



The Illuminata

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Re-Inventing the Wheel: Remakes Done Right

By Bret Funk

The most coveted category of remake is the Reinvention, a reinterpretation of the original that breaks new ground, garners more praise, or otherwise distinguishes itself from the original (in a good way). Sadly, it's also the least populous category, with expediency and budget saving decisions often overwhelming efforts to improve quality. These gems do exist, however, and if you have the patience to delve through the vast sea of substandard fare you'll eventually be rewarded with something that dazzles the mind.

Some claim that for a Reinvention to truly surpass the original, it must seek its own voice; it must stand alone. This statement is often misconstrued to mean that for a remake to be a success, it must have as little as possible to do with the original. Such an assertion is faulty and impossible to attain. If a remake has nothing to do with the original, it's not a remake. A Reinvention can not be completely disengaged from its

ancestor, and it should not be. In fact, many of the best Reinventions contain strong elements of Homage as well, so much so that it's sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Putting remakes into discrete categories (as I have done) disguises the fact that they fall more appropriately into a spectrum with broad regions of overlap.

My interpretation of the concept that a Reinvention must be able to stand alone is this: to qualify as a Reinvention, the work must be compelling enough to win an audience independent

of the original. Qualifying a work's success in this area is difficult for several reasons, the most prominent being that fans of the original are the most likely to tune in, and if the remake is good, they're also likely to continue watching. Conversely people who did not watch the original (or did not like it) may have biases that prevent them from giving the remake a chance. In such a subjective area there will certainly be disagreements about what qualifies as a Reinvention (as I have discovered in my research for this article), so I beg your forgiveness if the remakes I mention here don't make your lists, or if I don't include something you think is deserving. (Also, for the sake of my sanity, I've confined my research to screen -> screen remakes. Print to screen remakes are *adaptations* and may be the subject of a future series.)

In my last article, I mentioned the Sci-Fi channel's remake of *Battlestar Galactica*. I'm now about halfway through season two and my opinion has not changed: this is a Reinvention of the first order. BSG balances elements of the original with a completely new interpretation of the Cylons. The characters are far more fleshed out than the original, with good and bad traits that make for more compelling television. Had this show been the first incarnation of the franchise, BSG might be considered a classic comparable to *Star Trek* or *Babylon 5*, and not a cheap television rip off of *Star Wars*.

To be fair to the Sci-Fi channel (something I am loathe to do), I should also mention their *Stargate* series. I have never watched an entire episode (partly because I know that *Stargate's* lower budget and strong viewership were key factors in the Sci-Fi's decision to cancel *Farscape*), but from online reviews and friends who are also fans, it sounds like they've managed to forge a cogent universe from what I considered a decent SF movie.

I haven't watched any of the new *Doctor Who* series, but I also haven't watched much of the old *Doctor Who* series, so my opinion on the franchise might not count for much. Those I know

Con't on page 8

In This Edition

Remakes Done Right

RPG Corner v5.5

Women in Gaming

The Writer's Block
Five Years Down the Road

REVIEWS

Benighted

Dark Celebration

Forest Mage

Hounding the Moon

Lady of Serpents

Having recently secured a spot in a game that a friend of mine has been running (thank the powers), I thought it would be a good idea to shift the perspective of the column (at least this month) from the Game Master to the Player. It's been the better part of nine years since I've been in a game—without any responsibility beyond my own character—which has lasted more than three sessions. I've completed two full scenarios in the new game and decided that now would be a great opportunity to discuss what qualities a Player should display to impress and make an ally of the GM. Keep in mind that this is not a guide on brown nosing, because the tips that I'm about to offer will make the game much more enjoyable for you, the Player. The fact that it may encourage favors from the GM is purely coincidental.

