

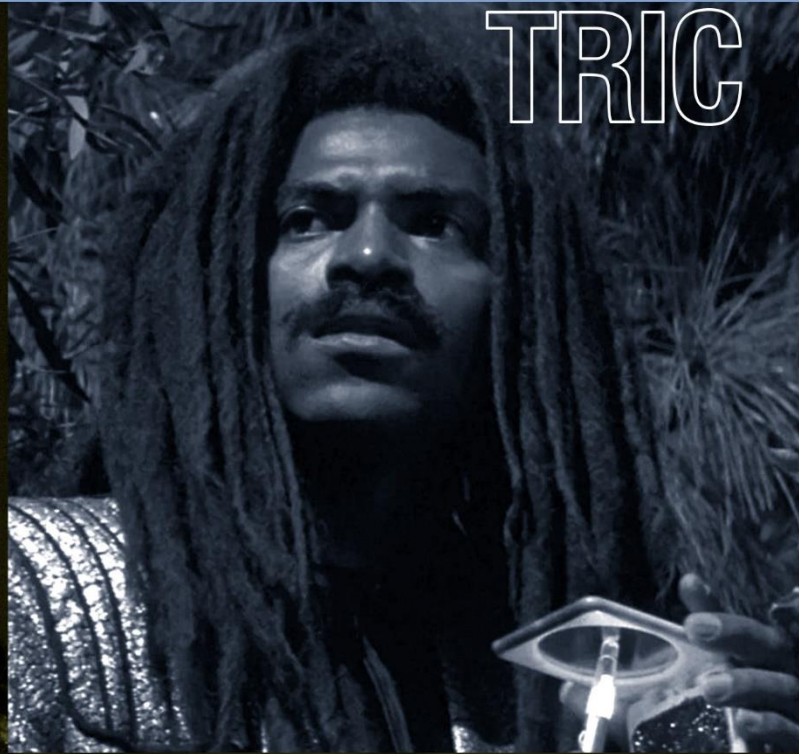
PROTECTING EARTH SINCE 1972

0823 BANZAI INSTITUTE

WORLD WATCH ONE

August 2023

AFRO CEN TRIC



WORLD WATCH ONE

IN THIS ISSUE

WORLD WATCH ONE ☯ IN THIS ISSUE

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Acknowledgments

This issue has been a long time coming. Originally, we aimed to publish a February newsletter in conjunction with [Black History Month](#). We reset and tried again for June, to coincide with the celebration of [Juneteenth](#). Neither panned out, but there is a virtue in all of this.

It occurred to me, as the deadlines came and went at a distressing clip, that the material collected in these pages shouldn't be tied to anything other than their own celebration. Every day on the calendar is a good day to bring attention to the accomplishments of others and share the joy of doing so. Call it our way of keeping the party going. May it never end.

In the hot seat: There never seems to be an issue without us contacting that dynamic duo of Earl Mac Rauch and W. D. Richter. Thank you once again, gentlemen, for answering the call. Very special thanks are in order for Dr. Damon Hines, Carl Lumbly, and Billy Vera for their interviews in this issue. Thanks also to Nancy Iannios of Core Public Relations Group for arranging our interview with Mr. Lumbly.

We also extend our gratitude to Hugo Award finalist Chris Barkley for taking the time to review this issue and make damned sure that we didn't publish anything unintentionally contrary to the spirit of its intent. Many thanks to Denise and Mike Okuda at the Banzai Institute Facebook page for their continued generosity in getting the word out about *World Watch One*, as well as their many other contributions to Banzai fandom. We extend our appreciation to Dan Berger and Barry Chan 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](#). Particular thanks go to Jeremy Brown, the newest member of our staff. Jeremy has waited patiently to see this issue go to print (his work was completed back in February), and we are delighted to have him aboard. Welcome!

All thanks go to the staff of this publication for once again bringing their formidable talents to bear on this publication: Jeremy Brown, Barry Chan, Steve Mattsson, Sean Murphy, Hugo Award finalist Steven H Silver, and Scott Tate. By Jove, we did it again! Woo hoo!

Commendations usually go to various members of the staff. Instead, I would like to call attention once more to Dr. Damon Hines, Carl Lumbly, and Billy Vera for their contributions to this issue. Every instalment of this newsletter depends entirely on people saying "yes" to us when we reach out and ask that they be a part of it, this issue more than most. Thank you all for your generosity of spirit, time, and experiences.

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Submissions to *World Watch One* are strongly encouraged. Really. I am dead serious. People, we know you're out there! All are welcome. Please contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com for details.



Front Cover: Jazz music in one of a very few uniquely American cultural contributions to the world. As a blend of African and Western musical traditions, Jazz exemplifies the promise that our shared humanity amounts to infinitely more than the sum of its parts.

This issue's cover comes to you from yet another collaboration between your humble editor and Blue Blaze Irregular Rolo Tomassi, aka Barry Chan. The image concept began with editor Dan Berger as an homage to both the issue's central theme and a tribute to Casper Lindley actor Bill Henderson. Henderson appeared on a number of jazz records as a singer with legendary record label [Blue Note Records](#). The final cover harkens back to Blue Note's amazing run of album covers from the 1960s, some of the most iconic ever.

Questions? Comments? Need a sympathetic ear and a kind word? That's why we're here. Contact us at dan.berger.2@gmail.com.

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An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Welcome to the latest issue. This particular installment is long overdue in all kinds of ways. Even so, I ask you to indulge me for a moment as I address the elephant in the room.

Is releasing this issue a good idea? It's not as simple a question as it sounds. There's no doubt in my mind that an issue celebrating the African American cast and crew of *The Adventure of Buckaroo Banzai* is more than a good idea; it's a great idea. Few movies of *Buckaroo's* era employed a cast and crew as varied in complexion as our beloved docudrama, and to such wonderful effect. That's not the difficult part.

The more complicated question is, "Are we the right people to tackle this issue?"

Looking at the list of newsletter staff directly to your right, you will find five fair skinned middle-aged men of predominantly European descent, one middle-aged man of Jewish descent, and one middle-aged man of Asian descent. Given the currents of contemporary American culture, there is no doubt in my mind that some will find this particular group of people ill-suited to the task at hand based on the circumstances of our birth. Publishing this issue comes along with the very real risk of personal attack as a result. That doesn't sound like a good idea to me.

What sounds worse is a world where celebrating the essential goodness and accomplishments of our fellow human beings becomes a cause for concern.

Make no mistake: this edition is not a political statement. It is a celebration. This issue of *World Watch One* takes to heart a notion promulgated by the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools." It is clear that, at this juncture in time, many of us are still climbing a steep curve in learning to live together. Many remain skeptical that ascending that slope together is even possible. I am not one of them. In a moment in history that cries out for allegiances, I have decided that trust and friendship, the foundations of brotherhood, are better choices. Trust and friendship come with the burden of being earned, and the risk that they will not be returned in kind. It is my estimation that earning trust is a risk worth taking, and that this issue is a celebration worth sharing.

So let the celebration begin! One of our most enjoyable tasks here at *World Watch One* is talking to interesting people, and this issue is no exception. We were absolutely thrilled when our newest staff member, Jeremy Brown, was able to arrange an interview with John Parker himself, actor Carl Lumbly. Meanwhile, I had the pleasure of sitting down for a chat with Junior Blue Blaze Irregular 41 1/2 Scooter Lindley, aka Dr. Damon Hines. Both interviews are essential reading.

Unfortunately, a number of cast members are no longer with us, so we celebrate their lives after the fact. In the instance of Rosalind Cash, Scott Tate was able to find abundant information regarding the John Emdall actress. Steve Mattsson was fortunate to interview Billy "Pinky Carruthers" Vera about his professional and personal connections with Bill Henderson that serves as the foundation of a tribute to Bill in Mr. Vera's own words. More distressing was an almost total lack of information regarding actor Jessie Lawrence Ferguson, the man responsible for portraying the memorable Black Lectroid Commander. Jeremy Brown was able to conjure more than research alone could provide in the form of some additional memories provided by *Buckaroo Banzai* director W.D. Richter.

There was a yin and yang accompanying this issue of the newsletter throughout the entire process of its creation. The negative side was the fact that a celebration of this sort was long overdue, which is a damn shame. The bright side, however, was an abundance of new territory to explore and the joy it gave in return. Well worth the risk.



WORLD WATCH ONE

NEWSLETTER OF TEAM BANZAI

STAFF

Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger
Jeremy "Ponca City" Brown
Barry "Rolo Tomasi" Chan
Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson
Sean "Figment" Murphy
Steven "Green Town" Silver
Scott "Camelot" Tate

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Short Takes

World Watch One Staff

Sharkey's Day

Jim “Sharkey” Van Over Sr. has long been associated with the *Star Trek* Art Department, from the 1990s through the early 2000s. He was part of the core group responsible for creating pitching aides for *Buckaroo Banzai: Ancient Secrets & New Mysteries* as well as graphic content for the banzai-institute.com website. Jim got his start in Banzai fandom long ago as Editor-in Chief of his own *World Watch Wire* fanzine in the summer of 1986. In short, Jim has been on the forefront of Banzai boosterism for almost forty years now.

We'd like to help keep that streak going.

Jim was diagnosed with tumors and lesions in his brain earlier this year. Between strikes shutting down productions and crushing medical expenses mounting by the day, Jim could use some support from his fellow Blue Blaze Irregulars. Please consider donating to [Jim's Go Fund Me](#) campaign, and let's help make sure he's around for many more years to come. Thank you. -DB

RIP: Manny Coto

Earlier this year we lost screenwriter, director, executive producer, and showrunner Manny Coto (June 10, 1961–July 9, 2023). Coto is perhaps best remembered in sci-fi circles as the creator of the Showtime series *Odyssey 5* and for his contributions to *Star Trek: Enterprise*, first as a member of the writing staff and later as showrunner.

Coto began his career in the late 1980s and early '90s, scripting for anthology shows such as *Monsters, Tales from the Crypt*, and the revival of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. He subsequently expanded into feature films, directing and co-writing the slasher flick *Dr. Giggles* (1992) and soloing as writer/director on the youth-friendly *Star Kid* (1997).

Among the creative high points of his career was the 2002 sci-fi series *Odyssey 5*, starring Peter Weller. *Odyssey 5*, a project of Coto's own creation, told an intriguing sci-fi time travel mystery about artificial sentience and planetary doom, starring Weller as astronaut Chuck Taggart. The premature cancellation of *Odyssey 5* after only one season, leaving its storyline unresolved, disappointed Coto tremendously, but it also opened doors for new opportunities. In 2003, he was invited to join the writing staff of *Star Trek: Enterprise*, and by the next year he was promoted to showrunner for the series' fourth and final season. As a *Trek* fan since long before his professional involvement, Coto often



Grand Finale: Admiral **Manny Coto (C)** pauses for a photo with Art Department gurus **Michael Okuda (L)** and **Doug Drexler (R)** during production of the *Star Trek: Enterprise* finale in 2005. **Credit:** Michael Okuda

spoke of his time on *Enterprise* as one of the personal highlights of his life. The crew of the series took notice. *Star Trek: Enterprise* Scenic Art Supervisor Michael Okuda remarked in a July 10 Facebook post honoring Coto that the writer-producer, “...brought the fun back to *Enterprise*'s fourth season with his love for *Star Trek*.”

Having worked well together on *Odyssey 5*, Coto invited Weller in for a memorable guest role on *Enterprise* as John Frederick Paxton in the 2005 episodes “Demons” and “Terra Prime.” In 2006, the pair reunited on Fox's action drama *24*, where Weller played Jack Bauer's former mentor Christopher Henderson during the show's fifth season, with Coto serving as an executive producer. In 2010 they went back to Showtime for the fifth season of *Dexter*, where Coto wrote several episodes featuring Weller as corrupt cop Stan Liddy.

Coto also created a short-lived sci-fi crime drama for Fox, *neXt* (2020). Most recently he contributed several episodes to AMC's horror series *American Horror Story* and its streaming spin-off *American Horror Stories*. He will be missed. -ST

Officer Murphy speaks

Noted art historian **Peter Weller** doesn't frequently indulge in discussing his acting gigs, so it's worth paying attention when he does. He'll be doing so in the upcoming 6-part docuseries [RoboDoc: The Creation of RoboCop](#). In addition to Weller, it will also feature new interviews with several other members of the cast and crew, including Nancy Allen, Ronny Cox, Kurtwood Smith, Paul Verhoeven, and more. Five years in the making, the in-depth examination will be available through horror-focused streaming service [Screambox](#) starting August 29. -ST

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More Murphy

Weller reprises his role as RoboCop in the upcoming video game *RoboCop: Rogue City*, expected to release around September of this year from [Teyon](#) and will be available for PC, Xbox Series X/S, PS5, and Nintendo Switch. -ST

Wicked

Gregory Maguire's 1995 novel *Wicked*, offering a different perspective on Oz, served as the basis for a popular 2003 musical and is being adapted to film. After a swirl of rumors, **Jeff Goldblum** has been confirmed in the role of the Wizard. But audiences still have a while to wait as *Wicked: Part One* is currently scheduled for release around Thanksgiving 2024...assuming the ongoing WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes don't bump it even further. -ST

Tim Talks World Crime League Audio Novel

Lots of you got put off by the sucky reviews and the ginormous 621 pages of [Earl Mac Rauch's *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*](#) novel and never read it. I read it and dug it, but it's way too long for me to ever read again.

So, what are we, whose attention span is fit for [Ditko's](#) 22 page Spider-Man stories, sposta do? Listen to it on Audible!

I'm not gonna listen to the whole thing right now (It's 28 hours and 45 minutes long.), but I promise a full review for the next issue of *World Watch One*. I will say that [the audio version of BBATWCL](#) is narrated by [Peter Nobel](#) and if you go to his website, he'll tell you that he's kinda a big deal among narrators. There's even a picture of him if you want to visualize the guy who is reading Hanoi Xan's and Lord John Worfin's [scatological](#) barbs.

Happy trails! -TM

My pal Sal

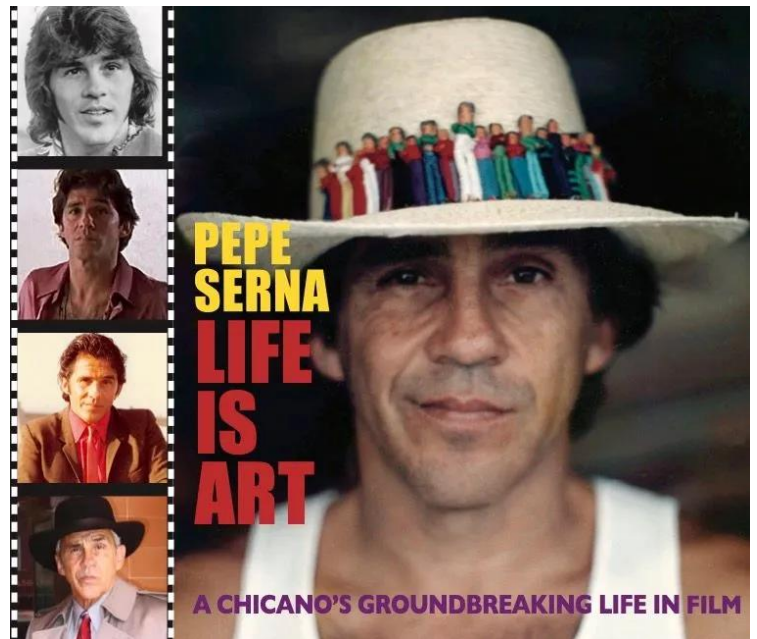
Clancy Brown has joined the cast of the upcoming series *The Penguin*, spinning off from the 2022 film *The Batman*. Alongside Colin Farrell reprising his role as the Penguin, Clancy will take on the role of Salvatore Maroni, a name familiar to longtime fans as one of Gotham City's prominent mobsters from Batman's early years who has ties to the sequence of events (in most prior versions of continuity, anyway) leading to the eventual introduction of the villain Two-Face. *The Penguin* is expected to air on HBO Max late this year or in early 2024...but again, the WGA and SAG-AFTRA

strikes might well push it down the road. Either way, start placing your bets now as to whether Clancy's Maroni will appear in *The Batman—Part II*, currently scheduled for October 2025. -ST

What's in a name?

