



WORLD WATCH ONE

June 2021



"It was like a roller coaster ride through a meteor shower."

—Buckaroo Banzai

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WORLD WATCH ONE ☯ IN THIS ISSUE



Introduction from the Editor	Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger, <i>Libertyville, IL</i>	Page 1
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EXCLUSIVE: Buckaroo Banzai Novel Excerpt	Reno of Memphis By way of E.M. Rauch	Page 2
--	---	--------

Short Takes	WWO Staff	Pages 3-4
-------------	-----------	-----------



INTERVIEW: Ron Veto, Jet Car Grip	Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson <i>Portland, OR</i>	Pages 5-6
--------------------------------------	---	-----------

INTERVIEW: Rexford L. Metz, ASC	Steve Mattsson	Pages 7-10
------------------------------------	----------------	------------

More Jet Car BTS	World Watch One Staff	Pages 11-12
------------------	-----------------------	-------------



Project Sawtooth: Masado Banzai's Jet Car	Tim "Tim Boo Ba" Monro <i>Renton, WA</i>	Pages 13-14
--	---	-------------

A Brief History of Speed: Evolution of the Jet Car	Dan Berger	Pages 15-19
---	------------	-------------



Skirmish on the Salt Flats Jet Car Special Insert	Dan Berger	Pages 20-23
--	------------	-------------

INTERVIEW: Dave Winfield, Designer	Steve Mattsson	Pages 24-25
---------------------------------------	----------------	-------------



Superman in the Eighth Dimension?	Scott "Camelot" Tate <i>Alamosa, CO</i>	Page 26
--------------------------------------	--	---------

INTERVIEW: Mike and Denise Okuda	Dan Berger	Pages 27-29
-------------------------------------	------------	-------------

Coming Attractions	Scott Tate and Rich "FilmBuff" Drees	Page 30
--------------------	---	---------



Finding Lost Footage for the Special Edition DVD	Sean "Figment" Murphy <i>Burke, VA</i>	Pages 31-33
---	---	-------------

Declassifying the Documentary	Sean Murphy	Page 34
----------------------------------	-------------	---------



Behind the Scenes of the Special Edition DVD	Sean Murphy	Pages 35-39
---	-------------	-------------

The Making of <i>Into the 8th Dimension</i>	Dan Berger	Pages 40-46
---	------------	-------------

Buckaroo Blu-ray/DVD Extras!	Dan Berger and Sean Murphy	Pages 47-49
---------------------------------	----------------------------	-------------



From the Colorado Bureau Office	Scott Tate	Page 50
------------------------------------	------------	---------

Your Moment of Zen		Page 51
--------------------	--	---------



Back Cover	BBi Rolo Tomasi <i>Somewhere in Southern California</i>	
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Acknowledgements

Once again, we are running a little behind deadline. How? Why? Damn it, it's not fair!

Ok, there are good reasons why things took longer than expected this issue. For starters, there was a stockpile of interview material that needed to be addressed. Since this is the Acknowledgements section, I am here to acknowledge that transcribing interviews sucks. The cover for this issue also presented logistical challenges, which created delays. But the deeds are done, the issue marches on, and it is a better issue for the difficulties met along the way.

In the hot seat: It's a little crazy to think about it, but most of the interviews in this issue date back to last summer. We apologize for the wait and thank one and all for their contributions: Heather Buckley, Michael Felsher, Ethan Halo, Rexford Metz, Mojo, Denise Okuda, Mike Okuda, W. D. Richter, Emile Smith, and Ron Veto. A special note of thanks to Earl Mack Rauch for bugging Reno and snagging that excerpt from the novel for us. Thanks also to Denise and Mike Okuda at the Banzai Institute Facebook page for their generous assistance in getting the word out about *World Watch One* and their contributions to Banzai fandom in general. 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](#).

Many thanks to our regular contributors for doing their thing: Dan Berger, Barry Chan, Steve Mattsson, Sean Murphy, Steven H Silver, and Scott Tate. Additional thanks go to Rich Drees for some additional Johnny-on-the-spot writing. Special thanks to Barry Chan, Sean Murphy, and Steven H Silver for their proofing of this issue's contents.

Commendations go to Barry Chan for pulling emergency artistic duty on both the front and back covers for this issue. Originally, Filmmaker Emile Smith was slated to spruce up the cover with a render straight from the Jet Car trailer promoting *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries*; but it was not to be...this time. We're working on it. Thanks go to both Barry and Emile for their efforts. We salute you!

Get in the game: *World Watch One* does not write or illustrate itself. All are invited to contribute to the next issue. Don't worry about making it perfect. We'd just love to hear from you. See below for contact information and further encouragement.

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Submissions to *World Watch One* are strongly encouraged. Seriously, we would love to see your work in the pages of this very newsletter. All are welcome. Please contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com for details.



Front Cover:

On the cover this issue, BBI Rolo Tomasi pays tribute to the 1980's Jet Car that propelled Buckaroo and Team Banzai into history on June 11, 1981; forty years ago this month. Masado and Sandra Banzai also feature prominently, along with the 1954 Jet Car they built with Toichi Hikita. The Jet Car image was created in Adobe Illustrator imported into Photoshop for the cover composition. It's amazing what can be created from a single film frame. Rolo has an affinity for art from technical illustration to Golden-Age illustrators, from Syd Mead and Doug Chiang to N.C. Wyeth and J.C. Leyendecker--and their influences. An art instructor once told him; "Whichever artist you admire, study whom they studied."

Questions? Comments? Want to send us an article or illustration? Go for it, compadre! Contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com.

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Looking to the past, racing towards the future

In the summer of 2020, *World Watch One's* Steve Mattsson made the acquaintance of two gentlemen responsible for the amazing Jet Car footage seen in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*—Film Grip Ron Veto and second unit Cinematographer Rex Metz. Mr. Metz was also responsible for capturing footage of Craig Breedlove's 526.277 mph speed record in his *Spirit of America* jet car on October 15, 1964. The beginnings of a Jet Car issue were in hand, and that sent Steve and yours truly down a couple of related rabbit holes, as you will soon see.

Jet Cars weren't the only thing on our minds in this issue. Last summer proved to be an interview windfall for the newsletter, one that we have finally caught up with on the editing front. You may remember Mike and Denise Okuda discussing *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* in our August 2020 issue. Our conversation also involved their work on the Apple TV+ series *For All Mankind*. We have included that portion of their interview in this issue for your enjoyment.

We were honored to interview producers Michael Felsher and Heather Buckley about making *Into the 8th Dimension*, the feature length *Buckaroo Banzai* documentary that appeared in SHOUT! Factory's excellent Blu-ray edition of the film. It took a bit of doing to boil sixteen pages of transcripts down into an article, but I managed. Now you can enjoy the meta experience of reading the making-of article about the making-of documentary, and that's just on the Blu-ray side.

We also had the pleasure of interviewing VFX guru Adam "Mojo" Lebowitz regarding his part in the *Buckaroo Banzai* Special Edition DVD. Sean Murphy took Mojo's interview as a starting point for a deeper dive into the making of the DVD which, consequently, has contributed at least some content to every video release of the film that has followed. We've even included a handy breakdown of all the content unique to each of the domestic and foreign DVD and Blu-ray releases since 2002, in case you are interested in finding all of the available content.

There is a remarkable amount of new Buckaroo media in the works these days. Earlier this month, yours truly appeared in an episode of the Deep Cuts podcast devoted to *Buckaroo Banzai*. If that wasn't enough, two Hong Kong Cavaliers crashed the party at the end of the episode, and that's just for starters.

We have been gently telling good readers for years now that a certain *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* novel is coming in the future. We may have buried the lede as a result, to see if people were paying attention. Then a funny thing happened. This January, I reached out to Reno at the Banzai Institute through Earl Mac Rauch, asking if he had any update about when the novel would be published. Mac's reply, "Let me check on that."

The day after that email, Dark Horse officially announced the 2021 release of [*Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League, et al. A Compendium of Evils*](#). The novel has seen a couple of delays to the release date since then, but now the cat is out of the bag and we're done being subtle. In addition to all of that Jet Car goodness to savor, we also present you with an exclusive Jet Car-related excerpt from *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* for good measure. We even have a cover memorializing the Jet Car's history and exploits, courtesy of *World Watch One* staff artist Barry Chan. Barry. We hope that it whets your appetite for more.

While reflecting on the making of *Into the 8th Dimension*, it dawned on me that *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* turns thirty-seven this year. Memories are fading, and people don't live forever. For over fifteen years now one of our main interests has been in documenting the docudrama through the stories of the people who made it, while that's still possible. But *World Watch One* has also marched forward with the hope that there will be more Buckaroo in the future. At times we have had the good fortune to publish new glimpses into that world through the writings of The Reno Kid provided by Earl Mac Rauch. With *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al.*, it is heartening to think that there will be even broader fields to explore in the not too distant future.



WORLD WATCH ONE

NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

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2 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

World Watch One Exclusive: Excerpt from *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League et al. A Compendium of Evils*

By Reno the Kid with E. M. Rauch

When Dr. B. Banzai first suggested that Reno the Kid should collect a volume of Team Banzai's adventures back in 1983, Reno asked excitedly, "Could we collect many together?"

"As many as the book will hold," Buckaroo assured him.

Clearly, one book alone could never contain the many adventures of Buckaroo Banzai. We hope you enjoy this exclusive glimpse into the long-awaited next volume.



The driver with the power-packed physique wasn't talking but his silence did not mean that the truth didn't hurt. Why couldn't he look at himself in the mirror? Could it be because he was an empty shell who had suppressed his feelings so deeply that he would never be able to retrieve them, much less analyze them? He preferred to blame the glare of a mysterious mini spotlight that seemed to follow his every move or the bank of overhead monitors, rather than a mental disorder; yet speeding toward the canyon's solid wall, he saw no way out, no escaping his fate. In 2.74322 seconds, he would hit the rocks, unless he ejected...now!

But of course he couldn't stop; there could be no stopping now. He had perhaps still a second or two in which to eject and lose the Jet Car or ride it out, though clearly there was a problem either with the software or the Jet Car's weight-balance dynamic. Like everyone, he had made his fair share of mistakes in life, but this one could be the last. To stay or go? That was the real pressing question. Hit the brakes or roll the dice, as in continue rolling forward with his life in the precarious balance? Which was the easy way out? Which the hard?

For a fleeting instant he was between his parents, a blissful child riding in the front seat down a country lane...his father behind the wheel, on the right...somewhere in Japan? He felt like speaking, but they both appeared deep in thought, musing to themselves behind stares that stretched on and on.

"Low on fuel...and Xan still behind us," the father said, glancing anxiously at the mirror.

"But it will be all right?" said the worried mother, or perhaps someone else, because when Buckaroo turned his head, he saw his true love sitting next to him in a moment of sweet blessed relief and smiling in the eye of the storm, as if to say, "I'll be fine."

At last he found his voice, long enough to ask, "Penny...will we ever be the same?"

"Sometimes you have to say goodbye," she said.

Against this Buckaroo had no answer.

"I'll never give up," he vowed but now experienced a sudden attack of nerves. Had he forgotten to attach the emergency spool of nylon filament, so he could find his way back home in case he got trapped or lost? And what about the left front mud tire? He couldn't remember if he had replaced it or if he was still driving with the donut spare. And the shock absorbers! How could he have forgotten to replace them? Or check his Jake brake...

As if reading his mind, Xan said, "You should have gone with the GT package. But don't worry about the flat tire. It's only flat on the bottom. Ha, ha! And the seat covers, is this really the color you wanted?"

Ordering the *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League* Hardcover Novel is as easy as 1...2...3!

1. Ask your local independent bookstore to order it for you now and pick it up this October. Find your local independent bookstore [here](#).
2. Order it directly from [Dark Horse Books for a 30% discount](#).
3. Purchase it from any of these fine on-line retailers:

[Powells.com](#), [Amazon.com](#), [Barnesandnobel.com](#), [Bookamillion.com](#), [!ndigo](#)

3 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Short Takes

WVO Staff

The Hong Kong Cavaliers Take Deep Cuts



Source: [Deep Cuts Podcast](#)

Hong Kong Cavaliers Pinky Carruthers (Billy Vera) and Reno (Pepe Serna) were recently heard literally crashing the end of the [Deep Cuts podcast](#) released on May 12, 2021. Tune into [Case File #65](#) as Dave Baker and Andrew Price host two hours of *Buckaroo Banzai* banter with *World Watch One's* Dan Berger. The episode explores some of the history and operational madness of this very newsletter, as well as a deep dive into the film itself and the franchise it kind of became, but not exactly. Be sure to stick around until the end for Pinky and Reno, voiced by the original actors and scripted by Earl Mac Rauch himself!

Also tune in next issue for some behind-the-scenes on the making of the podcast, and the appearance by the Hong Kong Cavaliers in particular.

China Joins the Race to Mars

NASA's *Curiosity* rover received some company on the surface of Mars this month with the successful touchdown of China's *Tianwen-1* lander at the [Utopia Planitia](#) impact basin on May 14th; the same region staked-out by NASA's [Viking 2](#) lander in 1976. *Tianwen-1* ferried company of another sort to the surface as well—a rover vehicle named *Zhurong*, equipped with a unique sub-surface radar designed to look for water ice. It is

theorized that Utopia Planitia used to be the site of an ocean, and that significant stores of water ice remain trapped beneath the surface. *Zhurong's* radar instrumentation is a capability unmatched by American rovers at present. As of this writing, [the Zhurong rover began its 90 day planned exploration](#) of the surface on May 21st, with an extended mission likely for as long as the vehicle lasts.

Tianwen-1 joins a growing [list of international space missions](#) bound for the skies above Mars as well as the surface of the planet and its moons. Could a new space race for a human piloted mission to Mars be far behind? Stay tuned.

Happy Birthday, Maserati Bora!

In the novel *Buckaroo Banzai*, Rawhide is briefing the team about Dr. Lizardo's escape from the Trenton Home for the Criminally Insane. He reports that Lizardo fled, "... in a sports car belonging to one of the staff physicians." Later the car is identified generically as a Maserati. In the film, Rawhide says that Lizardo, "... cops a Maserati Bora" and "totaled it a block away." It's an oddly specific detail. Later in the novel, more intrigue is added when it is discovered that the fingerprints of Hanoi Xan's Lieutenant, Lo Pep, were found in the Maserati.

Buckaroo Banzai is named checked in [an article about this year's Fiftieth Anniversary of the Bora](#) by Ben Hsu. Hsu tells us that the Bora's designer, Giorgetto Giugiaro, also designed the iconic DeLorean sports car. ***Back to the Future*** is a film that shares cast, crew, and concepts in common with ***Buckaroo Banzai***. The DeLorean time machine and the Jet Car are sisters in many ways. If any enterprising promoters out there put together a car show featuring Buckaroo's Jet Car, the DeLorean time machine, a Maserati Bora, and Craig Breedlove's *Spirit of America* please send press passes to the Chicago offices of *World Watch One*.



Source: Andrew Yeadon/<http://automobilemag.com>

4 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

In Memorium: Norman Lloyd



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Actor **Norman Lloyd** (b.Norman Perlmuter, 1914) died on May 11. Lloyd was part of Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre and helped broadcast information about the successful Red Lectroid invasion that took place on October 31, 1938 under the guise of a dramatization of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Lloyd began performing in Vaudeville and was a professional actor by the age of 9. He made his Broadway debut in 1935 in *Noah*. He left the Mercury Theatre company shortly before production began on *Citizen Kane* and always regretted the decision. He later appeared in Alfred Hitchcock's *Saboteur*. He appeared with Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton in *Limelight* and with Robin Williams in *Dead Poet's Society*. His television appearances included episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and a recurring role on *St. Elsewhere*. His final film role was in Amy Schumer's *Trainwreck* when he was 101 years old. From the 1960s through the early 1980s, he tried his hand at directing television movies and tv episodes. During that time, he also worked as a television producer. Lloyd was the subject of the 2007 documentary *Who Is Norman Lloyd?*

There Can Be Only Josh



Arizona Josh Swain (L) vs Nebraska Josh Swain (R).

Source: [autisticmob](#)

On April 24, 2020, an Arizona civil engineering student named Josh Swain channeled his lockdown boredom and, perhaps, Clancy Brown's skull-wearing, sword-wielding Kurgan from *Highlander* into what began as a joke. Pursuing his own peculiar version of the Gathering, Josh messaged all of the Facebook users he could find who were also named Josh Swain, challenging them to meet as a group one year from that date in a fight to determine the one true Josh Swain. Randomly chosen coordinates within the more or less central location of Lincoln, Nebraska were proposed as the field of combat.

The humorous notion soon gained traction on social media, embraced by Joshes with other last names and by eager would-be spectators. As the date approached, it became apparent to Swain that some sort of gathering might actually happen. The selected coordinates turned out to be on private land owned by someone with no interest in the event, so the site was shifted to a nearby park. Swain, wanting to steer the event towards a good cause, organized efforts to help raise money for the Children's Hospital & Medical Center Foundation of Omaha, Nebraska, and a food drive to benefit Lincoln.

On April 24, 2021, more than 900 people converged from across the country, including 50ish Joshes. Only two were full Josh Swains. The two Swains engaged in rock, paper, scissors, with the Josh who began all this emerging victorious. A second round of combat, open to all Joshes, involved swatting each other with pool noodles. A third round of pool noodling opened up for anyone present who wanted to participate, with an honor system in place trusting anyone on the receiving end of a noodle to declare themselves out.

All this good-natured Joshing raised more than \$14,000 and 200+ pounds of food for charity, and a California winery called Josh Cellars subsequently donated an additional \$30,000. A local four-year-old boy named Josh Vinson, Jr. was happily declared the day's overall winner. And not even the Kurgan can spoil that.

5 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

INTERVIEW: Ron Veto, Jet Car Grip

By Steve Mattsson

Ron Veto worked as a stunt man in Hollywood before switching to grip work. He mounted the cameras on the Jet Car for *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*. Currently, he is a Steadicam Pro owner and operator. Ron posted some amazing behind-the-scenes photos of the Jet Car shoot on his Facebook page and I wanted to know more about them.

Steve Mattsson: Ron—tell me more about those photos!

Ron Veto: I took those images on my Nikon FM 35 mm film camera at the El Mirage Dry Lake Bed in the Mojave Desert. Pictured in the second photo are Rexford L. Metz, ASC—Director of Photography: second unit. Louis Niemeyer—First Assistant Cameraman: second unit, and Jim Arnett—Stunt Coordinator is standing in the blue shorts. Jim was a humble, quiet, macho stuntman. He doubled for Paul Newman in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

SM: You worked with Rex Metz for many years...

RV: I worked for Rex as his Dolly Grip, his Key Grip, and aerial assistant cameraman. Finally, after 20 years I became his camera operator and Steadicam operator. We did the television show, *Pickett Fences* and so many films.

SM: Tell us about working with Rex on *Buckaroo Banzai*...

RV: *Buckaroo Banzai* was a short gig for us. We specialized in action sequences and big second units. Many times the second unit was larger than the first unit. We had it made. We got all the toys and the best



Ron Veto, Jet Car Grip extraordinaire. Credit: Rex Metz

people in the world to make stunts happen. Rex was big time back then. He did the famous chase scene through the streets of San Francisco for *Bullitt* with Steve McQueen.

SM: What do you remember about the Jet Car shoot?

RV: We shot it in the summer heat at El Mirage in California. We mounted four Panaflex cameras and an Eyemo on that wild beast. It was so hot you could fry an egg on the Jet Car. Just touching any metal burnt your skin. The Jet Car broke down a few times but they managed to get it going without too much drama. It tracked very straight and we never felt in real danger, other than that associated with normal car stunts.

SM: The Jet Car shoot took place early during the production of *Buckaroo Banzai*, while Jordan Cronenweth was still the Director of Photography. Did you work with him?

RV: I worked with Jordan Cronenweth briefly on BB. Later, I worked for dear Jordan for many years as his dolly grip. He took us everywhere. His son Jeff and I are very good friends. Jordan developed the “Cronencone”, a directional light box. His work on *Blade Runner* set a film look and style that others are still trying to copy. His secrets were in his timing lights and how he exposed the film. Jordan was the best, the nicest, and the coolest guy around. Even in his illness he had class.

SM: Your father worked as a stuntman in film...

RV: My Dad was the only Redshirt on *Star Trek* to never die. LOL! He worked the show all the time. During my teen years I would just go to Desilu Studios to wait for him. I'd walk around the studio onto Stage 31, where the Enterprise set was, looking for my Dad. There would be



Hot stuff: (L to R) Rex Metz, Louis Niemeyer, and Jim Arnett weather the blistering heat of the El Mirage Dry Lake Bed, Mojave Desert, capturing some hard-earned Jet Car coverage. Source: Ron Veto

6 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

green faced aliens with antenna coming from their heads in the hallways playing gin and reading racing forms—fun times. He took me to a lot of his jobs.

SM: Is that how you got your start in the business?

RV: I became a stuntman doing some of his jobs under our same name. The other stuntmen were his friends and they watched out for me not to get hurt or get screwed by the production with my money. Ha.

SM: What else did your Father work on?

RV: I see Dad in *Star Trek*, *The Ten Commandments*, *King of Kings*, and *Pork Chop Hill* all the time. Saw him last week on *No Time for Sergeants*. He had an infamous bit part as a protester in a Marlon Brando film called *The Ugly American*. He was a great friend of Brando. Marlon and Elvis would come to our house to visit. I had many pieces of apple pie across the dinner table with Elvis. Marlon used to play with me in the grass in the backyard all the time.



Take a picture, it will last longer! In the era before everyone on the planet had a smart phone with a high quality digital camera, candid snaps required a little more effort and intentionality to make sure certain moments were preserved photographically. Fortunately for us, **Ron Veto** brought his Nikon FM 35 mm film camera to the El Mirage Dry Lake Bed

SM: Great stories, Ron—thank you for sharing them. Any last observations about the shoot at El Mirage?

RV: It was just us guys, a few Panaflexes, and the Jet Car playing in the desert. How can you beat that? No drama, just sunburns. It was lot of fun to share the photos 30 years later.

SM: Thanks, Ron—I'm so glad you did!

A big *World Watch One* thank you to Ron who graciously offered to help us contact Rexford Metz. You can read Rex's interview next in this issue.

If you want to learn more about Ron's work, [check out his IMDB page](#) and his [award winning travel photography](#). You can order Ron's book [Plastic Fantastic Does the City of Angels from Amazon](#) (18 years of age and older). It's a whimsical, risqué, photo fairy tale about how faith and love can defeat prejudice, discrimination, and racism.



in the Mojave Desert to capture the Jet Car's triumph of man over mountain. While entertainment journalism tends to focus on actors and directors, many of the behind-the-scenes technical trials and triumphs of a film are captured and preserved in photos like these taken by members of the film crew. Source: Ron Veto

7 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

INTERVIEW: Rexford L. Metz, [ASC](#)

Jock Cinematographer

By Steve Mattsson

[Variety](#) called Rex Metz, “The King of the second-unit cinematographers.” He is renowned for being able to get the shot on land, sea, or air. Rex was the “Director of Photography: second unit” for the Buckaroo Banzai Jet Car shoot at the El Mirage Dry Lake Bed in California, but that wasn’t his first experience with shooting a jet car at speed.

