kills* did indeed come to pass in 2013, and in the Machete tradition it opens with a mock "Coming Attraction" for the third movie, now with the expanded title *Machete Kills Again...In Space*. The clips we see in it seem like an improbable leap forward in terms of continuity development, but the events of *Machete Kills* do indeed bring us close to that point by the end of that story. So will we ever see *Machete Kills Again*, in space or otherwise? Perhaps someday, but so far it's been eight years and fans are still waiting.

Did we miss any, movie buffs? Let us know. Maybe this article needs a sequel—you know what, nah, never mind. 🐾

## All Roads Lead to Rome: The Making of Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League

By Dan Berger

Fans of Buckaroo Banzai have not lacked for stories about their favorite neurosurgeon/rock star/daredevil/dimension jockey over the last four decades. Granted, there have been missed opportunities. *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* teased fans with the possibility of a television series in the late 1990s that came to nothing. A second attempt at a series by View Askew filmmaker Kevin Smith in 2016 fell victim to legal wrangling over the Banzai property's ownership. *The Lizardo Quartet* series of Buckaroo Banzai novels with publisher Simon & Schuster died a similar death in the early 2000s.

There were also victories. *Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*' pilot endured as the first of several stories published by Moonstone Books starting in 2006, with a lightly edited *Supersize Those Fries!* script rechristened as the three issue *Return of the Screw* comic book miniseries. Other miniseries followed. The comic books proved sporadic in frequency and continuity, but they offered moments of classic Buckaroovian excellence as well.

Yet the comics lingered in the shadow of something larger and inescapable: *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*. *Return of the Screw* certainly fulfilled all the narrative criteria of a proper sequel, but in the minds of Banzai fans there was only one story that would sooth the empty feeling left by the words, "Watch for the next Adventure of Buckaroo Banzai."

Thirty seven years later, that story can finally be told; not as a film, but a prose novel published by Dark Horse Books with the expansive title *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al., A Compendium of Evils*.

So too can the story of how *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* made its way into print at Dark Horse Books. Over the last several years we have gathered a collection of email updates on the novel's progress from W. D. Richter and E. M. Rauch and supplemented them with more recent inquiries to fill in some gaps. At last, we can reveal the story you've all been waiting for behind the story you've all been waiting for.

### A Dark Horse Emerges

In 2002, a lot was happening in the world of Buckaroo Banzai. MGM's January release of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* on DVD was selling well, a second printing of the film's novelization was performing



W. D. Richter (L) and Earl Mac Rauch (R) hang out at the studio during commentary recording for the *Buckaroo Banzai* Special Edition DVD in 2001. Source: W. D. Richter

admirably for publisher Simon & Schuster, and a series of Banzai novels billed as *The Lizardo Quartet* was rumored to be in the works. It was at about this same time that owner Mike Richardson first expressed interest in bringing Team Banzai to Dark Horse Comics. The comic eventually found a home with Joe Gentile's Moonstone Books, as *Buckaroo Banzai* director W.D. Richter related in an April 2006 *World Watch One: Chicago Bureau* interview, "I proposed to Joe that they could do a comic series based solely upon the pilot script [for *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*]. He was willing to do that when other 'big' companies (Dark Horse? Hint, hint.) would only go forward with the rights holder of the movie...and no one can claim to be that because the paper trail has gone cold."

### What's in a name?

Long-time fans of Buckaroo Banzai will notice a subtle change on the cover of the new novel, the author's name. What happened to Earl Mac Rauch, and who is this E. M. Rauch guy?

The solution came as part of the answer to a related question, "Is the surname Rauch or MacRauch?" The answer arrived by email, straight from the source, on March 24, 2019:

"It's definitely Rauch, not MacRauch, and I'll fight any man who says different at a parking lot of my choosing. In fact for the upcoming novel you reference (co-written with The Reno Kid), I'm using the handle 'E.M. Rauch' to avoid such questions."

Case closed.



Buckaroo's infamous property rights weren't the only trail to go cold. By 2006, Moonstone's run of Banzai comics was just beginning to heat up, but Team Banzai's fortunes at Simon & Schuster were far otherwise. As Richter remembered in a Spring 2006 interview with *World Watch One: West Coast Bureau*, "The first [novel submission in the *Lizardo Quartet*] turned out to be much too intense for the publisher's taste so [Earl Mac Rauch] wrote a second. It took too long, and they seem to resent that enough to not release it. 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."

Richter's suspicions proved prophetic. When asked in October 2021 about the possibility of these early novels ever seeing the light of day, writer Earl Mac Rauch's reply was, "Simon & Schuster is ancient history."

Rauch elaborated on that history in a [March 2019 issue of \*World Watch One\*](#), page 21, as follows:

"About the novels that never were, there was really only one. Back in 2001-2002, Simon & Schuster kind of came out of nowhere with a proposal for a series of Buckaroo novels, as you note. This was nearly 20 years after Buckaroo the Movie and I thought, 'Great. Exciting. A chance to resurrect Buckaroo!' So I sent them a couple of pages, laying out a very vague notion of a Buckaroo trilogy, but it was all off the top of my head and nothing I had put much thought into.

"It's all a little blurry now, but my life during that period was pretty turbulent—I'd just spent 6 months in cancer treatment at Cedars in 2001—and I ended up taking a fairly long time with the first draft. Maybe it was 'cancer brain', but I'm not an outliner in any case, and it usually takes me an initial draft to figure out where I want to go...I'll get there in the end, but in this case sometime after the first deadline had passed, Simon & Schuster was getting antsy to receive something, so I sent my very sketchy rough draft, which didn't exactly whet their appetite for more...so they decided to cut their losses and cancel the deal. In other words, things never got very far—a lost opportunity I regret."

Simon & Schuster's exit from the Buckaroo Banzai publishing game came as a blow to expectant fans, but not a fatal one for Buckaroo himself. Dark Horse remained in the picture, as Richter explained in a September 2021 email, "Mike Richardson, the founder/owner, is the key. He's a great guy and has

unfailingly supported Mac and BB over the decades. He'd cut many deals with our original agent Mark Lichtman (Shapiro-Lichtman, now dissolved) with several of Mark's other clients, and I suspect Mike and Mark were discussing BB one day when one of them proposed asking Mac if he were interested in writing a BB novel because Mike wanted to develop a DH prose imprint."

Dark Horse Head Honcho Mike Richardson confirmed Richter's tale in a November 2021 email, "It's true that Mark Lichtman asked me about my interest in BB years ago. I told him I was a big fan and he introduced me to Earl. We had many discussions and I strongly gave him my opinion that what the BB fans really wanted was the long awaited and often discussed *Buckaroo Banzai vs the World Crime League*. Earl ended up agreeing (or my badgering wore him down) and the novel was born."

The exact date that *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* was conceived with Dark Horse is a little hazy, but thought to be sometime in 2014 or 2015. According to Rauch, "The original contract may have been dated 2014 but I know for a fact I signed it in 2015 and finished a first draft in 2017 or 2018. Other drafts followed."

### Back in the Saddle Again

On October 9, 2017 *World Watch One* received its first confirmation of a completed Buckaroo Banzai novel. The message from W.D. Richter also contained the seeds of an ongoing theme during the writing and production of the book: delays. "Mac has just finished a long new BB novel for Dark Horse Comics, but his contract was written three years ago as a standard publishing agreement when it should have followed the terms and conditions of The Writers Guild Minimum Basic Agreement Separation of Rights language. So we've had to go back to an accommodating Dark Horse and get it revised so it's enforceable and protects both Mac and MGM. If it's not one thing, it's another. I believe MGM has the new DH contract in hand by now and will, hopefully, sign off on it before the apocalypse. Then we endorse final paperwork and...start? Would seem the logical thing to do."

While MGM's then ongoing lawsuit with Richter and Rauch presented a hiccup in the publishing process, it did not prove to be a major disruption holding up the book's release. As Rauch explained in September 2021, "So the thing Rick is talking about had no effect on the writing or timeline. Totally a side issue within the larger lawsuit. The wording of the DH contract is the kind of issue only an adversarial lawyer poring over documents brings to light. It arose as a momentary bump in the road

late in the game. But, hey, one of my kids is a lawyer. Lawyers gotta eat.”

