

# 2018 RoberCon Panel Guide

We have over 60 panels, which include workshops, Q&A sessions, costume contests, and planetarium shows scheduled for this one amazing weekend.

## Saturday

**10 a.m.**

### **Our Last, Best Hope: 25 Years of 'Babylon 5'**

**Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Chris Kocher (moderator), Anita Casella, John Tremark, Kat D'Andrea*

Showrunner J. Michael Straczynski's sci-fi epic told a sweeping story of interstellar war and its aftermath over the course of five seasons, a concept hard to sell at the time but which has influenced dozens of television shows since. This panel will discuss the show and its effect on TV today.

### **Protectors of Paris: 'Ladybug & Cat Noir' Fight Crime with Style**

**Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Emily Potter, Jennifer Elliott, Emma Whittaker*

The animated adventures of two teen superheroes in the French series *Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug & Cat Noir* have made their way to America on Netflix. Join us to talk about your favorite moments in the show and to test your knowledge of Marinette and Adrien's adventures.

### **Open the Pod Bay Doors: 50 Years of '2001: A Space Odyssey'**

**Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Albert Halstead (moderator), Nicholas Bongiorno, John Ebert, Vincent LoBrutto*

Director Stanley Kubrick's groundbreaking 1968 film, based on the acclaimed Arthur C. Clarke novel, set the standard for all other space-based tales that have followed. This panel will discuss Kubrick's contribution to the science fiction genre, the role of artificial intelligence in *2001*, Kubrick and Clarke's references to mythology, and the film's use of music and choreography with inanimate and abstract images.

### **Alexandria vs. the Savivors: Battle for the Future of 'The Walking Dead'**

**Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Sarah Hower (moderator), Lisa Stuckey, Matt Terzi, Jonathan "Moose" Musok, Jim Bellardini*

The dead walk among the living, but Rick Grimes and friends have other problems lately. The people of Alexandria just want a safe place to call home, but the Savivors want to take that away. We will discuss the latest season of *The Walking Dead* and the epic battle between communities. We will also briefly look at Morgan's crossover.

## **Things that Go Bump in the Night: A History of the Macabre**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Michael N. Shew (moderator), Aaron Thomas, Jennifer Place*

From early gothic horrors of “The Cabinet Dr. Caligari” and “Frankenstein” to the modern classic “Get Out,” get a survey of the history of horror on the big screen and the written page. Discuss how world events shaped horror movie topics and how slashers hacked away forbidden images. Author Jennifer Place will discuss how a real-world location haunted her enough to add horror to what she writes.

**11 a.m.**

## **Through the Wormhole: 25 Years of ‘Star Trek: Deep Space 9’**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: David Rasey (moderator), Thea Whirlwindhorse, Anita Casella*

For its third television series, *Star Trek* broke some of its cardinal rules: Put the action on a space station, let actions have consequences and send the Federation to war. This panel will look back across the *DS9* series, discuss its overall influence on the *Star Trek* universe, and try to answer an important question: Was it real, or was it all the fantasy of a sci-fi writer on Earth in the 1930s?

## **Youth Panel: YouTube’s Geek Culture Goes Worldwide**

### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Lyrik Faling (moderator), Jacinda Daniel, Riley Ziemba*

Thomas Sanders, Markiplier, Jacksepticeye and more have made YouTube its own geekdom. A group of tween and teen fans will discuss what they love, what they hate and everything in between about YouTube’s role in young geek culture.

## **‘Fantastic Beasts’: Let’s Speculate, Just A Smidge**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Amy Hogan (moderator), Stephanie Bailey, Nicole Olmsted, Allie Kamel*

The *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* film release is less than two months away. We’ll take a look at what we know about the film already, what we suspect, and what we hope will be included.

## **‘The Great American Read: Heroes’**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

From the PBS series: Follow the trials and tribulations of some of literature’s favorite protagonists. From Katniss Everdeen to Don Quixote, examine how these everyday heroes and anti-heroes find their inner strength, overcome challenges and rise to the occasion. *Sponsored by WSKG Public Media.*

## **The Editors Speak: How and What to Submit to Get Published**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Joshua Palmatier (moderator), Patricia Bray, Jacob Hadden, Janeen Ippolito*

What are editors looking for today? Are there some ideas that are played out? What's the best way to write a cover letter or approach a publisher? How do you find the right market for your story? Hear what to do (and what not to do) to increase your chance of getting published.