Steve Mattsson: Rex, you were the cinematographer for the Academy Award nominated documentary [The Spirit of America](#). How’d you get involved in shooting [Craig Breedlove’s](#) attempt to break the world land speed record?

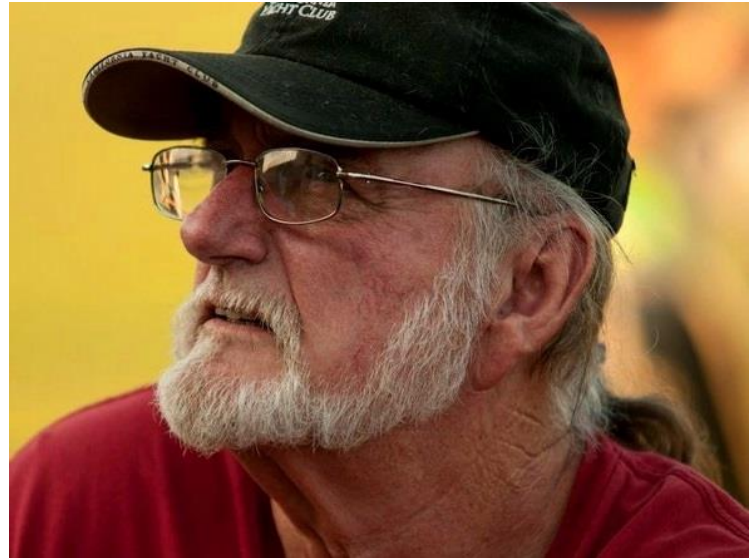
Rex Metz: I was into drag racing and I met Breedlove through that scene. My brother-in-law, James Deist, was the builder of the parachutes that were on the car. Jimmy’s company was called Deist Safety Equipment. We put the first parachute on dragsters at Whiteman Air Park in San Fernando during the late ‘50s. I was on the Bonneville Salt Flats when Art Arfons, Mickey Thompson, Craig Breedlove, and others were racing there in the ‘60s.

SM: I couldn’t find the complete *The Spirit of America* documentary anywhere online, but [you can order a print-on-demand copy](#) for \$10.95 through a partnership between the National Archives and Amazon.

RM: I called the Library of Congress a few years back and got myself a copy. Now it’s somewhere in a box with hundreds of other DVDs. I’ve moved a couple of times since I was teaching film in at Florida State University and unfortunately I have no idea where the box is.



P.O.V. of the GSAP gun camera mounted in the *Spirit of America’s* tail. Source: National Archives/Rex Metz



Rex Metz. Credit: Jacob Abrams

SM: [There is video](#) for a Beach Boys song that somebody put together using your footage from the 1963 run.

RM: There’s also [film from the 1964 attempt when Breedlove broke the 500 mph barrier and then crashed](#). All of that stuff is my footage. I was there when he was up on the bank of the dike after the crash and said, “For my next trick, I’ll set myself on fire.”

SM: I imagine it was tougher to get coverage for a record attempt than it was for the Jet Car shoot in *Buckaroo*—did you get to mount cameras to Breedlove’s car?

RM: Sure, we had a [GSAP aerial gun camera](#) mounted in the tail fin shooting 16mm. We had a camera mounted on the right rear wheel strut that caught the nosecone and the centerline during the run. For the record attempt I had a camera on a chase fixed-wing and a couple of guys in towers with long lenses. The rest of the time it was just me. I used an [Arri IIC](#) and an [Eyemo](#) shooting 35mm.

SM: Could you compare shooting the Breedlove and Banzai jet cars? How was El Mirage in 1983 different from Bonneville in 1963?

RM: The money for the documentary came from Shell and Goodyear. *Buckaroo Banzai* was studio financed, so we had more resources. I had a bigger crew for *Buckaroo*. I had my assistant cameraman Louis Niemeyer and my key grip Jack Johnson. Ron Veto was with me. Jim Arnett was the stunt coordinator for *Buckaroo*, but he directed those second unit jet car scenes. Jim and I did six stunt movies together, so we had a good relationship.

SM: It sounds like, from Ron, that you were able to mount more cameras on the Banzai Jet Car. I guess streamlining wouldn’t matter...

8 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION



A tale of two jet cars: The 1964 *Spirit of America* (Top) vs Buckaroo's Jet Car in 1983 (Bottom). Hollywood money buys prettier pictures. Sources: **Top**-National Archives/Rex Metz **Bottom**-MGM/Universal/Rex Metz

RM: Yeah, we weren't trying to break a record during the *Buckaroo* shoot. We were trying to make the best movie we could.

SM: How do you pick the spots to mount the cameras?

RM: You get some standard coverage, like the driver's POV, but then you look for shots that nobody else has done. You want an identifiable part of the car in front, the surface you are traveling on, and something interesting you are approaching in the distance—basic foreground, middle-ground, and background stuff. You want to give the viewer the illusion that they are riding along as an observer.

SM: What about the other shots? It looked like you had some from a chase car or a helicopter following the Jet Car...

RM: Yeah, we had a camera car and I was up in a helicopter for some shots.

SM: So how does it work? You do some runs with the cameras mounted to the car. You do some runs with the

car in hero mode* to get ground level shots (like those shown in Ron's photographs) and then more runs for the aerial photography?

RM: It's all carefully planned to get the maximum amount of shots, with the minimum amount of runs. We'll set the cameras and the car will make a run. The car will return to "A." We'll move the cameras and the car will make another run. Each run will be covered from multiple angles.

SM: What your experience shooting the documentary helpful when you were shooting *Buckaroo*?

RM: Yeah, there were some shots used in the documentary that were repeated in the movie. We watched my Breedlove footage a couple of times when we were planning the *Buckaroo* shoot.

SM: What were the pre-shoot meetings like? What's the interplay between you, the driver, and the second unit director like?

RM: The more you trusted the driver, the more you'd ask him to get closer to you. When you are looking through the eyepiece on the camera, you feel removed from the situation—you don't have any fear of it. People called me a daredevil, but I didn't see it that way. You need to be close to the action to make the shot interesting, but there are also plenty of precautions to keep everyone safe.

SM: Jordan Cronenweth was still the director of photography for *Buckaroo* during the Jet Car shoot. Did you get to work with him?

RM: I worked with Jordan a lot. He was a good friend. There's a thing between first and second unit

*In car movies there are usually several versions of the car used in the film modified for different functions: jumping, sliding, crashing, etc. There is always at least one "hero car," a pristine version used for close-ups and such.



Rex Metz at El Mirage. Source: Ron Veto

9 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

cameramen. They need to tell you all of their tricks, so that the stuff I did matched with what he was doing. We had to talk about choices of lenses, filters, etc. We were working from the same storyboards and we would call each other from different locations on the set to keep everything straight. Later, we would see each other's dailies and then talk about them. It was a real collaborative effort.

SM: Any other stories from the Jet Car shoot that you'd like to share?

RM: Buckaroo's Jet Car was a prop. It contained a real jet engine that provided thrust, but it wasn't jet propelled. It was predominantly powered by a big Ford V-8 engine. We shot a lot of stuff under sped, so it would appear to be going a lot faster than it actually was. We had a great time making it look as real as we possibly could.



Source: Rex Metz

SM: Let's back up a bit in your career now, how did you get the gig on *JAWS*?

RM: I had heard about *JAWS* being made at Universal and I decided that I wanted to work on it. I told my assistant cameraman at the time, Jan Kiesser, that we were going to learn how to SCUBA dive and become

certified divers. We did that and then put out the scuttlebutt that we did underwater work, so people would talk about it. Later, I was working on *The Man Who Would Be King* with John Houston. We were doing



JAWS underwater with Rex Metz (Left) and his assistant, [Jan Kiesser](#) (Right Foreground). Source: Rex Metz

a whitewater sequence in the Grand Canyon when I got a phone call from Joe Alves, the production designer on *JAWS*. He told me that the guy they had hired for the underwater stuff told them that you couldn't shoot underwater at night. Joe wanted to know if that was true. I told him, "No, it's just like shooting on a soundstage through smoke. Water is just another medium. You can shoot underwater at night all you want." Then he said "Steven Spielberg wants to talk to you." I said, "I'm having dinner with John Huston right now"—dropping names, of course...

SM: Well, Huston would have been a lot bigger than Spielberg back then.

RM: Big time! So, I said I'd call him back. I told Huston about it and he said, "Oh, that's really cool!" After dinner I did a quick review of the underwater section of my *American Society of Cinematographers Manual* and called Spielberg. Joe Alves, Spielberg, and I talked about the night sequence in *JAWS*. I told them that you could use underwater spotlights as a light source and then put milk in the water. Milk would do the same thing in water that smoke does on a soundstage. You could create shafts of light or whatever you want. If you look at the movie, you'll see the scene where they find Ben Gardner's boat—all of the stuff in that sequence came from our first phone conversation.

SM: We've talked about land and sea, now let's talk about air. Got any cool aerial photography stories?

10 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

RM: While working on the television show, [Baa Baa Black Sheep](#), I was in the back seat of a [T-28 trainer](#). We were shooting a dog fight. We had just gone inverted when the engine died. The pilot, [Jim Gavin](#), said, “Okay, we gotta bail out. We lost the engine and we’re gonna



Eye in the sky: Rex Metz gets a shot of the Jet Car post-8th dimension from his perch in the Chase 1 helicopter. Source: Rex Metz

crash.” I said, “I can’t jump out. I’ll hit the tail and hurt myself! You need to re-start it and land.”

SM: [Laughter]

RM: He got it re-started and we landed. The mechanics worked on the plane during lunch. We went back up and during the same maneuver, the engine quit again. This time there was no discussion about parachuting out. He just re-started it.

SM: Ho hum. [Laughter]

RM: The first time was exciting in the moment. The second time was a little more routine.

SM: You specialized in shooting from helicopters...

RM: I spent around thirty-five years flying with a pilot named [John Sarviss](#). He was great, the equipment was great, the support crews were great, but people don’t want to hear the stories about when everything went great.

SM: Okay, I’ll bite—do you have a helicopter story when things didn’t go great?

RM: We were under contract to Porsche to do a documentary on the [East African Safari Off-Road Rally](#) in Kenya. The helicopter had an engine failure and we did an [autorotation](#) landing into the side of a mountain. We packed up the camera and stuff and hiked down off the mountain. We found a river and hitchhiked back into Nairobi...

SM: [Interrupting] Wait! Let me repeat what I just heard. You crashed into the side of a mountain, packed up your gear, and hiked down—in *Africa*! And that’s all in a day’s work?

RM: We had a contract.

SM: Rex, that’s a pretty cool job!

RM: I was a jock kinda-guy. I drove fast cars and motorcycles. I learned to SCUBA dive and enjoyed the flying. That’s why I gravitated to the second unit stuff. We were shooting stuntmen crashing cars while the first unit crew was filming actors talking to each other. I worked on the second unit of thirty movies with [Mickey Moore](#),** who was probably the greatest action director of all time. We had an amazing run.

SM: Any advice for someone who wants to get into the business?

RM: Well, I never said, “No.” I always said, “Yeah, I can do that.” I enjoyed learning new skills and applying them to cinematography. Something else that’s important is that there are many ways to get the shot you need. It sounds cliché, but I used smoke and mirrors a lot. When shooting the big action stuff, it’s often safer to shoot into a mirror. Mirrors were an essential part of my grip equipment; with them I could use illusion to trick the audience into thinking they were seeing something that they weren’t.

SM: Any last observations on your career as a whole?

RM: The “jock thing” opened a lot of doors for me with the high end first unit cinematographers like Jordan, [Bill Fraker](#), and [Connie Hall](#). I had an opportunity to work with some of the absolute masters of the craft. I could figure out a way to get the shots they needed and match their look while doing it. But, the very best part of it was that I got to spend my entire career doing what I loved.

SM: Rex, thank you very much for your time. The staff at *World Watch One* is thrilled that you were able to bring your unique experiences to the making of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*.

For more about Rex’s work, see [his IMDB page](#), [his Instagram page](#), and [his interview for the American Society of Cinematographer’s](#) magazine.

**Chances are that your favorite scene from any of the Indiana Jones movies was actually directed by Mickey Moore—as well as your favorite scenes from *The War of the Worlds*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Ghostbusters II*, and many others. Mickey Moore’s book [My Magic Carpet of Films](#) is available at [Amazon](#).

11 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

More Jet Car Shoot BTS

By WWO Staff

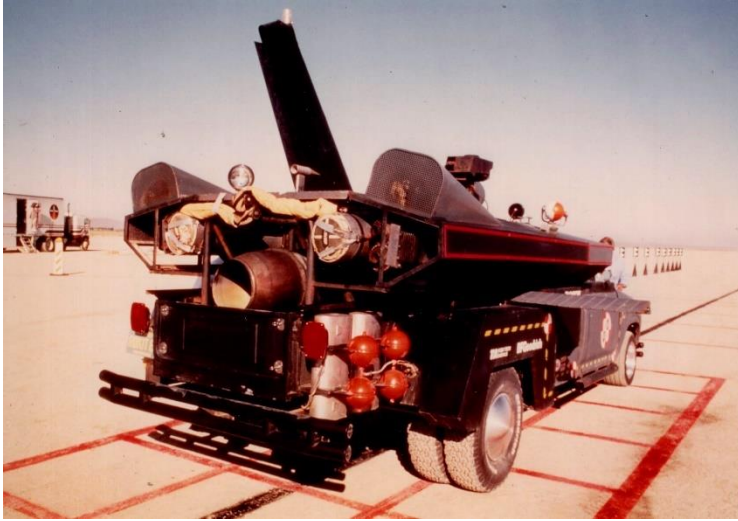
On December 31st, 2020, [James Belohovek](#) posted these behind-the-scenes (BTS) photos of the Jet Car shoot on the [Crew Stories Facebook page](#). James shared that he worked on some of the effects for *Buckaroo Banzai* at [Peter Kuran's](#) special effects shop, VCE Inc. WWO staff reached out to James who explained that he didn't take the photos, they were provided to him as reference by the production. This was in case VCE Inc. needed to build a miniature Jet Car to complete their effects shots. VCE Inc.'s assignment was to build and shoot a miniature set for the scene where the Jet Car exits the mountain from the 8th Dimension. Belohovek's specific job was to build the miniature mountain.



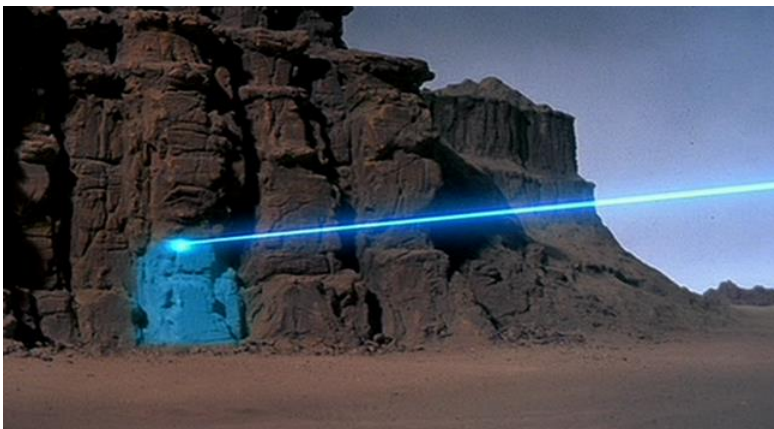
Free Jet Car Rides? A line forms behind the Jet Car at [El Mirage OHV area](#) (**Above**) for reasons that aren't entirely clear from the photo. With a mountain behind the vehicle and the hood covered in gunk, it is possible that a smoke effect is being set up for the shots after Buckaroo's trip through the mountain. Rexford Metz and Jim Arnett are the first two people in line to the left of the Jet Car.



He's gone through it! He's gone through the mountain! The Jet Car coasts to a halt, trailing smoke during its post-8th dimension portion of the shoot from El Mirage. You can see the black-clad figure of Buckaroo rolling away from the Jet Car and to the right in the second photo (**Above Middle**) in this sequence. Source for all photos above: James Belohovek.



In a separate Crew Stories post, Belohovek recalls that Kuran was having trouble matching the miniature to film of the actual desert floor. The set had been struck weeks before, so James put everything back together at the last minute. He placed the mountain he had built on two 2x8 foot work tables. Then he and [Steve Burg](#) applied a gooey plaster across the surface of the tables. Then Burg built the background mountains and painted the miniature desert floor. [Rick Taylor](#) animated the oscillation overthruster's blue laser and he also lit and shot the miniature mountain sequence.



Warm up lap: Various shots of the Jet Car, pre-8th dimension, appear above. You can see a tool box in the bottom left corner of the **Top Right Photo**, possibly used for one of the Jet Car's minor break-downs on set.

[Radford Polinsky](#), *Buckaroo Banzai*'s costumer and friend of *World Watch One*, inspects the Jet Car (**Bottom Right**). Note the 88 symbol is on the left rear quarter panel instead of its familiar position on the left door. Mt. Mini (**Left**), as seen in the film. Sources: James Belohovek/MGM

The WWO staff thank the crew at VCE Inc. for their work on *Buckaroo Banzai* and especially to James Belohovek for preserving and sharing these Jet Car photos so many years later.

Project Sawtooth:

Masado Banzai's Jet Car

By Tim Monro

Big Shoulders put out a call to the Tri-State Area and beyond asking for Jet Car articles for a special issue of *World Watch One*. I reminded BS about a piece I wrote for the September 2018 issue of *WWO* regarding Overthrusters. The article included a tidbit about Masado Banzai's '50s era Jet Car being built from a cannibalized British jet fighter. BS, who is an expert motivator of his staff, told me that he got zero feedback about that article and didn't think anybody read it. He then, generously, assigned me the task of expanding the tidbit. Be careful what you wish for, BS...

I remember reading something in one of the moldy old issues of *WWO* about all the different versions of Masado Banzai's co-pilot for the '50s Jet Car. (I'd give whoever wrote the article credit, but my back issues are still in my step-dad's basement.)

In the screenplay, the co-pilot is "Sir Alan Motley of Cambridge, a brainy, affable limey." In the director's workprint he is, "Sir Godwin-Lloyd Jones of Cambridge, a brainiac of a limey." From the DVD, he's not so smart as the first two, but he is, "The fastest man alive, British race car driver, George Campbell."

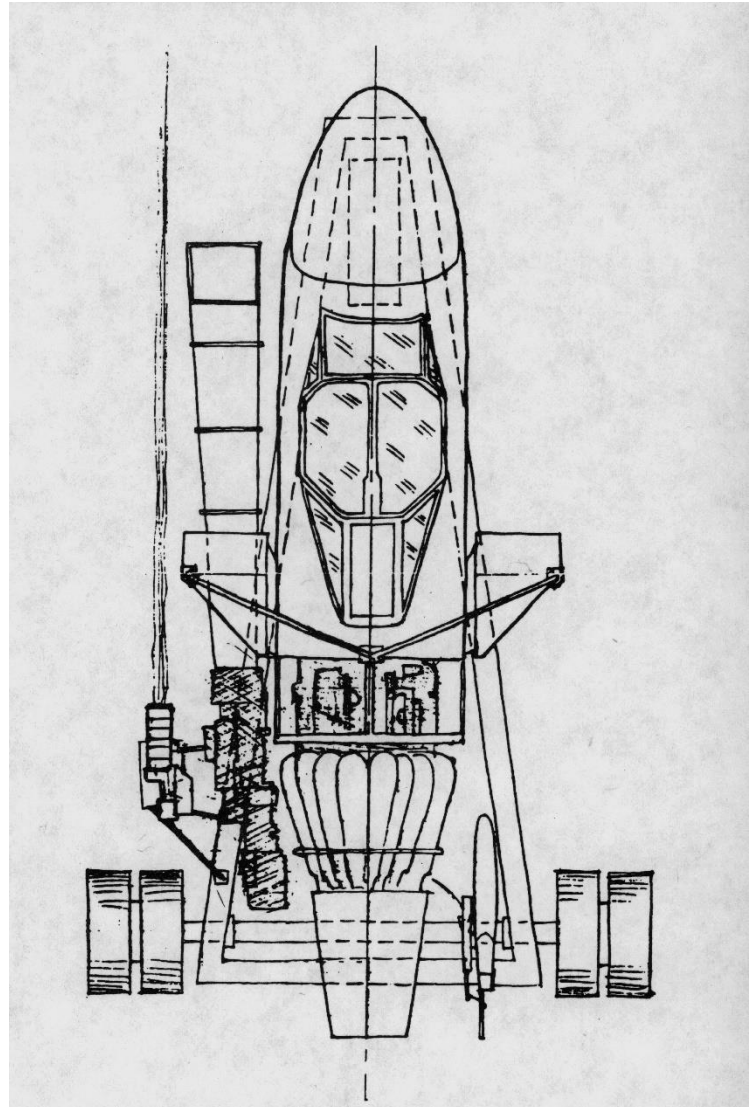
The workprint goes on to say that Lloyd-Jones was, "...co-developer with Whitehead and Lord Russell of the world's most advanced theoretical gravity catapult." Nothing on Google about "Lloyd-Jones", but "Whitehead and Russell" were real dudes. [Alfred North Whitehead](#) and [Bertrand Russell](#) co-wrote [*Principia Mathematica*](#), which, I guess, is Latin for "Mathematical Principles." I don't have any idea what a "theoretical gravity catapult" is, but those guys sound smart enough to build one.

I got zip for "Sir Alan Motley."

Things get more interesting with the name "George Campbell." [Sir Malcolm Campbell](#) was British and was the fastest man alive. He set several land and water speed records. Unfortunately, he died in 1948, so he couldn't be the co-pilot of the '50s Jet car. He did have a son, though—Donald Campbell.

[Donald Campbell](#) set his own speed records would have been in his early 30s during the '50s Jet Car era. In 1964, Donald, driving his Bluebird CN7, broke Craig Breedlove's Spirit of America* land speed record (LSR) of 407.4 mph with a top speed of 403.1 mph. Now I hear

***Editor's Note:** For more information on Craig Breedlove and the Spirit of America, read the interview with Rexford Metz on pages 5-8 of this issue.



The 1954 Jet Car. Credit: Stephen Dane



Donald Campbell: LSR by technicality. Source: Wikipedia

14 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

slower than 407 mph and think, “How could Campbell break Breedlove’s record with a slower speed?!” Well, the Federation Internationale de L’Automobile, whoever they are, initially said that because the *Spirit of America* only had three wheels, it wasn’t really a car, but later they changed their minds. *¿Comprende?* So, for a brief shining moment, Donald Campbell was the fastest man alive with a slower top speed.

Now I hear my editor, BS, saying, “Tim what does all of this have to do with *Buckaroo Banzai*??” Nothing, BS! It has nothing to do with *Buckaroo Banzai*, but it is about jet cars and it was your idea to do a special jet car issue of *World Watch One!*** But enough of that— If you feel like it, you can watch a video for the song “[Out of This World](#)” by the band [Marillion](#). It’s about the death of Donald Campbell. If you do choose to watch it, remember this—I’m not crying, YOU’RE crying.