The first rule of being a good Player is to be on time. If at all possible, and if it's okay with the GM, be at the game a little early. This provides time for you to tweak your character, confer with the GM about the events and details of the last session, and gives you time to settle into the gaming space and get comfortable. In addition, your punctuality reinforces the GM by displaying your interest in the game, and the plot he has constructed for you. Being late once or twice is unavoidable with all of the pressures and delays we face, but consistent tardiness is just disrespectful. It throws the whole game out of whack and keeps the GM and the other Players from having a good time. In the last session of the game in which I am playing, both of the other players were late, and I'm not talking ten or fifteen minutes late either. I mean hours late. I was really honked off about it because there was nothing I could do, as my character's progression depended on the other characters. Because of this, I withdrew from their characters a bit, and kept more information to myself. I was protecting my investment of time by ensuring that I could continue the plot without their presence, and that harms the fun factor of the game.

The second thing I think a Player worth his salt should do for a game is take good notes. There is really no downside to writing down important events, character names, and details. It may seem a little anal or obsessive, but it isn't really. Having good notes on the game you are in grants you wonderful opportunities to see connections, and recall important details without having to keep everything in your head. You should at the very least be keeping track of NPCs and big plot events, and depending on how detailed a GM you may

be gaming with, you may want a daily accounting of your characters actions and thoughts and deeds. GM's notice when a Player is keeping notes, and usually reward them by providing extra bits of important information to that Player, because he knows that the Player will get it and keep it. GMs spend a lot of time creating the plots that the Players run through, and a monstrous amount of detail goes into some of them. Knowing that the details are being noticed and marked down pleases the GM, and allows the Player to experience the plot more fully. They key is to re-read your notes often, revisiting them whenever you can to look for connections and details that seemed unimportant at the time, but with the addition of new information take on vital importance. A prime example of this from the game I am playing now is the original owner of a stolen car. At the time I learned of this man, his name meant nothing to the investigation. I assumed it was a trivial detail, but recorded it anyway. Later on, when I found an abandoned child who shared his last name, he became the centerpiece of the investigation. I'd have floundered were it not for that one name that seemed so unimportant.

You can really help yourself by knowing the system that you are using. If you have to stop and check with the GM every time you want to do something, he will get annoyed and you may get left out or left behind. Additionally, being familiar with the systems may help you to find loopholes in the rules that can benefit you, and at the very least you will know how best to take advantage of your character's abilities.

Another way to impress GMs and to help yourself out in the process is to attend the game in costume. Of course there are some obvious caveats to this bit of advice. I don't recommend getting a full suit of armor to wear once a week at your friend's house, and I can't really advocate getting dolled up like your barbarian, who I'm sure looks resplendent in his loin cloth, unlike you. It's much easier to find something suitable for a game in a modern setting, but anything that captures the feel of the character you are using is fine. The idea of the costume is to use it to help you get into and stay in character. The clothes make the man, after all, and if you look like a daring double agent, it's easier to act like one.

Speaking of staying in character, that is exactly what a good Player should do as much as possible. Staying focused and staying in character continues the trend of showing interest, both in the GM's material

Con't on page 7

Women in Gaming: A Dicey Role

by Terry Crotinger/montanasings

My friend and science fiction mentor, Scott Maehner, started me with role playing games (RPG) as a way to understand various facets of science fiction, fandom, anime and the like. Discussions about being a character player versus Game Master (an agenda he admits he has for me) abounded for hours, either in person when I lived in the area, and now every Wednesday night by phone (unlimited minutes—such a blessing!). I asked him about our gaming group and why he enjoyed it, nay, suffered incredible torture from the group on a weekly basis. Even though we've discussed this often, he comes back to the same theme: women gamers. He isn't a GM in order to pick up chicks (though, if an available babe entered the game, I'm sure he wouldn't mind). I believe he GMs because he is a closet voice-actor and this helps relieve the pressure of his vocal genius while sharing in the dynamic of the group—playing the part of non-playing characters, and, as GM, narrator and sometimes, god.

Scott, being a pragmatic soul, felt I needed to know the caveats of gaming as well as the benefits: women gamers are not common, and sometimes, not valued. In my effort to understand this conundrum, since I am one, I asked him to share his perspective and experience.