Most bands go through a few extra names during their formative stages while their line-up and style falls into place. The Beatles were the Quarrymen, Led Zeppelin were the New Yardbirds, the Hong Kong Cavaliers were...well, you get the idea. For a short span in the early 1970s, after being Angel and the Snake but before fully becoming **Blondie** as we would know them, Debbie Harry's group was briefly known as **Blondie and the Banzai Babies**. "I don't remember which of us came up with 'Banzai Babies,'" Harry wrote in her 2019 memoir [Face It](#). "Chris [Stein] and I were both into Japanese pop culture... We just kept on playing and experimenting. After a while, we just called ourselves Blondie." It's a solid one-word choice, but we do think the Banzai thing had a nice ring to it. -ST

Pepe Serna Autobiography Update



Credit: pepeserna.net

[Pepe "The Reno Kid" Serna's](#) memoir; [Life is Art](#) is now available for pre-order. He writes about the making of such films as [Scarface](#), [American Me](#), [Carwash](#), and [The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai](#). Pepe provides insights into working with co-stars [Al Pacino](#), [Johnny Depp](#), [Jennifer Lopez](#), and [Kevin Costner](#). The book is illustrated with over 100 photos from Serna's personal archives. The introduction is by his friend and frequent co-star [Edward James Olmos](#). -SMatt

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The Weirdness Beat

by Scott Tate

Big Brother rats out rats: Exterminators are now experimenting with [facial recognition on rodents](#), using the software to track individual rats and better understand their habits: "...which rat has come back, where they are feeding, where they are sleeping, who's causing the damage, which part of the building are they coming from, where are they getting into the building from, whether it's the same rodent that caused the problem last week." Next target: the rat who keeps swiping other people's stuff out of the break room fridge.

How do you do, fellow kids? In New Brunswick, NJ (what's up with that place?), for four days in January, a 29-year-old woman used a forged birth certificate to infiltrate a local high school [pretending to be a student](#). In an unrelated incident a few days later, a 22-year-old assistant JV high school basketball coach in Portsmouth, VA [impersonated one of her players who](#) was out of town, donned a borrowed jersey and inserted herself into a game. Hey, remember that time when some of Xan's Death Dwarfs tried to infiltrate the Junior Blue Blaze Irregulars? Lousy disguises, but you can't blame 'em for trying.

Dodo-a-Go-Go: Biotechnology company [Colossal Laboratories and Biosciences](#), AKA "the De-Extinction Company," has announced their intention to [recreate the Dodo bird](#), considered extinct since 1662 or so. An article from [BBC Science Focus](#) summarizes the plan, which involves comparing the dodo's genome to that of its closest living relative, the Nicobar pigeon, and implanting edited cells into chicken embryos. Colossal previously expressed their hope to have hybrid woolly mammoth calves ready by 2027 and to reintroduce thylacines, also called Tasmanian tigers.

Catch a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a fish to play Pokemon, and...wait, what? YouTube gamer [Muteki Maru](#) set up a motion-tracking sensor relay that would allow his tank of betta fish to manipulate the controls of his Nintendo Switch, figuring it would be entertaining to stream them playing *Pokemon Violet*. He'd previously done this with *Pokemon Sapphire* with some success. But when left unsupervised this time, the [fishy antics](#) of one ringleader in particular included spending 500 yen (about four dollars) at the Nintendo eShop, revealing credit card information online during the live stream, downloading an app, cashing in a reward for a new avatar, requesting a confirmation email of PayPal, and changing the game account's screen name from Mutekimaru to ROWAWAWAWA. They did also complete a level of the game.



The Flying Spaghetti Monster: Mysterious are the designs of his noodly appendages.

Touched by his noodly appendage: Residents of Old Bridge, NJ were baffled this spring by the discovery of what appeared to be several mounds of cooked spaghetti, macaroni, and other noodles dumped in a wooded area along a nearby creek. No sauce, no meatballs, just piles and piles of pasta, hundreds of pounds of it. Hypotheses ranged from aliens to the Flying Spaghetti Monster to the possibility of a suspect jokingly named Al Dente. The truth, as it so often does, turned out to be more mundane. It was [later determined](#) that the culprit, who hadn't meant to cause any trouble or mystery, was a local man in the process of selling his recently deceased mother's home, cleaning out pasta she had apparently stockpiled during COVID. The pasta had been dry and uncooked when he scattered it to biodegrade but took on the limpness of cooked noodles after soaking up rain. The public works department subsequently hauled away the mess, and no charges seem to have been filed over what Mayor Owen Henry referred to as "a lapse of judgment," but we here at Team Banzai would like to remind you that resources such as [Feeding America](#) can help you find a local food bank to receive donations if you're ever in a similar fix.

Oath of the Flying Fish? In February it [rained fish](#) in Lajamanu, a small town in Australia's Northern Territory well inland from the coast or any significant body of water...and it's not the first time. The phenomenon of fish, or other small critters such as frogs, seeming to fall from the sky is rare but does occasionally happen. But for some mysterious reason it's less rare in Lajamanu. In addition to this most recent event, they've previously experienced it in 2010, 2004, and the 1980s.

One more fish story, but it's a deep one*: In April 2023, a deep sea scientific study released images from the previous September of the [deepest fish ever caught on camera](#). The subject, lured into stardom by a baited robotic camera, is a young snailfish, a tadpole-like creature known to grow up to about a foot long and

*Insert your own [H.P. Lovecraft](#) joke here.

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common across much of the oceanic world, although this particular specimen is thought to be of a previously unknown variety of the species. It was recorded at a depth of 8,336 meters, which is more than 27,000 feet, or more than 5 miles. The deepest previously documented snailfish was at 7,700 meters in 2008. The expedition, part of a broader collaboration between the University of Western Australia and the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology, was conducted across three trenches in the North Pacific near Japan, with the major find coming in the Izu-Ogasawara Trench, which plunges to 9,300 meters deep.

Put a ring on it: Ringed planets aren't uncommon, Saturn being the best known example. But something's odd about Quaoar, a minor planet at the edge of our own solar system out in the Kuiper belt. Quaoar is about half the size of Pluto, and it has a ring. That's not unheard of on its own for a small planetary body, but Quaoar is unique so far in that its ring maintains stable orbit **much farther away** from its parent body than thought possible until now, well beyond our previous understanding of the Roche limit. Needless to say, scientists are now rethinking what they thought they knew, as good scientists do.

Coronation sensations: Which of these tributes made for the coronation of King Charles III captures him better, this **life-size bust made of chocolate**, or this **7-foot knitted likeness** of the king posed with gardening tools and knitted bees?

Great Dane unleashed: Torbjorn "Thor" Petersen returned home to Aarhus, Denmark in May for the first time since 2013, having spent the past 10 years **traveling the world**. He claims to be the first solo traveler to have visited every existing country, a total of 203 of them in that interval, in a single continuous trip. What's more, he did so without flying, instead traveling by ship, train, bus, and foot but never by plane.

"What's that watermelon doing there?" You wouldn't expect to find fresh-on-the-vine watermelons growing in **Antarctica**, but Russian scientists have done just that. Vostok Research Station is located at a spot which formerly held the record for being literally the coldest place on Earth, so successfully cultivating the melons is an impressive feat, even when done within the station's greenhouse.

Space rock or not? Just imagine: You're standing outside at four in the morning, sipping coffee and talking with a friend, when you feel something strike you in the ribs. Your first thought is that it was a small flying animal like a bat. Then you think maybe it was a small piece of cement that broke off from a nearby roof, and you do find a rock, but it doesn't seem to match anything

nearby. So you show it to a roofer, and then a geologist...and you find out you've been **struck by a meteorite**. That's what happened in July to a woman from Schirmeck in northeastern France. Or did it? As the story began to gain traction online, other experts weighed in to **cast doubts** on the rock's alleged celestial origins. Although the facts in this case remains uncertain, it's been documented on rare occasions that people have been struck by meteorites and even survived the experience—notably the 1954 case of **Ann Elizabeth Fowler Hodges** of Sylacauga, Alabama.

Beware the Peruvian Face Peelers, Part 1: Something is harassing the Ikitu tribe living northeast of Lima, Peru, and has been doing so nightly for nearly a month as of this writing, spread across July and August. At least one victim has been hospitalized with a cut to her neck. The village has asked the military for help. The invaders are being spoken of as "aliens" or "extraterrestrials," and the Ikitu have given them an additional name inspired by their traditional folklore: "Los Pelacaras" or, loosely translated, "the Face Peelers," supernatural figures said to consume the faces and organs of their victims.

According to witnesses, some of whom claim to have encountered them up close, these current interlopers are 7 feet tall, with "huge" or "long" heads and yellowish eyes. They wear dark hoods and masks that obscure their faces, and shoes described as "round-shaped" which apparently enable the Pelacaras to hover in the air. The invaders are also said to be immune to Ikitu hunting weapons. Aliens? Maybe. Mercenaries in goggles and body armor? Also maybe...but if so, what the heck is up with those shoes? Either way, dare we speculate potential involvement by Xan?

Well, they aren't aliens, even though they've been telling the Ikitu that they are. Peruvian authorities believe they're part of a criminal cartel specializing in illegal gold mining. The weird shoes? Part of a **jetpack rig**, which in addition to impressing the Ikitu with their unearthliness was probably used to scout the dense jungle from a bird's-eye view and spot natural gold deposits along nearby river tributaries. In the classic tradition of generations of Scooby-Doo villains, the "Pelacaras" pretended to be aliens to scare the locals away from their operations. We do still wonder if Xan might be involved, though. The World Crime League has its hands everywhere.



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UPDATE: Hong Kong Cavaliers Auditions with Billy Vera

by Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson

Last issue we looked at some real life musicians who have the musical and intellectual chops for The Hong Kong Cavaliers—such as [Sir Brian May](#), astrophysicist and guitarist for Queen. Since we put [the Halloween issue](#) to bed, Steely Dan and Doobie Brothers guitarist, [Jeff "Skunk" Baxter](#) has released his first solo album, "[The Speed of Heat](#)." He talks about the album and his work with the [U.S. Missile Defense Agency](#) on [NPR](#) and [Pollstar](#). Of more interest to readers of this newsletter, we recently discovered that Skunk was also a touring member of Billy and the Beaters and produced their #1 single, "[At this Moment](#)." We asked [Billy "Pinky Carruthers" Vera](#) about his work with Skunk.

Steve Mattsson: So, Billy—what do you think? Is Skunk Baxter Hong Kong Cavalier material?

Billy Vera: Oh yeah. Did you know his Dad was in the CIA?*

SM: I did not.

BV: I mean like a big shot in the CIA. So, Skunk's been plugged into that world his whole life. I think he would have made an excellent Hong Kong Cavalier.

SM: Right, a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame guitarist, a missile defense expert, and he already has a BBI nickname.

BV: Yeah, you know—he'd actually make a fine Buckaroo Banzai himself.

SM: Tell us about Skunk's time with The Beaters.

BV: When I first started The Beaters in 1979, I had been listening to a lot of [Bob Wills](#) and the Texas Playboys as

*I didn't see anything on the internet about Skunk's father, Loy Baxter, being in the CIA. I did find that he served in the United States Army during WW II in the U.K. and North Africa, where he was an Infantry Unit Commander, an Adjutant General, and Public Relations Officer. Mr. Baxter left active duty with the rank of Major in December of 1945 and went on to serve as an officer in the US Army Reserve, ending his military career with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He worked for the [J. Walter Thompson](#) advertising agency where he managed their Washington D.C. office. Later, Mr. Baxter and his family moved to Mexico where he worked as the agency's head of Latin American public relations. J. Walter Thompson's clients included [Augusto Pinochet](#), the military dictator of Chile, who wanted to tidy up the perception of his regime after human-rights organizations had documented extensive violations.

Nope, doesn't read like the resumé of a CIA officer at all.



Live, from the Los Angeles basin, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter appears with Billy Vera and the Beaters on a November 6, 1981 episode of *Fridays*. Credit: [ABC/Disney Entertainment](#)

well as my usual, Ray Charles and Little Richard. The fellow whose idea was to start a band, my old bass player from back in New York, Chuck Fiore said, "We've got nothing to do on the weekend. Let's put together a band and meet girls. Why don't we start a horn band? You always liked to play with horns." We decided to base the group on the old Little Richard and Ray Charles '50s bands, which included four horns.

So, Chuck knew all these musicians, but I didn't know anybody in California. So, he basically found the musicians and I said, "I've been listening to a lot of Bob Wills. Maybe let's throw in a [steel guitar](#) player to offset the R&B of the horns...if we can find one in LA." He found a guy that played pedal steel, Steve Fisher. He played probably six to eight months with the Beaters. Then Steve got an offer to go with, maybe...[Captain Beefheart](#)? I can't remember...anyway, some big name band. And then Skunk walks into the club one night.

By this time The Beaters were very popular in town. All these big name musicians wanted to jam with us, but we didn't want to do a jam band. Players would come in and say, "Man, if anybody ever quits and you need another sax player or guitar player, or whatever, think of me." So, Skunk came in and he said, "I see you lost your steel player." Skunk says he plays steel. I said, "Really?" He said, "I'd love to be in the band." I said, "Yeah, sure. So, that's how he joined. And then when we got the record deal, which was after playing at [The Troubadour](#) every Monday night at midnight for a year straight, we were looking for someone to produce the record and Skunk offered to do the job.

SM: He has skills.

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BV: Yeah, the deal was with a Japanese record label and Skunk was very popular in Japan, much better known there than in America. So, he put it all together. He found the location and hired the recording people. He didn't really have to do much musically to produce the record, because it was a live album. I wrote all the songs and the arrangements were the ones we'd already been using in our shows. But the technical stuff was where he excelled. He was real savvy in the studio. He took all the recordings that we made—we recorded the album at [the Roxy](#) here in LA. What we did was we booked three nights and we recorded all three nights and then we took the best versions of the songs from whichever night. One might be from night number one. Another song might have come from night number two or number three. We did that and he did the mixing and all the studio stuff.

When the record came out we had a little hit called “I Can Take Care of Myself.” Then they sent us to Japan to

be in the Tokyo Music Festival where we won the gold prize there doing “At this Moment.” We started doing some television shows in the United States. We were on [Fridays](#) which was ABC's answer to *Saturday Night Live*.

SM: I remember it, with [Melanie Chartoff](#) and [Michael Richards](#)...

BV: Exactly. We do three songs in an episode that aired in late '81. We did, “[I Can Take Care of Myself](#),” “[Millie, Make Some Chili](#),” and [Percy Mayfield](#)'s great blues song, “[Strange Things Happening](#).” You'll see Skunk playing with The Beaters in all those videos.

SM: Well, Billy, thank you. Your stories about Skunk and his father are certainly food for thought. 🐦



Who's Your (Red River) Daddy?

by Tim “Tim Boo Ba” Munro

If I had any friends who were into *Buckaroo Banzai*, I think they'd say, “Tim, tell us about Buckaroo's drummer with the [dreads](#) and the submachine gun. He's so cool!” To which I'd reply, “Yeah, it never fails to get a laugh when he cocks the bolt of that Israeli [Uzi](#) during the gig at Artie's Artery.” Then I'd try to sound smart by asking, “Who do you want to hear about—the actor or the character?” They'd say, “Both!” and I'd be screwed, because I was just stalling. I don't know much about either.

In the making of Buckaroo Banzai documentary, [Into the 8th Dimension](#), on the [SHOUT! Blu-ray](#), [W.D. Richter](#) says the actor, “...playing the drums was a wonderful black guy with [Rasta](#) hair. He was a [session musician](#) who was too expensive for us to incorporate as an on-going Cavalier.” Richter says that he was disappointed because he wanted to do a scene where the faux Rasta John Parker met the real Rasta drummer. That woulda been totes m'goats awesome!

In “[The Return of the Screw](#)” comic book from Moonstone, The Hong Kong Cavaliers have an African-American drummer called Red River Daddy. Red River Daddy's weapon of choice is also the Israeli Uzi. Coincidence? I'm thinkin' that the HKC's African-American drummer with an Uzi in *Across the Eight Dimension!* is the same as the HKC's African-American drummer with an Uzi in “Return of the Screw”. The only one who would know for sure is [Earl Mac Rauch](#), but so far I haven't been trusted with his contact info. I was



Da man with da Uzi. Credit: MGM/Amazon

asking our eagle-eyed editor Dan “Big Shoulders” Berger about this and BS said I didn't need to bother Mac, 'cause BS also thought the two were meant to be the same character. This is a first, one of my articles that don't need a, “This is only Tim's opinion”* disclaimer.

Now I hear ya sayin'—but Tim, even though they both sport [goatee](#) facial hair, the drummer in the movie has dreads and the drummer in the comic book has a shaved head. Well, it's totally possible to have a cool haircut and at a later date choose to shave your head. I don't want to talk about how I know this. 🐦

*Tim's opinions regarding disclaimers in *World Watch One* are his own and not necessarily shared by *World Watch One*.