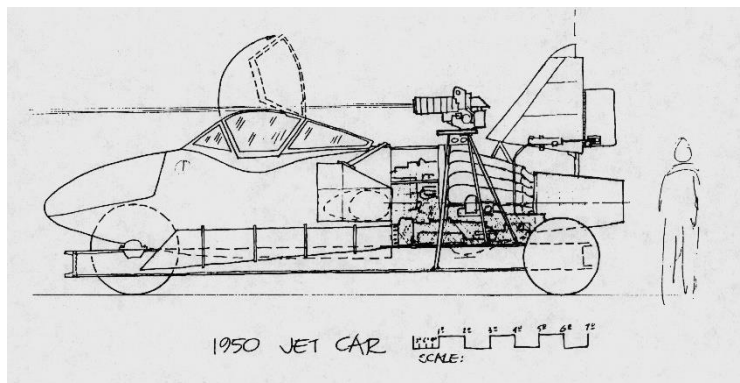
Okay, seems legit that Rauch based “George” Campbell on an amalgam of Malcolm and Donald Campbell. This character was probably the actual pilot/driver of the ‘50s Jet Car and Masado was the equivalent of a modern Weapons Systems Officer (WSO) with the gig of operating the clunky ‘50s Overthuster.

When Mac spins his yarn in different ways I cling to the *Buckaroo Banzai* novel as canon. In the novel, the ‘50s Jet Car had a cockpit that, “...might accommodate a crew of two...,” but no co-pilot is mentioned. There are also two unidentified “Caucasian men” present at the test. Maybe one of them is the co-pilot, but who’s the other dude? In 2009, Mac wrote his most recent version of the ‘50 Jet Car test. In Moonstone’s comic book *Buckaroo Banzai: A Tomb with a View*, Masado Banzai had no co-pilot and the two Caucasian men at the test were identified as physicists [Albert Einstein](#) and [Niels Bohr](#). So, now the definitive novel and most current comic book versions kinda correlate and all my “George Campbell” Googling was an M’F’ing waste of time.

Anyway, back to the cannibalized British jet fighter. When I was writing the Overthuster article (that nobody read) I remembered reading something about how the Buckaroo Banzai prop guys had built the ‘50s Jet Car out of an old British fighter and they were flabbergasted to discover that the fighter was built out of wood. I wish I wasn’t a lazy ass and included a footnote to the original source back then, because I can’t remember where I read it now. After searching “wooden jet fighters” I came up with the [de Havilland Vampire](#). The Vampire began development in 1941, but didn’t become operational

until a few months after WWII ended. It was designed to be mass produced during wartime, so it was built from “non-strategic” materials like wood. It was the front line British fighter until the early ‘50s. Later, a more modern two-seat version was used as a trainer by the Royal Air Force until the mid-60s. It was probably one of these [DH115 trainers](#) that the prop crew got their hands on. Here’s a [video of a Vampire two-seater](#). The nosecone and the cockpit look like the ‘50s Jet Car to me.

Now I hear you saying, “Tim, so what? Big deal! That info is mildly interesting, but hardly practical.” It’s practical if you’re a true fan who knows how to turn a wrench. You can actually [buy a real de Havilland Vampire](#) pretty cheap and build your own version of Masado Banzai’s Jet Car. All I ask is, if you do build one, please send photos to Big Shoulders so I can prove that someone read this article!



1950s Jet Car side view illustration by Art Director [Stephen Dane](#). Source: MGM/Universal/Banzai Institute



Final check: Dr. Sandra Banzai runs down a systems checklist with husband Dr. Masado Banzai as driver George Campbell continues his own preparations for the ill-fated test. Source: MGM/Universal/Banzai Institute.

****Editor’s Note:** Steve Mattsson was the primary instigator of jet car-themed content. Prior to that, the theme of the issue was centered around articles about the making of Blu-ray and DVD extras, which shares the spotlight later in this issue.

A Brief History of Speed and the Evolution of the Jet Car

By Dan Berger

Humans have a history of trying to make things on wheels go really, really fast. Sometimes this impulse is practical. Developing the power, efficiency, and reliability of various motor and engine technologies requires the tracking of data to measure and refine performance. With multiple technologies being developed, natural progression leans towards a less practical but equally necessary impulse of rivalry and one-upmanship. It is no surprise, then, that land speed records quickly became tethered to both impulses.

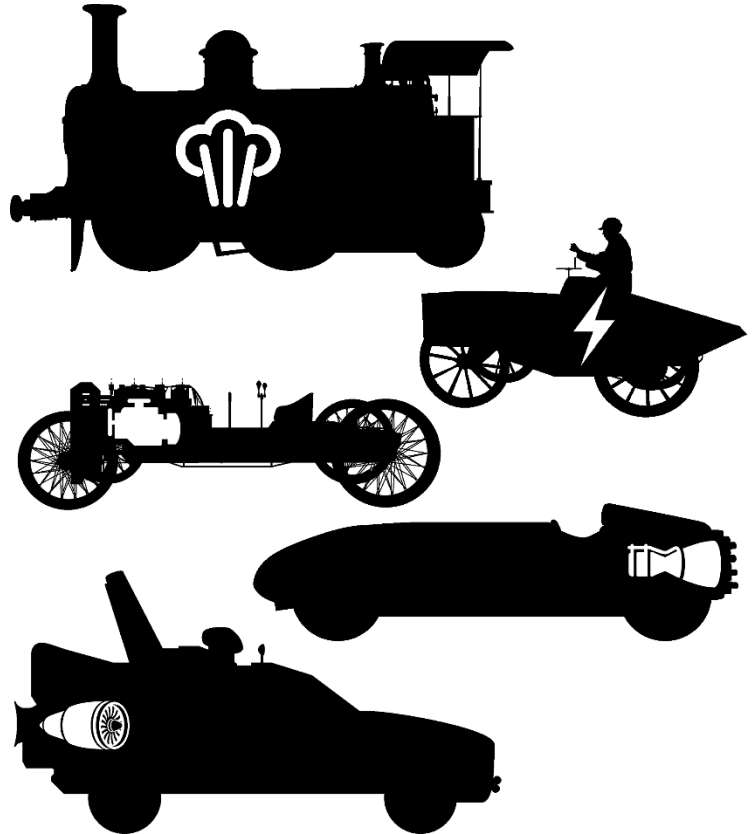
The Banzai Institute Jet Car (designation HB-88) was primarily built to serve the technical demands of the Oscillation Overthruster. In doing so, HB-88 and its predecessor, Project Sawtooth, became entangled in the larger engineering escalation of land speed records and the vehicles propelling them to ever more rarified velocities. The Banzai Institute gravity catapults of the 50s and 80s are part of an evolutionary line of vehicles, visionaries, and a grand tradition of novel technological applications, often adopted based on price-point.

The following is a not-very-exhaustive look at some of the human and technological predecessors of the vehicles that paved the way for Professor Toichi Hikita, and various members of the Banzai family, to create a viable Jet Car.

All Aboard!

We tend to think of sleek, jet propelled predators of the salt flats when it comes to land speed records. The first Kings of the Track, however, were literally that—locomotives. With steam as the dominant technology, locomotives became the first vehicles to adopt and improve upon engine technologies. Starting with the [aeolipile](#) described by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in his *De architectura, libri decem* (circa 7-15 BCE), steam engines progressed beyond their initial use driving water pumps to drain inundated mines in the late 17th century, to powering rail travel in the early 19th century. The first speed record was set by [Richard Trevithick](#)'s unnamed steam locomotive, which huffed to life on the Penydarren Ironworks tramway in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales on February, 21 1804. The top speed, nearly 5mph, left plenty of room for others to redefine the upper limits of land travel velocity.

Steam maintained its primacy in locomotive propulsion through the 1940s, topping off at 126 mph with the UK's [LNER 4468 Mallard](#) in 1938, but by then other technologies powering smaller, more nimble land crafts



Credit: Dan Berger

had long since asserted their dominance in the search for a land-speed record.

Get Your Motor Running

Electric motors were a relatively recent innovation compared to steam engines in the late-19th century. Where steam could trace its roots back to antiquity, the first experimentation leading up to the electric motor only dated back to the mid-18th century with Scottish Benedictine monk [Andrew Gordon](#)'s invention of the *electrical whirl* and *electric chimes* described in *Versuch einer Erklärung der Electricität* (Translation: Attempt to Explain Electricity), published in 1745. It wouldn't be until nearly ninety years later that English physicist [William Sturgeon](#) built the first modern electric motor in 1832, followed by Vermont blacksmith [Thomas Davenport](#)'s battery-operated motor used to power a car in 1834.

The batteries of the 1830s were one-shot affairs with very limited lifespans, unsuitable for the energy demands of faster or longer distance travel. This limitation was finally overcome by French physicist [Gaston Planté](#)'s rechargeable lead-acid battery in 1859, a key technological development allowing the motor to go mobile in practical terms.

By the late-19th century, motorized road-vehicles were ready to join the quest for speed, beginning with French



Le Comte Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat. With a mustache like that, a speed record was inevitable. Source: Unknown

aristocrat and race car driver [Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat](#)'s winning of *La France Automobile* magazine's fastest car competition on December 18, 1898. De Chasseloup-Laubat coaxed his [Jeantaud](#) electric automobile to a record-setting 39.24 mph, still a long way off from the 82 mph speed record set by [Bristol and Exeter Railway 4-2-4T locomotives](#) in 1854. The [records for electric automobiles](#) escalated quickly, from just short of 40 mph in 1898 to over 65 mph in 1899, dominated by de Chasseloup-Laubat and Belgian race car driver [Camille Jenatzy](#).

With most of the records being set in France, often by French drivers, it is only natural that the premiere arbiter of automobile land speed records would fall under the auspices of a French institution. So it was that, in 1902, the [Automobile Club de France](#) (ACF) declared itself the official keeper of land speed records, an authority that became the provenance of the [Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile](#) (FIA) in 1904, sort of. Automobile clubs popped up around the world, and none of them would necessarily recognize the standards for record keeping devised by others until the FIA standardized the rules in 1924.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Engines!

Steam managed to grab one automobile land speed record from the electric vehicles dominating the field on April 13, 1902 with the [Gardner-Serpollet Œuf de Pâques](#) (or *Easter Egg* in English), driven by French engineer and co-owner of the company, [Léon Serpollet](#). Topping the record with an impressive 75.06mph, Serpollet proved that there was still room for steam engine

innovation with his [flash boiler](#) design, but it was a short-lived victory arriving on the cusp of a new technology that would dominate engine manufacturing for generations to come.

Like the electric motor, the roots of the [internal combustion engine](#) were recent compared to those of steam, starting with the invention of the [gas turbine](#) by English inventor [John Barber](#) in 1791. From there, a varied list of scientists and engineers contributed to the evolution leading to the [two-stroke gasoline engine](#) developed by German automotive engineer [Karl Benz](#) in 1879. This led to the rise of the *Benz & Compagnie Rheinische Gasmotoren-Fabrik* and the [Benz Patent-Motorwagen](#), the world's first commercially available automobile, in 1888.*

Fossil fuels were a game-changer in the quest for speed. Inexpensive, abundant, and possessing tremendous energy potential by weight, petrol could do things that electricity and steam only aspired to achieve in terms of delivering maximum power for minimum additional mass. The internal combustion engine set the standard for fastest automobiles on land for decades to come, starting with noted American heir, philanthropist, businessman, and horsebreeder [William Kissam Vanderbilt's](#) record-setting 76.03 mph run at Ablis, France in a [Mors](#) Z Paris-Vienne on August 5, 1902. By 1903, automobiles topped steam trains as the fastest things on wheels. By 1926, they had nearly doubled the upper range for steam locomotives. The Modern Age of land speed records had begun.

Look, Up in the Sky!

Running in close parallel with the ascent of the internal combustion engine was the race to create a piloted

*It is noteworthy that Karl's wife, [Bertha Benz](#), made significant contributions to automotive invention of her own. On August 5, 1888, unbeknownst to her husband and without permission from legal authorities, Bertha made the world's first cross-country automobile journey with the Benz children, Richard and Eugen, to visit her mother in [Pforzheim](#), Germany. Bertha's larger designs behind the journey were to raise awareness of the Benz Patent-Motorwagen by generating publicity and to demonstrate the vehicle's utility to the general public. Several technical issues developed along the journey, including the failure of the vehicle's wooden brakes. Bertha addressed the problem by visiting a cobbler and installing leather linings on the contact points, thus inventing the world's first set of automotive brake pads. She also recommended the addition of a third gear to the Benz Patent-Motorwagen for driving up inclines after her children were repeatedly forced to get out and push the vehicle uphill along their journey. The [Bertha Benz Memorial Route](#) following her travels was established in 2008 to memorialize this momentous occasion.

heavier-than-air aircraft. It is apropos that, four weeks before [Henry Ford](#) tied the then current land speed record of 84.73 mph (in New Baltimore, Michigan on January 12, 1904), brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright became “[First in Flight](#)” above the sands of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on December 17, 1903...both vehicles powered by internal combustion engines.

Unpiloted heavier-than-air flight had been around since the Chinese introduction of the rocket-propelled [fire arrow](#) to Song dynasty warfare in the 10th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, the works of [Jules Verne](#) and [H. G. Wells](#) redirected military applications of the technology in a more aspirational avenue, towards the unexplored reaches of space. In addition to Ford and the Wright brothers, [Konstantin Tsiolkovsky](#) was making waves of his own with his book, *The Exploration of Cosmic Space by Means of Reaction Devices*. Inspired by the fiction of Verne and the [Russian cosmism](#) movement, Tsiolkovsky mapped out the first serious theoretical explorations of the forces necessary to thwart gravity and send machines into space. The book’s two most important contributions were the application of an equation defining the propulsive forces necessary for space travel (named the [Tsiolkovsky rocket equation](#) in his honor), and advocating for the use of liquid hydrogen and oxygen as a propellant.

While the most remembered contributions to rocketry aimed heavenwards, three men directed their efforts towards a more terrestrial application, with [Fritz von Opel](#) at the epicenter of the affair. Von Opel was the grandson of [Adam Opel](#), founder of the [Opel](#) automobile manufacturing company. After receiving his doctorate from [Technische Universität Darmstadt](#), von Opel was hired into the family business as Director of Testing and also put in charge of publicity. With rocketry capturing the public imagination through books such as *The Advance into Space* by Austrian freelance science writer [Max Valier](#), von Opel became intrigued with the idea of using rocket propelled vehicles for publicity stunts. Von Opel approached Valier for advice on a rocket vehicle program. Valier, in turn, approached German pyrotechnics engineer and manufacturer [Friedrich Wilhelm Sander](#) about supplying rockets for various vehicles.

The resulting series of five vehicles were a combination of rocketry experimentation, publicity grandstanding, and high speed daring-do called [Opel-RAK](#). The first to roll into the spotlight was a rocket car with the uninspired moniker Opel-RAK.1, driven by German race driver and regular Opel test driver Kurt C. Volkhart. On March 15, 1928, Volkhart stepped into the car and became the first man to ride a controlled explosion in a wheeled vehicle, to the tune of 47 mph. Not very



“[Rocket Fritz](#)” von Opel mugs for the cameras during the demonstration of his Opel RAK.2 rocket car in 1928. Source: [silodrome.com](#)

impressive by record-setting standards, but the stunt did the trick. Opel-RAK.1 became the first rocket propelled car in history, and people took notice.

The next rocket car, Opel-RAK.2, benefitted from the initial test of Opel-RAK.1 and didn’t hold anything back. This rocket car was one of the first to employ inverted wings to produce downforces for additional stability, and it was driven by none other than Fritz von Opel himself. Von Opel also made sure to have a [motion picture](#) camera crew in attendance to capture the event for posterity. The twenty-four rockets powering the vehicle roared to life on May 23, 1928, propelling von Opel to an impressive 143 mph and earning him the moniker “[Rocket Fritz](#)” ever afterwards. Opel-RAK.2 wasn’t as fast as the more conventional [Sunbeam 1000 HP Mystery](#) behind the current speed record of 203.79mph set in 1927, but it didn’t matter. Rockets meant “the future,” Fritz was more than fast enough, and the stunt put Opel into the minds of potential car buyers. Von Opel’s feat of technological theatre was a success.

Two more wheeled vehicles appeared in the program, Opel-RAK.3 and the inexplicably Romanized Opel-RAK.IV. Both vehicles were designed to ride on rails rather than roads. Opel-RAK.3 zoomed to a speed quoted variously as either 158 or 180 mph on its first run before jumping the tracks and crashing on its second attempt. Opel-RAK.IV failed spectacularly when one of the solid rockets fell on the track and detonated the rest, prompting Railway authorities to forbid further tests.

A rocket-powered [Opel-RAK.1](#) aircraft, piloted von Opel, followed on September 30, 1929—the first vehicle of its kind and a fitting end to an Opel-RAK program filled with rocketry firsts. As the years passed, Rocket Fritz

and his contributions to rocketry faded into the footnotes of history, but they made a lasting impression on one person in particular—a brilliant Italian teenager with a passion for fast cars and physics named Emilio Lizardo.

Hitting Their Heads Against the Wall

The 1930s were not kind to Quantum Theory. The field had burst onto the physics scene in 1900 with the introduction of the discipline's basic ideas according to German theoretical physicist [Max Planck](#), who won a Nobel Prize for Physics in 1918 for his ongoing work. By 1938, Quantum Field Theory was mired in a decades-long quagmire of erroneous theoretical formulations producing infinite energies.



Max Planck, father of Quantum Theory, also sported a bitchin' mustache. Source: [University of Oregon](#)

Onto this field of play stepped Japanese particle physicist Dr. Toichi Hikita and Milanese [gauge theorist](#) Dr. Emilio Lizardo. The details of their tragic Princeton experiment in the Fall of 1938 need no introduction here, but it is worth noting how and why the developments in technology already discussed in this article manifested on the day Dr. Lizardo sent himself hurtling at a wall and into history's ledger of failures.

Given the controlled nature of the experiment and the limitations of both the facilities and technologies at

hand, it is clear that the gravity catapult of choice would travel on a rail to provide maximum control over the vector of travel. The demise of von Opel's rocket rail car must have left an impression on Lizardo, as would the confines of the Princeton lab housing the experiment and the carbon monoxide making an internal combustion engine unsuitable for propulsion. This naturally led to the adoption of an electric motor to power the vehicle hurling Lizardo half way through a wall and into the clutches of Lord John Whorfin. Sadly, the docudrama *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* does not provide an explanation behind the failure, implying instead that at least part of the blame fell to Lizardo's exuberance in rushing into an only partially-ready experiment. However, future events seem to point to at least one other culprit—a major deficit in velocity.

Jet Setting

Velocity was still on the minds of land speed enthusiasts in the 1930s and aviation, in its own way, was at the center of the action. [Ernest Eldridge's](#) July 12, 1924 record of 145.89 mph set the tone of the next several decades as he drove his [Fiat Mephistopheles](#) into the history books with a [Fiat A.12](#) airplane engine under the hood. By the end of 1935, the record had changed hands sixteen times and broken the 300 mph barrier, all with airplane engines as the key component to success. These were engines of the internal combustion variety, but a new option was about to present itself.

1935 also heralded the appearance of the [Heinkel He 178](#) turbo jet airplane, the first of its kind and, like internal combustion technology, owing a debt to John Barber's 18th century work with gas turbines. Jet technology mostly remained experimental throughout the 1940s, thus keeping jets out of World War II in any meaningful way. It wouldn't be until the allies captured the more technologically advanced but metallurgically primitive German jet technology that jet engines finally began their rapid progression as a dominant aerospace technology in the 1950s.

So rapid was the development of jet technology that, by 1954, the vintage 1941 British de Havilland Vampire fighter jet Tim Boo Ba mentions earlier in this issue was already lurking in the obsolescence Nirvana of military surplus.** Both the Vampire and its engine, the equally dated [de Havilland Goblin](#) turbo jet, would have presented a real bargain for Toichi Hikita and Masado Banzai's Overthrust experiment, along with a much needed upgrade in speed. Readers are already familiar with the tragic results of that 1954 Oscillation

Editor's Note: You should totally read Tim's article, "Project Sawtooth," on pages 11-12. For all of our sakes.



A formation of de Havilland Vampires soars above the sands of Egypt in 1952, just two years before the Banzai family tragedy of the 1954 Jet Car test. Source: The collections of the [Imperial War Museums](#)

Overthrust test, so we will not dwell upon it here, but it is safe to say that the homespun nature of the 1954 jet car most likely grew out of budgetary limitations imposed on a very niche instance of scientific inquiry.

Both speed and price-point were definitely a concern for Craig Breedlove and [his land speed aspirations](#). Breedlove entered the land speed chase in the early 1960s, more or less as a California fireman with a dream of being the fastest man on Earth, in whatever vehicle he could afford on his own dime. He initially planned on using a large internal combustion airplane engine like other record holders before him, but soon discovered that demand was high, driving the prices well beyond his budget. It turned out that surplus jet engines were significantly less expensive, and potentially much faster with the right chassis design.

One [General Electric J47](#) turbojet and a couple of years of expert engineering and testing advice later, Breedlove made a first unsuccessful record attempt in 1962. One year and some redesigning after that, Breedlove nearly took his now updated *Spirit of America* into the record books, except for a technicality, when his August 5, 1963 trials on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats clocked a head-spinning 407.447 mph. Sadly, the vehicle's radical three-wheel design did not conform to the FIA's four-wheeled specifications. Neither did *Spirit's* non-wheel steering design, thus placing the vehicle temporarily in a class of its own. The oversight was corrected when the *Spirit of America's* design was later ratified by the [FIM](#) and the record confirmed, technically making Breedlove's "jet car" the fastest motorcycle in history.

Change was once again in the air. Almost overnight, cars powered by jets became the reigning technology in the quest for speed. By the time of HB-88's famous trip through the mountain, the new upper limit had been set by American driver [Gary Gabelich](#) racing to a colossal 630.478 mph in his [Blue Flame](#) on October 23, 1970. Eleven years later, HB-88 would break the sound barrier of 767.29 mph on June 11, 1981 in pursuit of a very different volume of the history books, and using the same ethos as Breedlove's pragmatic and homespun engineering practices. Sadly, being a one way trip, Buckaroo's historic ride would not pass muster with the FIA. In order to qualify, a vehicle must make two runs, in opposite directions through a "measured mile," to cancel out the effects of headwinds and tailwinds on a car's performance.

Almost forty years have passed since Buckaroo and Team Banzai's fateful trip through the mountain. The current LSR record holder, British RAF Pilot [Andy Green](#), has not seen his record of 760.343 mph touched since he drove the [ThrustSSC](#) to that dizzying pinnacle on October 15, 1997, but plans have been in the works since 2008 to unleash an even more astonishing [Bloodhound LSR](#) capable of topping out at 1000 mph. The *Bloodhound* has yet to make good on that lofty promise, but [with testing of the vehicle well under way](#), it's safe to say that the evolution of the jet car is far from over, and likely to continue for many years to come.