Scott: "To begin with, it was an act of sheer self-interest, compounded by desperation, and under pressure by overabundance for which I have only myself to blame. I had RPGs in vast number, shelves of core game books and adventures, and I was more than willing to GM—what I lacked was players.

"I don't even mean good players, but *any* players. One might think that in a college town, there would be gamers, good gamers especially. The problem is that there usually is no good way to make that all-important connection that gets and keeps a game group going. By the time I usually encountered a gamer, they already had a game or three in addition to any other commitments (school, work...breathing) and were just not interested in taking on another one. In addition, I was unwilling to simply run (and by run, I mean buy everything published to run) three-point-whatever Dungeons & Dragons. For that kind of cash outlay, I'd rather buy stock in Hasbro and have a trickle of money coming in stock dividends. It's almost enough to make a self-respecting GM toss out the dice in frustration. However, at least in this town, fandom had a meeting place, and that was how I luckily, and I mean lottery-luckily, met Terry.

"Terry was just taking her first few steps outside Trek fandom and curious about what lay beyond that corner of SF fandom where many of us started. I was somewhat initially skeptical about Terry's reaction to RPGing due to her past with organized religion. Some of us who grew up in the 70s-80s remember, with great annoyance, the demonizing of the hobby with enthusiasm and sheer misinformation that rivaled the Salem Witch Trials. Had I not been so lucky as to have an actual Methodist minister as part of a previous gaming group, I might have missed out on a great opportunity. Along with that minister, I had the great luck to game with a group that was more than half women. The hub and frequent hosts of the group were a married couple who were comic book and anime fans, and big into science fiction and fantasy. They were artistic, intelligent, and insightful with a talent for infectiously, enthusiastically inspiring those traits in others. That group had some *great* players. I've experienced the sort of "roll-playing" which is little more than, "I kill it and takes its stuff—who needs plot or character interaction?" But there wasn't just combat, there was *plot*, and *subplot* and *theme* and all those great obscure English major words that, when expertly applied and combined, add up to "good game".

"RPG author and editor, John Tynes, defines role-playing as improvisational radio theater. For all the gamers I have met and gamed with as a player or GM, women gamers are usually three steps ahead and gaining on being the kind of players you want: the kind that think, reason, feel and *act* the parts of the character—role-playing, the name of the game, literally. So those were the ingredients I was hunting for, to be an excellent GM, with at least some excellent female players, in a city where I was having trouble finding even a free bad male player with Doritos breath and a mammoth breast fixation. I set the bar even higher for myself. I didn't just want to be a GM, but I wanted to GM players outside of the bleh-dungeon-crawl mindset, and more importantly, try to keep that mindset from being passed on."

As Scott was the only person I'd ever had as a Game Master, I was gradually and gracefully introduced to the concept of acting, voice acting, and role-playing—just short of LARPing (live action role play). I was encouraged to think like my character. It was okay to react to bad (dice) roles as my character would. I made up alien (or worse) language and accents. I could sing,

Con't on page 7

The Writer's Block: Five Years Down the Road

by Charles Gramlich

Five years for *The Illuminata* now. In that time Bret has missed one issue. Dare we call it the "Katrina Issue?" I've been in a lot of magazines that didn't last that long or publish that regularly. Our editor deserves kudos for his work ethic, and energy. But so do we who've scribed for this fine newsletter. I'm giving myself a figurative pat on the back even as I write this. And I wish *The Illuminata* happy birthday.

This makes the forty-fourth column that I've done for the newsletter. Maybe it's time for a retrospective, a look back at the main points I've made over the years. Here they are.

1. Ideas are everywhere for the plucking, in the fiction and nonfiction that you read, in the movies you watch and the people you meet. Dreams are some of the greatest sources.

2. Ideas are only the beginning. You have to work your ideas, like kneading bread before you bake it. Put them through boot camp so that they can be all they can be. A good way to do this is to interrogate your ideas. Ask them questions. Demand answers. But don't necessarily accept the first answer you get. Dig deep.

3. Don't try to manufacture a style for yourself. Write and keep on writing, and your style and voice will develop organically.