Work on the book progressed in stages, reflected in a tongue-in cheek mention of the initial “publication” dates of the novel on the title page:

THE BANZAI INSTITUTE

BANZAI INSTITUTE PRESS, LTD.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 2016

SECOND IMPRESSION 2017

THIRD IMPRESSION 2021

Needless to say, *World Watch One* was anxious to unleash an announcement of the book’s progress at the first available opportunity. Staffer Steve Mattsson asked W.D. Richter in December 2017, “Is it okay to contact Dark Horse for a quote?” but the timing proved problematic. Richter’s response, “Alas, no, Steve. They’re just reading the new novel—it’s a grand 600-page-plus whopper, dense with details upon details—and, as I read it, I am in editorial dialogue with Mac.”

Richter elaborated upon this editorial dialogue in a September 2021 email, which reveals to some extent the long gestational process of the final novel:

“I read the book twice, an earlier draft, then quite some time later the draft that is pretty much ‘The Book.’ In both instances, I was reading the manuscript, and Mac was re-reading it simultaneously and making changes as he saw fit, then sending me his revisions as I read deeper into the book every day. So I was reading and rereading all at once. When you read it, imagine how confusing that can be, just keeping straight where events are in all those pages. I was checking for inconsistencies and sharing reactions I had to phrasings here and there, asking for narrative clarifications if something confused me. Mac is wonderfully responsive. The book and its scope are so large that I’m sure at times he’d forgotten a small moment or reference he’d written ages ago on, say, page 109 that conflicted with something on page 423! Frankly, I don’t know how a novelist can keep everything straight over that many pages and years of writing and rewriting. You can get your head around a lean 120-page screenplay, but this was an epic challenge.”

A measure of the six year journey from contract to publication can also be attributed to Rauch’s approach to writing, as he described it in an October 2021 email:

“I don’t work from an outline. Sometimes I wish I did because the job would go faster, but I’m not sure I could work that way even if I wanted and possessed the knack for it. I envy writers who can do that but I’m lucky if I can see even a couple of scenes ahead in a story. Truman Capote said he first needed to know the ending and then work back from that, kind of like seeing the destination in the distance and then figuring how to get there. I’d like to know the ending, too, but for me it’s always a shifting target. I guess I like to surprise myself, kind of like being in a dream that takes a sudden turn that you as the author didn’t see coming, like a Jedi mind-tricking himself. When you’re writing and it’s going reasonably well, those are the best moments. Because I do often encounter the unexpected, it’s necessary to go back and rewrite as I go.

I would add the caveat that outlining is much more useful to a screenwriter because in that world you typically don’t have the luxury of time to vamp and see where it all leads (which may be nowhere). I have gotten in trouble on that score.”

When asked about his editorial input, Richter described his contributions as, “A sounding board for Mac. He says I have a ‘jeweler’s eye’ for tiny details. I hope that took pressure off him. Proofing yourself is weird. You can kind of zone out and just slide over things that have grown familiar because you’ve read and reread them so many times.” Given the amount of time devoted to the book and Rauch’s writing style, the substance of the actual narrative didn’t change much over the course of revision according to Richter. “Mostly sections were removed that seemed digressive or way over the top,” he explained. “And, of course, hundreds of hilarious tweaks were sneaked in by Mr. Rauch. But all things considered, the novel underwent only minor plot changes from the first draft that I read to the final. I do imagine that before Mac showed me anything, he made three billion changes on his own.”

When asked about the kind of editorial issues he most frequently commented upon, Richter replied, “An intriguing question. I sent Mac a lot of positive comments with quotes from the book that I considered priceless, hoping to give him the confidence that the thing was really special, if wildly rich and complicated in its juggling of multiple crazy characters and mad plot twists. I’m sure I touched at times on every aspect you mention: story development, continuity not only with the film and his earlier novelization but with the doings in the new book, as well. Nothing ever major, though. This book is packed with actable dialogue, exchanges I’d kill to see terrific actors perform. Just the Lizardo/Whorfin/Xan exchanges are worth the cover



price! As is the battle raging between Lizardo and Whorfin for control of the same body...a concept that never occurred to us during the development of the script.”

Science fiction fans can be notorious sticklers for continuity, and Buckaroo Banzai fans are no exception. Given the discrepancies between various events as described within the film, film novelization, and comic books, what is “canonical” becomes a natural point of analysis. “As for the inconsistencies in the various iterations of Buckaroo’s world, I can understand how these may be disconcerting to some readers who are concerned with ‘the facts,’” Rauch said. “I think the best way to look at these things is from the standpoint that every author of fiction is lying to the reader on every page anyway and this is doubly true of an unreliable narrator like Reno who relies on second-hand info much of the time and often recounts events where he wasn’t present in order to ‘spice up’ the story. As he receives new information or new fabrications from his sources, his version of ‘the facts’ may change. For all I know, he might even admit he made the whole thing up.

“At least that’s my cop-out and I’m sticking to it.”

So progressed work on the novel. Days turned into years as the writing and rewriting continued. According to Rauch in a March 24, 2019 email, “*Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League Et Al*, was originally scheduled for a spring release, but I got a little carried away with a set of changes that kind of blew that plan out of the water, so the release will be later this year. I literally just finished the rewrite a week or so ago, so I don’t have a new release date yet.” He added in January 2021, “I worked on [the novel] for 2-3 years, then sent in a draft. While waiting to hear back from [Dark Horse], I thought I might as well use the time to rewrite, so I began rewriting...until one day I spoke to Mike and he wanted to know when the hell was I going to finish. So while I was waiting for them to move forward on the publishing end, they had been waiting for me to stop writing before putting their ducks in a row. By then we’re in late 2018 or early 2019 and a publication date gets penciled in for Spring or Summer 2020, but then COVID and a postponement...and now 2021...”

### Covering Their Bets

In the same March 24 2019 email referenced above, Rauch included a small detail that led to an episode generally unknown outside of the *World Watch One* Chicago Bureau offices, and it’s a doozy:

“One other thing, we’re still looking for a cover design, so if anyone has some cool artwork that

might be a cover, I’d love to see it. They can send it to me, by way of you, if anyone is interested.”

Was anyone interested? Talk about a loaded question. Your devoted editor sent Rauch a reply to his email the next day:

“As far as cover art goes: I know that between Steve Mattsson’s stint in the comic book industry and my dinking around helping to run a couple of science fiction conventions that we can get you some names, but a lot of it depends on an artist whose style best embodies the material for you and that Dark Horse can work with on schedule and price. Mike Okuda might have some opinions on the matter, too. If you want, Steve and I can knock our heads together, make a short list of names along with the artists’ websites for their portfolios, and shoot that over to you. Let me know if that works for you.”

On March 27, 2019, after an excited, growing conversation with Steve Mattsson, and on the cusp of a trip to Cincinnati, the following list zinged its way into the ether minutes before your editor hit the road to the Queen City:

“I had a chat yesterday with Eric Wilkerson, a science fiction/fantasy artist who was the Artist Guest of Honor at a convention I help run here in town. I had the opportunity to show Eric around Chicago a little bit and got to know him well enough to know that he’s a good egg. His work is excellent, so it really comes down to if you think his style is the right fit for the book.

Another upside is that he recently did some work for Dark Horse, so he’s a known quantity over there. Here is his website [ericwilkersonart.com](http://ericwilkersonart.com). You can access work from his portfolio there.