Keeping the Flame alive: Looking very much like a cousin of the *Spirit of America* (Top), *The Blue Flame* (Bottom) was the sole contributor to the 1970's LSR successes. Sources: Top-National Archives, Bottom: [Wikipedia](#)

Skirmish on the Salt Flats:

Jet Car Special Insert

By Dan Berger

It's August 6, 1963. Warm summer winds ruffle the hair of a fourteen year old boy pouring over a newspaper headline for the third time that morning, soaking in the news as he reads about the most amazing thing to happen since John Glenn sailed around the earth the year before. Craig Breedlove has done it. After almost sixteen years, [John Cobb's](#) September 16, 1947 record of 394.196 mph has fallen to a jet car that looks like something out of a Flash Gordon serial. Craig Breedlove has set a new land speed record of 407.447 mph on August 5, 1963.

Technically, Breedlove's record isn't official. Land Speed Records (LSR) are certified by the [Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile](#) (FIA). With only three wheels and a highly unusual steering system, Breedlove's [Spirit of America](#) doesn't exactly conform to the stodgy old organization's definition of a "car." It doesn't matter to the boy. As far as he's concerned, Breedlove is the fastest man alive, and drives the coolest car ever built.



The boy couldn't know it yet but the Jet Car Era was dawning, and a contest to determine the next stages of the LSR along with it. A drama was about to unfold on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah spanning several years, ushering in a unique chapter in the history of motorsports.

Legions of young men and women weren't the only ones keeping an eye on Breedlove's adventures in the *Spirit of America*. [Art](#) and [Walt](#) Arfons were a pair of mechanically inclined brothers living in rural Ohio near Akron. Both men grew up teaching themselves how to turn whatever junk they could find into dragsters. Their collective efforts were good enough to win races, and prize money, resulting in a series of vehicles called the *Green Monster*. The words "Green Monster" would loom large among fans of the LSR in the years to follow.

Art and Walt eventually had a falling out and decided to each independently design their own vehicles in pursuit of the LSR. Walt joined forces with engineer and driver [Tom Green](#), secured sponsorship from Goodyear (who also happened to be sponsoring Craig Breedlove at the time), and set to building their jet powered [Wingfoot Express](#). On October 2, 1964, with daylight failing and no time to refuel, Green took the *Wingfoot* on its



Source: [FIA](#)

required second run to validate an LSR attempt. The vehicle zoomed to an impressive 420.07 mph and, when averaged with the 406 mph first run, received an official 413.199 mph speed record at Bonneville. But it was about to have company.



The very next day, Art Arfons arrived on the Bonneville Salt Flats with his jet car in tow, dubbed the [Green Monster](#) in keeping with the long line of more conventional dragsters preceding it. Fitted with the same classified [General Electric J79](#) jet engine used to power [Lockheed F-104 Starfighters](#), Arfons took his *Monster* through its paces for two days until he was comfortable enough to make an LSR attempt. Walt was arriving back in Ohio with his team on October 5 when the news came that brother Art had already smashed his record, a mere three days after setting it, by taking the *Green Monster* to a record 434.022 mph without the afterburners. Two days later, on October 7, Art Arfons was back on the flats attempting to break the 500 mph barrier when his right rear tire exploded, damaging the vehicle. Arfons returned home from Utah in a mixture of triumph and defeat with a new record and a car in need of repair, ready to plot his next move.



Meanwhile, Craig Breedlove was ready to reclaim the title of "Fastest Man Alive"—FIA rules be damned—in the *Spirit of America*. His old reliable General Electric J47 jet engine was no match for Arfons' J79, but the aerodynamics of Breedlove's vehicle were far superior to those of the *Green Monster*. Aiming for 500 mph and

chomping at the bit to get there, Breedlove spent two days of trials at Bonneville before taking the *Spirit* up to a record-breaking run of 468.719 mph on October 13, just a hair over a week after Arfons' record-setter. Two days later, he was ready to break the 500 mph mark, but it wasn't the only thing he was destined to break that day.



On October 15, 1964, Breedlove drove the *Spirit of America* up to a stellar 513 mph for his first run through the measured mile. Less than an hour later, the car was ready for its return run. The vehicle entered its return trip through the measured mile at 500 mph when something in the suspension broke. Breedlove did his best to maintain control and keep the pedal down to finish the run, but immediately afterwards both of his parachutes failed. Unable to employ the breaks at speeds over 150 mph, Breedlove careened off the course and continued for five miles at breakneck speed before hitting a telegraph pole, jumping a levee, and crashing into a drainage ditch. Miraculously, Breedlove was unhurt and able to exit the vehicle unassisted, saying, "And now for my next trick, I'll light myself on fire."

This wasn't the only trick he pulled off that day. Breedlove had managed to hold it together long enough to drive the record up to a stunning 526.277 mph, the fourth time the record had been broken in two weeks. It was not to be the last.



"And now for my next trick..." Craig Breedlove (L) laughs off a brush with death after the October 15, 1964 crash capping his 526 mph record. Source: National Archives

Art Arfons, not content to play second fiddle to anyone, patched up his *Green Monster* and carted it fifteen hundred miles back out to Bonneville as rains threatened to make the salt flats undrivable. Fortunately for him, the weather and his luck held out long enough to make the final statement in the record books for 1964 as he edged the *Monster* past Breedlove's twelve-day-old record to a rarified 536.710 mph on October 27. Breedlove heard the news as he gave a press conference about his own record from October 15. With both the *Spirit of America* and his record in ruins, it was time to start making plans for next year.



It's the middle of October, 1965. The boy is now sixteen and dividing his time between homework, chores, and a 1955 Ford Thunderbird in desperate need of attention. With his academics well in hand, the boy washes the supper dishes and steals out to the garage to see if he can coax new life into the comatose vehicle. It seemed like a bargain at the time, but wisdom fills him with each new mechanical travesty as he learns, first hand, the difference between how things appear and how they are. His ears perk up as the radio announcer mentions Bonneville. The rivalry between Breedlove, Arfons, and Arfons is heating up once again. After the excitement of 1964's LSR madhouse, how much more insane could things become this year?

Walt Arfons was, by far, the challenger with the craziest plan in 1965. Taking a page from Fritz von Opel's rocket cars of the 1920s, Walt radically redesigned the *Wingfoot Express 2* for the new season, with solid rockets providing thrust for the vehicle. The car was built heavier with the expectation that the rockets might take it supersonic, but the weight was a drag on the vehicle's acceleration. On October 19, 1965, after a disappointing test run, Arfons added ten more rockets to the car and sent driver Bobbie Tatroe out for another go at the record. Suddenly, some of the explosive caps used to cut loose the rockets in case of emergency detonated, damaging the car and ending the vehicle's run. Tatroe was not seriously hurt, but Team Wingfoot was officially out of the race.

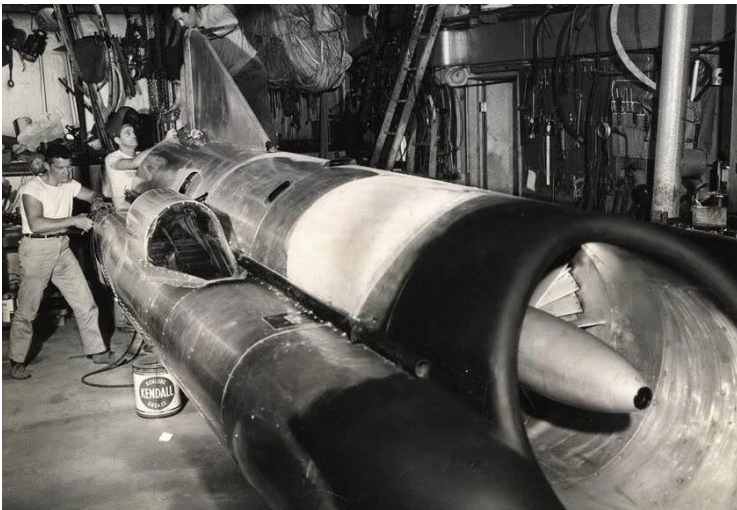


Breedlove, now free to completely redesign *Spirit of America*, made some much needed changes as well. His [*Spirit of America Sonic 1*](#) replaced the original's three

wheel configuration with an FIA compliant four wheel design and conventional steering. The crash of 1964 did not go unaddressed. A much improved braking system was added to the car, as was a J79 jet engine upgrade to match the *Green Monster's*.

As Team Wingfoot bowed out, Team Sonic 1 revved up at Bonneville. It performed so well with the first use of its afterburner that the nose of the car began to pull away from the ground and essentially fly, negating the new steering system entirely and threatening to send *Sonic 1* to the same crash site as its predecessor. Fortunately, the parachutes held, and the car was adjusted accordingly to address the problem. On November 2, 1965, *Spirit of America Sonic 1* took to the salt flats once more. It still wanted to inch its nose heavenwards even after the modifications, but managed to remain stable enough to leave the previous record in the dust, clocking in at 555.485 mph and setting Art Arfons up for his next leg of the competition.

555.485 mph



The Man and his Monster: Art Arfons brings the Green Monster to life in his Ohio garage. Source: [Petersen Automotive Museum](#)

Arfons was back in Bonneville with the *Green Monster* less than a week after Breedlove's latest triumph. On November 7, the day after arriving on the salt flats, Arfons took the *Monster* on a practice run good enough to set him up for another possible record, and he was of a mind to see it through. Less than an hour later the car was fired up and raced back the way it had come for its second run when the *Green Monster* once again suffered a tire blow-out, nearly losing both parachutes in the process. It was another frustrating moment for Arfons, but it was mixed with triumph. Despite the malfunction, the *Green Monster* had managed to clock in an average

speed of 576.553 mph between the two runs, taking the record back only five days after it had been set. Breedlove received the news shortly before his appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. It's a fair bet that he was not very happy to hear it.

576.553 mph

It was back to Bonneville once again for Breedlove and *Spirit of America Sonic 1*, still possessing a tendency to want to fly through the air as much as across the salt flats. With the season headed towards rain, Breedlove waited impatiently as the Firestone tire company finished its previously booked time on the testing range. Fortunately, worsening weather conditions gave way to better conditions on November 15, 1965, long enough for Breedlove to squeeze in one last go at the record before the end of the year. What followed was a paradigm-breaking 600.601 mph land speed record that propelled Breedlove into the FIA record books and history books as [the first person to surpass the 400, 500, and 600 mph marks](#) in a land vehicle; an amazing accomplishment in its own right. Art Arfons would return the next year to make another attempt at the record, but the resulting crash would nearly kill Arfons and mark an end to the LSR one-upmanship of the 1960s, with Craig Breedlove as the undisputed victor.

600.601 mph

It's Thanksgiving Day, 1965. The enthusiasm of the latest Battle for Bonneville still fills the boy—really more a young man now—with even greater purpose regarding his old, tired Thunderbird, only now it doesn't sound so tired any more. His mother's family won't arrive for another hour, allowing him time to savor a victory of man over machine in happy solitude as the ignition key turns and the engine roars to life for the first time in years. "What would it take to mount a jet engine to the back and still be street legal?" he wonders. The thought scatters as a familiar voice cuts through the sound of the engine, calling him back to the house. Company will be over soon, and it's time for Buckaroo to clean up.

The author wishes to acknowledge this article's debt to an excellent short documentary called [The Battle of Bonneville](#) created by the fellows at the [Scarf and Goggles blog](#).

A very special thanks to the [Petersen Automotive Museum](#) in Los Angeles, CA for taking the time to provide us with some amazing photos of the *Green Monster*. So Cal BBIs should make a point of seeing the *Green Monster* for themselves.

Skirmish on the Salt Flats: LSR Timeline

Spirit of America 8/5/63 407.447 mph



Wingfoot Express 10/2/64 413.199 mph



Green Monster 10/5/64 434.022 mph



Spirit of America 10/13/64 468.719 mph



Spirit of America 10/15/64 526.277 mph



Green Monster 10/27/64 536.710 mph



Wingfoot Express 2 10/19/65

DNF



Spirit of America Sonic 1 11/2/65 555.485 mph



Green Monster 11/7/65 576.553 mph



Spirit of America Sonic 1 11/15/65 600.601 mph



INTERVIEW: Dave Winfield

Cut & Fold Designer

By Steve Mattsson

Dave Winfield is a graphic artist who designs amazing miniature paper models. These are vehicles that have special significance to him; custom cars that he has seen, movie and TV vehicles, and his favorite toys. He has also created some models that will be of interest to readers of *World Watch One*. All are simplified one-sheet paper models and all are (mostly) easy to build. They are available for free download at Dave's Card Creations.

Steve Mattsson: Dave, please tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Dave Winfield: I'm an ex-Brit and now live in southern Ontario, Canada. I've been a graphic artist all my life. I'm an ex-auto mechanic, built hot rods, and was a custom painter (airbrusher) for 15 years. I got into model building about 20 years ago as a hobby. I am a self taught digital artist and work mainly in CorelDraw. I eventually started designing my own models to help pay for the hobby and I sell them in an online store, www.papermodelshop.com. I started designing small models for myself. It is a personal challenge to create simplified models using as few parts as possible (everything must fit onto one letter sheet.) I started sharing these Koolwheelz models because of interest from within the modeling community. It turns out they also work well as bait to get people to my websites. What started out as a handful of personal projects, is now about 200 models and accessories and growing every day!

SM: How do you choose subjects for your models? I would assume that rectilinear designs work better for paper models...

DW: The subject doesn't matter, but since paper will only bend in one direction, I have to design with all angular surfaces (no real curves). And I intentionally over-simplify shapes because of scale and the desired simplicity of a Koolwheelz design.

SM: I see that many of the designs in your collection are of vehicles important to nerd culture...

DW: Me? Nerd? I grew up on *Star Trek* and *Thunderbirds*. I love sci-fi and superhero movies. I'm a big fan of Batman and Superman, although I was never really a comic book reader.

SM: Someone on your forum requested that you do the Jet Car from *Buckaroo Banzai* and you responded that you were a fan of the movie. Tell us what you liked about the film.



From 2D to 3D, through the 8D: You too can build your very own paper model of the Jet Car, thanks to the ingenuity of graphic artist **Dave Winfield**. Source: Dave Winfield

DW: When the topic of *Buckaroo Banzai* came up, I remembered seeing the movie years ago and got very excited...and rushed to the internet to see if I could watch it again. It's one of the few sci-fi films I don't already have a copy of. My mind was mainly flooded with memories of Ellen Barkin, whom I fell in love with after seeing this film. I didn't remember much else about the film, other than the fact that many well known "stars" were in it. So watching it again 30+ years later was a totally new experience. After that, designing the Jet Car and then the Tour Bus was a no brainer.

SM: It looks like the Hong Kong Cavaliers' Tour Bus was an easier design for you to create and would be easier for interested Blue Blaze Irregulars to build. Do you recommend starting with the bus before trying to build the Jet Car?



Get on the bus! World Watch One. Source: Dave Winfield

DW: Yes, the Bus is very simple construction and I always recommend some of my easy Koolwheelz models to beginners. I don't think the Jet Car is that complicated, but there are definitely a lot more parts and assemblies to deal with. The Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour Bus is also a simple build.

SM: There are some articles in this issue of *World Watch One* about the history of land speed records. Tell us about your Land Speederz collection.

DW: I've always followed land speed records and was interested in the British Bloodhound project back in 2015—so much so that I had to create the model of it. At the same time, I rediscovered an old Budweiser advert in my memorabilia collection that featured the Bud Rocket Car. Those two models spawned an entire series of land speed record models.

SM: Could you walk us through the process from the idea for a new vehicle to the finished model sheet?

DW: I don't use 3D, CAD, or digital modeling software. I design mainly in my mind...I envision a structure, then envision an assembly part, then imagine the unfolded part as a 2D paper thing. Then I create that unfolded part in CorelDraw...using a lot of art skills, math, and measuring. If it passes a test build, I continue with more parts and more assemblies until I create an entire model. I will often start with my own multi-angle "blueprint" of a vehicle to work from. I'll create it with the finished boxy paper construction in mind, that way I can work out all the dimensions. I usually don't do the colouring, texturing and artwork until the end, but sometimes it's part of the design process.

SM: You sell your more complex military models at papermodelshop.com, but how can *Buckaroo Banzai* fans show their appreciation for your free Jet Car and Tour Bus models?

DW: To help me keep the websites afloat and the free models available, I am happy to accept donations [through my PayPal account](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpapermodelshop.com).

SM: I see you use the handle "airdave" online. We would like to initiate you into our ranks as Blue Blaze Irregular airdave—any objections?

DW: Nickname from my airbrushing days...sounds good! Oscillation Overthrust baby!



On the scent of the LSR: In addition to vehicles from film and television, Winfield has created a series of models for land speed record-holding vehicles, like the Bloodhound SSC above. Source: Dave Winfield



Source: Dave Winfield

Find Dave's science fiction vehicle collection, including Buckaroo's Jet Car and The HKC's Tour Bus, [here](http://papermodelshop.com).

Find Dave's Land Speed Record Vehicles [here](http://papermodelshop.com).

For more information about Malcolm and George Campbell read Tim Monro's "Project Sawtooth" article in this issue.

For more info about Craig Breedlove read Steve Mattsson's interview with Rex Metz and Dan Berger's article, "Skirmish on the Slat Flats" in this issue.

Superman in the Eighth Dimension?

By Scott Tate

History tells us that Prof. Hikita and Dr. Emilio Lizardo conducted a partial breach of the Eighth Dimension in 1938, and that Buckaroo Banzai fully accomplished the feat more than four decades later. But in between, Superman may also have done so in 1958.

In *The Adventures of Superman* episode “The Mysterious Cube” (S06E04, originally aired February 24, 1958), criminal Paul Barton (Bruce Wendell) has the perfect hiding place within the interior of, well, a mysterious cube—a large, featureless, completely sealed structure with rooms and supplies inside, somewhat like a bomb shelter. Barton has been living comfortably inside the cube for seven years. No one can arrest him or even technically prove he’s in there. Not even Superman’s mighty strength or X-ray vision can penetrate the cube.[†] Enough time has passed that Barton’s brother and accomplice Steve (Keith Richards[‡]) can initiate proceedings to have him declared legally dead, thereby sidestepping all pending charges against him. He’ll soon be able to exit the cube with impunity.

Seeking a solution, Superman ([George Reeves](#)) turns to his scientist friend Prof. Lucerne Ω ([Everett Glass](#)).

Lucerne had been introduced in the episode from one week earlier, “Divide and Conquer,” S06E03), where he coached Superman on the development of a new power, the ability to divide himself into two individuals existing in multiple locations at once. That was accomplished by focusing “an extraordinary concentration of will power” so that Superman “can expand [his] atomic structure by driving the molecules farther apart, then separate them.”

Now Superman turns to Lucerne again to help him penetrate the cube, and the elderly scientist offers similar advice about how Superman might “rearrange the molecules of your own body” through “an extraordinary degree of concentration and will.” But in this case the alteration of molecular density would be guided towards a different result: “You mean that I might be able to just pass through a wall?” Superman asks. And in short order, he masters the ability.

[†] How such an impressive feat of engineering came to be constructed in the first place is, frustratingly, only briefly and vaguely glossed over.

[‡] No, not that Keith Richards.

Ω The spelling of the professor’s name is a matter of dispute. Some sources, such as IMDb.com, list it as LaSerne. We’ve chosen to go with Lucerne, which is consistent with the subtitles on the 2006 Warner Home Video DVD.



Man of Molecular Density? Superman learns a way to pass through solid matter in **The Mysterious Cube**. Source: [Warner Home Video](#)

Did Superman step through the Eighth Dimension? If there’s one person who could do so without an Oscillation Overthruster, it’s Superman. The result seems similar, and the concept of the empty space between atoms is similar in principle to Buckaroo’s remarks at the press conference after his own incident: “See this rock? It’s solid matter, right? But in point of fact, the solid parts of this rock, the neutrons, quarks, protons, and electrons comprise only about one quadrillionth of its total volume.”

On the other hand, it’s possible Superman passed through some dimension other than the Eighth[∞]. The means were operationally different, and there’s no indication of the story of Superman having encountered any other Lectroids or other life forms therein. Of course, the true details may have been simplified for televised fictionalization, much as aspects were for *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*.

Despite their effectiveness, neither of Superman’s newfound abilities were ever mentioned again. Bits of dialog suggest that Superman may have turned to Prof. Lucerne for further mentorship on other unseen occasions, but as far as screen time goes viewers never saw him again for the remainder of the series. It just goes to show...I don’t care if you walked through a wall in Metropolis. When you play my joint, you’re just another act.

[∞] We don’t actually have a relevant footnote for this item, but did you know that Tim Monroe wrote an article in this issue? You didn’t? You should totally double back and read it! See “Project Sawtooth” on pages 13-14 of this issue.

Also, we are totally interested in photos from anyone building a replica of the 1954 Jet Car.

INTERVIEW: Mike and Denise Okuda
Of Quarantines and Counterfactuals
By Dan Berger

In July of 2020, *World Watch One* had the good fortune to interview *Buckaroo Banzai* uberfans Mike and Denise Okuda, of *Star Trek* art department fame, about their involvement in the attempt to bring [a *Buckaroo Banzai* series to television](#) in 1998. The Okudas were extremely generous with their time and experiences, and the conversation covered a wide range of topics. Of particular interest was a discussion of their work on the alternate history television series, *For All Mankind*. The show chronicles a very different end to the 1960s when Soviet Russia reaches the moon first and the Space Race steers history in surprising new directions.

At the time of our interview in July 2020, COVID-19 was beginning to surge once again in the state of California. Our conversation naturally turned to the pandemic's effect on the Hollywood machine.

Dan Berger: How has California been holding up to the pandemic, especially the entertainment industry?

Mike Okuda: California has been trying to open up but it's a slower process than anybody thought. For one thing, the numbers are still up. Los Angeles is still definitely a hot spot. Theoretically, film production has opened back up, but production is a complicated thing. There are so many individual crafts and jobs and tasks – how do you reinterpret those tasks to be as safe as possible when you have situations like make-up artists in people's faces? For example, our job would be to sit very close to the director, watching over his or her shoulder, whispering to the script supervisor, and running whatever info the actors need onto the set. How do we interpret our jobs so that we're protecting ourselves and the people that we work with?

A couple of weeks ago we attended a meeting by Zoom of our union and they were telling us all not what we would be doing, but the way they're trying to figure out what to do. It is just incredibly complicated. I'm glad they're smarter than I am.

DB: Has the shutdown totally disrupted the seasonal nature of television production?

MO: There used to be a very definite pilot season and production season, but that really doesn't exist anymore. In a way, we're living in a golden age of television. There are so many productions happening, but because of all the different outlets there isn't really a premiere week anymore. Now, a television show starts when it's appropriate for the broadcaster or for the network; and it may or may not be the traditional Fall premiere.



Source: [Apple TV+](#)

Shows back in our *Star Trek* days ran twenty-six episodes a year. Now, a lot of shows do ten episodes per year, which means that most people cannot support themselves working on a single television show. So you end up working on this show here, then you work on that show there, and then you work on that show there. Then the first show may start up again and you may not be available. So, it's a brave new world.

In a way it's nothing new. Everyone in the film industry has always been at the whim of a lot of things. For a long time, we were lucky enough to be working on *Star Trek* for eighteen consecutive years of television production, which gave us extraordinary stability in a notoriously unstable industry. And during all that the film's overlapped and Denise and I did books and things like that.