**12 p.m.**

## **From Verity to Jodie: The Women of 'Doctor Who'**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Jana Kucera, Heather Kriesel (moderators), Adrienne Wise, Matt Gaska, Chris Kocher*

Only weeks away from Jodie Whittaker taking over the role of the Doctor, this panel will discuss how women have contributed to the *Doctor Who* universe, from first producer Verity Lambert and theme-tune pioneer Delia Derbyshire to new series director Rachel Talalay.

## **Archie in the 21st Century: 'Riverdale' Re-imagines a Classic Comic Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Peter Hower (moderator), Jenni Vansteenburgh, Sarah Hower*

Discuss the new adventures of Archie Andrews and his friends in the darker setting of the *Riverdale* TV show. We will compare the comics characters to the show and discuss whether we like the added depth it has given to the characters.

## **A Pioneering Mind of Television: The Life and Times of Rod Serling Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenter: Lawrence Kassan*

Rod Serling, one of the early pioneers of broadcast television, was proud to call Binghamton his hometown. This presentation will highlight his childhood, his war years and the role he played in television's "Golden Age." Also explored will be the role of corporate interference and censorship that led to the creation of the iconic television series *The Twilight Zone*.

## **Planetarium Show: 'Asteroid: Mission Extreme'**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

Go on an epic journey to discover how asteroids are both a danger and an opportunity. The danger lies in the possibility of a cataclysmic collision with Earth; the opportunity is the fascinating idea that asteroids could be stepping stones to other worlds – veritable way stations in space – enabling us to cross the solar system. Explore what it would take for astronauts to reach an asteroid and how such an adventure could benefit humankind.

## **Shiver Me Timbers: Hit the High Seas with ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Kirsten Clinton (moderator), JuJu Renee Grate, Kathleen Quinlivan, Josh Clinton*  
Talk about the past, present, and future of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise, including the lesser-known book series. Dive into fan theories, pick apart scenes and share the love for this universe that Disney has created.

**1 p.m.**

## **The Force Comes Full Circle: ‘The Last Jedi’ & Episode IX**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Anthony Borrelli (moderator), Tom Henderson, Allen Archie, Sarah Eaton, Danielle Stilloe*

"The Last Jedi" proved to be a thrilling, game-changing and, in some respects, divisive eighth chapter in the *Star Wars* saga. How do we feel about the plot twists, the storyline and character arcs thus far, and the direction Rian Johnson chose to pursue? As a film, how did Episode VIII stack up against the previous entries? And as we look ahead to Episode IX, where would we like to see J.J. Abrams take us as the Skywalker saga comes to a close?

## **‘The Orville’: Boldly Going into Space with Humor and Heart**

### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Lisa Stuckey (moderator), Peter Hower, Jim Ulrich, Eric Smith*

The first season of Seth MacFarlane’s *Star Trek* satire had a surprising thoughtfulness at its core. This panel will talk about the characters, the humor, the serious issues, and what we hope to see in the next season. Let’s open that jar of pickles!

## **Media Guest of Honor: Uncle Pete Q&A**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Uncle Pete, Chris Kocher (moderator)*

Since 2007, Uncle Pete has hosted *The Dark Vault of Public Domain*, a cult movie show broadcast across the U.S. on public access television as well as on Roku’s Beta Max TV. Learn about the show’s origins, where he finds the films to show and how a skewed “Dark Vault universe” has evolved over the past decade.

## **Hobbit-Forming: The Immortal Popularity of Tolkien’s Middle-Earth**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Elaine Casella (moderators), Mary Rakas, Eric Swan, Kathy Moore*

This panel revisits J.R.R. Tolkien’s beloved *Lord of the Rings* series, contemplating why it remains popular with little magic and no fancy technology. We’ll discuss the books, director Peter Jackson’s film series, and the proposed new TV series. "May It Be" rewarding with the audience's thoughts as now, "Elen sila lumenn' omentielvo."