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“It Is A Three-Man Thermopod”

by Scott Tate

You know the scene. After duck hunters Burt and Bubba accidentally down a small Black Lectroid ship attempting to bring vital information to Buckaroo Banzai, the crash attracts the attention of a highway patrolman and a trio of interlopers from Yoyodyne. John Bigboote tries to downplay the incident to the patrolman while John Gomez identifies it as a three-man thermopod. Who were these three noble Black Lectroids, two of whom we knew all too briefly? And who were the actors who brought them to life on the screen?

Kevin Rodney Sullivan as John Gant



Credit: MGM/Amazon

“Detonator set. My most profuse apologies to my homeland and loved ones.”

These twelve simple words convey volumes. Dedication to a cause. What they’re fighting for. Humility. Self-sacrifice. Devotion to others. John Gant is as noble of a Lectroid as any we see.

Born in San Francisco in 1958, Kevin Rodney Sullivan was the youngest of three children. His father was a bus driver and his mother was a hospital receptionist. He got into acting early, starting at age 11 when his entire sixth grade class were cast as extras in Sidney Poitier’s *They Call Me MISTER Tibbs!* (1970). The acting bug next led to an Alpha-Bits commercial, then an uncredited bit part in *Thumb Tripping* (1972), a movie very much of its era about the ups and downs of a newly met couple hitchhiking up the California coast. [Your Author recently watched *Thumb Tripping* out of curiosity and admits to failing to spot Sullivan.] He landed a regular role in *Wee Pals on the Go* (1972-73), based on Morrie Turner’s comic strip designed to highlight ethnic diversity. For Christmas, the producer of *Wee Pals* gave Sullivan his first 8mm camera, perhaps kindling or encouraging Sullivan’s future love of directing.

Sullivan went to high school on a scholarship to St. Ignatius College Preparatory, a private Jesuit school with a student body at the time of 1,200...all boys, only about 40 of whom were black. Sullivan was initially excluded from joining the school’s theater program, but in his senior year he was allowed to direct a production of Lonnie Elder III’s *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* and to play the lead in *The Teahouse of the August Moon*.

At 17, Sullivan applied to the famed Juilliard School in New York but was turned away, being told that he had talent but was still too young compared to the majority of Juilliard’s students who already had at least some college experience. Sullivan instead drifted to Willamette University in Salem, Oregon on a theater scholarship. He excelled in their theater program, both acting and directing, and becoming interested in writing as well. After a time he left the school with the intent of writing and producing a play of his own as an independent study project, but never went back.

Sullivan continued to find roles in films such as *More American Graffiti* (1979), *Night Shift* (1982), *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982), and *Buckaroo Banzai* (1984). He turned up occasionally during the last few years of *Happy Days* as high school student Tommy in thirteen episodes scattered across the final three seasons. In 1987 he sold a script for an episode of *Fame*. *Happy Days* and *Fame* both aired on ABC, which gave him a toe in the door to pitch to the network a series of his own creation, *Knightwatch*. Inspired by the real-life [Guardian Angels](#), *Knightwatch* told the story of the Knights of the City, an unarmed volunteer citizen safety organization composed mostly of former gang members who now sought to safeguard their community and cooperate with the legal system. ABC picked up the series but unfortunately it didn’t fare particularly well in the ratings and lasted for only nine episodes, airing between November 1988 and January 1989. Sullivan next created *Moe’s World*, another community-minded drama which would have explored the struggles of a working-class neighborhood through the perspective of the compassionate ghost of an 11-year-old boy who’d died there. Sullivan wrote and directed a pilot, but first ABC and then Fox passed on giving the series a home.

Sullivan continued directing for both TV and film, including HBO’s *Soul of the Game* (1996) and his biggest commercial and critical hit so far, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1998), an episode of *The West Wing* (2000), *Conviction* (2002), *Barbershop 2* (2004), and *Guess Who* (2005).

Regarding *Guess Who*, Ashton Kutcher told [Blackfilm.com](#)’s Wilson Morales: “We picked Kevin to do the movie, Bernie [Mac] and I did, because what he knew

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the movie needed was heart. And he was more concerned about the heart than the comedy.” But Sullivan brought determination to the movie as well, pushing for wider international distribution than it might not have otherwise received. “I’ve had three feature films and the first two, they just said no, we’re not going to release your movie overseas,” he told [Aspire TV’s EXHALE](#). “*How Stella Got Her Groove Back* never got a foreign release, *Barbershop 2* never got a foreign release. When *Guess Who* came along I really sort of put myself on the line...So that was a proud moment for me, not just because of the success of the movie, but I knew that by having that conversation I was contributing to the bigger picture.”

Sullivan continues to direct regularly, contributing in recent years to shows such as *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Riverdale*, *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, *Titans*, *Evil*, *This Is Us*, *Lost in Space*, and *Snowfall*. He’s also set to direct the upcoming film *Rise*, based on real-life events about a janitor who coached a middle school basketball team to a championship. *Rise* is currently in pre-production.

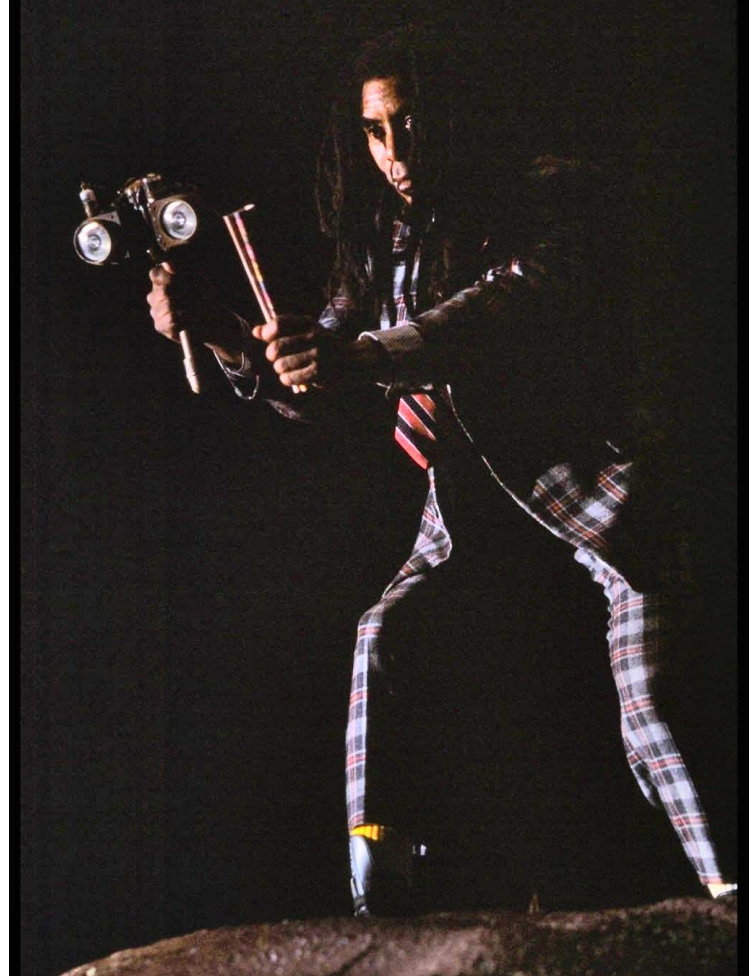
Alan Oliney as John Valuk

“John Valuk is dead. He fell on his head.”

The first Lectroid to exit the small craft didn’t get far, almost immediately losing his footing and fatally striking his head when he falls.

Poor Alan Oliney doesn’t get enough recognition among Banzai fandom. His character had no spoken lines, so he doesn’t get listed among the actors. His function in the story was literally to slip and take a fall, so he’s grouped as part of the stunt crew. Even then, his name appears in the end credits as “Olney,” obscuring him a little further.

But like all good stunt performers, you’ve seen him dozens of times without knowing he was there: In *Westworld* (1973), *Silver Streak* (1976), *M*A*S*H* (“A Night at Rosie’s,” 1979), *The Black Hole* (1979), *The Blues Brothers* (1980), *Scarface* (1983), *Die Hard* (1988), *The Abyss* (1989), *Last Action Hero* (1993), *Demolition Man* (1993), *The Crow* (1994), *seven* (1995), *Showgirls* (1995), *Black Sheep* (1996), *Con Air* (1997), *Batman & Robin* (1997), and more. He’s doubled for Ace Frehley (*Kiss Meets the Phantom of the Park*, 1978), Kevin Peter Hall in *Predator 2* (1990), Wesley Snipes in *Rising Sun* (1991), Avery Brooks in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (“Battle Lines,” 1993), Delroy Lindo in *Gone in 60 Seconds* (2000), and Eddie Murphy in just about everything (*Beverly Hills Cop*, *The Golden Child*, *Harlem Nights*, *Vampire in Brooklyn*, *Doctor Doolittle*, *Bowfinger*, *Nutty Professor II*, *The Adventures of Pluto Nash*, and others). Deeper behind the scenes, he’s been



Credit: MGM/Amazon, Bruce McBroom

stunt coordinator on *The Karate Kid* (1984), *I’m Gonna Git You Sucka* (1986), *Sister Act* (1992), *Amistad* (1997), and a good portion of the obscure-but-fan-favorite TV series *The Powers of Matthew Star* (1982-83), among other productions.

A Los Angeles native, Oliney got into stunt work through a recommendation from his UCLA gymnastics coach. Oliney is an honorary member of [Stunts Unlimited](#), an elite group of stunt professionals founded in 1970. Full membership in SU is kept limited to 50 individuals or fewer, and they extend honorary memberships for even fewer people than that, so he is in refined company.

Oliney appears in several films that include other Banzai alums, though not necessarily in scenes shared together: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982) with **Vincent Schiavelli**, *Get Crazy* (1983) with **Bill Henderon**, *Star Trek III* (1984) and *My Favorite Martian* (1999) with **Christopher Lloyd**, *The Presidio* (1988) with **Jessie Lawrence Ferguson**, *Ricochet* (1991) with **John Lithgow**, *Holy Man* (1998) with **Jeff Goldblum**—that’s another one where Oliney stood in for Eddie Murphy—and *Little Richard* (2000) with **Carl Lumbly**. Which brings us to...

Carl Lumbly as John Parker



Credit: MGM/Amazon

“But perhaps John Parker will get through with our message to Buckaroo Banzai.”

Of the three members in the thermopod crew—indeed, of all the Black Lectroids seen throughout the movie—John Parker is the one we spend the most time getting to know. He does indeed get through with their message, where Parker and his famous pink cake box provide both Buckaroo and the viewing audience with knowledge of the stakes involved before joining Buckaroo and the rest of the gang on their raid of the Yoyodyne facilities. Parker is particularly useful in helping Buckaroo pilot the ship the Red Lectroids have been secretly building. Well, somewhat useful anyway. “It flies like a truck.” “Good. What is a truck?”

Born in Minneapolis, Carl Lumbly accidentally became an actor by way of journalism while covering a local sketch comedy and improv group for an article. He auditioned for them, seeking an inside angle from which to write about the process. His participation with the group stuck unexpectedly, eventually growing into a career that branched out into film and television.

We’ve talked about Lumbly’s screen acting career in these pages before, such as a look at some of his animated and sci-fi roles in the [September 2018](#) issue, so this time we’ll focus on his stage work. He’s performed Shakespearean roles in *The Tempest* (the 1981 New York Shakespeare Festival), as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (a 1987-88 run at NY’s Joseph Papp Public Theater), and as Macbeth (Berkeley Repertory Theater, 1997). Some of his other New York stage work has included August Wilson’s *Jitney* (2000), where he was among those recognized with a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Ensemble Performance, and Regina Taylor’s “stop. reset.” (2013).

On the other side of the country, he has frequently performed at the SF Playhouse in San Francisco, including *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* (2007), *The Sunset*

Limited (2010), *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* (2013), *Storefront Church* (2013-14), *Tree* (2015), and *Red Velvet* (2016). He’s been nominated multiple times over the years for the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award, winning in 2007 for *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train*.

“Obviously certain things were made possible by earning more as an actor [for TV/films],” Lumbly told *SFGate* in 2012, “but I treasure and can count on one hand those really peak moments, and San Francisco has three of them—*Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train*, *Sizwe Bansi*, and *The Island*.”

Another potential “peak moment” for that list is his one-man show *Jimmy: According to Me...*, in which he takes on the persona of his favorite author and essayist, James Baldwin. A passion project he spent years writing and honing, it finally came to fruition in 2018. Lumbly first read Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain* while in college, then went on to absorb nearly everything Baldwin wrote, forming a strong identification with the man. “I was struck by the similarities in some of the things we had both chosen to do as young people,” Lumbly told *The San Francisco Chronicle* at the time of the show’s debut. “He spent a good amount of time by himself in the library. He was identified as very bright quite young, but opportunities for him were limited...I also grew up feeling outside the norm. I am the son of a Jamaican immigrant who moved to Minneapolis—not a city where you found a lot of black people, let alone a lot of Jamaicans. I am not what I would consider a wildly masculine individual. I was considered sensitive. I figured out how to be a man in what I considered to be a hostile environment, and James Baldwin had a similar experience growing up poor in Harlem.” Lumbly almost certainly had these words of Baldwin’s in mind: “You think your pain and heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

Lumbly joined the Marvel Cinematic Universe as Isaiah Bradley in *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* in 2021, a role he is expected to reprise in 2024’s *Captain America: Brave New World*. He’ll portray Edgar Allan Poe’s detective C. Auguste Dupin in an upcoming Netflix adaptation of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and he’ll be a recurring guest star in the upcoming Netflix action comedy *Obliterated*, where he’ll play CIA director Langdon. *Obliterated* follows an elite special forces team who disarm a bomb threat in Las Vegas, have a drunken party to celebrate saving the day...and then find out it was only a decoy. Now they have even less time to find the real bomb while massively hung over. Release dates for *Usher* and *Obliterated* haven’t been announced yet. 🦋

INTERVIEW: Carl Lumbly

By Jeremy Brown

From the Arrowverse to the MCU, from the streets of Manhattan to the formless void of the eighth dimension, Carl Lumbly has imbued his characters with strength, intelligence, and quiet dignity. All of those qualities he brought to the role of John Parker, the Black Lectroid emissary who delivers an ominous message about the fate of Earth to Buckaroo Banzai and then joins the team to help save both Earth and his homeworld of Planet 10. Lumbly has numerous film and TV credits to his name, and will soon be seen as Isaiah Bradley, the MCU's first Super Soldier, in the upcoming *Captain America: Brave New World*. But for *Banzai* fans, his role as John Parker, the man in the silver jacket, will always be nearest and dearest to their hearts.

Jeremy Brown: You came to acting almost by accident while working as a journalist. Can you tell us how that happened?

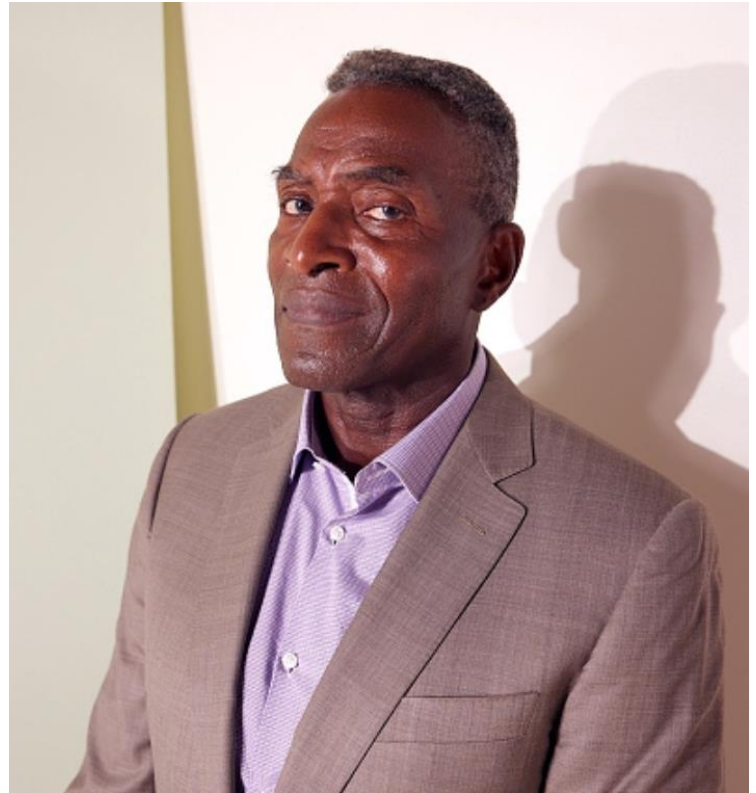
Carl Lumbly: I had an assignment to cover an improvisational comedy theater in Minneapolis called Dudley Riggs' [Brave New Workshop](#). They had lost their entire cast to Los Angeles, so they had to recast the entire company. They held a public audition, and I was assigned to cover the process. So I thought, "This is an interesting idea. I'll go through the audition process and I'll write about it from the perspective of someone who was trying to get in and didn't, and was able to watch all these actors, performers, and writers vie for this opportunity." And, at the end of the process, they selected five people, and I was one of the five.