Now, even though we're employed on *For All Mankind*, in the past year—between the two of us—we have worked on a couple of features and on a couple of other series to varying degrees. Some of them were fairly significant, others were just little bits here and there; but that's what you have to do to make ends meet. We're work for hire.

DB: I just saw the teaser trailer for *Foundation* on Apple TV+ and it made me wonder, “Does this mean they've finished shooting everything or what?” Are productions still active at the moment, even with the shutdown?

Denise Okuda: Yeah, post is working. Visual effects—they're working on *For All Mankind*. I'm sure they're working VFX on shows. I'm sure of it. One thing that the pandemic has made very clear is that there are a lot of jobs that can be done from home, over the internet.

Especially writers and a lot of folks in post-production. Maybe not so much the actors and the shooting company.

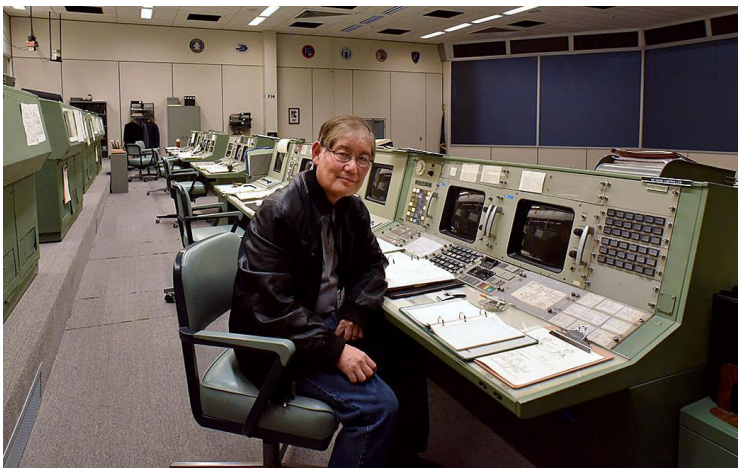
MO: We have no insight into production on *Foundation*, but if they've already shot the live action portion or even have shot a significant portion of it there's a tremendous amount of work that can be happening now. People—especially these days with visual effects—can do a huge amount of work at home.

As an example, even though production on *For All Mankind* was shut down in early March, there were already several episodes of this season in the can. So our colleagues from editorial have been working and our colleagues in visual effects have been working. We're getting a small but steady trickle of work relating to their work, and it's been fun just to see this stuff come to life.

DB: What are your roles on the series exactly?

MO: We are technical advisers. They brought us on because we're both die hard space geeks. One of the things we'll do is sit on the shooting stage when they're filming, say, a scene in Mission Control. And the director will ask, "What does this line mean?" or a cast member will ask, "Why am I doing this?" And we'll say, "Okay, this console does this, and while you're doing this you should be keying in here and you should be looking at that screen because you want to make sure that this fuel level doesn't drop too low."

For something that's partially based in reality, that's a lot of fun. We shot a scene very early on with our version of the Apollo 11 crew, and there's something that happens during the Apollo 11 mission that is pretty well known,



Remembering the past as it's reimagined: Mike Okuda sits at the Network Controller station at Apollo Mission Control in honor of [William Foster](#), on the set of *For All Mankind*'s first season. The museum-quality re-creation was overseen by production designer Dan Bishop, whose credits also include [Mad Men](#).



Chris Agos as Buzz Aldrin in season one of *For All Mankind*. Source: Apple TV+

and our writers told our version of that. So, we sat down with actor [Chris Agos](#), who plays Buzz Aldrin and said, "Okay, at this point when you see this alarm light go on, here's how you work the computer to get the alarm code." The Apollo guidance computer was an astonishing piece of technological development. It was a huge leap forward in technology and, by today's standards, is astonishingly primitive. Something that you think that should just come up automatically had to be keyed in using probably eight or twelve keystrokes. Chris just looked at me incredulously and said, "You're kidding me. Buzz Aldrin actually keyed this in while they were approaching the moon?" And we looked at him and said, "Yep."

Another huge advantage is that one of the other tech consultants is [Garrett Reisman](#), the real life astronaut. He's been there. If we don't know, we'll call Garret and ask, "Hey, does this is work?"

DB: So, what has it been like working on this particular show in terms of what it's trying to do story-wise?

MO: One thing that's really, really fun about the show is it's an alternate history. Even if you know the story of Apollo 11, even if you know the story of what happened in this mission or that mission, we can still surprise you. You know how Apollo 11 beat the Russians to the moon?



Flying with the Eagles: Denise Okuda takes the Apollo 11 Lunar Module, Eagle, for a “spin” during production of the very first episode of *For All Mankind*.

Surprise! In our version they don’t beat the Russians to the moon, and suddenly things happen differently. Even though the technology looks pretty much the same as you might know it in archival footage it’s different, and it’s surprising. And it’s fun.

On the very first day of filming we were sitting on stage and Ron Moore came and sat next to us. He was really excited about the show and we’re going on because we’re both space geeks, and I’m thinking, “Okay, this is fun.” And then Ron said to us, which was exactly the right thing to say, “I see this show as ‘This is the way you get to *Star Trek*.’”

Okay. We’re sold.

DB: Damn. That’s pretty awesome.

MO: It really is a lot of fun. We get to hang out in Mission Control, we get to crawl around in the Apollo spacecraft. In fact, there was one scene when Apollo 11 is landing on the moon where this indicator light is supposed to go on and, for whatever reason, there weren’t enough special effects people on hand to flick all the switches to make the lights light up.

DO: I’m not a special effects person and you’re supposed to stay in your lane. So I said to the special effects person – because he wanted me to help and he didn’t have enough hands – I said, “I am not going to touch this unless you give me permission to touch this because I am not special effects.” But he said, “Yeah, I need your help.” So I was, on cue, just flipping a switch and the light would go on.

DB: How has working on this show compared to working on, say, *Star Trek*?

DO: It’s very different. Mike and I usually work in the art department, and we’ve had such an interesting career working on *Star Trek* and then we went over to CBS, and DVD projects for home video—and now we’re back working production, but we’re not working in the art department. We’re technical consultants. It’s been an interesting experience.

At this point our conversation pivoted to other subjects. Fortunately, production on *For All Mankind* was able to resume a month after our conversation on [August 17, 2020](#). [Apple TV+](#) must have liked what they saw, because they announced the renewal for a [third season](#) of the series on [December 8, 2020](#), months ahead of the Season Two premiere on February 19, 2021. Apple TV+ has yet to announce a premier date, so keep your eyes peeled.



Houston, We Have Leftovers...

For All Mankind imagines an alternate history that propels the United States space program through 25 *Apollo* missions and a *Jamestown* Lunar Base by 1975. The reality is that nine [Saturn V rockets](#) launched *Apollo* missions 8-17 to the moon from 1969-1972, but a [grand total of twelve Saturn Vs](#) were built in anticipation of additional missions. [Budget cuts and a shift in public opinion](#) regarding national priorities put an end to lunar landings and the *Apollo* missions, so what to do with the spare rockets?

A highly modified SA-513, originally built for the Apollo 18 mission, was used to launch [Skylab 1](#) into orbit on May 14, 1973. This Saturn V carried the upper stage from a Saturn IVB retooled by the McDonnell Douglas Corp for use as the Orbital Workshop module of the station.

SA-514 and SA-515 were originally intended for Apollo 19 and 20 Lunar missions. Most of SA-514 is on display at the [Johnson Space Center](#) in Houston, TX. Parts of SA-515 are displayed at the [INFINITY Science Center](#) in Hancock County, MS, the Johnson Space Center in Houston, and the [National Air and Space Museum](#) in Washington, DC.



The independent horror film *Slapface* with **Dan Hedaya**, which we mentioned earlier this year in our January issue, has since made its debut at the Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival, where it earned the Audience Award in the category for feature thriller, horror, or sci-fi. Writer/director Jeremiah Kipp has implied that a wide release will occur sometime this year, but no specific date has been announced.

Another indy horror, *The Mortuary Collection*, hit home media and select digital services a few weeks ago, and is worth a look if you're into horror anthologies. **Clancy Brown** appears as the mortician Montgomery Dark in the framework story interwoven around four other ghoulish segments. He gives a fine performance, one which earned him a Fangoria Chainsaw Award. We'll be talking about the film more later this year in our Halloween issue.

The comedy-drama *Senior Moment* had been stuck in distribution limbo since completing filming in 2017 before being purchased by Screen Media Films earlier this year, who quickly released it to theaters and on-demand services in March. The story of two aging friends, it reunites **William Shatner** and **Christopher Lloyd**. Trekkies will recall the duo previously appeared together as onscreen enemies in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*... one of two movies that came out during the summer of 1984 in which Lloyd played an alien, and if you don't know what the other one was, you're a monkey boy. Reviews for *Senior Moment* are mixed at best, leaning low, but the casting may make it worth it for some fans.

Down the road, **Clancy Brown** will be heavily featured in the *Dexter* revival coming this fall, and look for **Ellen Barkin** to co-star with Kaley Cuoco, Kevin Hart, and Woody Harrelson in the action comedy *The Man from Toronto*, currently scheduled for January 2022.

—Scott Tate

Screenings

Calling all Blue Blaze Irregulars in the Tri-State area! A rare big screen presentation of *The Adventures Of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* has been scheduled for [Friday, June 25 at 9:45pm at the Colonial Theatre](#) in the Philadelphia suburb of Phoenixville, PA. The film will be presented from a 35mm print.

The docudrama will be shown as part of the theater's on going special programming of classic cult films. This screening will mark the return of the film to the Colonial for the first time in almost exactly a decade. Previously, *Buckaroo Banzai* was shown at the theater on June 3, 2011. For that screening, Blue Blaze Irregular Rich "FilmBuff" Drees attended, staging a display of *Buckaroo Banzai* memorabilia in the lobby. Details on what special exhibits and more may be part of the evening's screening were still being developed at press time.



If the Colonial Theatre looks or sounds familiar to you, you may recall it was at [the center of a 1958 attack from a large, red Blob-like gooey mass](#) believed to be from outer space. The non-sentient creature was defeated by a group of teenagers who froze it using an assortment of fire extinguishers. The Army then moved this Blob to the Arctic. Climate scientists at the Banzai Institute are participating in the ongoing program of monitoring the frozen Blob, as concerns about climate change raise the possibility of it dethawing from its icy prison.

—Rich Drees

Blue Blaze Irregulars in the Los Angeles area can catch Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York*, penned by Buckaroo Banzai scribe Earl Mac Rauch, at the New Beverly Cinema on [June 25th](#), [26th](#), and [27th](#) from a newly struck 35mm print of the 1977 film. Keep an eye on the [New Beverly website](#) for ticket availability.

Finding lost footage for the Special Edition DVD

By Sean Murphy

For many years the only way to see any deleted footage from Buckaroo Banzai was to find a grainy bootleg workprint on VHS (anyone remember video cassettes?). *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* Special Edition DVD in 2002 changed all that by not only restoring the original opening of the film but also including fourteen cut scenes. And while this DVD seemed to fall out of the sky for *Buckaroo Banzai* fans at the time, the truth is that the special edition almost didn't happen.

As documented thoroughly in the [Fall 2004 issue of World Watch One](#), W.D. "Rick" Richter explained how he discovered that there was originally a plan by MGM for a sub-par DVD release. "They didn't even tell us they were going to do a DVD, and a fella who was hired to cut the tracks for the DVD, Chris Johnson is his name, was a fan. He worked for an independent sound cutting company that would routinely get jobs like this, and he went in all excited, I gather, but saw they were just going to slap together a soundtrack and do a real third-rate version of the DVD."

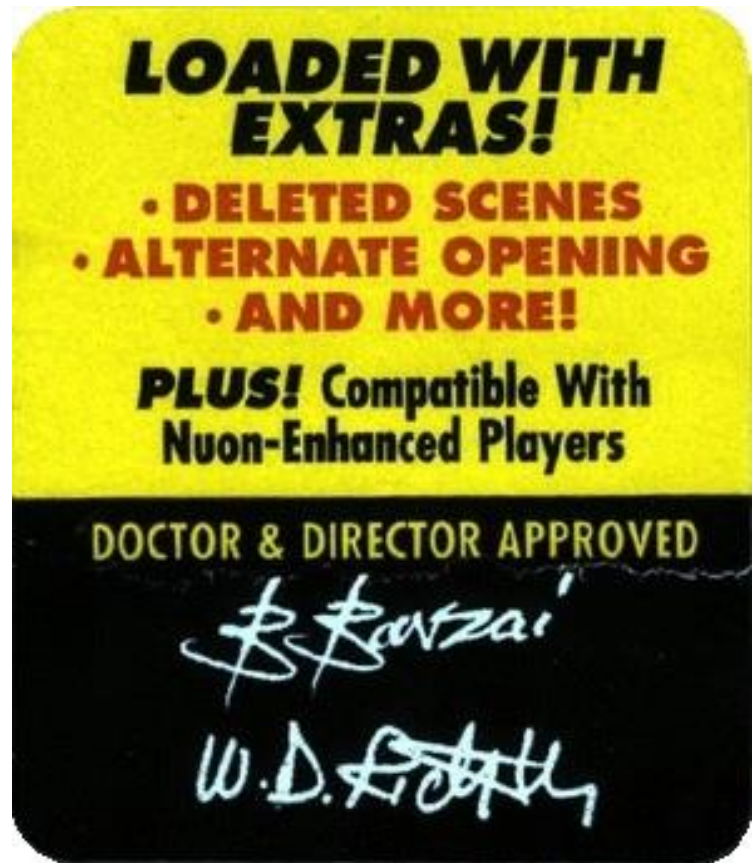
Once Richter heard the words "third-rate" and "DVD" in the same sentence, he leapt into action. "I immediately started calling MGM, and said, 'Can I do anything to convince you that you're throwing this away? That this is a title you really shouldn't squander or treat this lightly?'"

Remarkably, MGM was oblivious to the fact that the film had an [official website](#) at the time, created in support of Buckaroo's television development at Fox. "So we got the people at MGM to visit the Institute website, and they said, 'Whoa, wait a minute. What's going on here?'"

Excited by the unanticipated prospects of tapping the film's still vital cult following, MGM scrapped their plans for a cheap-and-dirty Buckaroo Banzai DVD project and rescheduled a release date for a new version. According to Richter, MGM returned with a small budget and said, "If you folks will help, we'll let you guys spend it all to do the best DVD you can manage."

Mike Arick was hired by MGM to be the DVD's producer and also directed the *Buckaroo Banzai Declassified* documentary on the Special Edition. Mike's video editor, Glenn Erickson, cut together the documentary, the alternate opening to the film, and helped compile the video extras on the disc.

World Watch One reached out to Mike Arick for an interview but he didn't have any specific memories to share about producing the DVD. Luckily, in a review



posted on his DVDSavant website, Glenn Erickson discussed the making of the DVD in his [December 2001 review](#). Some of that information informs this article.

Rebuilding the Home Movie Prologue

One of the best things about the *Buckaroo Banzai* Special Edition DVD is the inclusion of the original opening of the film, where we see a young Buckaroo and his parents in a home movie. This scene shows a Jet Car test that goes awry when a bomb, planted on the vehicle by the villainous Hanoi Xan, kills both of Buckaroo's parents. This footage is available on the DVD as a standalone scene or it can be played as the original opening to the film.

The actual prologue footage, according to Erickson's article, "was found intact on 35mm (instead of VHS) and was therefore able to be reintegrated into the film...A series of outtakes of Clancy Brown's narration were found and a new audio opening cut from them, as no [other audio] track was located." This new audio opening led to a different structure and wording in the narration than found on the bootleg workprint.

What's fascinating about both of these narrations is the fact that several different approaches to the voiceover were recorded at the time. The focus of the workprint prologue audio is discussing the rapid weapons race while the new audio focuses on Buckaroo, who is



Source: MGM Home Video

celebrating his fifth birthday. This shift in subject matter moves the emphasis from the adults to Buckaroo, which makes sense since the rest of the movie is all about him. Both versions of the prologue can be found in the [Buckaroo Banzai article from Video Watchdog magazine](#).

Missing, Presumed Lost

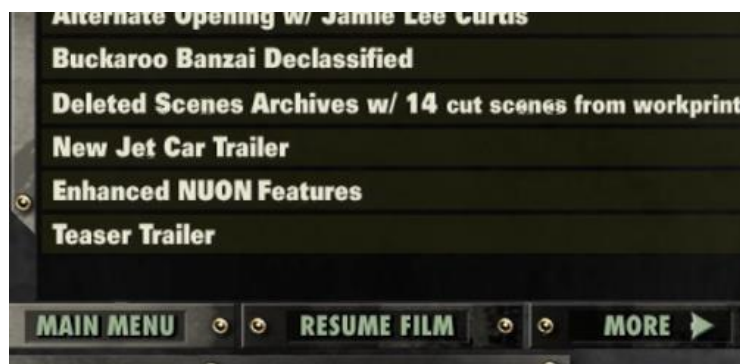
The discovery of the original prologue footage raised hopes that other deleted footage and audio could be found and potentially reinserted into the film.

“I’d have loved to replace the awkward dubbing of the President (in the hospital) that Begelman insisted on and, thus, have been able to share Ron Lacey’s original, absurdly excellent impression of Orson Welles, but the audio track vanished,” said W.D. “Rick” Richter in late 2020. “Then there’s BB’s line when he’s looking at the direction finder (prototype GPS) in his hand at Yoyodyne. When New Jersey asks him where they are, on the production track Buckaroo says, ‘I have no idea.’ Begelman couldn’t handle that coming from a ‘hero’, although Begelman himself, like Trump, was a pathetic lost soul and certainly saw himself in a heroic light.”

Sadly, adding any additional audio or footage turned out to be impossible. “None of the 35mm work print elements for longer cuts were found in the scraps and snips of trims and outs still archived for the film,” Erickson said in his review. Producer Mike Arick had hoped to reconstruct additional scenes that Richter was interested in seeing restored, but the prologue was the only 35mm film found that could be used.

Although the workprint’s 35mm film elements were missing, all was not lost in terms of additional footage. “The only element for the missing scenes was Richter’s own VHS of a work print-in-progress transferred to let the sound cutters get a head start.” Erickson explained in his review. “This is the original for the many bootlegs, so at least it’s good VHS quality.”

Amazingly, this VHS is what led to 12 additional missing scenes being included on the Special Edition DVD. An additional two scenes, Solve These Equations! and Illegal



Aliens, were not on the VHS but were discovered amongst the 35mm work print trims.

The deleted footage found on the DVD is bracketed by the ending of the previous scene and the beginning of the next scene to show the viewer where the deleted footage fits within the released film.

1. Backstage with the Cavaliers

Backstage at Artie’s Artery, the Hong Kong Cavaliers discuss the spectrographic analysis of the specimen found on Buckaroo’s car and discover an image of a half nude woman in Professor Hikita’s viewer.

2. Penny’s Troubles

In her introduction mid-performance, Penny Priddy speaks of her humiliation, motivating Buckaroo to come to her defense.

3. The Conference Begins

The opening of the conference where Buckaroo, and the some of the Hong Kong Cavaliers, arrive and he lectures the press about the significance of his 8th-dimensional journey in the Jet Car.

4. “Dr. Lizardo?”

In the middle of the conference, a reference to the escaped Dr. Lizardo.

5. “Give Me A Fix!”

The Red Lektroids, escaping in their van from the press conference, make a joke about sipping electricity from a battery, as if it were a drug.

6. A Little Down

A bit of down-time at the Banzai Institute conference room, a humorous contrast with the mayhem happening concurrently on the road.

7. “Therma-what?”

Top secret chit-chat among the Red Lektroids at the Thermapod landing site.

8. New Jersey Meets the Cavaliers

The Hong Kong Cavaliers arrive at the Bunkhouse with new member New Jersey, to begin investigating Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems. Computer expert Billy Travers is introduced as a member of the team.

9. John Emdall

The “recorded” hologram of Black Lectorid leader John Emdall is played. After making her threat to fire a particle beam weapon at the Soviet Union, Emdall suddenly responds directly to Perfect Tommy’s concern about a possible nuclear war, showing that this is not a recording but a live hologram.

10. “Hanoi Xan?”

In his bedroom, Buckaroo tells a distraught Penny Priddy that his late wife (apparently a twin sister she never knew) was murdered by World Crime League criminal Hanoi Xan.

11. Penny Confronts Dr. Lizardo

As she’s dragged away ‘to the pit’, Penny Priddy confuses Emilio Lizardo with super-criminal Hanoi Xan.

12. “Solve These Equations!”

Dr. Emilio Lizardo begs Buckaroo to help him return to his home planet, and reacts when Buckaroo addresses him as John Whorfin, his Red Lectorid alter-ego. Also, the Secretary of Defense gets tired of waiting on the bus.

13. “A Piece of Cake”

Added business between Buckaroo, Perfect Tommy, and New Jersey during the rescue of Penny Priddy.

14. Illegal Aliens

A discussion among the victorious Cavaliers as to what to do with the captured Red Lectorids.

Erickson mused in his review about where the original 35mm workprint footage could be, stating that it was “undoubtedly carefully set aside, and... who knows? The fact that Buckaroo was an independent [film] handed off to a series of rights holders and libraries before coming to MGM didn’t simplify the research process.” Perhaps one day it will be discovered again and this deleted footage could be officially reinstated into the film.

A brief lament for things unseen

One of the most exciting things found in Erickson’s Special Edition review is the revelation that “reels of star



The Sherwood Productions receptionist is harassed by a Lectorid during a makeup test, an example of behind the scenes footage that could not be used for the DVD.

interviews and behind-the-scenes video were shot” during the making of *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Sadly, “none [of the footage] was retained by anyone except director W.D. Richter, who only had VHS tape copies, often with time-code windows.” Some of the interview footage was able to be utilized for the *Buckaroo Banzai Declassified* documentary, but “funny original behind the scenes video wasn’t used for lack of clearances.”

It’s disappointing that the original behind-the-scenes footage was apparently lost by the studio after all this time. And it makes sense that legal issues need to be cleared before content like this footage could be officially released. After all, big entertainment companies don’t want to get sued.

While it’s a bummer that we’re not able to see this behind-the-scenes footage today, maybe someday we’ll all get to see it on a Special Edition Blu-ray. We can hope.

Special thanks to Glenn Erickson for his original DVD review and for letting us all know that this behind-the-scenes footage still exists in VHS form. You can find Glenn’s reviews and much more at the [CineSavant/DVDSavant](http://CineSavant.com) website.



Declassifying the Documentary

By Sean Murphy

The *Buckaroo Banzai Declassified* documentary was directed by DVD producer Mike Arick using archival material, including existing interviews with the cast and crew shot during production on the film. A new interview with director W.D. “Rick” Richter was shot for the documentary and incorporated with vintage footage. The feature is just shy of 23 minutes long. Rick was kind enough to reflect on his involvement with the DVD during a late 2020 interview with *World Watch One*.

World Watch One: What’s your memory of the experience helping with the DVD and documentary?

Rick Richter: Well, if you have a bad experience you tend to remember that, at least I do. Over the group of movies I’ve made, the unpleasant times are not hard to recall, unfortunately. And I have none of those about the making of the DVD.