## **Aiming for the Middle (Grades): How to Write Fiction for Young Adults**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Paul D. Smith (moderator), Tamora Pierce, Timothy Liebe, Alethea Kontis, Julie Holderman*

Middle-grade and young-adult fiction are among the most popular types of literature on the market. What are the secrets of writing for youths? How do you keep young people interested in reading? What do young readers want to read about? All are welcome as we talk about literature for this fascinating age group.

**2 p.m.**

## **Wakanda Forever: Why 2018 is the Right Moment for ‘Black Panther’**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Kymel Yard (moderator), Brian Daniel, John Jones, Dominic Davy, Jess Steele*

When it was released earlier this year, *Black Panther* - the first black superhero film of the Marvel Cinematic Universe - became a box-office smash second only to *Avengers: Infinity War*. What makes it such a touchstone for audiences, especially people of color? And how does it relate to the American cultural climate of Black Lives Matter and resurgent racism?

## **Horse Sense: ‘My Little Pony,’ ‘Equestria Girls’ and Pop Culture**

### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Drew Gruenberg (moderator), Charlotte Coker, Jo Tokarcik, Christina Stafford*

*My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic* relaunched the cartoon franchise in 2010, and it has attracted a wide demographic of fans. Join a discussion of favorite characters and story arcs, opinions on the spinoff show *Equestria Girls*, as well as the effect that pop culture has had on the show and that the show has had on pop culture.

## **Author Guest of Honor: Anne Bishop Q&A**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Anne Bishop, Crystal Sarakas (moderator)*

Join us for a conversation with the bestselling writer behind more than 30 novels, including the *Black Jewels* books and, most recently, her series *The Others*.

## **‘The Expanse’: Putting the Science in Science Fiction**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Adrienne Wise (moderator), Patrick Manley, Jim Ulrich, Rick Markunas*

Calling all Earthers, Belters, Dusters and fans of this outer space epic! *The Expanse* features colonies on Mars, drilling on asteroids for precious resources and technology for hybrid humans and space travel that's out of this world. We'll discuss some of the science behind what makes this series fly in addition to our favorite characters, episodes and more! With the recent

discovery of liquid water on Mars and the announcement of the next chapter in manned space flight, how far out are we from living in the world of Holden, Amos, Alex, Naomi and Bobby?

## **The Real Ghost Hunters: A Q&A with Empirical Paranormal**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Deb Overfield (moderator), Gina Caprari, Dominic Caprari, Will Jenks*

Empirical Paranormal is a professional team based in Binghamton that does presentations, events, tours, investigations and clearings of all sorts. The group averages 8 to 10 members with different backgrounds and ideas to work in the field.

**3 p.m.**

## **Fighting the ‘Infinity War’: Marvel’s Heroes Unite At Last**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Paul D. Smith (moderator), Marley Laskaris, Anthony Borrelli, Mary Rakas, Brian Daniel, Kenzie Shields*

After 10 years and 18 movies, Marvel’s record-breaking blockbuster finally arrived. With a snap of his fingers, the mad titan Thanos changed everything. Discuss the shocking events of “Infinity War,” speculate about the future, and celebrate 10 years of Marvel at the movies.

## **God Mode Unlocked: The Next Generation of Video Games**

### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Ryan Reynolds, Matt Bronson*

Join the hosts of the Southern Tier-based podcast God Mode Unlocked (GodModeUnlocked.net) to record a future episode discussing what we know about the next platforms and innovations from Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo. The panel will cover what to expect from the future of gaming hardware and services as well games that we think are in development. Make your own bold predictions before the next generation of games is upon us.

## **Quick Draw Returns: Improv with Pen and Paper**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Russell Swanger, Eric Maruscak, Rob Boss, Chris Kocher (moderator)*

Our panel of artists will sketch quick (and witty) cartoons based on moderator and audience suggestions. Audience members will watch the artists start with a blank paper and finish with a final cartoon because their work will be projected on the screen. Think of it as cartooning improvisation. Artists will be Russell Swanger (a.k.a. “Russ the Big Guy”), Eric Maruscak (creator of the comic strip “The Line Starts Here”) and Rob Boss (of RB Artistry).