JB: Did you tell them then that you were a journalist?

CL: I did. I told them I wasn't an actor and showed them that I was writing this story. They said, "OK," and then contacted me a few days later saying, "We'd like to offer you a place in the cast if you're interested." And, full disclosure, Minneapolis at that time had a fairly low representation of black people, and there were none in the company. So I said "OK," and I did it for about a year and a half.

JB: At that point, did you know that acting was what you wanted to do?

CL: Well, I left Minneapolis for San Francisco, and, when I got there, I called a former boss of mine at the Associated Press and asked him what might be available. He said he might have a position for me in a couple of weeks if I could just hold out. So I said "Yes," and opened up the newspaper to look for a couch. And, in the newspaper, they had a performing arts column. They didn't have one in Minneapolis, so I thought that was



Carl Lumbly today. Credit: [Carl Lumbly Official Facebook Page](#)

interesting. I was looking at the column, and it said, "Two black actors needed for South African political plays." And something about that was interesting. A South African political play.

So I went to the library and looked up the play. It was a play by a man named Athol Fugard called *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. It was a two-character piece, and the character that I was auditioning for began the piece with a 30- to 40-minute monologue, which I thought was fascinating. So I went and auditioned and got cast, and the other actor who was cast with me was Danny Glover. We did that play for the California Arts Council and toured it up and down the coast. We ended up doing a venue in Los Angeles, and some agents saw us, and what happened to Danny is evident and what happened to me is what happened to me!

JB: How did you make the transition from stage to screen?

CL: I stayed in LA for another year and did not like it. Then I moved to New York, which I loved. I was doing plays and having a wonderful time, and I got cast in a pilot for a television show that was shot in Toronto. The network picked up six episodes, so I came back to Los Angeles, did those episodes and it was pulled off the air after six shows. So I went back to New York with cash in my hand, and apparently the producers had a write-in

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campaign, and they decided to pick the series back up. And that series was *Cagney & Lacey*.

JB: As you broke into the business, what were some of the challenges and hurdles you had to overcome?

CL: Getting into the business was, I think, pretty easy in a way. I had a skill set. I had come from stage and I was able to play different characters. I think versatility was probably the thing that helped me the most. But staying in the business was more of a challenge because it required me to accept certain conditions. The number of times I was told, “Well, we’re not going in that direction,” or, “The producers don’t want to go through the problems that would come from casting you in that role,” or, “They don’t want to cast you next to a white woman as a love interest.”

And I did not think those conditions were at all fair, but they were quite similar to the conditions that I had to accept in the greater world outside of acting. And I never really accepted those. So that’s always been a challenge to me, this whole notion of race and bias and traditions that relegate a person of color, or a woman, or an elder to anything that identifies that as some sort of disability. I love acting, I love doing this work. And it has been at times anything from frustrating to gratifying to surprising to annoying to angering. Much of what I have seen lately is encouraging, but the entire thing is still stupid to me. That’s my take on it. Racism and racists are stupid and I don’t want to have anything to do with it or them.

JB: Do you think that more people are waking up to that notion and that it will affect more change in the business?

CL: I’m not certain that people are waking up to it in that I don’t think people have been asleep about it. I just think it’s one of those things that we’ve either agreed to kind of a slow, unfolding snail’s pace turtle progress, or people get angry and they act up. But I don’t think anyone can be in this country for too long and not understand the fact and the ubiquity of it. My parents moved to this country from Jamaica. And what they came here for in the early 50s was promise. And they felt that the opportunities here would be greater for themselves and for their children. And they were right. I have three sisters, and my parents were able to put us all through college and we all have made our way successfully in the world and we have benefited from great opportunities in this country. But I can tell you what that came with. What my parents had to go through, due to this stain on the American conscience and on the body politic, was unconscionable. And I had, and still have, apparently, based on this conversation, deep anger about that.



Carl Lumbly chats with an interviewer in behind the scenes footage captured during the filming of *Buckaroo Banzai* in 1983. **Credit:** World Watch One archives

JB: The hope now is that society is starting to move in the right direction and future generations won’t have to experience what you and your parents have gone through.

CL: I have a son, and I hope when he’s my age he’ll be able to see a world with less of it, and it won’t be something that will confront him and his children in the same way that it confronted me, just as it didn’t confront me in the same way that it confronted my parents. It’s been a long time, and that’s what’s infuriating. I believe that this change that we all agree is coming gradually could be sped up if everybody became impatient. I think it’s easier for some people to be patient and say, “Let’s keep making this steady progress,” rather than saying, “Let’s work as individuals to change and each and every one of us make that a mandate for citizenship.”

JB: Pivoting back to your career, when you first received the script for *Buckaroo Banzai*, what did you make of it? Did you have any reservations going into such a unique and unusual film?

CL: Oh gosh, no! I thought it was refreshing. In fact, I thought it was familiar because it reminded me a lot of the way we developed scripts in improvisational comedy. It was based on this idea of a world, and that was what was so brilliant about it. I might not understand all of the things that we were dealing with in this world, but gee whiz, the idea of another dimension that was just around the corner? Certainly physics has been talking about all sorts of possibilities like that. And we know that we use such a tiny percentage of what we have in our brains. So the idea of certain people who work hard and accept that it’s possible to do five or six different things at once and be really good at them, like *Buckaroo*, I loved. You know, “I love neuroscience, but I’m really

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working on this guitar lick right now.” I thought it was brilliant.

I also loved the idea of this ragtag group of individuals who were part of a team but still remained individual. They had their own areas of expertise and their own vanities and foibles, but they worked together. I loved Buckaroo’s leadership style. There was an influential leader in South Africa named Steve Biko. And his leadership style was, when there was a meeting and they would discuss what was to be done, he would stand at the back of the room and let the other people in the group stand up front. So there was never a strong, serious idea about who exactly the leader was. The leader was all of them. I think a good leader instills that and encourages it.

JB: Speaking of Buckaroo, you and Peter Weller had great chemistry in the film, particularly during the final battle with you both working together in the thermal pod to defeat John Whorfin. Did that come from what was on the page or the chemistry you both developed together?

CL: Well, I thought Peter was a wonderful actor, and his nature seemed to be that he was both enjoying what he was doing while also being very serious about it. And we had conversations about what the possibilities might be in the scene and then we went in and tried things out. And, to his credit, W.D. Richter, for a first-time director, had a gentleness about him, and such a deep intelligence. And I thought he was smart enough to say that the open-endedness of this script and the size of these ideas would work best if we were knitted together as a group, resolved to saving the world and contributing in the ways that each one of us could.

JP: While researching this article, we came across a memo that detailed how many of the Lectroid actors had trouble with the makeup and the prosthetics, feeling uncomfortable and claustrophobic. Did you encounter any issues with the makeup?

CL: I had no problem with it at all. What I did not love was the application! That was tedious. But I thought it was worth it. It just felt like a process that, after which, I could not be anything but in character.

JB: Some actors have talked about how, during the process of applying the makeup, they slowly become the character. Did you find that to be the case with becoming John Parker?

CL: No, because I thought that John Parker existed as a character even before the makeup, because he existed in two phases. He had that Lectroidal, eighth dimension side of him, and then he had his Rasta appearance. And, to me, neither of those was a disguise. Both were equally

applicable in the eighth dimension. The idea of being “two-faced” was not an insult to a Black Lectroid. That’s just nature.

For me, I considered John Parker the same way I considered developing a character for the stage. Who did he love? What were his activities? Why had he been chosen to deliver this news? It was a desperate time, but what was it about the Black Lectroids that allowed them to remain relatively calm? This conflict with the Red Lectroids had taken place, but it seemed like it was over. And now Lizardo is back and not only their world, but all worlds are at risk. Evil was the enemy. Not only Lizardo and the other Red Lectroids, but evil was the enemy.

I considered the Black Lectroids to be pacifists. I loved the idea of a society where contemplation and quiet enjoyment of one another’s company was the order of the day.

JB: During the final “curtain call” over the end credits, fans were so excited when you walked up and joined the team as they strutted through the dam together, taking that as a sign that you were on Team Banzai officially and would be a part of the then-promised sequel, *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League*. Was that a consideration, and, if so, how would you like to have seen your character evolve?

CL: I don’t think I ever thought in terms of a sequel. I pretty much went gig to gig. I do remember in that scene thinking it was so cool that Clancy Brown was there, too. Because we thought he had been killed in the movie. So that opened up all sorts of possibilities for what might happen.

I looked forward to perhaps playing more in the world of the Black Lectroid. It seemed to be a very contemplative world, a peaceful world and a world of a tremendous amount of power. I think my overall thought was, it was a wild and wacky, wacky, wacky film. But if we could get back together, I would love to see what the next iteration of wildness would be.

JB: Although we know how beloved *Buckaroo Banzai* is today, when it was first released, it was not a big box office success. Was there any negative stigma back then, being associated with a film that had underperformed?

CL: There was no negative feedback, no. There were probably people who felt sorry for some of us for being a part of the cast once it became established that it was, as the term goes, a flop. But for me, the idea that it was not successful commercially had, in my view, nothing to do with how well the film worked. And, for those people who did like it, I got some great, great feedback. I don’t think I’ve ever had a better costume. That jacket was on

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point! And when you're that sartorially splendid, it doesn't matter what dimension you come from.

JB: It's interesting that you mention the jacket. W.D. Richter has claimed that you kept the jacket and that you wear it every August 15 in honor of the film's premiere. Can you confirm or deny these allegations?

CL: I cannot confirm it, no. I don't know where the jacket is or where it went. But I do know that was a big month for me. Because my birthday was August 14, and then the film debuted and then, on the 21st, I went to work on a project with an actress named Vonetta McGee, and I married her two years later. So that was a big summer for me!

JB: What were your thoughts when, as the years went by, the film began to take on this new life as a cult classic?

CL: I thought it was only right, because Mac Rauch had done a bold and brilliant thing, and that's what art is supposed to be. And W.D. Richter had directed in the only way it could have been directed, which is wide open, taking advantage of as much as possible. I thought it had been lovingly put together and that it was only fair that something that had been created by love had found love.

JB: How do you feel today, knowing that the film has endured and has been as embraced as it has been?

CL: I'm glad that it has! Every once in a while, I will be approached by someone who knows this film. And they usually have a big smile on their face! And they come up to me and say, "I loved that movie. I don't even know what it was all about, but I loved that movie." And I think there's something quite wonderful about something that not everyone can figure out, and that some people *really* don't care for, that other people are just over the moon about.

I will forever be grateful to Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter and that wonderful cast of people. Ellen Barkin, and Jeff Goldblum, Clancy Brown, Jonathan Banks, it just goes on and on. I think the film maybe continues because of some of the energies that we were forming. And maybe it's a new definition of what makes a film successful. Maybe it has to be a flop before finding an audience that holds on to it and keeps it in perpetuity.

It did things that other films couldn't do. There are some really, really successful box office hits that don't get recycled as often as *Buckaroo* and people don't still talk about them because they're concluded. You saw the film, you knew what it was about and you could put it away. But I think it's tough to put this one away because you're not certain it's really finished. It's like a book you've read several times and you say, "I think there's more in this."

JB: In an era where so many movies and franchises are being remade, recycled and rebooted, do you think that there's a chance that *Buckaroo Banzai* could ride again? And, if so, could we count you in?

CL: I would only do it if W.D. Richter was directing again. Because I think his sensibilities are such that he could do what he did with it again. And I think he would be doing it in a world that is much more open to this idea of innovation and stepping outside the lines. But it's a wonderful world, and I would love to visit it again. So, if someone came up with something that was in the same vein with the same kind of ethic and goodwill, humor and joy that *Buckaroo* had, that would be tough to resist. I'm not sure I still have what it takes to pull off the silver jacket!

JB: After *Buckaroo Banzai*, you have continued to have a thriving career. One of your other signature roles was playing television's first black superhero on *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, a show that was very ahead of its time. Is that a role you would like to revisit?

CL: I think the way that I would imagine it happening would be to go back to the pilot and to let go of what we did in the series. I would use the pilot as the seminal directive and, and go from there. Because in the pilot, many of those themes are just so on point and they translate so well to today. The idea of a hero who refuses to kill and who accepts the possibility that individuals who are doing wrong need to be stopped from harming others, but that should not require them to be harmed. It's difficult to call someone a hero who is that willing to take a life, and that held so beautifully and so firmly in the pilot.

I also loved the idea that, in the pilot, we didn't know who had shot him, but he had been injured and put in the wheelchair, not unlike many political assassinations or assassinations of civil rights leaders, because he was



Putting the man in the M.A.N.T.I.S.: Lumbly appears in full super hero regalia in a scene from the short-lived Sam Raimi series M.A.N.T.I.S in 1994. **Credit:** [Universal Television](#)

upending things and because of how he was influencing the way people thought. I thought all that was beautiful, and what we did subsequently was an adjusted and somewhat limited version of what the pilot had to offer. So, in doing it again, I would say, “Go back and make the series a robust continuation of what the pilot had to say.”

And not to mention the costume! That was wonderful. But I also loved being in the wheelchair. I loved that it didn’t affect his agency one drop, and that it gave him an increased perspective and understanding about what ability and “disability” are all about.

JB: In addition to *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, you have carved out quite a niche in the superhero genre, from animated shows to playing the father of Martian Manhunter in *Supergirl* and now as Isaiah Bradley in MCU. What do you enjoy about working in that particular space?

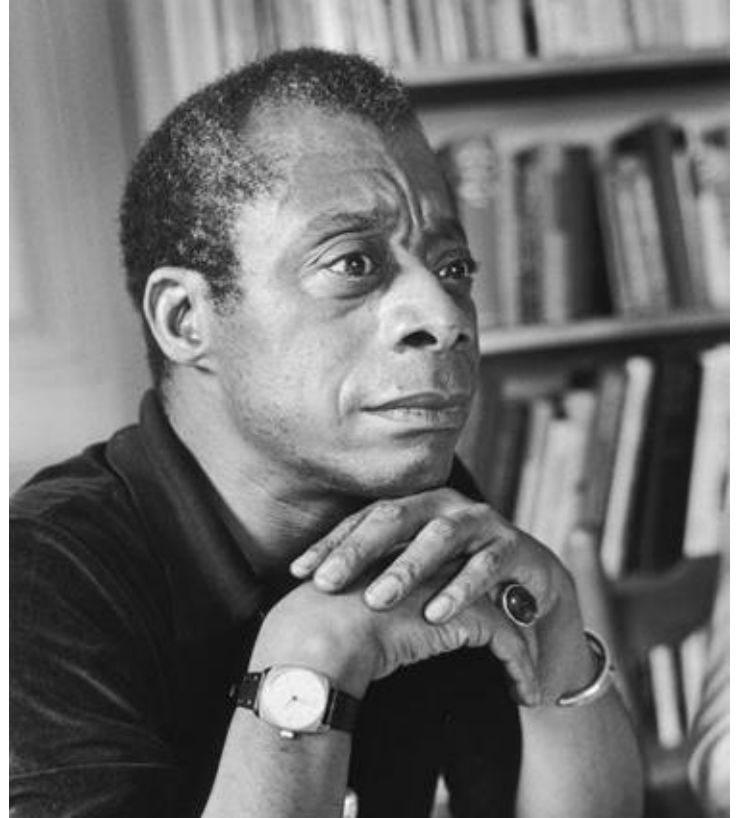
CL: It’s funny, because it’s all been kind of accidental. My career has been you hear about an audition, maybe get an offer, and you do the gig. And the fact that it’s taken a shape has to do with the fact that I’ve been willing to do all sorts of different things and that versatility is key for me. And I think one of the other things is that these are large characters who have deep backstories and fascinating psychologies, and all of that is what I prize about doing this work.

With superhero stories, they can fly, they can blow things up, they can change forms, but they’re still operating out of spirit. And it’s generally the strength of their spirit that wins the day. So I love that, and I champion it. Because I think that reflects what we all have inside us. And I think there is this idea that what we share is far greater than what separates us, and, for most of the superhero genre, that’s the task. To bring together what is different, disparate individuals and different communities and cultures and galvanize them towards doing good.