I remember being amazed that we were actually going to be allowed to do something that had a real budget. I mean, it wasn’t just going to be made by anonymous people in Hollywood and then just dumped out there.

To me it was almost unbelievable because that was a long time from when the movie came out and the movie did not light the world on fire. So, why was I sitting there recording an interview for the documentary? Just because a group of passionate people had somehow made a major studio, people who didn’t care about the film and didn’t understand it, had somehow gotten them to say, “oh, okay, if you really think there’s a giant fan base out there, go ahead and do this.” Amazing.

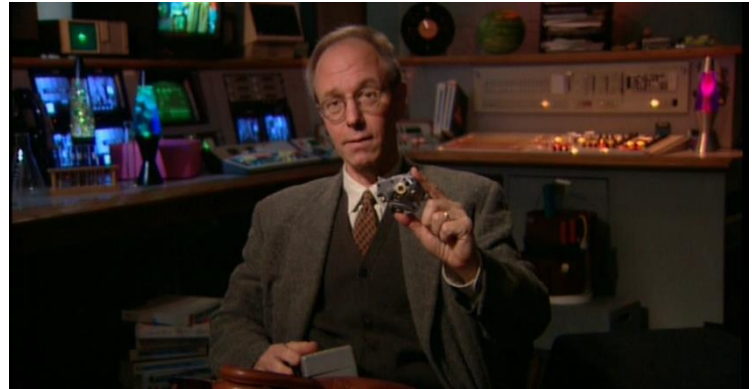
WWO: What was your involvement in creating the documentary, besides being interviewed?

Rick: I think all of my answers here are going to be little more than best efforts at recalling times long past, but, since the only reason for time is so that everything doesn’t happen at once, what I remember today is as relevant as what I remembered years ago. Or put differently:

“Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.”

— T. S. Eliot “Burnt Norton,” *Four Quartets*

Other than supplying video material (and maybe some



Source: MGM Home Video

still photos) from my “archives,” I don’t recall having anything to do with the structure of the documentary. However, I’m sure I poked my beak deeply into the creation of the format and content for the on-camera interview I gave at The Banzai Institute. For instance, I chose my own wardrobe! It also seemed important to be right there, in the actual Institute, rather than in some sterile Hollywood recording studio, sitting in front of blank background. I recall talking a lot on the phone with Mojo about much of this, but I’d trust his recollection over mine because, as we know, he’s an obsessive/compulsive historian.

For the interview itself, I had brief access to that astounding rock Buckaroo brought back from the 8th Dimension and had previously loaned to the production (under heavy Cavalier guard) when we shot the press-conference sequence. Ditto with the Overthruster I arranged (with Mrs. Johnson’s help) to showcase in the video.

There was no interview script because, not being a trained actor, I could never have memorized it. I recall making some notes for myself that gave structure to the interview and saved us all from a scatter-shot ramble on my part. We tried to do the interview in one long take to make it feel as spontaneous as possible...no inserts or “coverage” to allow it to be manipulated later and made more ordinary.

WWO: Were the BB props from your collection?

Rick: The “props,” as you call them, that I showed on camera were definitely not created by the Star Trek art department. We can pretend they were fakes, if you like, made for the movie, stuff I can claim I took home because Sherwood Productions would otherwise either have destroyed them or lost track of them through indifference. But those things sure looked like the real deal to me, and I left them at The Institute when I left New Jersey after the interview.

Special thanks to W.D. Richter for once again taking the time to answer questions about days of yore.

Behind-the-Scenes of the Special Edition DVD

By Sean Murphy

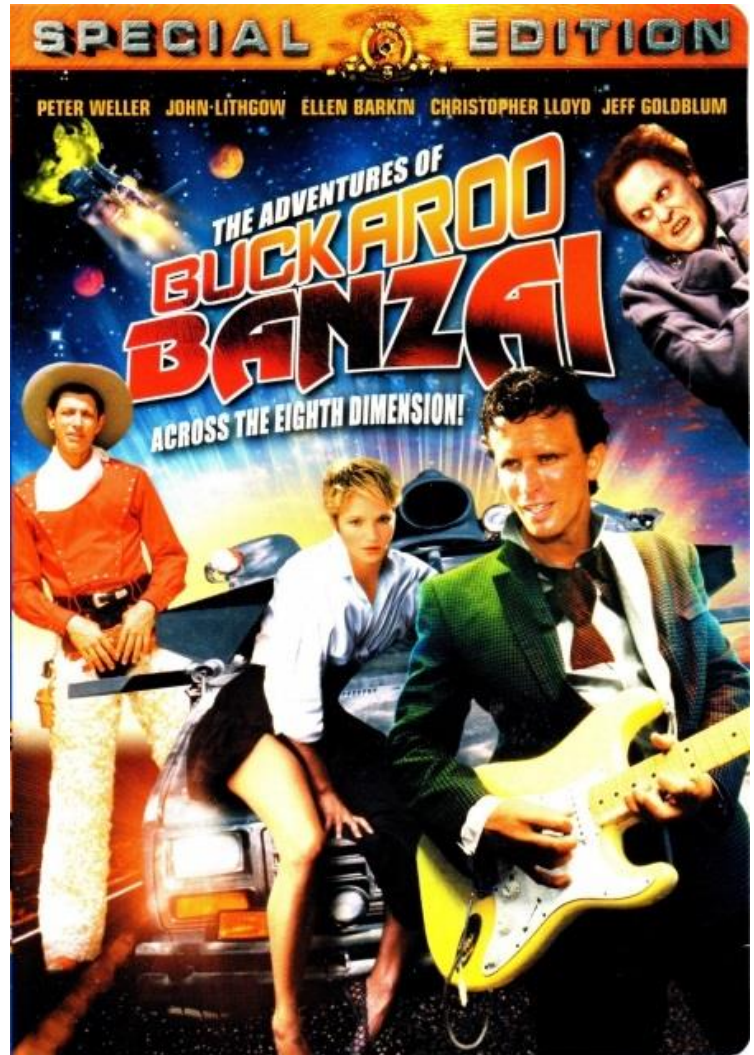
World Watch One was lucky enough to interview Adam “Mojo” Lebowitz about his involvement with *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* Special Edition DVD. Mojo is a senior Previsualization/VFX supervisor and artist with an [extensive background in visual effects](#). He was the first employee at Foundation Imaging, the company that created the [Jet Car trailer](#) for the proposed *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* tv series. Mojo was happy to share some of the behind-the-scenes shenanigans he went through to get the Banzai Institute Archives content onto the disc given the existing space constraints of the DVD format.

Getting involved to make a difference

“MGM was finally going to work on the DVD [in 2001],” Mojo said, “Rick called me and asked if they could put the Jet Car trailer on the DVD and if they could give the trailer to Michael Arick. Mike was the one producing the DVD. And I said, ‘Sure. Of course, we’d be thrilled to put the Jet Car on there.’”

“I put the Jet Car trailer on a digital videotape, because this is before you could send files like that over the internet, and hand delivered it to Mike Arick. I started asking him about the DVD in general, and what was going to be on the special edition. I was hopeful that there would be all kinds of behind-the-scenes footage [see the **Finding lost footage for the Special Edition DVD** article for more information]. And he said that, unfortunately, MGM was not interested in paying to create a special edition DVD. It was basically just going to be the movie, an audio commentary, and the jet car trailer. And I said to him, ‘Wow! Of all the movies out there, it’s really a crime not to create a special edition DVD for *Buckaroo Banzai*. There is such a wealth of behind-the-scenes material.’”

“Mike didn’t know anything about the history of *Buckaroo Banzai*. He was just assigned as the producer and this was just another DVD project for him. So, I explained the rich history of the project and the treasure trove of material that Rick and Mac had in their archives. And Mike said, ‘Well, I would love to put it on there, but they’re not paying for me to produce all that stuff.’ I replied that ‘I’ll be happy to do it for free’ because at that time, I was working freelance. I was no longer at Foundation Imaging and I was working from home on some projects. I had some money in the bank so I could afford to work on the DVD content without getting paid. I just really felt that this had to happen. We had to include this wealth of *Buckaroo Banzai* archival material somehow on the DVD.”



Source: MGM Home Video

“Mike said, ‘Hey, if you’re willing to put that stuff together, I’ll be happy to put it on disc.’ I instantly contacted Mike Okuda and let him know that Mike Arick was open to this extra content. I let Mike and Denise know that I was going to be putting together material for the DVD. Then it came time to figure out what special features would go on the disc.”

“I spent a couple of months working on it. I can’t remember how I decided, or how we all decided, what would go on there. We knew it couldn’t be a lot of video material. It was only going to be a one disc and, because MGM wasn’t originally planning for it to be a special feature rich disc, we had to be careful about how much space was available on the DVD. There had to be enough room for the movie and then we could work with just the little bit of space left over.”

Making a gap-less audio commentary

Audio commentaries on a DVD can range wildly in terms of quality. Mojo, being a huge fan of audio commentaries, wanted director W.D. “Rick” Richter and

writer Earl Mac Rauch to tell great stories and anecdotes about the making of the film.

“I didn’t want gaps of silence to happen with the *Buckaroo Banzai* audio commentary,” said Mojo. “And with many commentaries, I understand why that happens. Often the people who made the film are sitting there, in the studio, watching it for the first time in years and they get caught up in just watching the movie again. That means they’re not really analyzing it and thinking about what to say. So I watched the film and started to make [a list of questions that I thought any *Buckaroo Banzai* fan would want to know the answer to.](#)”

“When it came time to [record the commentary](#) with Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter, I sat in the studio with them and, just in case there was a period of silence or they weren’t sure what to talk about, I would prompt them with questions. I was kind of feeding them during the entire commentary section. My voice was actually on the initial commentary, but I didn’t feel like I deserved to be on it asking the questions. I asked Michael Arick to just edit me out of the commentary and he did.”

Raiding the Banzai Institute Archives



Character Profiles	
Buckaroo Banzai	Perfect Tommy
Reno Nevada	Pinky Carruthers
New Jersey	John Parker
Dr. Emilio Lizardo	Lo Pep
Lord John Whorfin	Hanoi Xan
Rawhide	Lectroids
Penny Priddy	Toichi Hikita

Source: MGM Home Video

“I asked Earl Mac Rauch to go through all his archives, which he did, to find any great text material we could use because we could put endless amounts of text on the DVD as text didn’t take up a lot of space,” said Mojo. The information Mac Rauch provided was spread across the multiple areas, including the Buckaroo Banzai Personal Profiles section, the Buckaroo Banzai Character Profiles section, and the Banzai Institute Archives.

“The Buckaroo Banzai Personal Profiles section covers five aspects of Buckaroo: The Musician, The Lover, The Scientist, The Man, and The Adventurer.

“The Buckaroo Banzai Character Profiles section includes biographies of Banzai, Reno Nevada, New

Jersey, Dr. Emilio Lizardo, Lord John Whorfin, Rawhide, Penny Priddy, Perfect Tommy, Pinky Carruthers, John Parker, Lo Pep, Hanoi Xan, Lectroids, and Toichi Hikita.

“The Banzai Institute Archives includes the Historical Archives section with a Buckaroo Banzai Interview, Institute History, Badges, Hikita’s Diary, and the Banzai Radio broadcast. The Technical Data section includes schematics for the Hong Kong Cavaliers tour bus and Complex 88. The Movie Archive section includes Movie Tie-Ins, Film Locations, and Movie Reviews. There is also a section on the Hong Kong Cavaliers CD Covers.”

You can see some of this content, shared from Mojo’s archive, at the [Buckaroo Banzai DVD Special Edition Files Overview](#).

“The other thing is that all of the menus on the disc, all the summaries and all the bios, everything you see, that was all written by Earl Mac Rauch. And I really, really, really wanted MGM to make sure that there was a credit for him on the disc, something that said ‘All menu material written by the writer of *Buckaroo Banzai*, Earl Mac Rauch’. Sadly, they never listed that credit on there. I just want everyone to know that all that stuff was written by Mac.”

Pinky Carruther’s 47,000 Unknown Facts

It’s well known that Pinky Carruthers has an encyclopedic brain for tidbits and ephemera that he’s picked up during his journey on this giant blue-green marble. This wealth of knowledge was boiled down into an amazing textual feature on the DVD called [Pinky Carruther’s 47,000 Unknown Facts](#) that can be read on screen while watching the movie.

“We wanted to have a text commentary track that had behind-the-scenes information,” said Mojo, “The text commentary was definitely a team effort. I started it off by gathering material and Earl Mac Rauch wrote new material. Mike and Denise Okuda, and some of their friends, provided some great quotes and extra material. The commentary track also got some of its material from the novel. This really was a full Blue Blaze Irregulars effort and was actually a lot of work.”

With the volume of text that makes up the 47,000 unknown facts, there was no chance that it would make it by MGM’s legal department completely unscathed.

“I think my favorite story about MGM legal being overly cautious was with the text commentary track. So, in the world of Buckaroo Banzai, these guys in the film are all actors playing real people. Lewis Smith is portraying the real Perfect Tommy in the film. One of the things I put in the text commentary track was that the actor, Lewis

37 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Smith, got to know the real Perfect Tommy pretty well so he could portray him in the film. The idea was that they actually became good friends. Every now and then, the real Perfect Tommy and Lewis Smith would be bar hopping to see who would be recognized as Perfect Tommy first, since many of the actors in the film would often be mistakenly recognized as the real people.

“MGM saw that and said, ‘Well, we don’t know about that. What if Lewis Smith is a recovering alcoholic? What if Lewis Smith reads something about him going bar hopping and it triggers him into relapse state? We can’t be responsible for that.’

“That is, I think, one of biggest stretches I’ve ever heard in my entire life.

“I’m just making up some silly scenario that I thought was funny for the text commentary and their reaction to it was kind of a shock. I came back to them with the following; ‘What if I changed it from bar hopping to club hopping? Would that be okay?’ And they said, ‘Yes, that’s fine.’ So, I changed it to ‘Lewis Smith has been known to go clubbing with the real Perfect Tommy. They enjoy taking bets as to whom will be recognized as Tommy first.’”

Sadly, this would not be the first nor the last time that MGM legal would have concerns about content on the DVD.

Jet Car Deep Dive



Source: MGM Home Video

The Jet Car All Access section of the Special Edition, which included sections on Statistics, the Jet Engine, the Cockpit, the Overthrust, and Design, was a particular labor of love for Mojo.

“I really wanted to go into how the jet car was created,” said Mojo, “And I tracked down the guys [Thrust Racing



Source: MGM Home Video

owners Jerry Segal and George Haddebeck] in Southern California who really made the Jet Car and asked if I could interview them. I went out to their office and spent the afternoon discussing the Jet Car.

“I told them, ‘Look, we want to not so much write about how you guys made a safe jet car for a movie.’ I explained to them that, with the world of Buckaroo Banzai, it’s all ‘real’. I said, ‘Let’s discuss how the Jet Car would really happen.’ So, we all sat there and they helped invent technology that may not have really existed, but things that would be necessary to make a real Jet Car.

“The entire interview with them was a discussion of figuring out the technical aspects of what made the Jet Car real, as if it was a ‘behind the scenes’ article in *Car & Driver*. I love that thing. When you get done reading the Jet Car article, you will actually believe the Jet Car is real. We put a lot of time and effort into figuring out how that thing would actually work, so that was a fun one.”

It appears that concerns were raised with using the *Car & Driver* magazine name, as can be seen in the following excerpt from the DVD, where the name was changed to *Auto Enthusiast* magazine.

“In 1987, a small team of enthusiasts from *Auto Enthusiast* magazine were invited by the Institute to inspect the car, marking the first time its inner workings were revealed to the public; the resulting article was suppressed by the United States Military, for reasons still unknown. Several Freedom of Information Act petitions have finally seen the information declassified and what follows is excerpted from the original *Auto Enthusiast* feature, ‘Inside the Jet Car,’ seen here for the first time.”

The Jet Car All Access content is a fascinating deep dive that blurs the real world and the movie world together. You can read the original version of the text from Mojo's archive, with *Car & Driver* intact, at the [BB DVD Special Edition Jet Car All Access](#) page.

Banzai Radio!

Banzai Radio is a unique audio experience on the DVD in the form of an episode of the Banzai Institute's ongoing radio show.

"I wanted to do an interview with Terry Erdmann, the publicist of *Buckaroo Banzai*, who had been hugely instrumental in getting the film the fan base that it had," said Mojo, "We couldn't film an interview because there was no room for more video on the disc. Then I remembered that part of the lore of *Buckaroo Banzai* is that there's a weekly radio show, like a weekly podcast from the Banzai Institute. I thought, 'Well, what if we made a fake excerpt from one of the episodes of the Buckaroo Banzai radio show?'"

"I asked Mike Arick, 'Can we do an audio interview?'" and he said, 'Sure. There's plenty of room for audio.' Audio takes up much less bandwidth than video on the disc. So I got Denise Okuda and Terry Erdmann together in a room and she interviewed Terry as if this was a segment from an episode of Banzai radio show. I liked that and putting it together was a lot of fun." The original interview was 45 minutes long and Mojo's editing of the audio involved cutting the discussion for clarity and breath removal as well as EQ and dynamic range compression.

The "original airdate" for the episode was October 18th, 2000, and runs for approximately 10 minutes. The following text from the special edition described the contents of the episode:

In this clip from the Banzai Institute's weekly syndicated radio program, host Denise "Catnip" Okuda interviews Terry about his publicity work for the movie. Headbands, The World Crime League, and the efforts of Blue Blaze Irregulars across the globe are just a few of the subjects they touch upon.

You can listen to this radio show audio, even if you don't have the DVD, where it's posted on [Mojo's Vimeo page](#).

Images of Merchandise and Legal

There are tons of images and drawings from *Buckaroo Banzai* scattered across the Special Edition in the Technical Data and Movie Archive sections. "We went through all of MGM archives of the *Buckaroo Banzai* imagery and picked a bunch of fun stills to use throughout the disc," said Mojo.

The dedicated Photo Gallery includes images in the following categories: 1930s, 1950s, Behind the Scenes, Buckaroo, Hong Kong Cavaliers, Jet Car, Lectroids, Penny, Scenes, and Villains.

Ironically, Mojo ran into more difficulties with MGM's legal department when he wanted to include some images of official *Buckaroo Banzai* merchandise.

"I actually have a little bit of a story about the View-Master reels. I was doing the legwork for putting the special features imagery together and Mike Arick, obviously, approved everything. Of course, MGM had to approve everything that was on there as well.

"I understand that studios are very, very, very cautious. I think studios are largely driven by anything that could prevent a potential legal battle somewhere down the line. No matter how small it seems, they want to make sure all their T's are crossed and I's are dotted. I presented the pictures of all the merchandise and it was things like the [View-Master reel](#), a picture of the [Jet Car toy game](#), a picture of whatever we had. MGM said, 'Well, I want you to make sure we have releases from all the companies that put out this merchandise and make sure they would give permission to show a picture of their merchandise on the DVD.'

"Now, most of those companies that made the merchandise were out of business. So, number one, I had to demonstrate to MGM that the companies were actually out of business. I didn't need a release form from those companies. But the big one was View-Master. MGM said, 'We need a release from View-Master giving us permission to show a picture of the View-Master reels on the DVD.' And I said, 'Um, but they licensed *Buckaroo Banzai* from you guys, so that should really give you permission to put something on the DVD that you already own.'

"And MGM said, 'Well, we want it anyway.' So I had to track down the people at View-Master and explain the situation. The first thing the View-Master people said to me was, 'But you guys own it. We can't give you permission to use something that you already own.' I said, 'I know, I know, but I still need a letter saying it's okay. Otherwise, MGM will not put the image into the disc.' View-Master was kind enough to appease the neurosis of MGM and we got a release for that."

When entertainment companies are this jittery about something they originally licensed, you have to wonder how anything ever makes it onto a special edition.

Missing DVD Credits Restored

Mojo's original intention was to make sure that the names of all the BBIs that helped with the special edition

were accounted for on the DVD. “I put together a huge list of names that needed to be on the DVD, people who have been instrumental in keeping *Buckaroo Banzai* alive. This was not just people who worked on the DVD, but people over the years,” said Mojo, “So I asked Mike and Denise to put together a list of people. We wanted that list on the DVD but, unfortunately, that didn’t make the cut at the time.”

However, all is not lost. As Mojo was digging through his archives, he found the original list of names that he, Mike, and Denise compiled. The document opens with the following note from Buckaroo.

FRIENDS OF THE BANZAI INSTITUTE

Were it not for the tireless effort of Blue Blaze Irregulars everywhere, the Institute simply could not function. I have prepared this list of notable individuals whose efforts have repeatedly gone beyond even my expectations and to whom I owe a great personal debt. In some cases, we have listed only their BBI names—shrouding their true identities in secrecy for reasons of security. We salute you and wish you well. PROGRESS OVER PROTOCOL. - B. Banzai

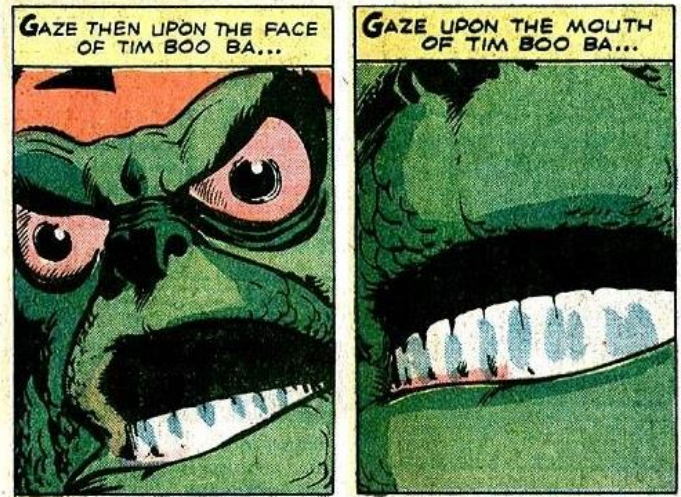
You can now read the entire list of names on the [Buckaroo Banzai Special Edition DVD Credits](#) page.

Glancing Back While Moving Forward

Reflecting on his DVD experience today, Mojo had this to say: “Nine times out of ten, when I run into a Buckaroo Banzai fan, I ask them if they’ve looked at the special features of the [Special Edition DVD](#). They’d say, ‘No. I haven’t gone through it yet.’ Go through it! I only wish we’d put more stuff on there.” *World Watch One* heartily endorses Mojo’s recommendation. When you do, set aside a few hours before you dive in, and make sure you don’t miss the [five Easter eggs](#) on the DVD.

As the interview was wrapping up, Mojo had one final suggestion. “Most people who see the movie have yet to read the novelization. If anyone reading this interview, right now in the newsletter, has not read the original novelization of *Buckaroo Banzai*, what are you waiting for? Go find it on [Amazon](#) and read it. It’s amazing.” The timing couldn’t be more perfect. [Buckaroo Banzai Against The World Crime League](#) sequel novel hits the streets in October, 2021. There is no better time for *Buckaroo Banzai* fans to dive back into that world.

Our heartfelt thanks to **Mojo** for this interview, and **Earl Mac Rauch** and **W.D. Richter** for keeping torch lit along with all the fans, and the **Banzai Institute** for their continued contributions to the betterment of humanity.