## **What's an Otaku?: An Introduction to Anime and Manga**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Oliver Thornton (moderator), Steven Guile, Xavier Biglin, Mabel Golden*

Whether you've read one manga, or hundreds, watched one episode or too many to count, or if you don't even know who Goku or Naruto is, this panel is for you. We will look at examples of manga and anime from AstroBoy to Trigun, and explain the difference between Shoujo and Shounen. Talk about monster maids, alien cops, human-looking plants and much more.

## **Horror in Our Backyards: The Stephen King Renaissance**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Heather Kriesel (moderator), Peter Hower, Jim Bellardini, Raph Tombasco, Kevin Lucia*

Join us while we discuss the resurgence of Stephen King's beloved works, reliving our childhood nightmares and fascinations with the macabre. We'll discuss our favorite stories and characters, talk some books versus movies and television, and speculate about all the works in progress (or soon to be).

**4 p.m.**

## **Cosplay, Crossplay and Drag: Gender-Bending with a Sci-Fi Twist**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Psi Kotik (moderator), Justin Saine, Rusty Locke, Jet Aime, Ken-Tai, Kay Nyne*

This panel will look at the similarities and differences among cosplay, crossplay and drag, and panelists will answer questions about the process of making a costume and building a character. Expect a short but fun drag show at the end.

## **Bear Challenge V: Major Ursa**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Daniel Schwartz, Jennifer Royce, Greg Musselman, Angela Schwartz, Jacob Thompson, Russell Swanger*

Now in its fifth year, interactive story adventure The Bear Challenge stands as an adult in ursine circles. Celebrate its coming of age with our most exciting panel yet! Attendees like you - yes, YOU - submit "facts" about potential competitors ("Bear has a machete," "Bear knows crav maga," "Bear is haunted by memories of their lost love," etc.) at our vendor table or via social media (#thebearchallenge). Each bear is randomly assigned one fact by our panel of experts, and the winning bear advances and gets a new fact, until only one Challenger remains! Can you handle the excitement? Of course not! Especially not when we throw in live artistic depictions by Russell Swanger (a.k.a. Russ the Big Guy)! Do not miss the chance to see and take part in the greatest and most grizzly spectacle of Robercon. Boom! Wordplay!

## **Planetarium Show: 'The Hot and Energetic Universe'**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

This documentary uses immersive visualisations and real images to show the achievements of the modern astronomy, the most advanced terrestrial and orbital observatories, the basic

principles electromagnetic radiation and the natural phenomena related to the high-energy astrophysics.

## **From Dark to Light: The Different Shades of Urban Fantasy**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Nancy Holzner (moderator), Anne Bishop, C.W. Briar, Alethea Kontis, Deborah Blake*

Urban fantasy is a broad genre that ranges from light, humorous stories to tales so dark they bleed into horror. Panelists will discuss different shades of fantasy and where their work fits on the spectrum.

## **Sunday**

**10 a.m.**

### **Through the Looking-Glass: New Journeys of ‘Star Trek: Discovery’**

#### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Victor Hull (moderator), Melissa Hanna, James Betley, Thomas Hull, Michael Tennant*

So, how did *Star Trek: Discovery* do in its first season? Discuss the *Discovery* crew’s journey into the Mirror Universe and how it could affect the “prime” timeline season 2. What would fans like to see when Capt. Christopher Pike and the *USS Enterprise* enter the story next year?

### **Assessing ‘A Wrinkle in Time’ Movie: Fantastic or Flop?**

#### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Peter Hower (moderator), Lisa Stuckey, Lyrik Falling*

Last year at RoberCon, we discussed the much-anticipated new film version of Madeleine L'Engle’s novel. The movie, though, was not a fan favorite. Was the trailer all you needed to see instead of sitting through the whole movie? Did it kill the chances of any other books in the series becoming movies?