JB: One of the projects that you have lined up for 2023 is playing Edgar Allen Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin in Mike Flanagan’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*. What can you share about that project?

CL: Oh boy, I wish I could tell you! Because it’s a really, big, beautifully-wrought piece of work. Mike took on a challenge. I mean, come on! Edgar Allen Poe! This is the man. But I could not be more proud of being a part of this and working with such a wonderful cast of people. In a perfect world, I would probably only work with Mike! But he’s got other things and there are other actors, so I have to be generous.

JB: Is there anything else big on the horizon that you can share with us?



Writer James Baldwin in a 1976 portrait. **Credit:** Unknown

CL: Well, there’s really only one thing on my bucket list and that’s, I was going to say writing, but maybe laboring is more accurate, to come up with a one-man show about James Baldwin. And I’m getting much closer than I’ve been in the eight or so years that I’ve been working on this. I will probably bring it to San Francisco, because that’s where so much of it was developed, but I’ll do it on the streets of New Delhi, I’ll do it in Kingston, I’ll do it anywhere I can find a space. Because, not only do I love the work that he did, but I loved what I think he stood for and the way that he lived.

JB: After such a long and distinguished career, what still drives and motivates you?

CL: I love the idea of striving for a perfection you can never achieve. I love getting the chance to do something where you get to be right and you get to be wrong, and whatever you come up with has elements of both. And then it’s up to the final judge, the audience, to make a decision. So it’s out of your hands at that point. The work is the work you do when you have it in your hands. And, once you let it go and it’s out there, it’s amazing the way people can take that forward. Going back to *Buckaroo Banzai*, I’ve read some things that people have said about it that I didn’t think about when we were doing it. No one has control over that. Nobody said, “Oh, this is what will get ‘em!” But that’s why we don’t just do this work for one another. 🐦

Cash On Demand

By Scott Tate

Almost from the beginning, Rosalind Cash prided herself—relished, even—in choosing roles that pushed against stereotypes for African-Americans, women, or both. But first and foremost, she was always true to herself.

Rosalind Cash was born in Atlantic City, NJ in the winter of 1938. Her mother, Mary, worked as a hotel waitress, back when Atlantic City was a summer vacation spot but before the casinos moved in. Her father, John, worked at a grocery store and apprenticed at learning watch repair. “My father didn’t make much money and my mother made even less,” Cash recalled years later, “but they were determined to keep the family together.”¹

Growing up in a housing project and attending a segregated school until her teenage years, Cash learned young to recognize certain inequalities. “I grew up very sensitive to the racial thing very early. I knew that there was disparity and that I lived on one side of town and white people lived on another side of town and you weren’t to go there unless you worked.”² Her parents encouraged the educations of Cash and her siblings (initially one older brother, later a younger brother and sister as well), and Cash had the good fortune to attend a high school with small classes and an emphasis on college preparation.

But what about preparation as an actor, which was already on Cash’s mind? She was a natural mimic, amusing those around her by doing impressions of relatives or imitating the vocal styles of famous singers. But formal steps towards building on that were elusive. “I wasn’t trained in high school as an actor. I couldn’t enter the drama club in Langston High School because it was all white. There were a few little openings for blacks but the kind of plays like *Oklahoma* really didn’t encourage us to come and we were always doing something way in the back. I joined the speakers guild. I didn’t want to be in the drama guild—that is, I wanted to but I didn’t feel wanted so I joined the speakers bureau.”³

After graduating high school, Cash moved to New York and began eking out opportunities. She joined a small theater group at the YMCA at 116th and Lenox in Harlem, where she learned about elements such as stage



Rosalind Cash appears as the formidable John Emdall in *Buckaroo Banzai*. Credit: MGM/Amazon, Bruce McBroom

movement and the Stanislavsky method. It was with this group that she made her stage debut in 1958 at the age of 20 in a production of Langston Hughes’ *Soul Gone Home*. Performing locally and then touring in the South—at a time when the Civil Rights Act wasn’t in effect yet—provided her with an informal but highly practical education. By 1966 she had the opportunity to give her first Broadway performance, appearing in a short run of Harry Tugend’s *The Wayward Stork* at the 46th Street Theatre (today known as the Richard Rodgers Theatre). She also became an enthusiastic participant of the [Negro Ensemble Company](#) (NEC) when it was still in its infancy in 1968. The New York-based theater company, dedicated to furthering the voices onstage of black writers, directors, and actors, began making waves right away with talents like Cash and others on their side, receiving recognitions such as a citation for excellence at the Obie Awards in 1968 and a special achievement award at the Tonys in 1969.

Cash made her first TV appearance on a Saturday afternoon in 1969 on a local New York broadcast, *Callback*.⁴ She sang “God Bless the Child,” originally made famous by Billie Holiday, one of the singers she

¹ Rosalind Cash as quoted by Irma McClaurin-Allen in “Working: The Black Actress in the Twentieth Century,” *Contributions in Black Studies* Vol. 8 (1986).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Callback*’s musical director at that time, a jingles writer named Barry Pincus, would go on to greater fame himself as Barry Manilow.

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used to imitate while growing up. Sadly, no recordings of the performance are known to exist.

The next few years brought Cash plenty more stage experience, mostly through NEC productions at St. Mark's Playhouse (which, alas, later became a Gap, and later still, condos). Her stage career reached one of its greatest heights in the summer of 1973 with the New York Shakespeare Festival, taking to an open stage in Central Park to embody the role of Goneril in a production of *King Lear*. A pre-*Star Wars* James Earl Jones lent his gravitas to the title role, and elsewhere in the cast were struggling young unknowns such as Raul Julia, Rene Auberjonois, and Paul Sorvino. A recording of the play was broadcast on TV six months later as part of PBS' *Great Performances* series.

Her film career had already started to take root by that time. After a couple of the usual obligatory breaking-in roles—an uncredited waitress, a prostitute—she was suddenly propelled into cinematic prominence in *The Omega Man* (1971) as the female lead opposite Charlton Heston as the last man on Earth—or so he thinks, until he meets Lisa (Cash). The film stirred controversy in some circles. Depicting interracial romances on the screen was still a touchy subject back then even when handled delicately and *The Omega Man* wasn't shy about it, with one of the first onscreen interracial kisses in mainstream film history and a bit of post-coital nudity. But times were changing, and many viewers rolled with it. Film critic Roger Ebert called Cash's performance "engagingly brash."⁵ And despite Quigley Publications' longstanding conservative reputation, Cash earned a place on their annual list of the Top Ten Stars of Tomorrow, making her the first African-American to appear on the list since its creation in 1941.

Cash repeatedly cited *Melinda* (1972) as one of her personal favorites. She co-stars as Terry, whose boyfriend Frankie (Calvin Lockhart) becomes entangled with the mysterious Melinda (Vonetta McGee)⁶. The predominantly black cast and karate-driven fight scenes often get the film pigeonholed, but Cash has always disagreed: "I never thought of it as a black exploitation film. To me that's just a label. Lonnie Elder [III], the screen writer, wrote a mystery, a drama, though there was pressure to bring more of the violence and the sex that was attendant to many black films of the day."⁷ She went on to express admiration for the film's implicit messaging, "that you could deal with the criminal element without firearms...that the good guys deal with



Rosalind Cash (L) and Charlton Heston (R) in a scene from the 1971 science fiction horror classic, *The Omega Man*.
Credit: Walter Seltzer Productions/Warner Bros.

the bad guys with the martial arts and outsmarting them. I love *Melinda*. I think it's one of the best movies ever made."

Cornbread, Earl and Me (1975) remains all too relevant today with its story about an innocent young black man shot by the police. Cash plays Sarah Robinson, the mother of Wilford, the "me" from the title, played by Lawrence Fishburne in one of his earliest screen roles. The cast is a great time capsule of black talent from the era, including Moses Gunn, Bernie Casey, Thalmus Rasulala, Antonio Fargas, and another future *Banzai* actor, Bill Henderson.

Production wrapped on a made-for-TV movie co-starring Cash in early 1979, but it didn't see the light of day until the summer of 1982. The emotional *Sister, Sister* was a powerhouse of African-American feminine talent, starring Diahann Carroll, Irene Cara, and Cash, with a script by Maya Angelou...but a network executive decided that it wouldn't appeal to a broad enough range of viewers and shelved it. Thankfully more open minds hadn't forgotten about it after a regime change a few years later. When it finally aired, both Cash and Cara were nominated for NAACP Image Awards for their performances, with the honor tipping to Cara, and the movie itself picking up an Image Award for Outstanding TV Movie, Mini Series, or Dramatic Special.

"I've always felt a responsibility in doing film," she stated in a 1981 interview.⁸ "That's why you might not see me a lot. There's a lot of films I won't do. But whenever I'm doing a film, I'm trying to show that power that we have."

⁵ Roger Ebert, "Reviews: The Omega Man," *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 1, 1971.

⁶ The real-life future wife of another *Banzai* actor, Carl Lumbly.

⁷ Video interview conducted by S. Pearl Sharp for *Lead-In* on BET, 1981.

⁸ *Ibid.*



Sister Act: Rosalind Cash (R) appears with Diahann Carroll (L) and Irene Cara (C) in a promotional image for the 1982 TV movie *Sister, Sister*. **Credit:** 20th Century Fox Television

By then she'd begun wearing the dreadlocks which remained a signature look for the rest of her career. "I've been up for roles, I didn't get 'em, my agent says, 'You're too light, you're too dark, you're too old, you dress weird, you have dreadlocks.' Screw it, I don't care about that anymore. I'm going beyond that."⁹ Those dreadlocks served her well a few years later in the role of the Black Lectroid leader John Emdall in *Buckaroo Banzai*, one of her few forays into science fiction aside from the *The Omega Man*.

Those dreadlocks were a lucky happenstance. "My recollection is that we envisioned coding the Black Lectroids as 'Jamaican' long before we ever went into production," Earl Mac Rauch told us when we reached out to ask if the decision had been made to style the other Black Lectroids the same way before or after Cash joined the cast. "I don't remember the exact genesis of the idea but the appeal of the Bob Marley/Jimmy Cliff reggae vibe is obvious. The fact that Rosalind wore dreads was just a happy coincidence."

"I think Mac's right on this one," W.D. Richter concurred. "As you know, Lectroids from Planet 10 were originally Lepers from Saturn. Such an obvious and all-too-common sci-fi trope! And one that I feared would incur the justifiable wrath of the leper community. So Mac changed their home planet from Saturn to 10, and we decided to drop 'Lepers.'" After a little more trial and error, the nomenclature evolved into Lectroids, and "since there were two warring groups on Planet 10 and, being reductive thinkers, Mac and I decided to name them after colors. From there it was a tiny step to 'The good Lectroids should be black.' But not wanting to stigmatize all white people by naming the villains 'white Lectroids' and also believing that most Americans who lived through the Cold War saw 'Reds' as evil, we chose red. And then gave Buckaroo red glasses to muddy the waters."

"Now if the good Lectroids were to be black but speak English," Richter continued, "and putting the 'Bob Marley/Jimmy Cliff reggae vibe' aside for just a moment, the Jamaican 'accent' is to me, at least, one of the loveliest ways to speak the language...It's quiet and friendly and relaxing in a loud, hostile, frantic world."¹⁰

In addition to the "happy coincidence" of Cash already having dreadlocks, she came by the accent semi-naturally as well. The inflections weren't part of her everyday speaking voice, but they weren't entirely unfamiliar to her. Her father's heritage stemmed from the West Indies, with her paternal grandmother hailing from Barbados. While not exactly close geographic neighbors—more than 1,200 miles separate the islands—the speech patterns do share some of the same melliferous Caribbean rhythms.

Cash's career continued to expand on TV. "I have been on practically every episodic show you can name as a guest star," Cash noted in 1986. By that time, her list included *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Good Times*, *Kojak*, *What's Happening*, *Police Woman*, *Starsky & Hutch*, *Barney Miller*, *Benson*, *Trapper John MD*, and *Hardcastle & McCormick*. It would later grow with *Riptide*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Knight Rider*, *The Cosby Show*, *Highway to Heaven*, *L.A. Law*, *Frank's Place*, *The Golden Girls*, *Knightwatch*¹¹, *Family Ties*, *Thirtysomething*, *Falcon Crest*, *227*, *Head of the Class*, *China Beach*, *A Different World*, *Knotts Landing*, *Tequila & Bonetti*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Lois & Clark*, and *Roc*.¹² "...but I've never had the distinction of having a hit TV series where I made a whole lot of

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Big thanks to Mac and Rick for indulging our curiosity here.

¹¹ *Knightwatch* (1988-89) was created by one of Cash's fellow

Black Lectroids, Kevin Rodney Sullivan.

¹² And yes, we're probably missing a few. The lady was prolific!



Rosalind Cash, rocking her signature dreads sometime in the 1980s. **Credit:** Unknown

money. [But] I've never wanted that...Wealth to me is only spiritual and everything else is just icing on the cake or something to titillate, so I've never gone for these things in my career—to be a big movie star and be rich. I'm more concerned with quality.”¹³

“I refuse to deal with the industry as interpreting my worth...I don't seek this to make me complete,” she added. “I'm an artist and will be an artist whether the industry recognizes me or not.”¹⁴ Over the course of her career, Cash occasionally received nominations for high-profile awards, but rarely won. At the NAACP Image Awards, over the years she was up for *The Omega Man* (1971), *Uptown Saturday Night* (1974), and *Wrong Is Right* (1982)—where she played the Vice President of the United States—but never took one home.¹⁵ Likewise, she missed out on the two occasions she was nominated for an Emmy Award, once for a PBS adaptation of James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1985) and a decade later for her ongoing role on *General Hospital*

(1994-95). Occasionally her peers did acknowledge her contributions. She was given a Phoenix Award from the Black American Cinema Society in 1987, and voted into the Black Filmmaker Hall of Fame in 1992.

Rosalind Cash died too early, passing of cancer in 1995 at the age of 56.

“Maybe I've handled it all wrong, but I've gotten what I wanted out of it,” she once said of her career, sounding as if she was possibly speaking philosophically of life in general. “That's a sense of being true to myself.”¹⁶

Mac remembers her this way: “She was one self-assured tough lady who had been through the Hollywood wringer as a female African-American and undoubtedly had her share of war stories. Intimidating in a way, as people with a ‘presence’ can be, but warm and open if you spent the time to talk to her. We had only a couple of conversations but at the [*Banzai*] After Party exchanged phone numbers. We never got back in touch but I'll never forget her scribbling her phone number in ballpoint in the palm of my hand. I regret we didn't become better friends. She was a very special person.”

“Rather than becoming more compromising as I've gone along I've gotten stronger because I don't care any more. What can they do, blacklist me?” she once said.¹⁷ “So I stand up and assert myself—in a nice way, in a very nice way. When I play a role, it's the human dignity of the spirit which I look for.” Rosalind Cash found that dignity again and again and never stopped encouraging it in others. 🐦

We close with an excerpt from Rosalind's obituary appearing in the November 17, 1995 issue of [The Independent](#):

“In his Channel 4 documentary *Black Hollywood* (1984), the director Howard Johnson made a heart-felt exploration of the effects of racism on black American film actors. Among his most revealing interviewees was Rosalind Cash, who gave an insight into the dilemma faced by black actresses who have talent, but don't want to play stereotypes. She said:

We are so grateful to have a part that often we do roles that aren't us, that are old tired stereotypes we don't even believe in. Then we sit and watch and we are embarrassed to see ourselves. I played a lot of prostitutes very early in my career but as I matured I lost interest in them. I just didn't want to be seen being abused in those nasty, degrading parts. I didn't want to project that image.”

at the WTC to be blamed on foreign terrorists as justification to invade and seize Middle Eastern oil fields.

¹⁶ Quoted by Myrna Oliver in “Rosalind Cash: Veteran TV, Movie Actress,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 2, 1995.

¹⁷ McClaurin-Allen, “Working,” *Black Studies*.

¹³ McClaurin-Allen, “Working,” *Black Studies*.

¹⁴ Sharp, *Lead-In*.

¹⁵ *Wrong Is Right* (1982), also known as *The Man with the Deadly Lens*, experienced surges of notoriety after the February 1993 and September 2001 World Trade Center attacks for its plot about the U.S. government planting bombs

The Last Word: Jessie Lawrence Ferguson

by Jeremy Brown

While John Parker took the battle to Dr. Lizardo and his minions earthside, the Black Lectroid Commander surveyed the conflict from high above the planet, calmly preparing to start World War III in order to protect his own world. And, after Lizardo is incinerated and both Planet 10 and Earth have been saved, he offers his own succinct summary of events: “So what? Big deal.”