Steve and I were knocking around other names and two that came up you may already have some familiarity with through Moonstone Books. Dave Dorman made a couple of outstanding covers for Buckaroo’s run at Moonstone. His website is [www.davedorman.com](http://www.davedorman.com)

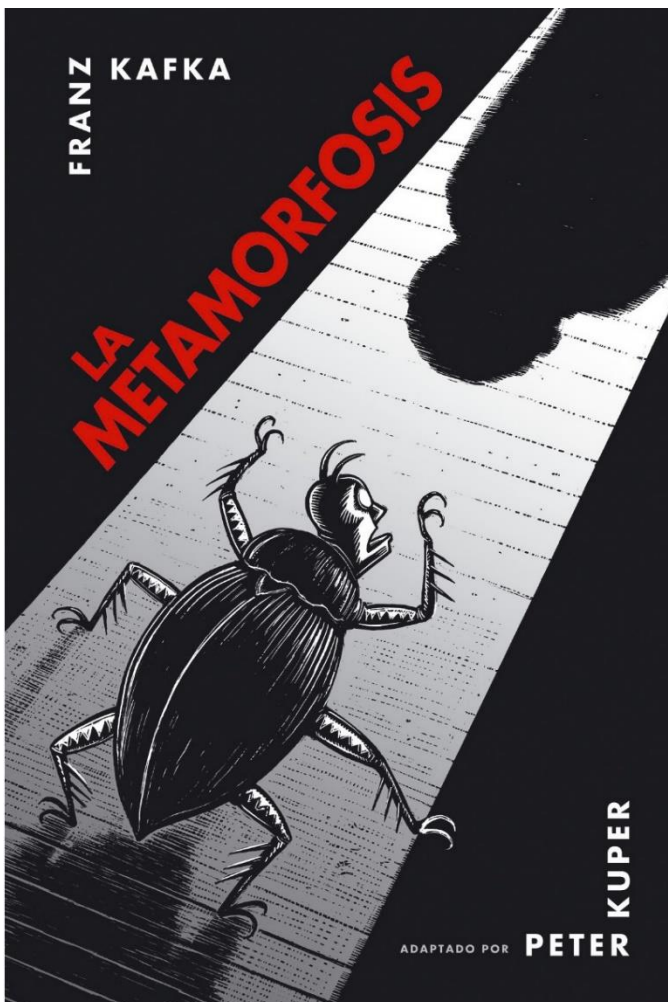
Matt Haley is a huge Buckaroo fan, good friend of Steve’s, and another artist who contributed great work to the Moonstone covers for Buckaroo. His website is [www.matthaley.com](http://www.matthaley.com).”

Rauch responded the same day, saying, “Thanks! Let me run a couple of these names by the editor over [at Dark Horse]. There has been talk about a couple of illustrations as well as a cover. I’m not sure if that’s still the plan, but certainly for a cover, it sounds like maybe one of these guys would be the perfect fit.”

On April 5, 2019, Rauch contacted Matt Haley to explore the possibility of a cover concept for the novel. Haley's work spans a broad swath of media credits, from a long history of artist's duties with DC to associated television and film work with Warner Brothers on *Gotham* and *Justice League*, as well as his creative partnership with Stan Lee in bringing the series *Who Wants To Be A Superhero?* to television. Rauch described the concept:

"Just to give you a little background, I've tried for a while to come up with a cover idea that somehow embraces the disparate threads of the new novel. Since no one knows what Buckaroo looks like in 2019, and since a generic-type depiction of a faceless Buckaroo is not very interesting, I'm leaning toward a variation of a cover for Kafka's *Metamorphosis*: a cockroach (freely rendered) representing the World Crime League, Red Lectroids, etc., about to be crushed, under the menacing shadow of Buckaroo's boot.

For reference..."



**Cover to the Spanish edition** of Peter Kuper's graphic adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*.  
Source: Crown/Peter Kuper

The visual reference provided was the cover to *Spy vs Spy* artist Peter Kuper's 2003 graphic adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*; an expressionistic image for an equally expressionistic story. Haley's response was swift and enthusiastic:

"Thanks for getting in touch! Rick may have told you I did a couple of covers for the BB comic years back, which is how he and I met, and he's been putting up with my nonsense ever since. I'm an unabashed Banzai freak since 1984 and it's an honor to get to be a part of this, however small.

One question—do you think it might make more sense to somehow portray Buckaroo metaphorically as not being in a position of power over the evils he faces? Since the defining element or heroism is sacrifice, should he be somehow seen as battling to overcome impossible odds, instead? What do you think?"

The answer to Haley's question became lost in a tangential eruption of silliness. Over the next seven weeks, Haley battled through the flu and other commitments, returning with an initial sketch on May 31, 2019.

Ultimately, the cover commission did not work out. "Mac's idea was a good one, just not the right fit for me," said Haley in July 2021, "I don't take it personally. I would still love to finish that one!"

Cover duties eventually fell upon the shoulders of Argentinian artist Julian Totino Tedesco, a veteran of companies including Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, BOOM! Studios, and Valiant Comics. It is noteworthy that the approved design for the novel went in a very different direction from that originally envisioned by Rauch, a common occurrence between authors and publishers. As Rauch noted in a January 2021 email, "There were many ideas for covers but Dark Horse wanted it to connect as much as possible to the movie and whatever residual BB consciousness is out there. Makes sense."


## Racing to the Finish Line...and Beyond

On January 12, 2021, Dark Horse was finally ready to unleash the official rollout of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.: A Compendium of Evils*. The title rocketed to #1 on Amazon's Hard Science Fiction list in short order, scheduled for a special comics shops pre-release on July 28<sup>th</sup> and wide release on August 10<sup>th</sup>. By January 15<sup>th</sup>, the response to the announcement prompted Rauch to say, "Yikes, I'm starting to feel a little pressure. Still, nice to see there's interest out there.





**The road not taken:** Matt Haley's proposed cover concept for *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al: A Compendium of Evils*. Source: Matt Haley

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			PM FF:	06/16/2021	FF:	06/23/2021		
	TO:		FROM:		DATE:	06/11/2021		
	PROJECT: Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League INTERIOR							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PROOFREADER <input type="checkbox"/> EDITOR/PROJECT MANAGER <input type="checkbox"/> EDITORIAL BARCODE APPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/> ROUTING BARCODE APPROVAL			<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED AS IS <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED WITH CHANGES <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED WITH ONSCREENS <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED; NEED NEW PROOFS <input type="checkbox"/> LABEL COVER MOCKUP AS NOT FINAL ART (NFA)			<input type="checkbox"/> TYPE KEYED IN; PROOF CAREFULLY! <input type="checkbox"/> FOR SOLICITATION APPROVAL ONLY! <input type="checkbox"/> FOR TEXT APPROVAL ONLY!		
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**Approval-seeking:** By June 2021, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* was entering its final few laps through the editorial and proofreading processes before entering layout and going to print, culminating six years of writing, revising, and delays with the novel's release in comic book shops on November 3, 2021. Source: Dark Horse Books

The book was still something of a work in progress in January. Rauch noted on the 15<sup>th</sup>, "I'm still waiting to see the galleys myself. I'll let you know if I find out anything." This prompted a quip from Richter in response, "They sent me the galleys to proof and said, 'If we send them to Mac, he'll just start rewriting everything because he can't stop having great new ideas.'"

By April 6th, Rauch reported that he was working through the galleys and, "I'm still doing some revisions on the novel," in response to a request for an excerpt suitable for publication in this newsletter. Rauch indicated a reluctance to unleash unfinished work onto the reading public. What he didn't realize was that the same galleys were now circulating as Advance Reader Copies (or ARCs), to allow reviewers ample time to read and digest the book ahead of its release.\* When informed that a *World Watch One* contributor had recently received an ARC, Rauch commented, "Well...I wish he hadn't gotten it because whatever he got, isn't the book that's going to be published. It's what I would call a first draft in need of a polish, even a rewrite in certain sections."

By mid-June, with I's dotted and T's crossed, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* entered its final paces before zinging through the ether to the printers for production. The ever-shifting goal posts of the release date had already moved several times and would shift one last time before landing in November.

Predictably, the snakes began to crawl out from beneath their rocks in July to prey upon anxious readers, with sketchy pirate websites offering the "novel" for sale.

**\*Editor's Note:** This galley/ARC appears to be the version of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* reviewed by Tim Boo Ba in this issue.

When one such site appeared to be Malaysian in origin, Rauch noted, "Xan has a huge operation in Sabah, one of his favorite watering holes. His fortress inside Mount Kirabalu is said to be three miles deep."

With *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* crowding the shelves of comic book shops on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and a wider release bringing the novel to ecommerce sites and various other store shelves on November 16<sup>th</sup>, the big question on the minds of Blue Blaze Irregulars everywhere is, "Will there be more?" According to Dark Horse owner Mike Richardson, "Earl is working on the second Dark Horse prose novel."