### **The Music of ‘Doctor Who’: Soundtracks Through Space and Time**

#### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Jana Kucera (moderator), Matt Gaska, Heather Kriesel, John Riebow*

Doo-wee-ooo! Even non-Whovians can’t read that without hearing the iconic *Doctor Who* theme. But what about the incidental music from the show? We’ll listen to and discuss such unforgettable pieces like “I Am the Doctor” as well as the classic series themes. We’ll also explore the music that not only shaped the television show, but continues to inspire musicians today, such as Muse and Pink Floyd.

## **Playing With Power: Nintendo's Legacy in the Video Game World**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Jo Tokarcik (moderator), Drew Gruenberg, Steven Guile, Mary Rakas, Xavier Biglin*

Look back on Nintendo game systems and beloved game series such as Mario and Zelda, and discuss who would win in a battle royale between Nintendo characters.

## **Rethinking 'Happily Ever After': Turning Fairy Tales on Their Heads**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Crystal Sarakas (moderator), Alethea Kontis, Deborah Blake, Nancy Holzner*

Sleeping Beauty. Little Red Riding Hood. Hansel and Gretel. Fairy tales are as popular as ever, but how do we keep adding new twists to old stories? Hear from authors who have taken these traditional tales and given them a 21st-century spin.

**11 a.m.**

## **Don't Panic: 40 Years of 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy'**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Chris Kocher (moderator), Heather Kriesel, John Riebow, Paul Benkovitz*

Douglas Adams' zany British sci-fi satire has been told in many different forms, first on radio and then on television, in books and a video game, and as a feature film. Why has it remained a geek touchstone for four decades? Don't forget to pack your towel!

## **From Thoats to Thestrals: My Kingdom for a Dependable Steed**

### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Elaine Casella (moderator), Kathy Moore, Dale Moore, BreAnna Ragsdale*

Both heroes and villains in fantasy literature depend on "beasties" in their quests and wars. Their steeds - whether sentient, telepathic or neither - transport, protect, teach and fight alongside them, often with great loyalty and affection. Add your favorite choices of noteworthy animals to our dragons, horses, fell beasts, tauntauns, phoenixes and more from J.R.R. Tolkien, Edgar Rice Burroughs, George Lucas, James Cameron, J.K. Rowling, Anne McCaffrey and others.

## **In the Zone: 'The Sixteen-Millimeter Shrine'**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Lawrence Kassan, Gary Ingraham*

See the *Twilight Zone* episode originally aired on October 23, 1959, which starred Ida Lupino as an aging film actress who longs for her glory days on the silver screen. A panel discussion will follow. (This episode from *The Twilight Zone* is being screened courtesy of CBS Broadcasting Inc.)

## **Planetarium Show: 'Back to the Moon for Good'**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

This award-winning 24-minute Google Lunar XPRIZE full-dome planetarium show chronicles teams from around the world competing for the largest international incentivized prize in history by landing a robotic spacecraft on the Moon. This global competition is designed to spark imagination and inspire a renewed commitment to space exploration, not by governments or countries but by the citizens of the world.

### **The Unusual Suspects: Unexpected Creatures in Urban Fantasy**

#### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Nancy Holzner (moderator), Anne Bishop, C.W. Briar, Deborah Blake, Alethea Kontis*

Urban fantasy draws from many different folklores and mythologies. This panel examines paranormal characters and creatures apart from the vampires and werewolves that have dominated books and TV shows over the past 20 years.

**12 p.m.**

### **Beyond the Skywalkers: 'Rogue One,' 'Solo' and Future Stories**

#### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Matt Gaska, Jana Kucera (moderators), Allen Archie, Danielle Stilloe, Tom Henderson*

In 2016, we were treated to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. And in May, not even two years later, came *Solo*, a film taking us back to Han's roots. This panel will discuss the many aspects of the films, such as casting, and what they have set up for the future. We'll also discuss how costuming, scenery and props relate back to or give a nod to the other *Star Wars* films.

### **Bye-Bye, Beach City: Saying Farewell to 'Steven Universe'**

#### **Ballroom Annex (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Julie Bartolotto (moderator), Xavier Biglin, Tommy Williams, Abigail Mayglothling, Nateal Erickson*

Discuss topics such as The Diamond authority and The Pink Diamond theory, go in depth about character development and talk about the appearance of White Diamond. We'll also speculate about what might happen in the film that will wrap up this fanatic show and save a little time at the end to sing the theme song.