Whether these last lines spoken are the Commander’s opinions of Buckaroo’s romance with Penny Priddy, or the events of the entire movie, are unclear. But there can be no doubt that they stick with the viewer, thanks to the dry, acerbic delivery of actor Jessie Lawrence Ferguson.

A native of the Bronx, Ferguson was born in 1941 and moved to Chicago as a youth. In 1979, Ferguson landed his first role, playing Fingers, an old friend of Antonio Fargas’s Huggy Bear on the *Starsky and Hutch* episode “Huggy Can’t Go Home.” Ferguson spent the majority of the early 80s making appearances on such TV shows as *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Hill Street Blues* and *Trapper John, M.D.* He also had roles in a few lesser-known movies from that era, including *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh* and *Goodbye, Cruel World*.

When *Buckaroo Banzai* came around, *Banzai* director W.D. Richter recalled seeing something special in the seasoned actor. “Jessie stood out from the crowd of actors auditioning for the ‘Black Lectroid Commander’ on the Father Ship delivering Emdall’s message to Buckaroo,” Richter said. “I considered that recurring role, brief as it was, pivotal. I think he has about six moments when we go to the Father Ship for updates. His voice sells the gravity of the situation, but his demeanor was a real special, and intriguingly casual, manner. He seemed, to me anyway, dangerously calm: this regal Lectroid was running the whole show, and the fate of Earth rested on his real-time reactions to the crisis developing on Earth.”

Richter also recalled that Ferguson was one of the actors who found themselves donning the full Lectroid makeup for every scene they were in. However, despite spending hours in makeup and long days on set, Richter said Ferguson was easy to work with.

“He *never* complained about all those prosthetics and having to climb up onto that chair or sitting for hours in that vaporous set,” Richter said. “That sort of an actor is a gift.”

Ferguson had a productive year on television following *Buckaroo*, notching guest appearances on such prime



Jessie Lawrence Ferguson plays Calder in John Carpenter’s *Prince of Darkness* (1987). **Credit:** Alive Films/Larry Franco Productions

time hits as *The A-Team*, *Santa Barbara*, *Remington Steele*, and *St. Elsewhere*. He played Lutan, the leader of a technologically advanced and intelligent race, who kidnaps Tasha Yar in a 1987 episode of *Star Trek: TNG*.

In 1990, Ferguson had a memorable role in Sam Raimi’s comic book homage *Darkman*, playing Eddie Black, a crime lord who finds himself on the wrong end of Larry Drake’s cigar cutter in the film’s opening sequence. The following year, he appeared in John Singleton’s seminal debut movie *Boyz in the Hood* in what may arguably be his defining role.

In that film, Ferguson played Officer Coffey, a cop charged with patrolling the South Central Los Angeles neighborhood where much of the action takes place. Far from being a kind, understanding officer of the law, Coffey was vicious, mean-spirited, and prone to sadistic and brutal interrogation tactics. In one of the film’s most harrowing scenes, Coffey pulls over Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Morris Chestnut and menaces Gooding Jr.’s by holding a gun to his throat and almost daring him to react. When he sees that his actions are terrifying the young man, Coffey almost seems to react with sadistic glee.

Following *Boyz in the Hood*, Ferguson’s career slowed down somewhat, with his last role playing The Magus in the 1995 short film *The Chosen One*. In 2019, the 76-year-old actor was sadly found dead in his home in Palmdale, California from natural causes.

“He was a strong, beautiful, intelligent black man,” [said his son, Jace](#), “and he wanted the best for his son and all people.”

While perhaps not as well-known as some of his fellow *Banzai* costars, Jessie enjoyed a productive career that spanned more than two decades. But, perhaps even more impactful, is the fact that the only words people have to say about him are not gossip or insider dishing, but words of praise. “I wish I could remember some juicy anecdote about Jessie, but I can’t,” Richter said. “He was just *real good*. Thank you, Jessie.” 🐦

Those Friendly Lindleys: Bill Henderson & Dr. Damon Hines

By Scott Tate

“Dad, Buckaroo’s in trouble!”—Scooter Lindley

“Say what?”—Casper Lindley

Casper and Scooter Lindley. Father and son. Blue Blaze Irregulars—well, Junior Blue Blaze Irregular in Scooter’s case. Both responsible for pivotal actions during the events depicted in *Buckaroo Banzai*. For operational reasons we can’t say much here about the actual Lindleys, but we do respectfully offer this look at the actors who portrayed them in the docudrama.

Musician and actor **Bill Henderson**¹⁸ was born in Chicago in 1926, during the city’s snowiest March on record.¹⁹ After a stint in the Army, he began earning a living as a professional musician in 1952, eventually sitting in on singles such as “Señor Blues” with the Horace Silver Quintet (1958) and the B-Side “Angel Eyes” with the Jimmy Smith Trio (1958). After moving to New York, Henderson began headlining as the lead. Within the next few years, he released albums such as *Bill Henderson Sings* (1959), *Bill Henderson with the Oscar Peterson Trio* (1963), and *Live in Concert with the Count Basie Band* (1966).

In the early 1970s, Henderson began acting in movies and television, almost always in minor supporting roles and one-shot guest appearances. His first screen role, and one of his more prominent ones, relatively speaking, was as Jimmy the pool room owner in *Trouble Man* (1972). He was in *Cornbread*, *Earl and Me*, as was another future *Banzai* cast member, **Rosalind Cash**. He popped up in films such as *Silver Streak* (1975), *Mother, Jugs & Speed* (1976), and on television in episodes of *Happy Days*, *Sanford and Son*, two episodes of *Good Times*—one as a bartender, one as a night club owner—*The Jeffersons*, *What’s Happening*, and *Diff’rent Strokes*. For you pre-MCU fans, he did a spooky Mardi Gras-themed episode of *The Incredible Hulk* (“Babalao,” S3E10, December 14, 1979).

Henderson also kept up his musical career during these years, continuing to release albums such as *Bill Henderson Live* (1976) and *A Tribute to Johnny Mercer* (1981).²⁰



The Lindleys in action. Credit: [Bruce McBroom](#)

Continuing to act, Henderson cropped up on cop shows (*Cagney & Lacey*, *Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue*, and as an ill-fated cop himself in the movie *Clue*), played clergymen (an episode of *In the Heat of the Night* and the film *Ghosts of Mississippi*), gas station workers (*Buckaroo Banzai* and an episode of *MacGyver*), and inevitably he occasionally even played musicians, including King Blues in *Get Crazy* (1983), Art “Jazzbeau” Jackson in a 1985 episode of *The Facts of Life*, and a member of the Venice Beach Boys in Spike Lee’s *White Men Can’t Jump* (1992). His *White Men Can’t Jump* performance also makes it onto the movie’s soundtrack.

Some of his other film appearances included Hulk Hogan’s *No Holds Barred* (1989), *City Slickers* (1990), playing a hospital security guard in *Conspiracy Theory* (1997) like Jonathan Banks did in *Buckaroo Banzai*, and

¹⁸ Not to be confused with Canadian musician Bill Henderson of the group Chilliwack or American vocalist Bill Henderson of the Spinners.

¹⁹ 800 miles away, *The New York Times* carried a short article that same day, a yellowed clipping of which still resides in Toichi Hikita’s archived research notes: “HIS DYNAMIC

THEORY RIVALS EINSTEIN’S; Prof. Born [Max Born, of the University of Göttingen] Expounds Principles at Princeton to Explain Structure of Matter.”

²⁰ “I’m an Old Cowhand from the Rio Grande,” one of Mercer’s songs covered by Henderson, is always a popular tune around the Bunkhouse.

in “Weird Al” Yankovic’s concert tour mockumentary [*There’s No Going Home*](#) (1996), where Henderson makes an uncredited appearance as Al’s (fictional) grandfather, Blind Lemon Yankovic. Henderson also did an installment of a popular action franchise: *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998), with Damon Hines. He’s the angry patient during the hospital wedding scene.

His final albums were *Live at the Kennedy Center* (2006) and *Beautiful Memory* (2008), and his final screen role was in the third season premiere of *My Name Is Earl* (2007). Bill Henderson passed in 2016 of natural causes at the age of 90.

We’ll give the last word on Bill Henderson to our friend and benefactor **Earl Mac Rauch**, who was kind enough to share this memory with us: “I went to see Bill Henderson and a couple of his pals at a small jazz joint in Venice some years later [after *Buckaroo Banzai*]. The man had great pipes and was, as always, his gracious self with our little party that night.”

Naturally Buckaroo fans remember **Damon Hines** as scene-stealing Junior Blue Blaze Irregular 41½, Scooter Lindley. For most moviegoers, he’s probably best known as Nick Murtaugh in all four *Lethal Weapon* films (1987-1998). Christmas movie cult classicists might recall his brief screentime as Steven Cooley in *Scrooged* (1988). If you’re really sharp and were the right age in the 1980s, you might even recognize him from inspirational videos such as [*Mr. T’s Be Somebody...or Be Somebody’s Fool!*](#) (1984) or [*It’s OK to Say No to Drugs*](#) (1988).

Hines was nominated twice for a Youth in Film Award (known these days as the Young Artists Awards), first for *Buckaroo Banzai* and then again in 1988 for one of the two episodes he did of *L.A. Law*. But in both years the competition was tough. The first time around he was up against the likes of Billy Zabka for *The Karate Kid* and Corey Feldman for *Gremlins*, with the award that year ultimately going to Ke Huy Quan for *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. In ’88, Hines’ *L.A. Law* was up against popular contenders like *Murder, She Wrote*, *Highway to Heaven*, and *Amazing Stories*, with the honor tipping to a guest star from an early episode of trendy new series *21 Jump Street*.

After completing his high school education at the Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies (class of 1991), Hines continued to pursue self-enrichment, first obtaining his B.A. at Loyola Marymount University (1994-98), then his M.A. in Speech Communications and Rhetoric from California State University–Los Angeles (2006-08), ultimately achieving his Ed.D. in Higher Education/Higher Education Administration from the University of Southern California (2012-15). He went on to teach at USC himself as a Professor of

Communications Studies. As of the most recent ratings available at this time on RateMyProfessors.com, his students praise him warmly with comments like “very caring and understanding” and “down to earth and very approachable.”

Casper and Scooter Lindley are remarkable individuals, or rather, like all of us, are ordinary individuals capable of rising to meet remarkable circumstances. Bill Henderson and Damon Hines are remarkable as well, and we celebrate them here accordingly. 🐦

Another One Fits the Bill

Bill is a common name and so is Henderson, so unsurprisingly there are plenty of Bill Hendersons out there: multiple musicians, multiple actors, multiple sports figures, and so on. Given that many Banzai fans also have broader interests in other colorful heroic adventures, we’d like to mention one other Bill Henderson in particular, a fictional one.

Bill Henderson, usually depicted as a police inspector with Metropolis PD, has a long history of working with DC Comics superheroes, particularly Superman and Black Lightning. Although never reaching the same pop culture prominence as Batman’s Commissioner Gordon, Henderson has existed almost as long and is woven across a variety of media. The character was created for *The Adventures of Superman* radio show in the 1940s, then made the leap to George Reeves’ *Adventures of Superman* TV series in the 1950s, where he was played by Robert Shayne. In 1974 he was folded into the comics, continuing to work with Superman (starting in *Action Comics* #442) and later branching out to regularly help another costumed hero, Black Lightning (as seen in *Black Lightning* #3, 1977). Henderson was adapted to animation for one episode of the 1988 *Superman* animated series, returned to live action in the 1990s for several episodes of *Lois & Clark* where he was portrayed by multiple actors but most frequently Richard Belzer, and back to animation again for one episode of *Superman: The Animated Series* (1996). In that episode, he was voiced by Mel Winkler, one of the actors besides Belzer who had played Henderson on *Lois & Clark*.

Traditionally shown as a middle-aged Caucasian male, in more recent depictions Bill Henderson is African-American, a trend which perhaps started in *Supergirl* #37 (2009) with the introduction of a different Inspector Henderson named Mike. A popular 2019-20 story, *Superman Smashes the Klan*, retroactively makes Bill a black police officer in its 1946 setting. And actor Damon Gupton portrayed Henderson in a regular and prominent role in the live action *Black Lightning* TV series (2018-2021). -ST

Remembering Bill Henderson

by Billy Vera

Musician turned actor, [Billy Vera](#) played Pinky Carruthers in [Buckaroo Banzai](#). Musician turned actor, [Bill Henderson](#) played Casper Lindley in the same film.

I first heard of Bill Henderson in the early '60s. I'd rummage through these bins with used jukebox records for sale, looking for music that I wanted. They were six for a dollar, so sometimes I would take a chance on someone I'd never heard of, if I liked the label. Bill was on a label called [Vee-Jay Records](#), which was good. So, I brought one of his records home, played it, and thought, "Well, this guy can sing!" I kept an ear out for him from then on.

Then about twenty years later...and call me dumb, but I didn't know that Bill Henderson the musician was also an actor until we worked together on [Buckaroo Banzai](#). We didn't have a lot of scenes together in the movie, but we had a few. I probably said something like, "Are you the same Bill Henderson who sings?" And, of course, he was. We'd hang out a bit on set, but we'd be busy running our lines and stuff like that.

After [Buckaroo](#) wrapped, Bill would perform at a place called [The Jazz Bakery](#) out here in LA. I'd go see him sing and we'd talk. I got to know him a little better then.

So, about eight or nine years after that, I contacted Bill again. One of my side hustles was, I would do work for record companies in their catalogue. I would compile their old stuff and anthologized CDs—various artists or multi-artist CDs. I'd write the liner notes and all that stuff. [Jerry Wexler](#) called me a "vault man." One of the labels I worked for happened to be Vee-Jay. So, my job was to work their vault and, every quarter, I would put together six or eight CD collections of their old stuff. I'd do a few jazz ones, several R&Bs, rock and roll, and a couple of gospel collections every quarter. And so, one of the first jazz re-issues I did on Vee-Jay was [Bill Henderson's Complete Vee-Jay Recordings Vol. 1 and 2](#). So, I've got a hold of Bill and I said, "I don't know enough about you. Let's get together and I can interview you for the collection." He was kind enough come over to my house and I found out more about him then. He brought some cool old pictures and we used them for the CD covers.

Bill's real name was William Randall Henderson and he was born in Chicago on March 19, 1926. He grew up there on Rhodes Avenue near South Parkway, which is now Martin Luther King Boulevard. He went to James R. Doolittle Grammar School and did some time at Wendell Phillips High School. He wound up at Paul Laurence



Source: [IMDb](#)

Dunbar Trade School. He took machine shop classes and performed in school musicals there. His drama teacher was a big influence on him. He graduated and worked a very mundane job on a punch press making metal baskets. He said, "That was the kind of job that let you know you should be in show business if you possibly can." He went in the Army and was with 293rd construction engineers in Europe. He got into special services, because he could sing. He worked with people like [Vic Damone](#), who was also in the Army at the same time. After he was discharged, he came back to Chicago and decided to be a full time singer. He worked at a place called Stelzer's Lounge, and it was a very popular club with the young crowd. Bill started becoming better known.

So then, Bill tried his luck in New York because he had met the jazz pianist [Billy Taylor](#). Billy said, "If you're ever in New York, look me up" and Bill did. So, he introduced Bill around and then he got a recording date with [Horace Silver](#), the great jazz composer and piano player on [Blue Note Records](#). Horace had a hit record called "[Señor Blues](#)." Blue Note decided they wanted a vocal version of it. So Horace went back into the studio and recorded Bill on the [vocal version of "Señor Blues"](#) and that became a jazz hit, which doesn't mean a million copies. Jazz hits are usually very small. This was around 1958. Bill said, "The first time I knew it was a hit, I was walking down 125th Street, people saw me and said, Hey Señor Blues!" He said, they must have seen him at the [Apollo](#) with Horace, [Jimmy Smith](#), and [Betty Carter](#). Also, he only had one song to sing, so with five shows a day, that's a lot of free time. So, the stage manager was [Honi Coles](#), who incidentally was the stage manager when I played the Apollo 10 years later. So, Honi says to Bill, "We need an emcee; you can talk, get out there and introduce the acts." They probably



Billy Vera (L) and Bill Henderson (R) working on the 1993 compilation CDs of Henderson's collected Vee-Jay recordings.