So there is only one question remaining, one familiar to everyone who saw that promise of a next Buckaroo Banzai adventure at the end of the 1984 film and wondered, "When?" Rauch's answer, "I don't know. I've written pieces which are not yet in narrative or chronological order and I'm not working solely on Buckaroo. In any case the best answer to this question is always a Zen riddle: 'How long is a piece of string?' However long it takes...but the hope is to write something much shorter than 600 pages, maybe break the sequel up into a couple of chunks if it makes storytelling sense. We'll see."

How long is a piece of string, and how many pieces? Stay tuned. 🐎





## Talkin' 'Bout (an early draft of) the *Against the World Crime League* novel

By Tim "Boo Ba" Monroe

After ordering some necessities on the "Water Closets Limited" website, I was surfing the interwebs and found what looks like a fo' shizzle PDF of an advanced reading copy of the *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* novel. **SCORE!**\* But, even if it's legit, it looks like a super early draft, 'cause its publication date was optimistically listed as 7/28/2021. I think there's been a few months of revisions since then, but what do I know?

**I have so many questions!** Luckily, there's an instruction on the PDF to "please see your Penguin Random House rep with questions." Unluckily, I don't have a Penguin Random House rep, so I asked the editor Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger if I can share what I found with my readers. He smirked and replied, "But only with your readers and no one else." (I don't think BS has a high opinion of the number of my readers.)

Anyway, protocol dictates that you purchase your authentic copy of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* at [your local comic book shop](#), [local book store](#), or from [Dark Horse](#). Progress over protocol would imply that you could download this sketchy AF PDF version of the draft [at this URL](#). (Please do NOT tell them that Tim sent you.)

Here is one of those "so many" questions I have, and I'll try to untangle the answer myself:

**When does this novel take place? In the '80s when Buckaroo and his team wore cool clothes or, now, in the '20s when everything sucks?**

I didn't spot any definitive dates in this draft, but there are some clues.

- 1) There's a new character called [Jhonny Appleseed](#) and he's the webmaster for the Banzai Institute. His job title implies the story takes place now.
- 2) Emilio Lizardo is over 100 years old. That also implies now, when things suck.
- 3) The current President ("Which President?" "The President of the United States in the novel.") is James Monroe II. He is the love-child of JFK and

**\*Editor's Note:** Shortly after receiving this review, Tim's email account began sending auto-generated marketing emails from a "WorldClassLovers.com" website hawking, among other titles, a series of "Hobo Erotica" DVDs (not a misspelling). His email and social media accounts have since gone dark. Here's to your computer's speedy recovery, Tim.

ADVANCE READING COPY  
NOT FOR SALE

## BUCKAROO BANZAI AGAINST THE WORLD CRIME LEAGUE

THE RENO KID  
with E. M. RAUCH

Please do not quote for publication  
without checking against finished book.

On sale date: 7/28/2021  
Price: \$29.99 US / \$39.99 CAN

Please see your Penguin Random House rep  
or email [REDACTED] with any questions.

Marilyn Monroe. If he was conceived in March of '62 at Bing Crosby's house, then he'd be close to 60 years old now. That's a fine age to be a President. Now I hear you sayin', but Tim—Marilyn couldn't have had JFK's son, [she died on August 4th, 1962!](#) And I'd answer, "Did she??" So, there are signs pointing to this novel taking place in the here and now.

Now that I kinda answered my question, I hear you asking one of your own:

**So then, Tim—this novel is about a 70 year-old Buckaroo Banzai and The Hong Kong Cavaliers touring as a nostalgia act?**

No. Dude! Why did you have to take it there?! Adam Ant is still touring and playing new music at 66 years old. The Hong Kong Cavaliers will always have new syncopated music to play. Jeez Louise!

Okay, okay! They're playing new tunes, but they're still old guys. There were specific dates in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* novelization. That story clearly took place in the '80s which would mean the Hong Kong Cavaliers of today would be eligible for AARP.

I ain't gonna argue with my own gender neutral straw-person, especially when what they say is true. I will say that in the new novel Buckaroo is having a few issues, but they don't appear to be age related. It seems that repeated traveling through the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Dimensions takes a toll on a person. (\*SPOILER\* Me and you are currently exploring the Fourth Dimension.) Anyway, I didn't see any ages for the gang in this draft, but they seem to be as young and vigorous as ever.

**Tim, I'm dying to know—where does *Against the World Crime League* fit into the Buckaroo Banzai canon timeline?**

After *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* obviously, but how does it fit with the "Supersize those Fries" pilot script and the comic books? Well, there is a scene where Buckaroo has a nightmare that is identical down to details like the Caduceus on the Jet Car's gearshift knob in *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* and in "Supersize those Fries" (and in the comic book version "Return of the Screw"). There is also a Lectroid birth and a few other things common to both stories. I'm thinkin' that *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* portrays the actual events and the *Supersize Those Fries* script is the obfuscated docudrama version developed for TV. As for the other comic books, I think of them as 90% fictional grist for the monthly publishing mill in the "real" Buckaroo Banzai Universe. They are what the young Blue Blaze Irregulars read on a lazy Saturday afternoon. I'm thinkin' that only the novels are Buckaroo Banzai timeline canon.

**Tim—that's a tough choice, but a fair one. I'd give you that one, EXCEPT you're telling me that the novels are contradictory! How is it explained that Buckaroo and the gang are still young and vigorous in the '20s? Immortality potion? Time travel??**

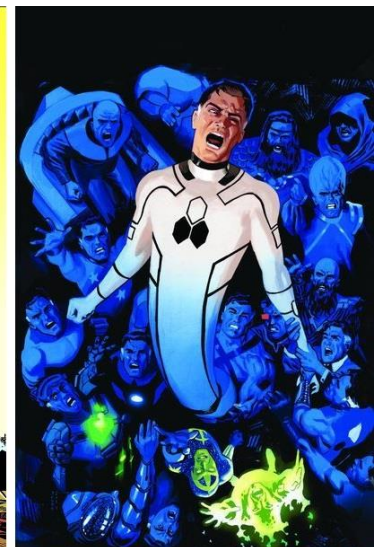
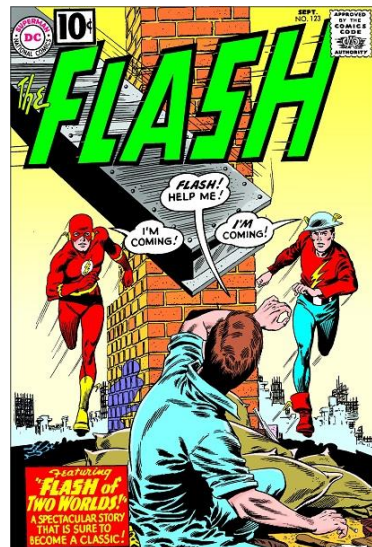
Can you honestly tell me that you're a Buckaroo Banzai fan and that you have never read an old school DC comic book or watched a new school Marvel TV show? Ever hear of the "Multiverse?" Remember Buckaroo was the OG dimension breacher. Buckaroo's '80s adventures took place on, oh let's call it, "Earth II" and the current adventure takes place on, uh... "Earth I". Someday the old and the young Buckaroo might meet in a story called,

"Buckaroo of Two Worlds!" (If you're a DC fan.) Or maybe the Buckaroos of all Earths will meet in a story called, "The Interdimensional Council of Buckaroos". (If you're a Marvel fan.)

**Tim—this is huge! Is there anything in the draft that confirms this theory?**

Nope. Nothing about immortality potions or time travel either.

NOTE: My editor, BS, usually waits until the end of the article for this disclaimer, but I'm going to save him the trouble and put it in right now: "*The views and opinions expressed are those of Tim Boo Ba and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of [World Watch One](#) or [The Banzai Institute](#) yadda yadda yadda.*" \*\*



(L) Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson's *Flash of Two Worlds* (R) Daniel Acuña's *Interdimensional Council of Reeds*

**Okay, as a considerate straw-person, I'll only ask about facts and not opinions. Do we get to have a nice visit with old friends and foes?**

Yes, but now Mac gives some of them longer names. John Emdall is now Empress John Emdall Thunderpump. Lady Gillette is now Lady Asquith-Gillette, the Marchioness. Sounds like she married and then became the widow of the Marquess Asquith since we last saw her in the Moonstone comic books. Perfect Tommy acts the fool and does some heroic shit. We get to know Pecos a lot better. As the author of the adventure, The Reno Kid has plenty to say. Mrs. Johnson has a few nice scenes. Pinky is present, but stays low key. As the new musical director of the Vienna Boys' Choir, New Jersey only has time to make a cameo.