4. Don't worry about money at first. Keep the focus on the words you're working. In the publishing world, the "writing" is the only thing you can control.

5. Develop your writing "tools." That is, educate yourself about vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. You have to know the mechanics or you'll never write up to your potential. Just reading good writers will help you pick up the nuances of language and how it is used, but reference books are a necessity. If you need more, consider taking a refresher course at a local college.

6. Learn about other writers. See how they practice--or practiced--their craft. And don't ignore *any* genre of writing. Every writer and every genre has something to teach you.

7. The "telling" detail is the key to writing memorable prose. This is the detail that grabs and holds the reader's attention in any given scene. Mine your memories for such details. Think of events *you've* experienced. What details come immediately to mind? *Those* were the telling details for you.

8. Openings are the most important part of your piece; endings are next. Openings sell the piece you're

submitting. Endings sell your next piece. Make 'em sing.

9. Readers like sympathetic characters.

10. Make contact with other writers. Let them help you flesh out ideas and give you emotional support. And return the favor. Writing really is a lonely business, but you don't have to be alone every second.

11. Rewrite everything.

12. Finish what you start, even if you can only get there by adding one good paragraph a day. Paragraphs add up to pages, and pages to stories and articles and books. Then submit what you've finished.

13. Learn how to properly format your submissions. There are plenty of books that can help, and you can usually find exactly the information you need in a magazine's "guidelines." These can be found inside the magazine itself, or, usually, online. Give the editors what they want in the way they want it.

14. You'll get rejections. Let them make you angry if you must, but *don't* let them make you stop trying.

15. Most importantly, WRITE! Butt in chair; hands on the keyboard. Or however you have to do it. Just get it done.

Illuminations 2006

Entries for this year's Illuminations Speculative Fiction Writing Contest have already started to arrive! Our panel of judges is eager to start reading your stories so that candidates for the next volume of *Beacons of Tomorrow* can be found.

If you have writing ambitions, we at the *Illuminata* encourage you to send in a submission for the contest. If you know someone else looking to gain exposure for their writing, please spread the word. A fee of \$5.00 is required per entry, and multiple entries are allowed. The fee will be used to help finance this contest and future anthology projects.

The highest scoring entry will receive a \$25 cash prize, and all submissions earning more than 80% of possible points will be guaranteed inclusion in *Beacons of Tomorrow* v2. Stories earning 70%-80% of possible points will have the option to revise their stories based on the judges' suggestions, though there is no obligation to do so. Contest entrants are not obligated to have their story included in the anthology and may back out at any time prior to signing the contract.

There's nothing to be gained by waiting for the deadline. Send your stories in today!

Reviews

Benighted

Kit Whitfield

Del Rey, Sept 2006

\$19.95, 544 pgs.

ISBN 0345491637

Review by Harriet Klausner

On an alternate Earth almost identical to ours, ninety-nine percent of the population are lycos, people who change into mindless, ravaging beasts at the full moon. The other one percent are norms, and are considered genetic freaks. These “barebacks” all work for the Department for the Ongoing Regulation of Lycanthropic Activity (DORLA). Their job is to protect the Lycos from each other or other barebacks and represent them if their crimes are so severe they end up in the courts.

Lila Galley, a norm who works for DORLA, is devastated when her friend and fellow worker Johnny loses his hand to a lycos attack. Later on he is murdered and the person under scrutiny is Mr. Ellaway who Lola is supposed to defend. On a search for information with her trainee Marty, three werewolves attack, and they arrest the Lycos for attempted murder and questioned. One of the people who interrogate them is killed with a silver bullet, the same kind of bullet that killed Johnny. Lila elects to stay on the job, while those who questioned the perp elect to be relocated until the danger is over. Moving in with her lycos boyfriend, Lila realizes her life is in danger and she could be killed if she doesn't find Seligmann soon and figure the link between the trainee and Johnny.

Kit Whitfield has written a great urban fantasy because of her brilliant world-building skills that create a lycanthropic culture where people who can not change into wolf form are considered freaks. The “barebacks” work for the Lycos in a realm where there is much prejudice between the two groups. The lycos look down on barebacks who are second class citizens who work for the lycos. The protagonist struggles to accept her place in this world where she is in the abyss of intense prejudice.