Source: From the collection of Billy Vera

paid him a few bucks extra for the five shows a day. Then Bill recorded for [Riverside Records](#), a song called "[Busy Signal](#)" and then he made a couple of more singles for Blue Note. This time he was backed by [Jimmy Smith](#), the great organ player, "[Angel Eyes](#)," "[Willow Weep for Me](#)" and I think he did a Ray Charles song as well.

Then Bill went back to Chicago to [Stelzer's Lounge](#) again. There he worked with [Ramsey Lewis](#) and he met [Sid McCoy](#) who was a disc jockey, but wound up also doing the jazz production at Vee-Jay Records. So, Sid McCoy brought Bill to Vee-Jay.

So, his first Vee-Jay single was the song "[Joey, Joey, Joey](#)" which is from a Broadway show. And then back in New York, he played the [Village Vanguard](#) on a show with [Sonny Rollins](#). Then he started playing around the country. He played Detroit at the [Flame Show Bar](#) which was a once famous club. At this time, it was starting to get a little rundown. But he said one night at the Flame Show Bar, [Berry Gordy's](#) mother came in with a whole table full of people and they were asking him to sing his big hit, "[Snap Your Fingers](#)." Well, "Snap Your Fingers" was by a gospel singer named Joe Henderson. When Berry Gordy's mother found out that it was only Bill Henderson and not [Joe Henderson](#) the whole table walked out of the club. Bill also told me a story of a time he worked with [Thelonious Monk](#). Bill said, "Monk gave me the timeless advice, always leave them wanting more." So, that's always kind of surprised me, because Monk was not exactly a big talker. He was more of an artist and was not much of a commercial show biz guy, thinking in commercial terms like that.

So by 1965, Bill was singing with [Count Basie](#). [Joe Williams](#) had left the band and Bill joined and worked at the [Sands](#) in Las Vegas. He said [Frank Sinatra](#) came in and took a shine to him. In fact, so much so that Sinatra got up on stage to introduce Bill. Sinatra said, "Here's a guy who sings up the storm!" and all that stuff. With that kind of exposure, Bill got better known in those circles. So, he decided to go to Hollywood, around '67, and the first guy he got a hold of was [Bill Cosby](#). Cosby really helped him get started as an actor. Bill took lessons and started doing commercials and TV series. He was in the movie [Trouble Man](#) with [Robert Hooks](#) and [Inside Moves](#). He was also in the series [Harry O](#) with [David Janssen](#). He was a semi-regular on there. He played a guy that took care of Harry O's car at the garage, but it was only a semi-regular gig. He might be on every two or three weeks. And of course, later he was in [Buckaroo Banzai](#) and [City Slickers](#).

He was still doing music—doing recording sessions, things like; [Bobby Timmons](#)' "[Moanin](#)" and [Bobby Bryan's](#) "[Sleepy](#)." While he was still on Vee-Jay, he recorded with everybody from [Benny Golson](#) to [The Ramsey Lewis Trio](#) to [Jimmy Jones](#). He recorded with Count Basie's band without Basie, because Basie was under contract somewhere else. He sang for [Eddie Harris](#), [Wynton Kelly](#), [Yusef Lateef](#), and [Cannonball Adderley](#). He chose eclectic material too, not the usual commonplace songs. One minute he might do [Ray Charles](#)' "[This Little Girl Of Mine](#)" and the next minute he might be doing "[Sleepin' Bee](#)" from an obscure Broadway show, [House of Flowers](#) with [Diahann Carroll](#) and everything in between. One of my favorites that he did was Adderley's "[Old Country](#)." [Curtis Lewis wrote lyrics for it](#)—a beautiful, beautiful song. Bill might sing "[Skylark](#)." He might do [Percy Mayfield's](#) "[Please Send Me Someone to Love](#)," so he got around musically.

The last time I saw Bill perform at the Jazz Bakery, he was getting pretty old and he had to read his lyrics off of a music stand, but he was still a great vocalist and an even greater guy. 🐦

***Bill Henderson** died less than two weeks after his 90th birthday of natural causes on April 3rd, 2016 in Los Angeles, California. You can find his discography [here](#) and his television and film credits [here](#). A rare film role that featured Bill's singing was *King Blues* in the 1983 comedy [Get Crazy](#). You can see the entire film for free on YouTube. It features some great music, including a pre-Banzai synth score by [Michael Boddicker](#). You can see Bill sing the [Muddy Waters](#)' songs, "*The Blues Had a Baby and They Named it Rock and Roll*" and "*Hoochie Koochie Man*" starting at 36:50.*

INTERVIEW: Dr. Damon Hines, Ed.D.

by Dan Berger

A lot of fuss is made over Dr. Peter Weller's crossover from Dr. Buckaroo Banzai to real-life PhD, and rightfully so, but Weller isn't the only *Buckaroo Banzai* actor to conquer the gauntlet of post-graduate academia. In addition to his many screen credits, including consummate Jr. Blue Blaze Irregular Scooter Lindley in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*, Dr. Damon Hines also earned the distinction of an Ed.D. degree. We had the chance to sit down this February and chat with Damon about his days as a child actor and his current pursuits in the land of academia.

Dan Berger: Good morning, sir.

Damon Hines: How are you doing my friend?

DB: I'm hanging in there. How are you doing?

DH: All right; I'm all right. Nice meeting with you my friend; thank you for having me.

DB: Not at all; thanks for agreeing to chat for a while today. How are things doing out in LA? Are you still getting hammered by atmospheric rivers?

DH: Listen; it came, it conquered and now it's gone. That's one of the nice things about LA in particular—when we do have a weather system coming, it usually blows through quickly. So even with the atmospheric rivers, they just came in succession but they weren't like super long events. So we have probably had sunshine for the last three or four days. It's still cold for LA standards, but we are dry.

DB: Glad you're getting some relief. All right, I suppose we should begin from the beginning. You want to just jump right into it?

DH: Of course, of course.

DB: Okay! So, how did you get your start in acting?

DH: Well, I love that question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about my Mom. She passed in 2020 and the reason why we are talking today is, without a doubt, because of her. My start was pretty humble; single child raised by a single Mom, so no siblings. I was very rambunctious according to her; and she sought to put me in something to help burn that energy.

We lived close to a city park which—unfortunately we don't have many of those in LA anymore. This city park had a theatrical component, and one year she signed me up for this Easter play. I remember being the Easter bunny. According to her, she met an agent named Don Schwartz there. Within days she received a phone call



ZOOMing in: Dr. Damon Hines via video conferencing during his interview with World Watch One. **Credit:** World Watch One

from his office asking if she could bring me in to meet him. I remember going into the offices and meeting with Don, and the rest is history. That is how I got started; doing a little play at a park and God and serendipity made sure the right person was sitting there. My acting jobs kind of snowballed from that; from that play to getting an agent to working pretty consistently commercially, then moving on to doing theatrical work on television.

Then I did "Tap Dance Kid," which I toured with the company. Then the movies started after that. Let's say I did the Easter play when I was 7 or 8. By the time I was 10, *Buckaroo Banzai*, *Lethal Weapon* and all of those things were rolling in.

DB: What was it like being a kid in that environment; dealing with a lot of adults who don't necessarily understand that the kids are absorbing more than the adults realize?

DH: It is a very unique experience. When you look at a child actor who is very successful, you are looking at probably one in every five million kids that can bring that level of maturity to a set without wanting to touch the camera, without wanting to look at everybody behind the camera...you are denying the fact that you are a kid. You have to suspend those impulses when you walk on the set. I was blessed to be one of those five million kids where it was like, "Oh, this is what I have to do. It is not who I am, but this is what I do," so I didn't find it very challenging. I could flip that switch on when I got on the lot, got on the set, and tell myself, "Okay, I have to be still. I have to be a sponge. I have to be able to take directions." And you don't process it per se as an adult actor would because you are still kind of in that fantasy land of "Wow, I'm a kid and I'm kind of in this big boy world, or big girl world, and I have to produce in a certain way, but I'm still a kid."

You brought up an interesting notion which is we are sponges when we're kids. Quite a few child actors have gone on to have really good careers as directors and writers, because you are hearing and processing quite a bit of what's happening around you. You might not actually be on camera, but you are still on set. You are still a part of what is going on. So if it's providing an eye line, if it's providing your cue line, you are there. And at that point when you are not on camera you're really looking around and getting a sense of, "oh there is the boom guy, there is the sound guy, there is Dick [director Richard Donner], there is whoever it might be directing and leading." It was a very fun experience for me.

Much of what my experience included was curated by my Mom. She made sure that I stayed grounded as a kid, and she made sure that my welfare was always going to be the most important thing whenever I was on set. If I had a headache, we were not doing that until the headache was gone. If I was hungry, we took care of that first. She just did a really good job. I was blessed, I understand that not a lot of child actors have that experience.

DB: Childhood acting definitely has its casualties. Would you say that your mother was the one that kept you on course and moving in the right direction? Was there ever a time when you felt like you might have been getting pulled over to the dark side?

DH: That's a damn good question, and it's an honest question. Unfortunately, the industry can be a meat grinder. When I reflect on the times within which I was working a lot—so early 80s; there was this divide between white child actors and black child actors or minority child actors. That divide was not only regarding opportunities; we just didn't have a plethora of roles. If I did *Lethal Weapon* or *Buckaroo Banzai* today—I might be a superhero in a year from now. Those qualities didn't exist on-camera from the industry perspective back then. But that divide also extended to off-camera and your potential friendships because you were kind of in your own bubbles. Even if we were part of an ensemble cast it was still somewhat segregated. And so black kids, whatever kids, they are over here and the other kids are over there and at the end of the production we go our separate ways. There weren't really opportunities to like, "Hey, let's go to this club."

There was a lot of clubbing at 15, 16. I heard about it, but I wasn't getting the phone calls. That being said, had I gotten a phone call, my Mom still wasn't just going to let me go anywhere.

I think the times also were very, very informative as to how success played out for child actors. For me, work would come up and it was more of, "This is kind of a

blessing," and then you may not work for another year. So I wasn't in that meat grinder the same way that maybe a River Phoenix was, or some other child actors who faced the ultimate consequence of the industry.

DB: In terms of *Buckaroo* as a production that featured a lot of African American actors, how remarkable was the film for its time? Was it progressive, or regressive, or just par for the course as far as its treatment of the African American characters?

DH: Very remarkable, and something that I was very aware of as a child on set, and it extended beyond just the cast. A lot of people behind the scenes were minorities and I was still, again, about 10 so not sure of the intentionality of the creative forces behind it, but certainly there had to be an intentionality. It was not common for any set I went on where I saw that many faces that looked like me or that looked of other persuasions.

From my recollection it did create kind of a nice little community who looked out for me when I was on set. If I wasn't standing on the right place, it was probably Bill or Rosalind that was nudging me over this way, this is where you stand. If we had perhaps a shot or we had a take and I was standing around, unaware, I may get a tap on the shoulder from Bill like "Hey, we are getting ready to go again." He would just make sure, in that kind of nurturing way, that I wasn't going to be a problem.

And then one of the aliens that; I forget which one it was, he was a tall black guy and he used to always come over and talk to me.

DB: Was that Carl Lumley?

DH: There you go; right. Like I said, it was really, really cool times.

DB: Backing up a second, how much interaction did you have with Rosalind Cash on the set; she was in for basically one scene and then she was out of there.

DH: Yeah, we shot that scene over several days. I don't remember exactly how long because I'm going way back, but when she was on set—very much so, very, very much so. I was inquisitive and I could ask her questions. She was very accessible, very professional. I remember when they had her standing up on that table...we did it over and over and over, take after take; a consummate professional. I learned a lot from watching her, and from when she would sit with me; things I drew from in my career and still rely upon to this day.

DB: How did you get involved in *Buckaroo* to begin with?

DH: It is a fun story. So, I had just come off the national tour for “Tap Dance Kid.” We started in New York, then Ohio, LA, San Francisco, we did Cleveland, I think we may have done...we did quite a bit. I think I toured for about a year, a year and a half. So I came off the tour and within a week I have an audition. Well, it was always something that was going to be fun and my mom is telling me—I can hear her now, “It’s a movie called *Buckaroo Banzai* and it’s kind of Sci-Fi.” So, I’m getting excited and thinking, “Oh! Okay!”

After that it was a straight forward interview process. We went for the interview, didn’t have many lines—which was great, more reaction stuff, had a call back like the next week, and then within two weeks I was on set. The first thing I actually did was learn how to shoot the rifle. I showed up early to work with; I don’t even know what they called it back then, like the production’s Armorer now. I’m forgetting. So first day I come in and it was like, “Can you hold a rifle?” and the rifle was heavy as hell for me.

It was a big ass rifle. I remember my Mom standing around and I have all of these adults around me, and I could barely lift the damn muzzle at the time. The person who was kind of the chief of safety, he was like, “He is not going to be able to fire this weapon if we don’t weigh him down.” I didn’t know what that meant and I’m like, “Oh okay.” So my vest became a weighted vest. Everything was heavy. The rifle was heavy, the vest was heavy, and so it became, “Can we just get one take of you trying to shoot the rifle?” That was interesting.

DB: What did you think about the story in the script as a 10 year old when you read through it?

DH: I just remember enjoying the aspect of the jet car and different dimensions, and it’s so creative. The aliens, the interaction between humans and aliens, and then the bad guy. I didn’t know John Lithgow’s name then, but the bad guy seemed interesting. And then you are always thinking, even at that age, “How is this going to look?” I read the descriptions and I knew what was going on in the scenes, so I was very interested in how it was all going to turn out. One day you are on set, there’s no green screen and...over there is the jet car; and it’s an actual vehicle...so it was just super sweet.

DB: What do you think of the script now? Do you watch the movie much anymore?

DH: Yeah, I have a copy of the film and it comes on the TV occasionally, so I know it’s running. Maybe once a year I will get a phone call like, “Hey man I just saw...” It was ahead of its time. I also feel like it was written in a way that needed to have a part two, a part three, a part four or whatever it was going to be, because it was so

complex. I can watch it now and still parse out things that I didn’t see before. I’ll see the movie, I don’t know how many times and I missed a part that I notice for the first time; so many what we now call “Easter eggs” that are hidden in there.

I also recently got the first set; I think that it was maybe two copies of the comic book, and the comic book reads fantastically. I’m like “This is just really well conceived. It’s a shame that it hasn’t been reintroduced in either a movie form or series form because I think it would do really, really well.”

DB: Yeah, I think it’s ideal for a serial format. They’ve tried ...

DH: Right, I know we got close with Kevin Smith. I just wish they would get it made because each character is very unique. You have familial components with the father and the son; it is just a really good script, it was a really good concept and I just wish we could have had more.

DB: How much of a difference was it with this being your first movie versus the work that you’d done before? You’d done several television films I think ...

DH: Correct.

DB: How much of a leap or change of pace was it to work in your first feature? Was it a big difference?

DH: It was and it is to me still. Television is much more, “We got the shot—moving on. Got the shot—moving on,” so the experience is condensed and really, really truncated. The movie was much more laid back and relaxed. I mean, of course it is stressful because you are making a movie, but not as far as having to get every line right within, “We only get three takes.” In film we can do it all over again to get it all right, and the director can go again if he wants to try something different.

The scale is different too; the scope of production for a television series versus a feature. When I did *LA Law* we shot on half of the sound stage for a courthouse, whereas when we went and did some of the things for *Buckaroo Banzai* I was like, “Damn, we have *two* sound stages for this scene.” The scale of it was so incredible that yeah, you noticed the difference immediately. The number of people on the production is also a very, very noticeable difference. I quite honestly enjoy the process of making movies more than television. I love them both but if I have to choose one I’m going to do the film.

DB: What are some of the memories that you have from working on the film?

DH: Right, so I'm not the tallest guy and when I was a kid I was even shorter, and I remember when I met Jeff Goldblum. I was like, "This dude is tall." That was my first, like, one of my first kind of real reflections and remembering was, like, this dude is like...is he 6'5 or what is he; 6'6?

DB: Yeah, something like that.

DH: And he was young, so he is a young tall dude and I'm like "this dude is like super tall" like okay. And so that was kind of my first "aha" like this is going to be kind of fun. He has this weird uniform on and all of this kind of crazy stuff. So the things that kind of stuck out were his height and, "oh my gosh, this is a collection of celebrities that I have seen their work, so it's not like I'm coming in cold because I kind of already know exactly who these people are."

The sets were incredible. I got to shoot a gun at, like, 10, and that was just like "wow," like "this is a real gun" and it makes sound, like, you press it—this is old technology—this is crazy. I enjoyed that quite a bit.

Peter was fine and we have seen each other since. He is like, "Holy shit, look how big you are." So, it was all love.