**What about new characters?**

**\*\*Editor's Note:** Bite me, Monro.





**Only photo** of President James Monroe II's parents together.  
Source: Cecil Stoughton

There are lots of new residents at the Banzai Institute. I mentioned Jhonny Appleseed. A BBI called Rainbow Trout is the Postmaster General. Li'l Daughter of the Rhine represents Bavaria and Hopalong Krilovsky is The HKC's new bass player. The transgender Dr. John Jane Doe is Buckaroo's personal physician. Muscatine Wu plays the electric lute and is on her way to becoming something more than human. An Apache character, Two Wolves, is cool, but does the Banzai Institute protect his land or does he protect the Institute?

There are a couple of interesting new characters in-between friend and foe: General "Wild Bill" Wagoneer, the Commander of Area 51 and The Pope's exorcist, Abbot Costello. The Abbot speaks in a thick Italian accent and if you remember how old I told you Lizardo is, I'll need to put in a \*SPOILER\*.

Manny Magdalene is one of Xan's cut throats. Pay Piggie is a sadistic torturer, but does he work for WCL or the Vatican? There's a new Lektroid called, "John Singsong-of-the-Narrows-of-No-Return-Not-Him-but-the-Other-One". (I mentioned Mac's new penchant for longer names.)

## **Do the Hong Kong Cavaliers actually play a concert?**

Yes, but instead of dive bar in New Jersey, they play the Roman Coliseum: *"Buckaroo Banzai e suoi favolosi Hong Kong Cavaliers in concerto, nel Colosseo!!"*

## **Do they play any of their hits?**

All of the songs on their set list are in key of G-sharp.

## **Say what?? Tim—that's oddly specific...**

Buckaroo knows best.

## **Any cool new gadgets in the novel?**

The Banzai Institute develops a viscous particle beam weapon for use against the compendium of evil. But will the Jelly Beam be more like "Reno's Watermelon" or "Chekhov's Gun"?

## **Anton or Pavel Chekov's gun?**

That's a loaded question. **RIMSHOT!**

## **Any mention of Mongolian fermented mare's milk?**

Give me a break—only Buckaroo Trooper and Rainbow Kitty care about that crap, but the answer is, "yes."

## **Okay, "just the facts ma'am," is getting a tad stale, Tim. Were there any lines in the novel you particularly liked?**

All of these lines, in context, made me LOL:

"If he hadn't lost his head, he'd still be alive," Buckaroo said tersely.

"And my Blue Blaze name shall be Twisted Sister," she announced.

At once her voice brightened. "So . . . I have a story idea for a movie . . ."

## **One last opinion, Tim—did you like the book?**

I ain't gonna review a draft that don't have the Earl Mac Rauch seal of approval, but Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II was a dick and he'd probably say, "There were simply too many words." Then, his pock-marked toady, Salieri, would kiss his ass. I ain't gonna put any lingo in Rauch's mouth, but a fictional Earl Mozart Rauch would totally respond, "There are just as many words as are required." Suck it, Emperor Joseph II! 🐔



**Josef Benedikt Anton Michael Adame:** Emperor. Father of [Josephinism](#). Kind of a dick.

## What to Expect When You're Expecting:

### Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League

By Dan Berger

In September of 2021, the Chicago Bureau office of *World Watch One* received an encrypted package via email from none other than The Reno Kid by way of E. M. Rauch. We were thrilled to discover that the contents were nothing less than an advance copy of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.: A Compendium of Evils*. It was a moment we had long awaited, but it came with a certain amount of caution. There was, of course, the responsibility of making sure the manuscript didn't fall into the wrong hands and end up plastered all over the internet, but the novel also came with an unexpected warning from Rauch himself, one that I reprint here as a starting point for discussing the book:

"I think we can lump the audience for this new novel roughly into two groups, those who know nothing about Buckaroo the Movie and those who are fans to some degree or other. Those in the first group will probably just be confused by the new novel. I include some exposition aimed at recapitulating the movie narrative but it's probably hopeless. Many people were left scratching their heads even after watching the movie, and I don't think this new novel will clear up matters. To the contrary. As for the second group of readers, the fans of Buckaroo who have carried the torch for 40 years, this novel may be a disappointment. This is also probably inevitable due to the gilding effect of nostalgia and pent-up expectations. You can't step into the same river twice, you can't go home again, etc. The original will always be the touchstone because it was the original.

In the end I can only say there are probably as many Buckaroos as there are readers. Due to his multidimensional talents, he is in many ways an empty vessel in which to pour whatever we wish. It's also safe to say that if there is to be another Buckaroo novel, movie sequel, TV saga or whatever, it will be a departure from this version of the tale.

Is this a good novel? I don't know. Is it good for a laugh? I hope so. If it saves just one life...

So read at your own risk."

With those cautionary words in mind, I dove into Reno's account with an enthusiasm tempered by some trepidation. It was slow work, and by the end of it I realized that the question everyone reading the novel would ask themselves at some point was, "Is it worth the risk to keep on reading through to the end?"



**It's the latest issue.** Source Dark Horse Books/ Julian Totino Tedesco

Someone should stitch, "Your mileage may vary," on pillows and sell them to fandom, because that always seems to be the answer to questions like these. The real operative questions when reading *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.: A Compendium of Evils* are, "What is your risk tolerance?" and "Exactly how attached are you to your expectations?"

## Setting Expectations

The moment that the words "Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League" appeared together, in that order, on the cover of a new Banzai adventure to be published in 2021, risk was already in play for both Dark Horse and Blue Blaze Irregulars alike. Fans had some baggage to unpack from their thirty-seven year road trip on the "Are they ever going to make the sequel?" turnpike, starting with the expectations suggested by the title itself, while Dark Horse was about to unleash a novel that could only be destined to teeter on the rocky



E.M. Rauch

### Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League

#1 New Release in Hard Science Fiction



**High expectations:** Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League hits #1 in Amazon's Hard Science Fiction category during the novel's pre-sale launch in January 2021. Source: Amazon.com, Inc.

chasm of those preconceptions. The title suggests a conflict between the Banzai Institute and the World Crime League as the centerpiece of the story, so certain narrative expectations are hardwired into the story from the start. What is actually going on between the covers of Team Banzai's latest saga?

A description of the novel found on its back cover frames the story within as follows:

A world-class hero confronts ancient "supernatural" evils in an adventure that spans entire planets and defies everyday notions of reality!

Still mourning the losses of his beloved Penny Priddy and his surrogate father Professor Hikita, Buckaroo Banzai must also contend with the constant threat of attack from his immortal nemesis Hanoi Xan, ruthless leader of the World Crime League. To make matters worse, Planet 10 warrior queen John Emdall has sent her Lectroid legions against Earth with a brutal ultimatum. Or is her true target Buckaroo Banzai? As the apocalyptic threats continue to mount, only Buckaroo and his Hong Kong Cavaliers stand in the way of global destruction.

Here's where the ragged line between expectations and execution begins to unravel. Hanoi Xan receives plenty of attention in the latest novel, but the central conflict is not really Buckaroo vs. Xan. The Lectroids figure as prominently or more so than the World Crime League in this installment, which can be a bit of a head scratcher. Additional subplots wend their way through the narrative as well, all of which serves to underscore the "et al." and "Compendium of Evils" portion of the title while relegating the "Against the World Crime League" portion to a B story left unresolved by novel's end. In short, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime*

*League et al.* is probably not the book fans were expecting based on the title alone.

Another natural expectation of *Against the World Crime League et al.* is that it will align with some version of Banzaiverse continuity. Given the sometimes shifting details of Buckaroo's adventures in film, prose, and comic books, that's probably not a reasonable hope to entertain. Fortunately, the film novelization and the new novel form a fairly seamless narrative when taken together as a unit independent of Buckaroo's adventures in film and comics, but familiarity with the novelization presents problems of its own.