Source: Steve Ditko/Marvel Entertainment LLC

Did you know that Tim “Tim Boo Ba” Monroe has written almost ten articles for *World Watch One* since 2010?

OK, I know what you’re thinking, “Get out of town, for realz? Tim has written that many articles for *World Watch One*?” Either that or, “What the hell does this have to do with the Special Edition DVD article?”

It’s true! This has nothing to do with the DVD article *and* Tim has written that many articles for *WWO*! Check it out!

WWO: June 2010

Interview with W.D. Richter

Review: Wild Asses of the Kush

Review: Of Hunan Bondage

Annotations: A Tomb With A View

WWO: September 2018

Lizardo’s Overthruster Was More Powerful Than Banzai’s—Believe it!*

*Read this one at least twice

WWO: August 2019

Buckaroo Crushes Cult Competition

Sekrit Orogins

WWO: May 2021 (This Issue! See Pages 11-12!)

Project Sawtooth: Masado Banzai’s Jet Car

The opinions of Tim “Tim Boo Ba” Monroe are his own and do not reflect the official editorial stance of this publication.

The Making of *Into the 8th Dimension*

by Dan Berger

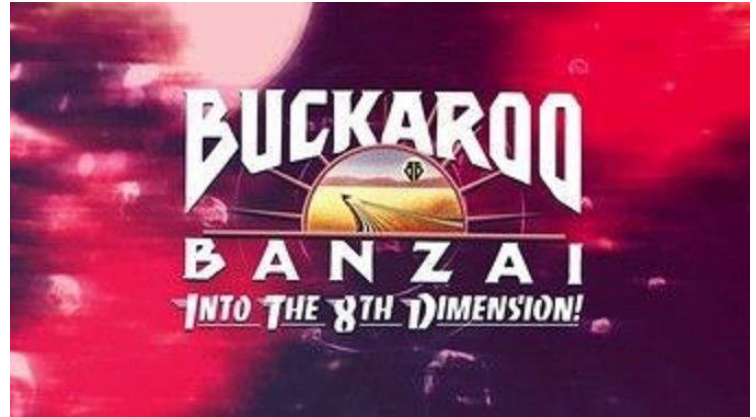
Introduction

On August 16th, 2016, Shout! Factory released a Region A *Buckaroo Banzai* Blu-ray in the United States, the first such release since MGM's Special Edition DVD in 2002. The DVD had covered a significant patch of content territory, much of it appearing on Shout! Factory's Blu-ray as well, but room remained to explore the film. At a slender 22 minutes running time, the 2002 *Buckaroo Banzai Declassified* featurette made the best use it could of archival interview and behind the scenes footage from the making of the film in 1983. This left plenty of room for a more all-encompassing retrospective documentary on the Blu-ray.

At the same time, Producer Michael Felsher, the man tasked with creating new content for the Shout! Factory Blu-ray, was adamant about taking the project in its own direction. "Mainly it was the documentary, that was the big thing," Felsher said. "I didn't want to repeat what had been done in the previous extras, which was kind of in-jokey. It was kind of insular, like they were from the Banzai Institute and stuff like that. I didn't want to go that way with it. I wanted more of an actual nuts and bolts, making-of piece and that ended up being the documentary."

In terms of a subject ready for a comprehensive deep-dive, Felsher couldn't have picked a better film to document. "*Buckaroo Banzai* was not a cheap, down-and-dirty affair," he began. "It had a lot of problematic technical components to it and a story that, when you look at it on paper, you say, 'What is this?' Then you watch the movie and you're like, 'What was that?' I was kind of in awe of the fact that everyone, even if they weren't reasonably sure that they knew how to swim, they all jumped in the deep end anyway."

"But, for me, a big part of the story was the failure of the film's marketing and the fact that it really did not do very well when it came out, and at the same time understanding that this movie was a challenge for any marketing department to try to figure out," he continued. "How do you sell this thing to an audience conditioned for *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* movies? How do you pitch the thing? What is your audience for it? That was where I felt the real story was: not just, 'How was this crazy-ass movie made?' but, 'How did it get unleashed upon the world and why didn't it connect?' That was the thing I really wanted to try to get across in the documentary, 'How did someone back this crazy idea, how did this this crazy idea translate to the screen, and then the disaster of the theatrical campaign and the



Source: SHOUT! Factory

release and then it's redemption over the years,' especially during the period where most people couldn't get access to it even if they tried. Fox didn't even have the video rights available because they were with Vestron. Vestron had them for five or six years or whatever, and then it was just gone."

Clearly, there was going to be a lot of story to tell, and the clock—she was a-ticking. "From the time that Shout! Factory talked to me about it to the time we were done with it was probably four months," said Felsher. "Out of that four months we probably only shot for two, and then the editing was maybe three weeks. I don't really recall the specifics of it; I just remember that it was rushed."

Based on an email received from director W.D. Richter dated March 19, 2016, the production window for *Into the 8th Dimension* roughly took place from February through May of 2016. The game, as they say, was afoot.

Getting the Band Back Together

2016 was already a busy year for Felsher and his production company, [Red Shirt Pictures](#), when Brian Ward of [Shout! Factory](#) approached him to create content for one of their up-coming Blu-ray releases. Shout! Factory, an American home video and music company specializing in pop culture titles and the collector's market, had just licensed *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* from MGM to create the first Blu-ray edition of the film for the American and Canadian markets. They had decided on Red Shirt Pictures to create new, unique content to compliment and expand upon some of the features appearing on the 2002 Special Edition DVD.

"2016 and 2013 were the two busiest years I ever had," Michael remembered. "2016 was insane. When I went back and looked over my notes and some emails from that period—just to remind myself about what happened when—at any point I was working on six different projects and trying to figure out, 'What do we do for this and this and this?'"



Source: Red Shirt Pictures

In the eleven years since creating Red Shirt in 2005, Felsher had worked on literally hundreds of Blu-ray featurettes, documentaries, commentaries, and other content for a variety of studios. When approached about *Buckaroo Banzai*, Red Shirt was already busy at work on several projects, including *Just Desserts: The Making of Creepshow* for [Synapse Films](#), *Return of the Killer Tomatoes* for [Arrow Films](#), and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* for Shout's horror brand, [Scream Factory](#). These were just three of the thirty-two films featuring content created by Red Shirt Pictures in 2016, adding to his already substantial resume with Anchor Bay and Lionsgate starting around the turn of the millennium.

Speaking with Felsher in July 2020, it quickly became obvious that the mad crush of projects on his plate in 2016 had dimmed his recollections of working on *Into the 8th Dimension*. "Prior to *Buckaroo* I think I might have done a couple of things or been attempting to do some stuff for [indie UK distributor] Arrow for their edition of *Buckaroo Banzai*, and then Shout Select got it. Or maybe it was vice versa, I can't recall," Felsher said. "But the reason I would have gotten *Buckaroo Banzai* was because I'd done a lot of their Scream Factory stuff. Shout Select was in its infancy, and *Buckaroo Banzai* was one of the first big titles that they did."

In the case of masterminding the production on *Into the 8th Dimension*, his answer was to bring in a friend and trusted pro to run the show. "My producer on that [project] was Heather Buckley," Felsher said. "I brought her on because, at the time that it was going on, I had so many other projects...and they were all big projects. I couldn't handle everything at once, so I put Heather in charge of this one because I knew she could handle it."

It's clear that [Heather Buckley's](#) passion for the archiving and preservation of film history, particularly on the special effects side, is a big part of what makes *Into the 8th Dimension* shine. "That's how I connected with Michael Felsher before being hired by Michael Felsher," noted Buckley. "I saved a whole bunch of photography from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre Two*—the actual photography and the negatives—because they were going up for sale on eBay and I grabbed them because, I'm an archivist. I'm going hold on to them. I'm not going to sell them to other people, that way they can all be in one place."

"...and they got featured in the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre Two* Blu-ray," noted Buckley's collaborator, Ethan Halo, another strong advocate of preserving a film's past through Blu-ray and DVD bonus content. "Let's archive it."

Buckley, like Felsher, looms large in the realm of content for Blu-ray extras, particularly on horror titles. Her curriculum vitae covers everything from acting, directing, effects, and make-up credits, to journalistic tours of duty at [Dread Central](#), [Fangoria](#), [Diabolique](#), and others. Buckley has nearly two hundred producer credits on DVD and Blu-ray featurettes, as well as producing several feature-length films including the 2018 punk rock slasher *The Ranger*. She is also the owner/operator of [Black Mansion Films](#), a studio she and filmmaker/producer Elise Salomon formally launched in 2020.

"[Mike and I] were very close for a very long time on so many projects," said Buckley, "and I know from working in the business that *Buckaroo Banzai* was one of the stars in heaven that, if he ever got this title, he would lose his mind. So one day he comes up to me and says, 'Heather, it's happened. We have the title *Buckaroo Banzai*. Curate this thing for me.' For Mike, this was one of his most important projects."

Contacting the On Screen Talent

With a direction in mind and a lot of ground to cover in very little time, the heavy lifting of tracking down talent in front of and behind the camera and scheduling interviews fell on Buckley. "My job is to do the upfront pitch and the coordination, and then Mike is pulling it through post-production," she noted. "There's nothing crazy. It's just contacting people and pitching an interview. I think everyone's story is important."

With Felsher thinking big on the documentary's scope, there was a lot to pitch and coordinate. "There were a lot of people [to interview] on this one," said Felsher. "I knew this was going be a feature-length doc, or very close to it, and we cast a very wide net. I was just throwing it out to everybody and seeing whoever we could get."

Casting a wide net proved to be a real benefit for Buckley. "This was one of the easiest discs to put together because, as soon as I reached out to the talent, a lot of them were like, 'I loved making this film. I love the director. I need to be involved,'" Buckley remembered. "I was actually on the road to Savannah with my friend Anya, who is a weird fiction writer, and my phone would explode with all the actors going, 'Oh, we heard about *Buckaroo Banzai*! Is this about *Buckaroo Banzai*?' And so many people had wonderful stories, and loved that



Heather Buckley. Source: Heather Buckley

movie, and got in touch with me instantaneously—not just their reps or their managers but the actual actors. I think Pepe Serna was maybe the first guy to call me. He was the first to respond to my note in a bottle, and genuinely excited.”

Not everyone in the cast were able to respond themselves, however. “I remember talking to Clancy Brown’s people and he was recording stuff for *Sponge Bob* and I said, ‘I’m aware that your client is sometimes a red crab,’ and they laughed,” said Buckley.

If anything, the sheer number of positive responses proved to be a complication during the editing phase, but a good problem to have. The magnitude of the response definitely left an impression on Felsher. “This documentary was one of those times where we got almost everyone we went after,” he said. “Usually when you cast a wide net like that you assume, ‘Okay, well, we’ll put out feelers to fifteen people. Maybe we’ll get nine if we’re lucky.’ Out of the fifteen, I think we got fourteen. So I was like, ‘Holy shit!’ I don’t remember the final count exactly, but it was that close.”

There were, of course, absentees. “With Jeff Goldblum it probably just didn’t work out because of the timing, but there wasn’t a hard ‘no’ from him,” said Buckley. “With Jeff Goldblum and Ellen Barkin there were problems coordinating schedules; but no one was like, ‘No. No way.’ If they could make it, they wanted to participate in the project. If there’s any sort of take away from all this it’s that I never had a project that, as soon as it was

mentioned to their reps, everyone said, ‘I need to talk about this movie. I love this movie,’ and even the bigger names were like, ‘Let me work it into my schedule.’ Where things didn’t work out, it came down to scheduling because we were working on a really tight deadline.”

Interviewing one big name in particular became a priority. “Actually, John Lithgow...Felsher set that up because he was doing [Raising Cain](#), so that was already in the bag,” said Buckley. “That was actually someone that I wish I had set up the interview with them, but Michael was able to get him.”

“Getting John Lithgow for me was imperative,” Felsher explained. “I love the fact that he’s always spoken so highly of *Buckaroo Banzai* over the years, because some actors can be like, ‘I was in this weird cult film that didn’t do anything—anyway I don’t want to talk about it.’ Lithgow is fine with it. He’s like, ‘I loved playing Lizardo, are you kidding?’”

Buckley had priorities of her own when it came to tracking down cast members. “Christopher Lloyd came to us this way,” Buckley explained. “I was at South by Southwest working as a journalist and there was a movie called *I am Not a Serial Killer* and Lloyd was in it. So I met Lloyd at South by Southwest and we did a great interview with everyone from the cast and crew of that movie. Lloyd is one of my favorite actors of all damn time—Judge Doom (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*), Jim Ignatowski on *Taxi*—and I was able to reach out to him and coordinate it with his manager and he said ‘yes.’”

“When I get interviews like that, I personally fly over from Jersey to LA on my own dime to do the on camera interview,” she continued. “We got along so well that when *I Am Not A Serial Killer* played IFC Center in New York City I also did the live Q&A with Lloyd there.”



Key players: In addition to **Peter Weller**, John Lithgow (**Above**) was a subject of particular interest for producer Michael Felsher. Lithgow remains a fan of his *Buckaroo Banzai* experience to this day, along with many of the cast and crew. Source: SHOUT! Factory

“Getting Christopher to talk about the film was great, because I’m sure he, on some level, was like, ‘Oh good, I can talk about something that’s not *Back to the Future*,” Felsher added. “This is just my opinion, but I think Christopher Lloyd gives the greatest middle finger in cinema history in *Buckaroo Banzai*. It is the most emphatic ‘fuck you’ with the middle finger that I have ever seen an actor give. I’m just delighted every time he does it right behind Lizardo’s back, it’s so much fun to see.”

For Buckley, providing an opportunity to bring people together was as important as securing the talent and scheduling the interviews. “A lot of these guys hadn’t seen each other since the film,” she explained, “so I would try to set up the interviews on the same day at the same time so the guys could meet each other. So, like, Pepe Serna and Billy Vera came in on the same day. People miss each other because there’s been so many years since they’ve made the movie. I also see these discs as a chance for a reunion.”

Between the pitching, the coordination of schedules, and the answering of phone calls and emails that go along with it, there is also research and actual on camera interviews to be shot. Fortunately, Buckley has collaborators to help in these key areas. When getting into the nuts and bolts of the research, that collaborator tends to be Ethan Halo, especially with interview prep. In the case of *Into the 8th Dimension*, “...I probably did a deep dive into the effects myself with Ethan, who writes a lot of these questions for me, and we do research together to make these discs,” Buckley explained. “Then, once everyone says yes and the footage is shot, all that magic is in Michael Felsher’s hands. But it’s a lot of finding the people to say ‘yes’ to these projects.”

Preserving the Visual Effects

Of particular importance to Buckley, and a subject dear to her heart, is visual effects work and the processes that bring them to life. “I try to do a deep dive into the FX and VFX on my end to try to get a lot of that imagery because I know those teams archive, and that’s how we can show a lot of process,” she said. “And that’s how we do our jobs. I’ll reach out to people because I feel, more than anything when I work with Mike and work on my discs, that a lot of it is about archiving. I especially love working on the FX and VFX.”

A natural outcome of “reaching out” to members of the VFX community is networking, a key ingredient in any producer’s success. “Okay it’s like [Effects Supervisor] Peter Kuran...I may have met him for the first time on this project, and we bonded because we’re both from New Jersey and because he was a visual effects supervisor on so many films,” Buckley explained.



Makeup artists Tom Burman (L) and Bari Dreiband-Burman (R) discuss their ups and downs during the production of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Source: SHOUT! Factory

“[Tom Burman](#) was important to get to know—the same thing with Kuran—because I’d work with them on many other projects moving forward. They did so many of the FX during the eighties of course. Tom and [Makeup Supervisor] [Bari Burman](#) (credited as Bari Dreiband)—I think we’ve interviewed most of the Burman family. Hoyt Yeatman supervising the motion control work, and trying to put together the VFX team was very important to me so we could get their stories.”

Sometimes circumstances prevent key players from appearing on screen. “So I will go to the ends of the Earth to document this stuff,” Buckley explained. “Greg Jein was not going to do an on camera interview, so I was like, ‘But can we get his work?’ If we can’t get the on camera interview, I want them represented on the disc somehow because it’s important for everybody to see their work and what goes into it and the process of filmmaking because it just doesn’t appear on screen.”

Where there’s a will, there’s usually a producer finding a way to make things happen. Such was the case with Buckley. “There’s a guy who does VFX archiving named

SFX and VFX: Extended Play

Want a deeper dive into the effects on *Buckaroo Banzai*? Several of the crew unable to appear in *Into the 8th Dimension* have their work documented elsewhere on the web:

Animator [Chris Casady](#) talks about creating many of the electrical and other animated effects for *Buckaroo Banzai* in the [My Work on Buckaroo Banzai 1982](#) video short on Vimeo.

[Mark Stetson](#) (miniatures supervisor), [Greg Jein](#) (miniatures construction), [Ron Gress](#) (model maker), and [Leslie Ekker](#) (model maker, uncredited) appear in a [BUCKAROO BANZAI miniature effects](#) segment from [Berton Pierce’s](#) excellent documentary [Sense of Scale](#).

Gene Kozicki and he goes around and archives VFX, like the post effects, for a lot of people,” she said. “He was very key in getting us all the images and video of that miniature work from Greg Jein, because Gene already had it documented himself or he was able to get us documentation for it.”

That documentation is of paramount importance to Buckley. “It’s these amazing artists behind the scenes working together in collaboration to create this stuff,” she said. “Especially everything from the eighties because you don’t see a lot of miniature work now. You don’t see a lot of stop motion work anymore and all that was practical. Anything that has, like, rotoscoped hand animated lightning—that is the time period when that was happening.”

Speaking with Buckley, it becomes clear that there is a humility and devotion to the preservation of stories about the people and processes of filmmaking that define her as a producer. “I want to pull the onus away from the producer because, given the opportunity, I think, with the right guidance it’s just how you get these stories from these generous people,” she explained. “I said the same thing when I won two consecutive [Rondo’s](#). My job is just to reach out and say, ‘We thought about you.’ It is the people who say ‘yes,’ it’s Gene who’s archiving all of the VFX all over Los Angeles; it is all of these people that say, ‘I want to tell this story,’ and, ‘I’m going to take time out of my busy day to tell you a story.’ The people who will look through their slides, who will go through their archives. They are the heroes of every disc I’ve ever worked on.”

Editing a Wealth of Interviews

By the time Buckley was done wrangling the people, research, and on camera interviews necessary for *Into the 8th Dimension*, it was clear that Michael Flesher had an embarrassment of riches on his hands to edit into a final form. “To Heather’s credit, she got a hold of some people I didn’t think we’d ever get; Christopher Lloyd, Peter Weller, and John Lithgow are in there,” he said. “It was so important because, sometimes when you get actors to interview, they don’t have a lot to say because it was just a gig for them and they moved on.”

On the flipside, it soon became apparent to Flesher that what made Buckley’s job easier was about to make his job more challenging. “When you’re dealing with a dozen interviews for a documentary, that’s a lot of people to squeeze in there and a lot of story,” he explained. “The shooting of the film was the least challenging part of the documentary because the shooting of it, by and large, was like most other films. They had their problems and they had their issues and so forth, but it’s like, ‘We cast it, we shot it,’ but then once you get into the editing



Orphan of the Storm

One potential disappointment to interviewing someone about a given project is discovering what might have been, but ultimately never happened. In the case of the Shout! Factory Blu-ray content, the lamented absentee was a featurette about Earl Mac Rauch’s novelization of *Buckaroo Banzai*.

“Heather introduced a new sub-genre of novelization interviews to Blu-ray supplements,” explained Ethan Halo, “the first one being Dennis Etchison for *Videodrome*. Then Alan Dean Foster for *The Thing*.”

Buckley confirmed, “Had I gotten Earl Mac Rauch, that would have been our first novelization interview.”

“With *Buckaroo Banzai*, the nature of that film—as a cult film especially—invites obsessiveness,” Halo continued. “I love the novelization for it, which I read back in the day and which I still have. It has all kinds of footnotes to his other adventures which were either totally non-existent or had maybe been earlier drafts of the film, but has been long since excised; sort of an early tongue in cheek way to hint at a kind of a *Buckaroo Banzai* universe. They gave this wonderful texture and a real sense of history, and I think that the documentary materials on the *Buckaroo Banzai* disc has some of that. But it was a shame Earl Mac Rauch wasn’t able to participate, because he’s an interesting guy.”

“I see now that the email from Richter says Earl Mac Rauch wasn’t available because he went to go buy some watermelons and he never came back,” noted Buckley

Halo laughed. “It’s called commitment to a bit, man.”

Buckley laughed in response. “He just stepped out, and for the rest of 2016 it’s like, ‘Where is he?’”

Sadly, the world may never know.

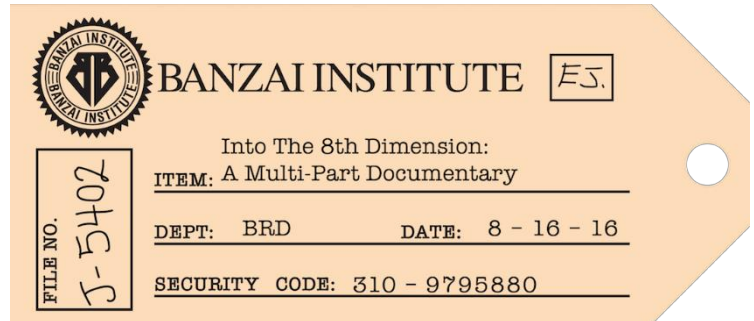
room a whole other story kind of takes place. So that was a challenge trying to figure out how to balance all that properly.” In fact, Felsher juggled a total of twenty-two separate interview subjects.


The absence of Earl Mac Rauch in particular proved disappointing, but navigable. “Even though Earl Mac Rauch didn’t participate, Rick could speak so eloquently about Rauch and how all of that went down that we could cover him without having him there,” Felsher said. “But you need to really make sure you understand the genesis of the film and that it stands alone. That’s why I think the documentary ended up being as long as it did. This wasn’t a situation where you could rush through, ‘Well we had this idea and then we get the script and then we went to shoot.’ It’s more like, ‘No, you really need to get into where this whole universe came from and then cover the rest.’”

Fortunately, the nature of *Buckaroo Banzai*’s quirky and manifold personality proved a fertile ground for the people involved to talk about the film. “I found that everyone who worked on this film did it because they were really intrigued by the movie,” Felsher said. “So they had a lot of memories along the lines of, ‘Yeah, I didn’t know what to make of this but I had to do it, because there’s nothing else like it.’ All the actors really stepped up to the plate and had something interesting to say rather than, ‘Yeah, I got an offer through my agent, I did the movie, blah blah blah.’”

Part of the craziness behind translating the *Buckaroo Banzai* script to the screen was the firing of original Director of Photography, Jordan Cronenweth during the production. Surprisingly, “That happens more often than you think,” said Felsher, “But certainly in a situation like this where it’s the first time director...and Cronenweth was no slouch; it’s not like he was some guy who had never done anything before. Begelman just didn’t like the look he brought to the film, and then Fred Koenekamp was brought in.”