Dark Celebration

Christine Feehan

Berkley, Sep 2006

\$23.95, Hardcover

ISBN 0425211673

Review by Harriet Klausner

The Carpathians and their human companions come together to celebrate Christmas. However, the clan knows there is not that much to rejoice in this Yuletide season. Fear of extinction is real: there is already a very low birth rate, many are stillborn and the infant mortality rate is high. On top of that their demonic, vampiric, and hunter enemies are mounting well planned assaults to eliminate females.

Prince Mikhail Dubrinsky worries that he cannot save his people, as he knows the evidence is overwhelming that they are an endangered species. He fears for the safety of his soulmate Raven and their daughter Savannah, but Mikhail wants more offspring, not just to procreate but because he cherishes his two females and wants more to love and nurture.

His bother Jacques is concerned over the safety of his “lifemate” Shea, a former human medical doctor, who carries his child. Other Carpathian males are just as worried about the females and the children, but none understands that a betrayal that abets a dark mage may prove more dangerous to survival than the vampires, hunters, and demons that seek to leave the species extinct.

Though well written, *Dark Celebration* feels more like a transition book setting the table for future delights. The plot is thin and no couple takes charge of the story line. Still, this is well written and will help newcomers obtain a deep understanding of Carpathian customs, lifestyles, and natural enemies while long term fans will know that the treats of “Dark Desserts” (recipes included) will soon follow with future tales.

Science Fiction: a subdivision of fantastic literature which employs science or rationalism to create an appearance of plausibility.

— Paul Brians

Reviews

Forest Mage **Robin Hobb**

EOS, Sept 2006

\$25.95, Hardcover, 736 pgs.

ISBN 0060757639

Review by Harriet Klausner

After recovering from the plague Nevare Burvelle is the only one who feels he is not skin on bones. His doctor believes he is gaining too much weight, a rare symptom of the plague. Nobody believes him that the plague came and spread when the primitive magic believers, the Speck people, used dust that made people sick. He believes this because he fought Tree Woman in another realm and recovered the missing part of himself, a person who was Tree Woman's lover and used magic.

Now Nevare is returning home, crossing the plains where the King's Road is destroying magic and the way of life, and bringing outsiders who settle there. He watches magic being totally destroyed when he sees a boy put cold iron on the Dancing Spiral. Twice he unknowingly uses magic, and by the time he reaches home, he is worse than obese. His family turns on him, and his father disowns him. He journeys to the frontier post of Gettys, where he becomes an enlightened man taking care of the cemetery. The Speck people tell him that the magic controls him and he is supposed to stop the sacred trees from being torn down because the magic told them so. He doesn't know how to use the magic, and if he doesn't find answers soon, the Specks will bring war on Nevare's country and that means death to all he holds dear.

Robin Hobb is one of the best high fantasy writers of the new millennium. Her characters, no matter how secondary, are well drawn and have complete personalities. The protagonist is not a hero by choice but because the magic chose him and though he fights it, in the end he gives in to its demand to save his loved ones. There is plenty of action and lot in excitement in *Forest Mage* so readers will thoroughly enjoy this spellbinding tale.

I don't see how an article of clothing can be indecent. A person, yes.
— Robert A. Heinlein

Hounding the Moon

P.R. Frost

Daw, Sept 2006

\$23.95, Hardcover, 352 pgs.

ISBN 0756403898

Review by Harriet Klausner

When Scrap the Imp entered the human realm he knew that when he was big enough he would infect Tess with the imp virus and battle the other imps to meld with her. When Tess came down with the virus she was taken in by The Sisterhood of the Celestial Blade Warriors who healed her, trained her how to fight demons, and then tossed her out because she was too independent to fit in with their order.

