

So what is this MST3K thing (and why did 2500 freaks like us fly over 1,000 miles to go to some place called Eden Prairie)?

by Amy Baranoski

On the weekend of August 30, Jeff Carter, SPOC President Brendan Sheehan, *WheatBread* Editor Randy Mack, and I attended the second *Mystery Science Theater 3000* convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These articles are about the experience, and require more than a little explanation...

The television show *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (MST3K) has its humble roots at a Minneapolis local ac-

cess channel. Created in 1988 by Joel Hodgson, local prop comedian and all around cutie, the premise is that Joel was sent up into space by evil scientists Dr. Clayton Forrester (Trace Beaulieu) and Dr. Larry Erhardt (Josh Weinstein).

The "mads" force Joel to watch cheesy movies as part of an evil experiment. Joel's only companions as he orbits the earth in the Satellite of Love are the ro-

bots that he built: Crow, Tom Servo, Cambot and Gypsy. While Cambot films the action, Crow and Tom Servo join Joel in the theater to help heckle the bad movies. (Gypsy has to stay outside, since she controls the higher functions of the ship.)

The following year the show was picked up by Comedy Central (then called Comedy Channel). In the seven seasons since then, the show has gone through a lot of changes. Dr. Erhardt left after sea-

son one and was replaced first by "TV's Frank" (Frank Coniff) and then by Dr. Forrester's mother (played by writer Mary Jo Pehl). Tom Servo got a new voice (writer Kevin Murphy). Joel left the show and writer Mike Nelson stepped in as the mads' new test case. Finally, Trace decided to leave and no one really knows how he will be replaced when the show goes into its eighth season, now on the Sci-Fi Channel.

Although there

have been many changes, the plot remains the same. The poor human is still stuck up in space watching horribly cheesy movies with only his trusty 'bots as companions.

What's truly amazing is the popularity MST3K has gained throughout seven seasons and a big screen movie. The show has always been, and always will be, an extremely low budget, "cowtown puppet show" (in the words of Mike Nelson), run by a close-knit group of

about ten people who make up Best Brains, Inc, the MST3K production company which is located in neighboring Eden Prairie.

People all over the United States and around the world follow the show religiously. The first ConventioCon ExpoFest-A-Rama two years ago brought over 2000 people from all over, and this year's Labor Day weekend ConventioCon ExpoFest-A-Rama 2: Electric Boogaloo, brought over 2500 people. •