### **Tales from the Word Trade: Bestselling Authors Share Their Stories**

#### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Anne Bishop, Tamora Pierce, Alethea Kontis, Crystal Sarakas (moderator)*

Every aspiring writer dreams of making it on the bestselling lists. Join us for a conversation with three bestselling authors - Tamora Pierce, Alethea Kontis and guest of honor Anne Bishop - to find out how they did it and whether it's everything they dreamed about.

## **Saving People, Hunting Things: The Extended Life of ‘Supernatural’ Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Sarah Hower (moderator), Lizzy Vanbarriger, Jenni Vansteenburgh, Kirstin Clinton*  
Sam and Dean Winchester have hunted vampires and werewolves, become mixed up in a war between heaven and hell, and chased around Satan himself looking for a fight. After 13 seasons, what does the future look like for the boys and their friends?

## **‘Game of Thrones’ Nears the End: A Panel of Fire and Ice**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Andrew Haggerty (moderator), Kirsten Clinton, David Mosteller*

The final season of HBO’s *Game of Thrones* will air sometime in the first half of 2019. *The Winds of Winter*, the penultimate volume of George R.R. Martin’s epic *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is like winter itself, said to be coming, though on a far less predictable seasonal schedule. We will discuss the enigmas and conundrums posed by differently-paced timelines of the show and the book, one roaring like wildfire, the other advancing stately as a glacier. Be ready for theories from the thoughtful to the tinfoil-hat, a riddle tourney in joust and melee, and chat about other Martin-related TV programming, such as the five (!) proposed HBO sequel series, and SyFy’s *Nightflyers*, airing this fall.

**1 p.m.**

## **Marvel v. DC on TV: Clash of the Comic-Book Titans**

### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Presenters: Adrienne Wise (moderator), Marley Laskaris, Allen Archie, Anthony Borrelli*

With the addition of shows like *Runaways*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *The Gifted* and *Black Lightning*, the DC and Marvel universes continue to expand beyond fan favorites like *Arrow*, *Supergirl*, *Jessica Jones* and *Luke Cage*. We’ll discuss if bigger is necessarily better as well as best and worst moments, shows, characters and episodes. Also, what we hope will happen next to our crime-fighting heroes across DC and Marvel franchises.

## **From Vampira to Uncle Pete: The History of Cult Movie Hosts**

### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Chris Kocher (moderator), Uncle Pete, Kirk Madsen, Mary Donnelly*

From the 1950s through the 1980s, it seemed like every city had its own cult film or horror program, each featuring a unique host: Vampira, Zacherley, Sir Graves Ghastly, Count Gore De Vol, Ghoulardi, Svengoolie, Chilly Billy and dozens more. Uncle Pete, host of *The Dark Vault of Public Domain* and the mind behind Roku’s Beta Max TV, will discuss his favorites, with other panelists and audience members offering their opinions, too.

## **‘The Great American Read: Villains & Monsters’**

### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

From the PBS series: Learn why literature's most notorious villains began behaving badly. Many weren't born evil, but became that way when faced with some of the same choices we make every day. See what these villains can teach us about our own dark impulses.

### **Diversity Rules: 'Avatar: The Last Airbender' and 'Legend of Korra'**

#### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Joe Picalila (moderator), Rachel Terwilliger, Amanda Park, Grace Eggers, Emlyn Saga, David Mosteller, Kaitlyn Mosteller*

While there are many examples in fantasy and sci-fi of diversity and inclusion, the "Avatar" series is a shining example. This panel will discuss favorite moments, characters and story elements, as well as the importance of inclusion and diversity for a vibrant cast of characters and how these concepts relate to good world-building and storytelling.

## **2 p.m.**

### **Costume Contest: Youth Division**

#### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Host: Tejay Schwartz from The Vault 102.5*

*Judges: Jana Kucera and Matt Gaska*

Watch youths 14 and under compete with their peers as we judge the best costumes and award spectacularly geeky prizes. Contestants must register by 12 p.m. Sunday in Visitors' Center and report to the Ballroom Annex by 1:30 p.m. for check-in.