Out in the world, Tess and Scrap are a unit even though they have yet to fight a demon. Her chance will come when she meets Cynthia Walking Moon, who along with her friends, is attacked by a dog who kills before Tess dispatches him. She later learns the dog is looking for the new Weaver who creates the tapestry of life and each night the dog undoes some of the work because if it is ever finished the world will end. Two men come into Tess' life one who she is attracted to but is very wary of and one who knows far too much about Tess' magical life. Both men play an integral part in the upcoming battle with the demons that are using a rogue portal to enter this world in order to possess the tapestry.

Readers who like the urban fantasies of Mercedes Lackey will want to read the brilliant storytelling of *Hounding the Moon*. Scrap, an 8-inch imp who smokes cigars, wise cracks his way through life, and likes to wear Tess' clothes (don't ask how), almost steals the show. There is much action in this character-driven fantasy novel based on Native American myths. P.R. Frost displays a unique and refreshing voice in this uniquely original, fantastic and spellbinding urban fantasy.

Reviews

Lady of Serpents

Douglas Clegg

Ace, Sep 2006

\$23.95, Hardcover

ISBN: 0441014380

When Aleric the Falconer was converted into a Vampyre, many of his peers believed he was the hero who would lead them to the Promised Land, a savior ready to battle the likes of Enora the sorceress and her minions. However, Aleric fails and Enora captures him, like she has done to so many other Vampyres. Humiliated and demeaned, he must entertain his captor by fighting in her arena. Refusal means a horrific death.

Aleric knows his race is losing hope, so he seeks a means to escape his incarceration. If he succeeds in that task, Aleric concludes he cannot defeat the sorceress without the help of an alchemist. He also knows the only individual who can provide him with the information he needs is his enemy, the woman who seduced him into becoming an undead: Pythia, the Lady of Serpents.

Lady of Serpents is a fascinating Vampyricon tale about an unsure hero struggling with the need to overcome his mistakes in order to achieve what most believes is his destiny. In many ways Enora is the more fascinating character with her evil use of prisoners as slaves, "entertainers", and cannon fodder, but readers will admire the filled-with-doubts Aleric trying against all odds. Fans of vampire epics will appreciate this enjoyable fantasy while seeking out the Aleric's previous tale *The Priest's Blood*.

Women in Gaming (con't)

I could curse, I could pout because my character drove me to push myself aside and live wildly for a few hours every Wednesday evening. Other than some common sense values and playing nicely with others, with Scott as the GM, even the silliest ideas were acceptable and sometimes encouraged.

Not every woman gamer is valued, a fact that startled me. Next month, I'll continue my exploration of women gamers with Scott and discuss why he enjoyed his RPG group (which still runs after several years) and some of the pitfalls of being a woman gamer.

RPG Corner (con't)

and in the interaction with the other characters. Constantly dropping out of character to swap jokes, order pizzas or whatever, robs the game of momentum and can destroy the mood that the GM has worked very hard to create. It also spoils the role-playing. If you can't count on the other guy to maintain character, you begin to feel self conscious about your efforts in character, leading to a diminished amount of trust with the group, and as I have said on many occasions, the key to a great RPG is the trust between the Players and the GM.

Lastly, and the most blatantly obvious brown nosing that a Player can do is offer to help the GM clean up his gaming space, or even offer his own place as an area to game in. Some GM's prefer to game at home where they have access to all notes and reference materials, but others would rather go elsewhere. Helping the GM shoulder the burden of hosting allows him more time to focus on the Game, which can only benefit you in the long run.

So there you have a little primer on being a good Player. Hopefully most of you do this kind of stuff already, and if you don't I suggest you give it a shot. Anything that enriches the role-playing experience should be tried at least once, but if you find that something I've mentioned detracts from your enjoyment of the game, feel free to curse me and by all means don't do that anymore. Gaming is highly subjective and what works well for me may not work for you at all. That's fine, just remain open to new experiences and new ways to experience them.

Since when has the world of computer software design been about what people want? This is a simple question of evolution. The day is quickly coming when every knee will bow down to a silicon fist, and you will all beg your binary gods for mercy.