At the mention of Producer David Begelman, the notion is proposed that a documentary of its own could be made about his history with *Buckaroo*. “Yeah that’s the thing with him,” Felsher acknowledged. “The problem I have is I wish he could have been around, just to hear his side the story. There were so many things that he did that I couldn’t understand, even from a business standpoint, why he did them. I mean, the look of the movie...how could he not know what he’d get from Cronenweth? Why would he bring in this guy? Why would he do this? Why would you treat your director like this? I was just like, ‘I don’t get it. I don’t understand.’”





BANZAI INSTITUTE EJ.

Into The 8th Dimension:
ITEM: A Multi-Part Documentary

DEPT: BRD DATE: 8 - 16 - 16

SECURITY CODE: 310 - 9795880

FILE NO.
J-5402

Tag it and bag it: As in all matters Institute-related, a copy of *Into the 8th Dimension* has been retained by Mrs. E. Johnson for archival purposes. Source: BBI Rolo Tomasi

That’s a Wrap

It is perhaps inevitable that no single documentary can capture every personality and aspect of its subject. In the case of *Into the 8th Dimension*, however, it was not for lack of trying, and with very little fat to trim from the source material. “There wasn’t a five hour documentary and we whittled it down to two,” said Felsher. “The first rough cut of the documentary was, I think, one hundred twenty-five minutes and it got cut down to one hundred and twenty. If there is any missing material, I doubt it was of any real significance.”

Given the time crunch to make the documentary, it was fortuitous that the pieces fell into place with relative ease. That said, “rushed” appears to be the default setting for content production. “I never have enough time to do these things, that’s a complaint I always have,” he continued. “It’s always like, ‘Oh, if I only had one more week.’ But the problem with that is, maybe you get one more week, and then something else comes up. Then it becomes, ‘Well, I need one more week, but then I’ll need one more week.’ I’ll take as much time as you can give me and then I’ll never deliver anything. It’s good to have deadlines because, at some point, you’ve just got to stop. *Buckaroo Banzai* was in a maelstrom, that was the whole thing. It was in the eye of the hurricane.”

Making sense of the chaos can’t help but change how you look at something. Such was definitely the case for Felsher and his perceptions of *Buckaroo Banzai* after making *Into the 8th Dimension*. “It certainly enriched my appreciation of all the time and effort that went into the film,” he said, “and all of the dedication and blind faith that so many people had in terms of coming over; like Lithgow feeling comfortable enough to give a performance like that for a brand new director. Richter had been a screen writer, but he had never directed before. Lithgow had the potential to come off as really silly, in a film that maybe would just be terrible, and the guy would never be able to live the thing down. But he

believed in the project, and all the actors and all the technicians all believed in it, even if they didn't fully understand what it was that they were doing."

"And that left an impression on me, like, 'Man, that's interesting that they all had faith in this thing in one form or another, even if they didn't fully have their heads wrapped around what the hell it was going to be.' And that says a lot about any creative endeavor when you get that feeling like, 'This is worth something. There's something of value here. Let's do that.'"

"That was something that I really came away with," Felsher continued. "I appreciate just how much passion was put into this by everybody, and the tragedy of its release, and the fact that it didn't connect at the time but the fact that it's so beloved now. I think that time has proven that this movie was definitely something. Not everybody is going to love it. It's not a film for everybody, but the people who get it, who can ride that wave and go, 'Oh yeah, this is something. I love this,' tells me a lot."

Making the documentary was also an opportunity to once again marvel at the journey all films take from script to screen. "That's the main thing I come away with, when I do any of these documentaries, is just the hard work and dedication of the people who go into any movie-making endeavor," he confirmed. "Making movies is pushing a boulder uphill. Every single movie is pushing a boulder uphill. Sometimes the boulder is kind of small, and the hill is not that steep, and the weather is nice, and you've got a lot of strong people around so it's not that big a deal. Other times the hill is a ridiculous incline, the boulder is eighty-five thousand times bigger than you thought it was going to be, it's raining and it's wet and everything is a challenge. Anyone who can get a movie made—to me, that's always a minor miracle, especially something like this."

Reflecting on the making of *Into the 8th Dimension* for Felsher came with mixed emotions. "Looking back, I wish that I had the time to be more involved with the documentary, just because it was such a crazy, active period for me," he lamented. "But thankfully Heather was on the case and able to bring it across the finish line. She managed to get a lot of great people and, at the end of the day, she was really the hero of the project."

Those heroics are on full display throughout *Into the 8th Dimension*. No single documentary can uncover all of a subject's ancient secrets. When something hidden is revealed, a new mystery tends to present itself. The documentary leaves room for some unexplored territory in the future, but it remains the most comprehensive account of *Buckaroo Banzai* on film to date, and is likely to remain so for many years to come.

The Commentary

With post-production winding down, an opportunity for additional content presented itself in the form of an audio commentary recorded by Denise and Mike Okuda. "I don't remember how we got in touch," said Buckley, "but as soon as we locked eyes it was like, 'We need to get you on a commentary.'"

Denise recalled the Okudas receiving a call from the producers, and that, "We were also smash busy on something. I don't remember what we were doing but we were really busy. We didn't have time to do it." Mike added, "We were doing a project for CBS—I can't remember what. And we kept saying, 'Can't do it. Can't do it.' They were very kind. They wanted to involve us and finally we said, 'Look, we're available this coming Sunday,' and it turned out that was the last possible day that they could incorporate the commentary. So they screened the picture, and there you go." As Buckley summed up the experience, "It was sort of a 'Hail Mary' moment at the end of the project."

Persistence paid off with a commentary to the film unattached to the "in-joke" premise of the Special Edition DVD, but the time crunch didn't make for an ideal situation. "We had no prep time," said Denise. "We were planning on re-watching the movie and I don't think we even had time for that." Mike remembered having some notes prepared from another project, but Denise said, "We basically did it cold. I don't think we've ever listened to it afterwards." According to Mike, "If anything, we looked at each other and went, 'Oh...that kind of sucked.' But the recording engineer was saying, 'Oh, that was fun.'"

"Fortunately, we had had the benefit of actually having done a fair number of voice commentaries for *Star Trek* episodes, so we had some idea of how to do it—of the thought process," he continued. Normally you try to prep—you watch it in advance, you write some notes—but there were a couple of times where we went into the studio to do a commentary on one episode and the producer would turn to us and say, 'Hey, we have so and so writer coming in for the next episode in half an hour. Would you do a commentary with them?' And we haven't watched the episode in years. So he kind of cajoled us, and we were like, 'Oh, okay.' It was actually fun because we got to chat with one of our former coworkers, which is always fun to do. In the case of the Banzai disc, it was just us."

Difficulties aside, the commentary is a welcome addition; filled with trivia and anecdotes of interest to Banzai fans. The performances are all the more impressive considering that they were done cold.

Buckaroo Blu-ray/DVD Extras!

By Dan Berger and Sean Murphy

In January 2002, MGM's Special Edition DVD of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* came as a revelation to Banzai fans. The DVD provided a significant upgrade to the videotape and LaserDisc releases of the film from Vestron Video, and others, beginning in 1985. By the early aughts, those legacy video formats were staring down the barrel of their own obsolescence and previous Banzai releases were out of print and becoming difficult to find.

The Special Edition DVD also represented a substantial extension of the Banzai universe, expanding further beyond the offerings of the Banzai Institute website begun in 1998. In effect, the DVD became a showcase for the convergence point between Buckaroo's world and our own. For Blue Blaze Irregulars, the Special Edition's documentary, commentary, and other content represented some of the few fresh glimpses into Buckaroo's world fans had seen in nearly two decades.

By 2014, both the Special Edition DVD and Blu-ray technology had been widely available for a decade or more. Umbrella Entertainment released a Region B *Buckaroo Banzai* Blu-ray on July 5, 2014 in Australia and Arrow Films released a Region B Blu-ray on July 20, 2015 in the UK. Both of these releases included some of the content from the Special Edition DVD, but the Arrow Video Blu-ray included new interviews and new content.

Then, on August 16th, 2016, Shout Factory released a Region A *Buckaroo Banzai* Blu-ray in the United States. Once again, content was carried over from the DVD, but this Blu-ray contained a new two-hour documentary and new audio commentary.

With the MGM Special Edition DVD, Arrow Video, and Shout! Factory Blu-ray releases dedicated to offering new insights into *Buckaroo Banzai*, there is a lot of special edition content. To see all of it, particularly the content on Arrow Video's Region B release of the film, you will have to invest in a region-free Blu-ray player. As you'll see, the investment is well worth consideration.

Sharing is Caring

Even in its dated format, the 2002 MGM Special Edition DVD remains a vital source of unique Banzai content. As such, it has been raided repeatedly for featurettes, photos, and commentary by subsequent releases of the film.

The following is a list of features that appear on the MGM DVD, the Arrow Films Blu-ray, and the Shout! Factory Blu-ray releases of *Buckaroo Banzai*:



Source: Dan Berger

The film - 2.35:1 Anamorphic Widescreen.

Screen-specific audio commentary with director W.D. Richter and writer Earl Mac Rauch

The Alternate Opening W/Jamie Lee Curtis (Length: 07m 14s). All three releases present the Alternate Opening as a standalone viewing experience. The MGM DVD and Arrow Video Blu-ray also incorporate the alternate opening into an optional presentation of the entire film. The Shout! Factory disc includes the alternate opening on a separate DVD in the set, unconnected to the main theatrical presentation.

14 Deleted scenes from the workprint (Length: 14m 17s)

1. Backstage with the Cavaliers
2. Penny's Troubles
3. The Conference Begins
4. "Dr. Lizardo?"
5. "Give Me A Fix!"
6. A Little Down
7. "Therma-what?"
8. New Jersey Meets the Cavaliers
9. John Emdall
10. "Hanoi Xan?"
11. Penny Confronts Dr. Lizardo
12. "Solve These Equations!"
13. "A Piece of Cake"
14. Illegal Aliens

48 BANZAI INSTITUTE FOR BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING AND STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Buckaroo Banzai Declassified documentary - Length: 22m 51s

New Jet Car Trailer for *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets and New Mysteries* TV show pitch - Length: 02m 26s

Original Buckaroo Banzai Teaser Trailer - Length: 01m 17s

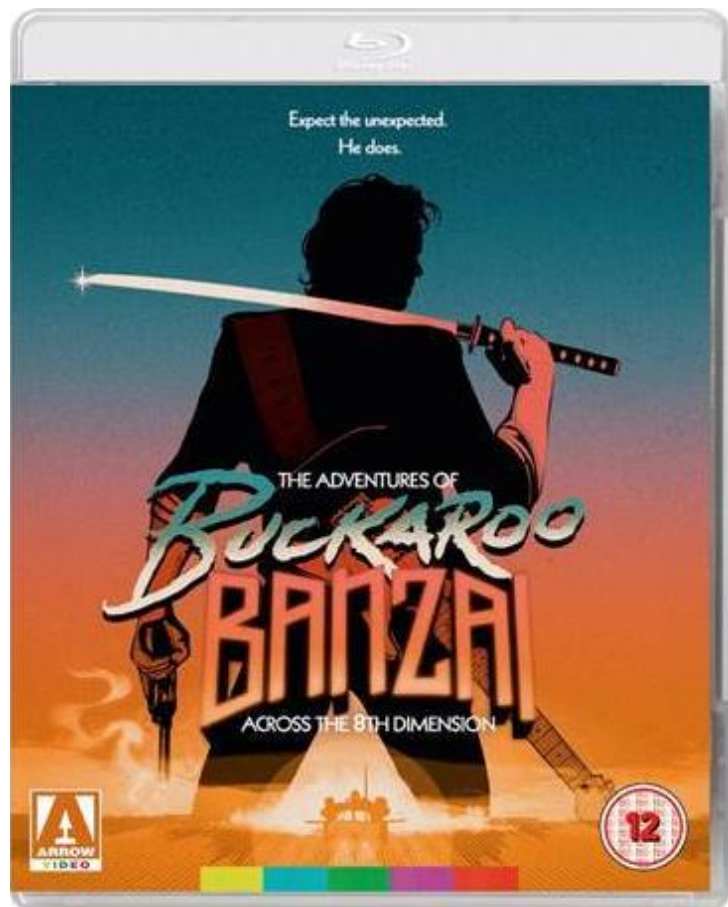
The Arrow Blu-ray release also contains the following content from the MGM DVD:

Banzai Radio audio extra, featuring Denise Okuda and Terry J Erdmann - Length: 10m 2s

The Photo Gallery, with 167 images, is presented as one long section on the Arrow Video Blu-ray but broken up into the following sections on the Special Edition DVD: 1930s, 1950s, Behind the Scenes, Buckaroo, Hong Kong Cavaliers, Jet Car, Lectroids, Penny, Scenes, and Villains.

Unlike the MGM DVD, both the Arrow Films and Shout Factory Blu-rays have English subtitles.

As you can see, the Blu-ray releases are indebted to the Special Edition DVD for much of their additional content.



Source: Arrow Films

To Each Their Own

It's a given that the entertainment industry will always be in search of new and exciting ways to separate cash from the wallets of fans the world over, and *Buckaroo Banzai* fans are no exception to that rule. In addition to the inevitable repackaging of previous releases, *Buckaroo Banzai* has benefited from continued efforts to present new, unique content as part of the bargain. Here are the features and content offered exclusively on each of these releases.

MGM Special Edition DVD (2002)

The granddaddy of the bunch, the Special Edition DVD stands the test of time in terms of the sheer bulk of fan-friendly content packed into a single disc. With video features eating valuable storage capacity on the disc at an alarming rate, the DVD found a variety of ways to pack vast quantities of text, audio, and still-image based content into the release for Blue Blaze Irregulars to enjoy. These are the extra features that can only be found on the DVD:

Pinky Carruther's 47,000 Unknown Facts subtitle track

The Buckaroo Banzai Personal Profiles section which covers five aspects of Buckaroo: The Musician, The Lover, The Scientist, The Man, and The Adventurer.

The Buckaroo Banzai Character Profiles section includes biographies of Banzai, Reno Nevada, New Jersey, Dr. Emilio Lizardo, Lord John Whorfin, Rawhide, Penny Priddy, Perfect Tommy, Pinky Carruthers, John Parker, Lo Pep, Hanoi Xan, Lectroids, and Toichi Hikita.

The Jet Car All Access section includes information and images about Statistics, the Jet Engine, the Cockpit, the Overthruster, and Design.

The Banzai Institute Archives section includes the Historical Archives section with a Buckaroo Banzai Interview, Institute History, Badges, and Hikita's Diary. The Technical Data section includes schematics for the Hong Kong Cavaliers tour bus and Complex 88. The Movie Archive section includes Movie Tie-Ins, Film Locations, and Movie Reviews. There is also a section on the Hong Kong Cavaliers CD Covers.

Enhanced Nuon features (for Nuon DVD players)

There are a total of [five Easter eggs](#) on the DVD.

Spoken languages: French

Subtitles: French, Spanish

Arrow Films Special Edition Blu-ray (2015)

While Umbrella Entertainment was the first to release a Buckaroo Banzai Blu-ray in 2014, Arrow Films was the first to go that extra mile by presenting new features with their 2015 release of the film. Content exclusive to the Arrow Films Blu-ray release includes:

High Definition Digital transfer of the film from original elements by MGM

5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio

The Tao of Buckaroo—An interview with Peter Weller (Recorded April, 2015) Length: 16m 36s

Lord John—An interview with John Lithgow (Recorded April, 2015) Length: 13m 39s

Q&A with stars Peter Weller and John Lithgow moderated by filmmaker Kevin Smith, filmed at Lincoln Center, New York (2011)* Length: 43m 27s

Visual essay by critic and author Matt Zoller Seitz—Length: 18m 08s

Closing sequence without on-screen credits—Length: 4m 03s

Reversible sleeve featuring original and newly commissioned artwork by Matthew Griffin

Booklet featuring new writing on the film by critic James Oliver, illustrated with original stills

Shout Select Collector's Edition Blu-ray/DVD (2016)

The Arrow Films release of *Buckaroo Banzai* was a tough act to follow, but followed it was by Shout! Factory in 2016. Shout! rose to the occasion by creating a two disc Blu-ray/DVD set in their Shout Select line, featuring:

Into The 8th Dimension—A two-hour retrospective documentary including brand-new interviews with the cast and crew including W.D. Richter (director), Neil Canton (producer), Clancy Brown (Rawhide), Carl Lumbly (John Parker), Peter Weller (Buckaroo Banzai), Bari Dreiband-Burman & Tom Burman (make-up and alien designers), Peter Kuran (effects supervisor), Pepe Serna (Reno Nevada), John Lithgow (Lord John Whorfin), Christopher Lloyd

***World Watch One's very own Sean Murphy** makes an appearance in this video at around the 41m mark to present Smith, Weller, and Lithgow with copies of our NYFF/NYCC guerilla edition of the newsletter. Read more about Strike Team Manhattan's adventures in the Big Apple in our [October 2016 issue](#).



John Lithgow (L) and Peter Weller (R) shake hands at NYC's Lincoln Center in 2011. Source: [SModcast Network](#)

(John Bigbooté), Billy Vera (Pinky Carruthers), Michael Boddicker (composer), Michael Fink (VFX supervisor), Lewis Smith (Perfect Tommy), Damon Hines (Scooter Lindley), Gerald Petersen (Rug Sucker), Linda DeScenna (set decorator), Eddie Marks (costume supervisor), Aggie Rodgers (costume designer), Hoyt Yeatman (motion control), and Richard Marks (co-editor). Length: 02h 08m 16s

Audio Commentary with Michael and Denise Okuda

While not as diverse in its exclusive offerings, the heft and depth of the *Into the 8th Dimension* documentary set a new standard in comprehensive coverage of *Buckaroo Banzai* from concept to release, and all points in between. The Okudas' commentary adds a welcome fan-friendly gateway to additional trivia about the film.

Future History

It is easy to imagine a future that contains yet another release of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*. A 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray release of the film remains elusive, and the docudrama's 40th anniversary is a mere three years down the road. What better way to celebrate than with an Anniversary Edition of the film?

Less certain is how future releases will address new content for their editions. The well of Banzai minutia runs deep, but it must hit a bottom at some point. Interviews with Ellen Barkin, Jeff Goldblum, Laura Harrington, and several other cast and crew members could add unique offerings to future collections, and the stories of how *Buckaroo* was promoted at science fiction conventions and through the West Coast offices of this publication are topics well worth exploring on film.

Whether it's collecting existing work in a definitive future edition, new never-before seen content, or some combination of the two, chances are good that a new *Buckaroo Banzai* disc will appear in e-commerce sites and store shelves on some not-too-distant day. You can bet your last nickel that, whenever they do, there we are.

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

JUNE

World Oceans Day (June 8): Every day is World Oceans Day if you're Steve Zissou, but the United Nations officially sets aside this date to encourage celebration and conservation of our planet's oceans. Look for ways to participate as organized locally or globally by groups like [The Ocean Project](#).

Bill & Ted Day (June 9): 2021 marks the first year you can celebrate this following a third movie joining the series. Plan a virtual viewing party, brush up on history, write some world-changing music, but above all, be excellent to each other.

International Buckaroo Banzai Day: (June 11): Recognizing the date on which Dr. B. first penetrated the dimensional barrier.

National Eat Your Vegetables Day (U.S., June 17): Ideally you should eat your vegetables on most days, but we'll be very disappointed if you don't make at least a token effort today.

JULY

Heavy Metal Knitting World Championships (July 9, Joensuu, Finland): The competitive hobby born from a humble question: Is it possible to knit with eyes closed and hands behind the neck in the style of guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen? The inaugural event was held in 2019, then 2020 was postponed due to the pandemic, so join us now in heralding their triumphant return!

Anniversary of Apollo 11 (July 16-24): Take some time to reflect on the "one giant leap" humanity took, setting foot for the first time on a celestial body other than Earth when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface on July 20, 1969.

Comic-Con@Home (virtual event, July 23-25): Comic-Con International isn't resuming

physical gatherings yet, but in the meantime they're keeping the tradition alive online.

National Day of the Cowboy (July 24): The fourth Saturday in July is set aside annually to recognize those knights of the American West, past and present. Attend a rodeo, wear a Stetson, plan a cookout, watch your favorite Western, and spare a thought for the hard-working men and women who embody the job behind the lifestyle.

Apollo 15 50th Anniversary (July 26-August 7): "Apollo Season" continues with the 50th anniversary of Apollo 15, the mission that introduced lunar rovers to the Moon. The [Michigan Space Grant Consortium will celebrate](#) the "all Michigan" crew on July 30. Check out the links above for details.

AUGUST

DEF CON 29 (Aug. 5-8, Las Vegas, NV): The preeminent annual convention for hacking and computer security issues. This year they're running in hybrid mode, cautiously resuming meatspace operations but also streaming on Discord. Billy Travers neither confirms nor denies that he'll be present, either physically or virtually.

37th Anniversary of The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai (Aug. 15): The summer of '84: The third Star Trek, the second Indiana Jones, the first Ghostbusters... and a bunch of wet-behind-the-ears kids portraying our own Dr. B and assorted friends and foes.

PulpFest 2021 (Aug. 19-22, Mars, PA): Explore the roots of pulp fiction and how it still influences stories today. This year's theme is "Love in the Shadows," honoring anniversaries for *Love Story* and *The Shadow* magazines.

National Bow Tie Day (Aug. 28): Tommy's our resident fashionista, but Buckaroo's no slouch when it comes to style. Join him in rocking this timeless look today.

SEPTEMBER

Dragon Con (Sept. 2-6, Atlanta, GA): One of North America's largest and most venerable genre-friendly gatherings. Screen and voice actors, authors, animation and comic book professionals, gaming, costuming, and more.

Rose City Comic Con (Sept. 10-12, Portland, OR): RCCC resumes as a physical

event this year. Be aware of some COVID-related accommodations, including no ticket sales at the door and limitations on multi-day passes to help thin out crowding. Plan accordingly.

National Museum Day (Sept. 18, 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?

CAST BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

Jessie Lawrence Ferguson (June 3), **Peter Weller** (June 24)

JULY

Robert Ito (July 2), **Pepe Serna** (July 23)
Dan Hedaya (July 24)

AUGUST

Lewis Smith (Aug. 1), **Kevin Rodney Sullivan** (Aug. 3), **Carl Lumbly** (Aug. 14)

SEPTEMBER

James Keane (Sept. 26), **Ronald Lacey** (Sept. 28)

ACTIVITIES FOR ANYTIME

Pandemic restrictions are loosening in some places, but if you're still sticking close to home and feeling boxed in, here are some ways to stay virtually connected with the outside world.

Radio Garden: Tune in to live feeds from radio stations all over the world.

12 world-class museums you can visit online: This list from Mental Floss contains links to a dozen notable museums offering virtual views, including the Louvre, the Guggenheim, the Smithsonian, and NASA.

Queso meditation: Some people like to calm their minds while visualizing a Bodhi tree or listening to gentle ocean waves. For others, it might come from watching this relaxing 8-hour clip of nachos being languidly dipped in creamy melted cheese.

Explore World Watch One on Facebook: The Banzai Institute's strategic information section is busier than ever these days. Make sure to catch all the latest Institute news at *World Watch One's* home on Facebook.

This page is provided for meditative purposes. Feel the Zen.

HIKITA • BANZAI

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