Where the film's novelization is a sleek and fast 250+ page dragster to the finish line, *Against the World Crime League et al.* reads more like a leisurely but determined hike up the side of a mountain to consult an esoteric oracle in its first half, followed by a luge ride back down the slope that ends in a jump that launches the sled into space. There is no question that a guy named Reno wrote both books. The same self-deprecating reporter of all things Team Banzai is present in both works, describing what he saw, providing first-hand accounts for what he couldn't see when possible, and filling in the blanks with a healthy mix of creative free-styling, explanation, and interpretation.

What must be kept in mind is that the author of *Against the World Crime League et al.* is almost forty years older and more seasoned than his 1984 counterpart. Time may be an illusion, but it changes people regardless. Circumstances change as well. Where the film novelization was written in a relatively short time under the specter of the film's release, and with the benefit of a film script to use as a map for the story, the new novel was crafted over several years of unpremeditated narrative development filled with repeated opportunities to second guess everything. The result is finding oneself faced with a Schrödingeresque thought experiment in which the two books are both apples to apples and apples to oranges comparisons to one another, even after you open the box.

#### Film versus novel

Expectations of another sort feature prominently in the mind of Buckaroo Banzai fans: the film itself. Fan Charley Todd alluded to those expectations indirectly in her comment on the [Buckaroo Banzai Blue Blaze Irregulars Club Facebook page](#) after finishing the new novel, saying:

"I found it pretty cool and interesting that, while Rauch came up with the script, the film is more than just that. Peter Weller said in an interview with *Starlog Magazine*, 'We've really removed it from

Mac's original concept... Buckaroo Banzai is Rick's thing now... He took Buckaroo Banzai out of the cartoon syndrome and almost put it into the film noir class.\* It has also been stated that many of the actors had the freedom to develop the characters as they wanted to. I felt like it really allowed everyone the freedom and creativity to make the original material the masterpiece that it is."

What Todd is getting at here is the fact that film, as a vehicle for storytelling, is collaborative in nature. *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8<sup>th</sup> Dimension* is what it is because of a series of collective creative choices made by the screen writer, actors, and all of the artists and technicians needed to bring the film to life, all under the stewardship of director W.D.

Richter. The vision of *Buckaroo Banzai* that fans carry as their default expectation isn't just Earl Mac Rauch's script, but rather W.D. Richter's efforts to find the film's best version of itself through the combined creative efforts of everyone involved in the making of the film.

By contrast, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* is "The Earl Mac Rauch Show." Novel writing is a much more solitary enterprise than filmmaking, which isn't to say that Rauch worked on the novel in a vacuum. W.D. Richter clearly had a hand in commenting upon Rauch's work as the novel proceeded through several years of writing and revision, and Dark Horse contributed editorial input of their own. That said, there's no doubt that part of the confounding nature of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* is that fan expectations are calibrated to the collective creative energy of the film, rather than the unalloyed creative vision of Rauch.

The result is that fans expect from the new novel what the film delivers: a frenetic joy ride that plows through multiple genres and conventions with equal measures of irreverence and abandon. What fans get instead for the first half of the novel is a very layered metafictional series of chapter length scenes, frequently interrupted by the Reno Kid's commentary and lacquered with references to persons of historical interest that would benefit from some extensive annotation. It's slow going, with a number of unpleasant characters and scenes that will offend certain sensibilities and smack certain readers out of the story entirely. The pace of the story may not be what readers of science fiction series are used to, but it doesn't stay that way through the entire book.

The second half of *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* opens up the throttle and matches the pace and tone of its cinematic forerunner as

\*From "W.D. Richter: Brainstorming with Buckaroo Banzai," appearing in *Starlog* VIII(89), (Dec. 1984) page 22.

Buckaroo and the Cavaliers travel to Italy to play a concert and thwart the latest doomsday scenario threatening the whole goddamned planet. The last three hundred pages of the book fly by as the twists and turns in the plot ramp up, growing tighter and wilder with every new hairpin curve in the action. The trick, for many, is getting that far into the novel.

### The Fans React

To call *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* a divisive work is an exercise in grand understatement, and it all starts in the beginning of the novel. Fan Elkin Tat summed up his difficulties finding a way into the story on the Buckaroo Banzai Blue Blaze Irregulars Club Facebook page as follows:

"Just finished the introduction to the new book and...I'm worried. Rambling, incoherent, unconvincing, and—dare I say it?—unimaginably dull. Was this supposed to be written by Reno? (Didn't sound like it.) Are we really supposed to believe that Hanoi Xan read the manuscript and contributed his own preface? (I'm hoping that's a joke.)

Finished the first two chapters. Better than the introduction, but I'm just finding it all rather...unimaginative. And bloated. And dull."

Fan Chris Chapman's reaction was more charitable, but no less concerning in its own way:

"I'm about 150 pages in. Chapter 3 was a hard slog as many have noted. My biggest problem right now is that there isn't a clear definition of character voices. Xan & Whorfin blend together, and the exorcism chapter Whorfin/Lizardo/Friar also got muddy. The hamster...that was almost a bridge too

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**The moment of truth:** Fans receive their copies of *Against the World Crime League*. Source: Amazon.com, Inc.



far. Buckaroo and the gang are on their ride, and I did enjoy the philosophical discussion at the campfire. It's pretty uneven."

Fan David Lipton Ph.D. interpreted the difficulties with the text in a more positive light:

"I'm beginning to wonder if this might be some sophisticated, esoteric, arcane, and overly clever literary masterpiece that English scholars will analyze in the future, getting a sense of dusty literary glee at uncovering a reference previously unrecognized, i.e., 'A Philosophical Synthesis of Rauch's Integration of Lao Tzu's Taoism with Nietzsche's Depiction of Hanoi Xan' or somesuch philosophical treatise. I seriously wouldn't rule this out or...it could just be crap!"

Fan Ed Dale was quick to respond to Lipton's comment, saying, "If you know the things he references, where they are things that are real, it is crap."

"Read at your own risk," indeed.

However, fan Brendon Wahlberg echoed Lipton's take on the novel as a difficult but intricate and layered literary experience:

"I'm about 100 pages in, just after Xan's party. The book takes patience, because it is so dense. But it is worth the effort to go slowly and appreciate the work that went into almost every sentence. As they say in *Dune*, the slow blade penetrates the shield."

The more the comments roll along, the clearer it becomes that, at the very least, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* is an act of literary risk taking with a tendency to confound reader expectations. To the extent that those risks are a good thing is very much in the eye of the beholder.

But where there are risks there are also rewards, and Buckaroo Banzai fans are finding those as well. Blogger Eric Kregel placed *Against the World Crime League* in his [three best novels read in 2021](#), finding virtue in many of the same features baffling other readers, saying, "If I had to have a tag line to review this I would describe it in 2 words: 'Gloriously convoluted.'"

Kregel continued, "It is convoluted, but redemptive in its connection between Catholicism, Ray Gun Pop Culture, Buddhism, Rock 'n Roll, Physics, and being a cowboy. Like the movie, you have to re-watch (or re-read) in order to get all of the jokes told to you in such a deadpan, straight forward means and, often, in an incomplete theme or story."

Hugo award winning author and Buckaroo Banzai fan John Scalzi reacted to both the negative fan responses and the book itself in a [November 21, 2021 Tweet](#):

"Reading the reviews of the 'Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League' novel on Amazon; apparently many reviewers are flummoxed by the florid storytelling, unaware, perhaps, that it exactly matches the tone of the 'Buckaroo Banzai' movie novelization. I like it, personally."

Scalzi's point cannot be understated. Buckaroo Banzai has always been a challenging proposition where connecting with fans is concerned. *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* was a film in search of an audience from the day it opened in theaters. Many admirers of the film only became fans after seeing the movie enough times to finally "get it." *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* is no different. The novel is a gold mine for fans of Buckaroo who revel in the absurd, the eccentric, the esoteric, and the audaciousness of his world. For others, the book is a major challenge.