### **Journey to the Red Planet: This Time for Real**

#### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Tish Bresee*

NASA, SpaceX and Boeing team up to make the jump to Mars, starting with the International Space Station (currently in Earth orbit) where astronaut Col. Doug Hurley from Owego will pilot the SpaceX Dragon next spring. From there, the team has a plan to jump to the Moon (where we will build homes) and then to Mars (which Earth has already invaded with robotic spacecraft). Now is finally the time for humans to discover the Red Planet.

### **Future Echoes: 30 Years of 'Red Dwarf'**

#### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Chris Kocher (moderator), John Riebow, Julia Adams, Paul Benkovitz*

Three million years in the future, Earth's last human must deal with his odd assortment of companions - a cowardly hologram, a vain man-cat, a senile supercomputer and a subservient robot - as they travel the universe together. The British comedy takes aim at sci-fi cliches and builds its own mythos for the Boys from the Dwarf.

## **Make Those 30 Seconds Count: The Art of the Elevator Pitch**

### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Joshua Palmatier (moderator), Nancy Holzner, Patricia Bray*

So you're an author at a convention. You enter the elevator and realize you're sharing the ride to the lobby with that dream agent/editor. Now's your chance to strike up a conversation and perhaps pitch your novel! But are you ready? This panel will begin by discussing the purpose of the elevator pitch and what it should (and should not) do. Then audience members can give their own elevator pitches and the panelists will critique it. Bring a prepared pitch to participate!

## **3 p.m.**

### **Costume Contest: Adult and Expert Divisions**

#### **Mansion Ballroom (top floor of mansion)**

*Host: Tejay Schwartz from The Vault 102.5*

*Judges: Jana Kucera and Matt Gaska*

Amateur and expert cosplayers ages 15 and up will strut their stuff to compete for fabulously geeky prizes. Contestants must register by 12 p.m. Sunday in Visitors' Center and report to the Ballroom Annex by 2:30 p.m. for check-in.

### **MuggleNet GNOMEs 'Harry Potter' Trivia Challenge**

#### **Carousel Theater (first floor of museum)**

Test your wizarding world knowledge with this super-hard, pub-style trivia presented by the No. 1 Harry Potter fan site, MuggleNet.com. We promise it will be mind-bending! After all, GNOMEs stands for grueling, nauseating and onerous MuggleNet exercises. Multiple rounds, teams of six and prizes for the winners. No pre-registration is necessary, so either come with a team already assembled or we'll find you a crew when you arrive. (Note: Trivia challenge is from 3 to 5 p.m.)

### **When Sci-Fi Met Horror: Lovecraft's 'At The Mountains Of Madness'**

#### **Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Kirk Madsen (moderator), Kevin Lucia, Dan Harris, Peter Hower*

One of H.P. Lovecraft's greatest works explored weird ideas about ancient astronauts, Elder Gods and an unnamed evil discovered in the wastelands of Antarctica. The novella has influenced horror and science fiction since its publication in 1936 through radio productions, tabletop games, video games, unofficial sequels and even a long-proposed movie adaptation. But why has it lodged itself in the collective consciousness for so many decades?

### **Back to the Upside-Down: 'Stranger Things' vs. the Demogorgon**

#### **Activity Lab (second floor of museum)**

*Presenters: Chris Kocher (moderator), Adrienne Wise, C.W. Briar, John Brhel*

Last year at RoberCon, this panel discussed what we hoped to see in season 2 of the Duffer Brothers' TV horror hit. Did we get what we wanted? Did it adequately build on what we saw in

the first season? Were there any surprises? (Besides that thug Billy, of course.) And what should season 3 look like when it premieres next year?

**4 p.m.**

**Planetarium Show: 'Phantom of the Universe: The Hunt for Dark Matter'**

**Planetarium (second floor of museum)**

In this new planetarium show, explore dark matter from the Big Bang to its anticipated discovery at the Large Hadron Collider.