— Bill Gates

Reinventions (con't)

who watch the show enjoy it, and some cursory research uncovered far more positive reviews than negative... though some are quick to point out that *Doctor Who* is not a remake at all but rather a continuation of the original.

Blade: The Series also may reach the status of Reinvention, though one might also posit that it, too, is a continuation. The jury is still out on this show, and probably will be until it has at least an entire season under its belt. The *Star Trek* movies and subsequent series were also suggested by a few people interviewed, but those even more than the others count as continuations of an existing franchise.

Only a few feature films stand out as exemplary Reinventions. 1981's *Outland* is a bold interpretation of *High Noon*, with Sean Connery in the Gary Cooper role of a sheriff fighting evil in a town that doesn't care. Steven Soderbergh's 2002 adaptation of *Solaris* garnered a great deal of praise from critics, but this nit-picky reviewer hasn't seen it or the 1972 original of the same name. Jeff Goldblum's acting in 1986's *The Fly* turned a creepy but low-budget Vincent Price flick into a taut thriller. But capping my list as the best SF movie reinvention is John Carpenter's 1982 version of *The Thing*, starring Kurt Russell. This remake took everything good in the original, applied it to the standard Carpenter formula (group of people trapped with a monster in an inescapable locale), and made cinema magic. It remains one of my favorite SF movies of all time.

There are a few films on the horizon that have the potential to become timeless Reinventions, but history has shown that there's a far greater chance these remakes will end up solidly planted in one of the lesser categories. The proposed *Star Trek XI*, a throwback to the original series but with an all new cast, definitely qualifies as a remake, but with so much to live up to, I wonder if it will get the attention to detail it needs to match (or exceed) its forebear. *The Black Lagoon*, *When Worlds Collide*, *Day of the Dead* (it couldn't be much worse!), *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Tron*, and *The Wolf Man* are just a few of the movies on deck to be remade in Hollywood's ongoing quest to captivate our minds (and acquire our money) without producing anything we haven't already seen.

Reinventions are remakes with an eye on the future. Next month we'll explore Homages, remakes whose success relies on the past.

Birthday Wishes

This September begins the *Illuminata*'s fifth year of life. I am immensely impressed that this little newsletter has kept on trucking for four years already, and I am both proud and humbled to have been a small part of that journey. For a privately published newsletter which depends so heavily on the generosity of writers with their time and effort to have made it this far is a testament to everyone's belief in the purpose and validity of this publication. I do believe in the *Illuminata*, and every month that goes by and I see that .pdf waiting for me in my mailbox, I feel part of something really special. I'd like to thank and congratulate the staff of the *Illuminata*, from layout artists to editors, reviewers and anyone who contributes to the newsletter for doing such a bang-up job on the publication, and for not asking me to buzz off once in the last four years. I'd also like to thank and congratulate the staff over at T-Press for all of their hard work. Lastly, I would like to thank the Readers, who have made the newsletter something we can all be proud of, simply by doing what they do and reading it.

Here's to a successful and natural disaster-free Fifth Year.

— Doug Roper

Being included in the *Illuminata* team with the likes of Erin and garrie, Doug, Charles, and Danielle helps me feel the pulse of fandom. Bret, you have allowed me to grow and explore science fiction in ways I thought to be impossible. I am richer and blessed from knowing you all. Thank you, staff; thank you, readers.

Happy Birthday, *Illuminata*! The best is yet ahead.

— Terry Crotinger

What can I say? I'm at a place in my life when all the requirements of adulthood (and fatherhood) are conspiring to keep me from what I love to do: write. The *Illuminata* has been my lifeline, a convenient forum to release my frustrations, a link to my past, so irrevocably and completely changed by Hurricane Katrina; and the sole continuous outlet for my writing. Without this ezine, I probably would have lost my focus; without my co-editors (who have all become my friends) I would have long ago lost my confidence, and without the hordes of readers I pretend download this publication each month (above and beyond our constantly growing mailing list), I'd have lost my faith. Thank you, everyone, for taking a little time to explore the vastness of speculative fiction with me.

— Bret Funk, Editor-in-Chief of the *Illuminata*