### With Great Expectations Comes Great Responsibility

The frustrations will have their impact. One last set of expectations that cannot be ignored are the ones that Dark Horse Books and MGM harbor for fans, which are at least as unreasonable as the expectations fans hold for the media properties they love. For better or worse, the cat is out of the bag now, and people are talking about it. *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.* will have some influence on future Banzai projects.

Speculation on what lies ahead makes little sense for now. Human beings are notoriously bad at predicting the future, and it is already known that Dark Horse and Rauch are moving forward with a next book in the series. If recent history is any indicator, the future beyond that is going to be as complicated, absurd, and unpredictable as any of Team Banzai's adventures to date.

Ironically, the greatest risk of all facing Buckaroo's further adventures are the very fan expectations that paved the way for new adventures to be told in the first place. For now, it is enough to take in the twists and turns of Team Banzai's latest epic. This is Buckaroo Banzai after all, so expect the unexpected. Expect to be challenged at times as a reader. Expect to laugh, a lot. Expect tons of references to things that you may not know off the top of your head. Expect an adventure that is, without question, one hundred percent Buckaroo Banzai, with all of the glorious chaos that comes in tow.

After that, let go of your expectations and enjoy the ride. 🐎

## REVIEW: Buckaroo Banzai Collectors Compendium—A Marketing and Promotional Odyssey

By Sean Murphy

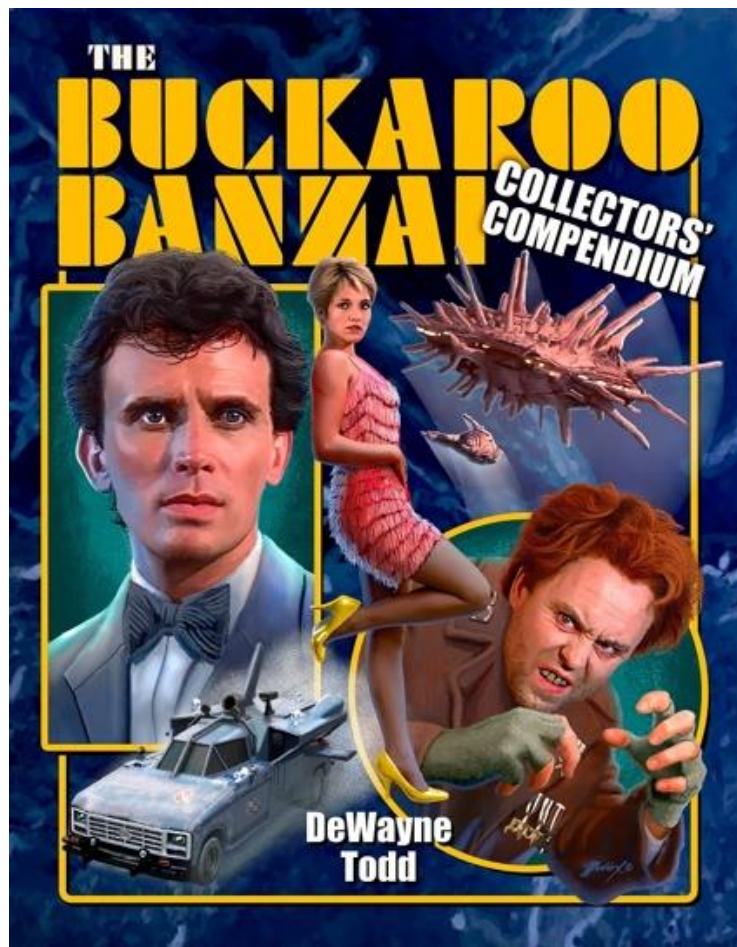
A [compendium](#) is “a collection of concise but detailed information about a particular subject” and, in this respect, [The Buckaroo Banzai Collectors Compendium—A Marketing and Promotional Odyssey](#) by DeWayne Todd is aptly named. Spread throughout the 22,000 words of text is a discussion about the publicity approach to the film *Buckaroo Banzai* including previously published and brand new interviews with Billy Vera, Laura Harrington, Bruce McBroom, Radford Polinsky, and others from Banzai fandom. The text is complemented by over three hundred full color images, from both domestic and international releases, including posters, slides, and lobby cards.

From Todd’s introduction: “This book is my attempt to share some of the interesting items that I have accumulated over the years and to place them within the context of the marketing and merchandising process. This volume is not intended to give a comprehensive history of the creative processes and political machinations that brought Buckaroo Banzai into existence and destroyed any chance of commercial success. That is a project for another day.”

The first three chapters set the tone for readers who may not be as familiar with the film, and contain some interesting facts and quotes for even diehard Blue Blaze Irregulars. Chapter one discusses what it means to be a cult film, how *Buckaroo Banzai* fits squarely in that territory, and how the various promotional items, such as the headbands and the press kit, fed into the film’s worldbuilding beloved by fans. Chapter two builds on the discussion about the appreciation for, and confusion about, the film from such stars as Peter Weller, John Lithgow, and Ellen Barkin. Chapter three delves into the background of how the Banzai story idea came together and explores some of the influences on the film.

Chapters four and five dive into the press materials used to build interest in the film and the largely failed attempt to market the film to the public at large. This leads right into chapter six, which discusses the novelization, video game, patches, and other merchandise made available when the film was released.

Chapter seven has the unfortunate job of diving into what critics at the time thought of the film and why it didn’t connect with audiences. As W. D. “Rick” Richter says in this chapter, “When people don’t get it, they really don’t get it. When people do get it, they love it and forgive the faults we all know the movie has.”



Source: DDT LLC/Mark Maddox

Chapter eight discusses the rebirth of the film on video and the growth of the fanbase over time as more people discovered it. Some of the images, especially the video release covers containing the drawing of Buckaroo with a briefcase, do get a bit repetitive. This is a product of the limited imagery available during the film’s release and Todd’s desire to show representative versions of the different physical media released at the time.

The images get more interesting as the book moves into chapters nine through eleven, which tackle the international releases of the film. These pages reveal promotional art from posters, book covers, comic books, and advertisements from various international film markets. Some of the marketing materials, including German and especially French examples, contain images that have nothing to do with the film at all. This is seen most strongly in the French poster for the film, which features a helmeted and leather-clad Buckaroo Banzai with a very large gun standing in front of a futuristic jet car, none of which is ever seen in the film.

Chapter twelve delves into items such as props, crew jackets, signed scripts, and original artwork from the Marvel Buckaroo Banzai comic released at the same time as the film. The book concludes with a discussion of



collectables and fan made items created since the film's release such as fanzines, as well as the *World Watch One* newsletter you hold in your hands right now.

The long list of collectibles discussed throughout the book ends around 2002 with the release of the last U.S. videotape. The later Banzai DVDs and Blu-Ray discs are not covered visually. There are several mentions of websites in various chapters but no links to those sites are provided. A few URLs appear in the bibliography, but it appears that Todd's goal was to use purely physical source materials. While the book does mention a few thoughts about collecting the materials shown, the book is not a "how to collect" guide, nor did it set out to be.

If I could change just one thing, it would be the extensive use of bolding for multiple quotes throughout the book. I found this visually distracting. Your mileage may vary.

As I worked on several drafts of this review, I was challenged by our editor to not just gush about how thrilling it is to have a book dedicated to Buckaroo Banzai but to also review the book critically. I struggled with this a bit (see the desire to gush above) but I'm always up for a challenge. I hit my bookshelf and tried to find a book that covers similar ground about a movie's marketing and publicity. While I have a bunch of books that discuss the making of a film or contain a script and such, only one really jumped out at me as something to use for a true comparison.

[The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary pictorial history of \*Lawrence of Arabia\*](#) has a thirty-one page chapter called "Premieres, reviews, and Oscars: 1962 and 1963" with images from the marketing and publicity of the film. The chapter discusses and shows the ticket stubs, souvenir program, posters, lobby cards, and other marketing materials. While the text is mainly dedicated to reviews of the film at the time, the photographic materials are discussed at length in the captions.

The entire Lawrence book is dedicated to the genesis, creation, and restoration of the film in 1989 and is the definitive word on the subject. This was possible because the authors had unprecedented access to correspondence, archival images, content, and people involved with the film.

