

# The Mystery Science Theater Convention, and What It Meant to Me

by Brendan Sheehan

Earlier this year Comedy Central decided to cancel Mystery Science Theater 3000, a move I thought would be the end of an era for me. For over four years, I had watched the crew members of the *Satellite of Love* rip apart the most horrible of horrible movies. After four years of this, its effects had rubbed off on me. I can no longer sit quietly while watching a film, good or bad, and I quietly laugh to myself every time I see a red gumball machine. As you can probably tell, I was quite disappointed when I learned of the cancellation.

A few weeks later, I found out that the creators of MST were going to hold a convention for MST fans in Minnesota, where we can see where they filmed the episodes, see the sets, and reminisce over cheesy flicks of the past. Although I readily admit it was one of the geekiest things I ever wanted to do, I went, figuring at the very least I could thank these people for all the laughs they had given me.

The trip (as if you haven't gotten sick of this yet) began at five o'clock

in the morning, we being a bit edgy about recent airline safety. Of course, for whatever reason, we don't keep our thoughts to ourselves. No, we loudly proclaim such wanna-be FAA slogans like "Do NOT bring a bomb in the airport" and "do not CARRY anyone's bomb onto the plane."

The final step in our flight-taking experience (My first by the way; well, I had flown on one of those little Buddy-Holly-killing-things, but we all decided that didn't count) was watching the flight instruction video. A simple suggestion to airlines, **don't** show a video to a group of people who are going to a convention for people who make fun of movies. It was all pretty morbid and I think we made one elderly woman cry.

We arrived in beautiful scenic Minnesota. The state is very flat, there are no trees. The convention began with a keynote address by several members of the cast, as well as the President of the Sci-Fi channel, the new home of MST3K.

It was interesting to see how much aspects of the characters in the show could be seen in different members of the cast. Mike, of

course, was pretty big and stupid-acting. Not that this makes him less funny, he's just amazing at giving that air of dimness. Think of it as a cross between Rainman and the Incredible Hulk. Paul is like a giddy little kid who snuck into the cookie jar. Bridget and Mary Jo seem to spend most of their time making sure that Mike and Paul stay out of trouble.

Kevin is Tom Servo. This can be taken in two ways: A) Kevin is an incredibly hilarious guy to spend lots of time with or B) Kevin is the world's worst actor. Trace was an exception to this. Both of his characters, Crow and Dr. Forester, are very outgoing, center stage-type people, but Trace is very quiet and really didn't say much through the entire weekend unless a question or comment was directed at him.

Another exception was Jim, producer of the show. In general, Jim is never in the show, and when he is, it's only for brief appearances as Gypsy. Oddly enough, Jim turns out to be the ringleader and spokesman for the group, and turns out to be quite funny himself. Although the keynote address was upbeat and cheerful, Trace's

farewell speech gave the whole night a last-hurrah feel to it.

This all changed after the speech, when we began watching MST3K episodes in the viewing rooms. It's hard to describe being in a room with hundreds of other people, all of whom thought that they were the only ones who got these jokes. We had a hard time leaving the viewing rooms at night because we were having such a good time.

Later, the question and answer session took place and our spirits were lifted even higher. We got our autographs, first in line, and found all of the cast to be very outgoing and friendly. I thanked each one for forever ruining my movie watching. They were flattered.

As we were leaving the convention, we were able to find Trace just as he was about to leave. We thanked him for the great time we had, wished him luck, and waved as he drove off into the sunset in a golf cart yelling "Wheeeeeeeee."

It was then that it hit me. It doesn't matter if MST is on the air or not. Joel was wrong when he wrote the original lyrics to the theme song: MST3K is not just a show, it's an attitude. Long may it reign. •

## Diary of a Juliewa Hopeful

by Amy "Juliewa 2-Electric Bugaloo" Baranoski

I need a job. This lack of employment luckily coincided with Julie Walker, (MST3K Info Club Poobah, affectionately known as her user name, Juliewa), leaving her job at Best Brains, Inc. It also coincided with the trip to the ConventioCon, so this was my prime opportunity. After all, if you are gonna dream, dream big. This is the story of my quest for employment at Best Brains:

### Friday

My journey towards being a Best Brains employee began not-so-promptly at 6:30 Friday morning. I almost completely missed my chance for employment when Randy's car started making funny wobbling motions while going Warp 3 down the Mass Pike. But somehow, ("somehow"=Aidan yelled at Randy enough), we made it to Logan airport alive and on time, only to realize that Logan is a damn big place and we had no clue where we were going.

Amazingly, we arrived at my weekend-long job hunt (i.e. the ConventioCon) in one piece and in reasonably good spirits. My first sign of encouragement was being honored with special press passes and press kits. Thank you, Wheat-Bread. This meant I would have more of an opportunity to shmooze behind the scenes; and, of course, more opportunity to suck up.

At 12:30, I stuffed the entry box for the "Shop Ahoy!" contest. Winners got to shop with Bridget Jones

(writer) and Mary Jo Pehl (writer, Pearl Forrester). This would be a prime opportunity for me to suck up to important people, and also a whole lot of fun—brunch at Planet Hollywood, followed by a day of shopping at the Mall of America (the huge one with the amusement park in it). Wowiee!

That afternoon, my cohorts and I went nuts in Gypsy's Basement buying neat-o souvenirs. I can assure you that this was money well spent. A little bribery never hurt anyone.

After an afternoon watching the touching farewell video for Trace Beaulieu and a few episodes of MST in screening rooms, I ran into Juliewa's assistant, Barb. After being impressively introduced by Randy, now my press agent, I was told that Juliewa's position had been split up and divided among the current staff. Damn. She did, however, say that they will be looking for unpaid interns for the production season beginning in October. After careful consideration, I decided to scale down my ambitions, from Info Club Poobah to lowly intern. I can always work my way up to Juliewa.

The remainder of the night was spent staying up way too late watching more episodes in the screening room. You can never watch too much MST. Besides, you never know what will be asked on the employment application: ("What is Torgo's most distinguishing feature?" "Sing the Kim Cattrall song."). I want to be ready for anything, even a pop quiz.

### Saturday

Saturday morning started out on sort of a low point. I found out that apparently another woman stuffed the ballot box worse than I did and I didn't win the shopping trip. It appears I have competition: the bitch. But I showed her. Later in the day, I got to go to a very intimate press conference, since I am important and she is not.

By 1:30, we were in the autograph line. After getting autographs from everyone else, I started talking to Jim Mallon, the President

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Trace Beaulieu, right, obviously ecstatic over the thought of Amy working at Best Brains. [This photo was taken moments before Security arrived, and has been submitted as state's evidence]

## So what is this MST3K thing (and over 1,000 miles to go to

by Amy Baranoski

On the weekend of August 30, Jeff Carter, SPOC President Brendan Sheehan, *Wheat-Bread* 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 access 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 robots 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 season one and was replaced first