If you are looking for a definitive history of Buckaroo Banzai, you will not find one in the *Compendium*, nor was that the goal of the book. Todd relies on his collection to provide the images we see throughout the Buckaroo Banzai book as well as interviews he personally conducted. Todd does discuss the origin story of the film and the reactions to it when released, but he does so in

### W. D. Richter takes note

"I write to thank you and praise you for your remarkable *Buckaroo Banzai Collectors' Compendium*. It took a lot of extraordinarily gifted people to make the movie and support it over the decades, but you have almost single-handedly found the time, energy, and passion to transform your joy about the result of our efforts into something quite remarkable: an illuminating (even to me!) and invaluable document that will forever enrich The Banzai Institute's Archives. Indeed, Buckaroo himself recently took pen in hand (his method) to drop Mac Rauch a note after reading Mrs. Johnson's personal copy of the *Compendium*. I quote the good doctor: 'This astounding volume should not be shown to poor Reno because his resulting jealousy will knock him off his game for weeks.' Buckaroo added that he was totally unaware that some people in Germany consider him to be the freakiest guy since Donald Duck, a fact that has given him some pause."

service of the publicity and marketing and not, as he said, to give a comprehensive history. Ultimately, the *Compendium* doubles down on the marketing and publicity in a way that [The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary pictorial history of \*Lawrence of Arabia\*](#) does not. Comparing these two books was informative and worth the time since it shows there isn't anything quite like the *Compendium* out there and that helps to make it unique.

So what do I think of the book? I'm thrilled to have a new Buckaroo Banzai book on my shelf. Todd provides a glimpse into his impressive collection of Banzai material that will marvel fans of the film. The images are wonderful and the interviews interspersed throughout the text are great to read. I was fascinated to see things, and learn things, in the *Compendium* that I didn't know about Buckaroo Banzai. I just wish that the book was longer, and covered more materials after 2002. However, I understand the realities of publishing, and the fact that you have to stop somewhere, or else you'll end up with a rather expensive book.

*The Buckaroo Banzai Collectors Compendium—A Marketing and Promotional Odyssey* is, without a doubt, a true passion project and labor of love. As a fan of the film, I highly recommend the book. 🐼

**Full disclosure:** I was interviewed by Todd for the *Compendium*, where several of my quotes appear. I also interviewed Todd in the [World Watch One September 2018 Newsletter](#). He later contributed to the newsletter as a Staff Writer.

## From the Colorado Bureau Office and Great Sand Dunes Observation Post

**Editor's Note:** The pandemic continues to wreak havoc on the kinds of events typically noted on our **Team Banzai Events Calendar**. Be sure to check the links provided for up-to-date information on any in-person gatherings listed. —DB

### JANUARY

[International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival](#) (opened Jan. 5, Harbin, Heilongjiang province, China). Harbin is one of the coldest spots on Earth, so it's fitting that for several months each year it hosts the world's largest ice/snow sculpting festival. See photos from recent years [here](#) or [here](#).

[Wakakusa Yamayaki, the Mountain Roast](#) (Jan. 22 at Nara, Japan). Some claim it began as a means to drive away wild boars, while others suggest it's a reminder of a conflict between two rival temples. Either way, every year on the fourth Saturday in January, the dry grass on Mount Wakakusayama is set ablaze in a spectacular sight visible from anywhere in the city below.

[Pillow Fight Championship](#) (Jan. 29). The premise may sound silly but we do like to encourage nonviolent conflict resolution. The championship is a pay-per-view event but previous highlights can be found for free on YouTube links from the official PFC site.

### FEBRUARY

[Lunar New Year](#) (Feb. 1). 2022 will be the Year of the Tiger. Shout-out to our old pal Yoshi "Tiger" Tanaka, chief of security over at Ichiban Ltd.

[Capricon 42](#) (Feb. 3-6) As of this publication date, Chicago's Capricon science fiction convention is still on track to meet in-person at its new home in the [Sheraton Grand Hotel](#). Programming will include a Buckaroo Banzai panel featuring World Watch One's very own Dan Berger and Steven H Silver.

[XXIV Olympic Winter Games](#) (Feb. 4-20, Beijing, China). *Citius, altius, fortius—communitur*. Faster, higher, stronger—together.

[National Random Acts of Kindness Day](#) (Feb. 17). Don't be mean, we don't have to be mean. If you miss this one for some reason, there's also a comparable day for New Zealand in September, World Kindness Day in November or, you know, any day.

[Sky Lantern Festival](#) (Feb. 15). As a culmination of lunar new year festivities, write a short note about what you want to embrace in the future, attach it to a fire balloon, and release it into the night sky along with those of others. Many places host similar festivals, but Pingxi, Taiwan is said to offer one of the best.

[Carnival](#) (Feb 19-March 1, Venice, Italy): Tradition holds that Carnival in Venice began as a victory celebration of [Venetian Republic](#) over the [Patriarchate of Aquileia](#) in 1162. It has since evolved into a ten day bacchanal leading up to the more restrained days of Lenten denial. Grab a [Medico Della Peste](#) costume and mask up for the revels.

### MARCH

[Artemis I Launch](#) (March 12, subject to launch conditions and other rescheduling factors). NASA's Orion spacecraft will undertake an uncrewed flight test beyond the moon and back, gathering extensive data to pave the way for the crewed Artemis II lunar mission planned to follow in 2024.

[Daylight Savings Time](#) begins March 13 in most of the U.S. As the philosopher Steve Miller observed, "Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin' into the future." But don't fret too much, as Buckaroo reminds us time is just an illusion anyway.

[Las Fallas](#) (March 14-19, Valencia, Spain): Las Fallas is a centuries-old festival that commemorates [Saint Joseph](#), held annually in Valencia, Spain. The festival features hundreds of large cartoon-like figurines called 'ninots' that are set ablaze on the last night of the festival in a spectacular display.

[International Conference on Biomedical Engineering and Systems](#) (March 28-29, Paris). Everybody pay attention: This one's in Paris, France, not Paris, Texas. Nobody wants to make that mistake again, do they?

### APRIL

[National Museum Day](#) (April 4, USA). Whether it's devoted to art, history, science,

or some other topic, wherever you live there's probably a museum near you, so why not take advantage of this day when many of them offer free admission? Search for participating locations at the link above. For BBIs abroad, keep an eye on the [International Council of Museums](#) for similar resources for International Museum Day coming up next month (May 18).

[First Contact Day](#) (April 5). A day of significance to some Star Trek fans, honoring the date in 2063 when humans will achieve warp flight and meet our first alien species, the Vulcans. Of course we BBIs know that Lectroids reached Earth in 1938.

[National Name Yourself Day](#) (April 9). If Sidney Zweibel can become New Jersey, any of us can be reborn with any moniker we want. Take today to try out a nickname, nom de plume, or other pseudonym and explore new corners of your personality that this freedom brings.

[International Louie Louie Day](#) (April 11). Celebrating what's considered by some as the best party song of all time. Its famously mumbly 1963 version by the [Kingsmen](#) was the subject of an [FBI investigation](#).

[International Haiku Poetry Day](#) (April 17). Set aside this day / to practice your poetry / in five, seven, five.

### MAY

[Large Hadron Collider, Run 3](#) (Early May, near Geneva, Switzerland). CERN's LHC will resume operations after a planned shutdown in December 2018 to implement systems upgrades. What subatomic mysteries will the collider unveil next? Stay tuned.

[Lost Sock Memorial Day](#) (May 9). This unofficial holiday honors those brave socks that have struck out on their own or otherwise disappeared to wander other dimensions, leaving their pair-mates behind. Never forget.

### CAST BIRTHDAYS

**Yakov Smirnoff** (Jan. 24), **Tommy Huff** (Jan. 29), **Read Morgan** (Jan. 30), **Jonathan Banks** (Jan. 31), **Mariclare Costello** (Feb. 2), **Robert Gray** (Feb. 10), **John David Ashton** (Feb 22), **James Saito** (March 6), **Bill Henderson** (March 19), **Ellen Barkin** (April 1), **Laura Harrington** (April 29)



Repe Sana

The  
Mysterious  
East