DB: Did you get to see that video footage that I sent of that interview you did for the behind-the-scenes footage filmed on the set of *Buckaroo*?

DH: I did. Not only did I see it. My wife saw it, my kids saw it and I was like, first of all, thank you for sending it and sharing it because I don't even remember the interview.

DB: That must have been a trip.

DH: It was so long ago but if you are to see my youngest son, he looks just like that. Same bright eyes, same excitement, same energy, same smile, very clear. And what I did appreciate was, you asked my thoughts on the script a few questions ago and, based on one of the interviewer's questions, I went on this diatribe of trying to explain the movie and I was like "man I really did understand it."

I got it and squeezed through matter and so we are laughing because I'm like, buddy, like I told you, my Mom wasn't going to let me come on set not knowing what was going on. So she probably sat there explaining to me, this is what matter is, this is what the over thruster does and so looking at that was just wild.

And then it's so clear! Like the imagery was not grainy at all because some things I have seen of myself are so grainy but I was like its super clear, it is super crisp.



Camera ready: A young **Damon Hines** is interviewed for behind the scenes footage shot during the filming of *Buckaroo Banzai* in 1983. **Source:** World Watch One archives

Thank you very much for that because that was so fun to watch.

DB: Who was the better on-screen dad, Danny Glover or Bill Henderson?

DH: It was a very unique relationship with both, but my relationship with Danny was really contained to when we were on set filming. With Bill, I think that he got along really well with my Mom; our relationship extended many years beyond *Buckaroo Banzai*. Knowing Bill was there also helped her because it was a big production and there was a lot going on from costumes to movements and I'm the only kid with all of these adults. I'm sure there was a level of anxiety that "Hey, my son is there, I hope he doesn't screw it up," and Bill was kind of that on-set extension of my Mom. Like hey, focus, let's get the scene right, I know you don't have any lines but the camera is still on us; all of those little things that you would want someone to kind of help your child with, he did and so I appreciated that.

My interactions with Bill on set were very, very meaningful and memorable. When we weren't on camera, he was still coaching and being that fatherly influence—consistent with what was going on in the script. If I was in, like, a director's chair, he would sit right next to me and we'd started talking about whatever it might be, "Do you play sports? Are you doing theater? Tell me about this."

Then, if we were going to be up shooting, he would turn the attention to, "What are we doing in this scene Damon? What are you thinking in this scene?" because Bill had a very strong theatrical background. He was very, very adept at understanding what the character was

doing in each moment of a scene, which therefore became part of the breadcrumb that led up to the kind of overall arc.

DB: It sounds like your relationship with Bill was more fatherly, whereas your relationship with Danny Glover was more professional.

DH: Correct, and I was a much older and more seasoned actor by *Lethal Weapon* and didn't need as much hand holding. But yeah, they were both really, really fun to work with. I have obviously spent more time with Danny because we did four films and we were on set quite a bit and so that was always fun.

When we came back, we picked right back up where we left off because they were shot relatively close enough together to where "hey what have you been up to, how is school?" it was just...and it went right back into kind of the flow of things. It was normalcy for years like, "Okay, another two years of doing another *Lethal Weapon*." It was really normal.

DB: Was there any discussion of a Buckaroo Banzai sequel?

DH: Several.

DB: Really?

DH: Yeah, I remember being told there was going to be up to three films and then, like I said, maybe four or five years ago, there was talk that it was going to be brought to television and that they wanted to include...we all sat, and we all, it was maybe five of the cast that included myself. Jeff wasn't there...

DB: Oh yeah; Billy Vera, you; I'm forgetting who else was at that San Diego Comic Con...

DH: Perfect Tommy was there.

DB: That's right. Lewis Smith

DH: Right, and so at that meeting they were asking us our availability like "hey we want to use the old cast" and it just never happened. And so I was super excited like, "okay I guess I won't be teaching at NLU next week, next semester because I'm about to go and have some fun" but it never materialized. But I do remember there was supposed to be like two or three films. I don't know if I was ever put on hold for two or three films but I remember talking with my Mom about it quite a bit, like, it would be a nice kind of run for the film.

DB: Yeah, it would have been nice.

DH: It should have.

DB: We talked a little bit earlier about some of your other work leading up to or around the time of making Buckaroo. What was it like working with Mr. T? I have to ask that as an 80s kid; there is no avoiding it.

DH: You're talking about *Be Somebody... or Be Somebody's Fool*.

DB: Yes! That's by far one of the most 80s videos I have ever seen in my entire life.

DH: Right. So very kind, very nice; he was smaller than I thought he was going to be. So it was one of those situations where I saw him as larger than life on screen and all of the muscles, and then when I saw him, he didn't have that same "That dude Jeff is tall as hell" kind of thing going on. With Mr. T it was more like, "It's the Mohawk, oh my goodness it's all that gold," but not this menacing figure that he played and not even the stature commensurate with being this monster. I have worked with Arnold Schwarzenegger on a commercial campaign and he was as big as you thought he would be.

So he might not have been tall, but you walked away going "That would be a hell of a fight if you were to have it." He is Mr. Olympia for a reason. But he was very fun. That whole period of working in the 80s was just magical; he was one of the people that, as a kid working in Hollywood, you know who Mr. T was and here I am on set with him. Those are really good memories to have.

DB: Between *Scrooged* and *Lethal Weapon* you spent a lot of time with Richard Donner. What was it like not only working with him but in a lot of ways growing up with him? That must have been a very formative time in your life.

DH: Richard Donner was incredible; that's the only word I could use to describe him. He really wanted to connect with you beyond just the professional that he hired. He was always talking to you, always asking questions about what's going on with your life, what is going on with your family, what you had been doing over the two years, boy, you know just his booming voice. He would be like, "Bring your report card;" he had me bring a card, "I want to see your report card, I don't believe you. You said you got all As so bring it." And so I will tell you a very intimate story that speaks to kind of who he is and my relationship with him.

I have been married going on 21 years February 2nd. So 21 years ago, I'm literally a week from getting married and I had sent him an invitation and all of those things and then his offices says you know he is filming, he won't be able to make it but he wanted you to know he would have. I'm driving and my phone rings and I'm like hello and he is like, "This is Dick. Who told you that you can

get married; who told you that you can get married?" and we have this 30 minute plus conversation about what it means to be married, I remember him just saying, "you've got to wake up every day wanting to kick ass."

I remember him saying it very clearly, "Wake up every day and wanting to kick ass." Where is the wedding at, so and so, do you want a gift, no I don't want a gift I'm just happy you called. "You know I would be there but I can't," and so and so. "And who is this girl anyway?" And I'm like oh no, this girl my future wife is...and then we hang up and I got married the next week and I carry that story with me every day especially when I see that ring on your hand. You know how it is to be married...

DB: Oh yeah.

DH: You have to wake up every day and say, "I'm going to make this the best day," if you want to have a successful marriage; like every day is supposed to be the best day of my marriage. Even when we are mad at each other, I try to remember those things, because my Mom wasn't married so I didn't have a blueprint to follow as to what it meant to be a good partner, a good husband, a good father. I had to kind of make up those, learn those kinds of lesson from other people and piece them together, and Dick was one of those people; one of the big ones because we'd communicate at all times. Just, "How have you been, checking in on you." And so when he passed it was very, very sad.

DB: It must have been hard.

DH: Yeah.

DB: You did five pictures with Richard Donner. Any memories from those productions you'd like to share?

DH: Right, again Bill Murray like, tall. I was like, "Oh my God, he is just pretty tall," and again - it is just because you are a kid and so you relate like, all of a sudden your head is looking up versus being eye level, right? Very, very talented. That was one of the films where I think I got hired before I even read the script. I remember trying to piece together 'Oh, okay. I know A Christmas Carol, but how is this going to turn out?' The other memory is that one of the girls who played my sister in *Scrooged*, we went to the same high school.

Back then you had to get a permit to leave school. It was a very different time. We were both in the office, and I was like, "Hey what are you doing here?" and she is like, "Hey, I'm working on a movie" and I'm like, "Me too." We said nothing to each other about what films we were doing and then, not long after that we found ourselves on set together and we were like, "What the hell?" It was the craziest thing. So that was super. And so of course it just

made it even that much more fun because I'm here with somebody I know from High School. It was Regina King's sister actually and so we were at [LACES high school](#) together and that was fun.

Some of the memories from *Lethal Weapon*—there are just so many. I remember watching the scene where Jet Li breaks the gun apart. I wasn't even filming that day; I think I was on there for some kind of fitting and Dick says to me, "I want you to watch this." I had no idea who Jet Li was at the time and I watch it and I'm like, "Did I just see what I thought I saw?" Of course, Danny's height and he is pretty funny. So Danny's height, Joe Pesci might be the most talented actor I think I have ever worked with and I have seen a lot. I remember him going into Leo Getz mode and then as soon as Dick yelled "Cut," he was just Joe; a different dude. "Going again? Okay," and then he was back to being Leo. You would see him move between becoming this character and then who he really was. He was fantastic; no ego. He was just incredible to watch.

Same thing with Mel; just incredibly talented, very funny and a lot of what made them magical, and what made Dick magical, was that he allowed them to play with the lines. And so, you would have a different take 20, 30 times. It kept you on your toes, and it just made the kind of engagement between actor and actor that much more fun. Those are some of the good memories.

DB: What made you decide to make the career change from acting to academia?

DH: Well, the industry decided for me, meaning that the roles that were being offered no longer interested me. I had no desire to play gangsters—I wasn't interested in that or being brought in for one line; no thank you. The industry slowly can push you away. So I became a civilian in essence. I still act, I still work, I still do theatre, I'm still ready for any meaningful production; but there came a point where I had to make a choice. Acting is something that God blessed me to be able to do. If I can't live in this space in a particular way maybe it's better I cultivate other aspects of my life. That's what led me to being in academia, and then that became kind of a march towards getting to the top of the food chain.

I kind of chuckled at that question about whether Bill or Danny was the better father because I had very unique relationships with both, but my relationship with Danny was really contained to when we were on set filming. With Richard Donner, our relationship extended well beyond being on set. He'd always be asking me "How are you doing, how is school going?" and then the conversation inevitably turned to college, college, college. I think he was trying to help me understand at a very young age that this acting situation, it's an up and

down experience. You need something to ground yourself. So I'm, what, 14 and he is trying to explain this to me in a way that I could understand. What persisted was the message that I had to stay in education. So I went to Loyola Marymount for my undergrad. And my senior year Dick and Mel Gibson paid for the last year which was incredible and then, as with most acting experiences, it started to slow down at some point and pick back up. That's why I know your dad's work*.

During a lull in my work I was, like, "You know what, I keep hearing Richard telling me, 'go back to school'." So I went to Cal State LA which was just an incredibly important time because it really got me excited about learning again, and lifelong learning. And I was a Comm Studies major. So then Berger and Burke and all of these great communications scholars; we are looking at them through that lens right; communication, had to study and had to learn them, including Uncertainty Reduction Theory.

So I spent three years in that program and then from there started teaching at Loyola Marymount. Then I went back and got my doctorate from USC. So now I teach in the Comm Studies Department at Loyola Marymount, and Uncertainty Reduction Theory is often times one of the theories that we'll assign in a given semester, certainly for interpersonal communications courses. We will use it slightly in intercultural communications.

But how crazy was it when I read your email. "You might know my dad." I'm like, "Oh shit, yeah I do. I know Charles Berger very well."

I fell in love with teaching because teaching is very similar to theatre. You have an audience, they are your students. And you have to be able to digest information and offer it in a way that is meaningful. Hoping that they laugh in the process and that they are not bored, you have to allow them to synthesize this. It is just the natural extension of acting I think, for me; there is just no camera. It's very similar to theatre in particular; it is performance. It is just a different script; I'm playing with your dad's theory, I'm playing with your dad's thoughts and assumptions and what is being said here, so it's very collaborative. I'm very familiar with him.

DB: Oh yeah and that's the whole thing. The Communications field is broad enough that, if you're not studying a particular area of expertise, you might not run into him at all.

*Dr. Hines is referring to [Charles R. Berger](#), who is probably best known for his work with Richard Calabrese on [Uncertainty Reduction Theory](#). You can hear Berger talk about the theory in this [video](#).

DH: Correct. But for us, since we are like really Communication Studies versus the Mass Communication side of things, it's a lot of theory. I mean a lot of theory so, of course, Berger is one of the dragons that you've got to tangle with before you can move on in the department so that's crazy.

DB: Are you doing research as well as teaching?

DH: So, I don't research. Once I wrote my doctorate I was like, "I'm good, I don't want to do that anymore." I have kids and so there are a couple of areas that I have done light research in, post my doctorate. One is African American participation in study abroad programs because I think that we don't participate in it enough. And then the other one is all of my guys play baseball; two of them are playing college baseball and with that comes the notion of holding kids back. We never held our kids back and so I was interested if it's...if there is efficacy in that decision to hold kids back specifically for athletic advancement. And so it's a challenging one for sure.

There have been some areas where I have done research but I haven't written and produced anything, but those would be the two areas that I would write if I was—study abroad and then kind of reclassifying holding kids back specifically. I don't know if that's the most prudent thing to do to be quite honest.

DB: I get the sense that we are in a time where you would probably have a much broader pick of roles that you would actually want to tackle as an actor. Is there any lure to that or has academia gotten to a point in your life where your passion for teaching has eclipsed your passion for acting?

DH: I still consider myself to be an actor first. If the right roles were offered certainly that would be, "Hey okay, you can get tenure at Harvard or you can do another *Lethal Weapon* 5, 6 or 7," and I'll probably do another *Lethal Weapon* 5, 6, or 7. As much as I love teaching, acting is just in my blood; this is just in my nature. That is kind of who I am but like I said, I love teaching, I love my students, and so it wouldn't be something I just haphazardly walked away from. But if someone says there is going to be another *Buckaroo Banzai*—they will have to see me the next semester because acting is my number one; that is still my number one passion. I will be back maybe next semester if I can.

DB: Thank you so much. It's been fantastic talking with you today. Have a great rest of your day.

DH: You too my friend. 🐦

Banzai Institute Progress Report

by Sean Murphy

Project Name: *Expect the Unexpected: The Making of The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*

Participants: Dan Berger and Sean Murphy

Deliverable: A book (currently in the process of being researched/written)

Date of Publication: Targeting Late 2024/Early 2025 (40th anniversary of the film)

Codename/Number: American Quarter Horse (ETU24-25)

Introduction

As per Mrs. Johnson's semi-annual request, it's time for us to rustle up some facts about the first year of production on the American Quarter Horse project, otherwise known as the Making of *Buckaroo Banzai* book.

State of the project

An email was sent to director W. D. "Rick" Richter and screenwriter Earl Mac Rauch in February, 2022 to see if they were on board with Dan and Sean writing a book about the making of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Luckily, they jumped right into the saddle with us—otherwise we wouldn't have pursued the project. Rick kindly opened his personal archive to provide a wealth of production material from 38 years ago which helped to get us firmly on the right trail. Mrs. Johnson also opened the Banzai Institute archives to our delight, providing behind-the-scenes images and footage. All of this content was crucial to building a working timeline of the pre-production, production, and post productions events from 1982 thru 1985.

The original plan for 2022 from that point onwards was relatively straightforward. We needed to gather additional information from other sources, put together a book proposal, and start interviewing the production people and actors from the film.

Our research included acquiring production information from the British Film Institute in London, original World Watch One newsletter materials from Steve Lee (who worked on the original WWO newsletter and runs the Hollywood Sound Museum), and from the collection of J. Michael Riva at the Margaret Herrick Library. We continue our search for additional primary sources and hope to round up as much as we can.

On the interview front, we've been very fortunate to have everyone that we've reached out to willing to speak to us about their time on the film. This list of production people and actors includes: Michael Boddicker (Music—

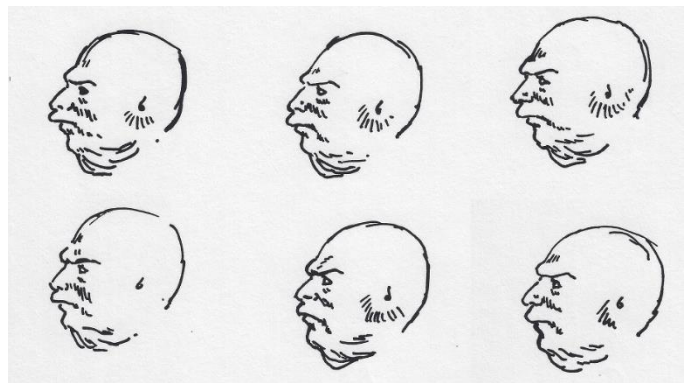
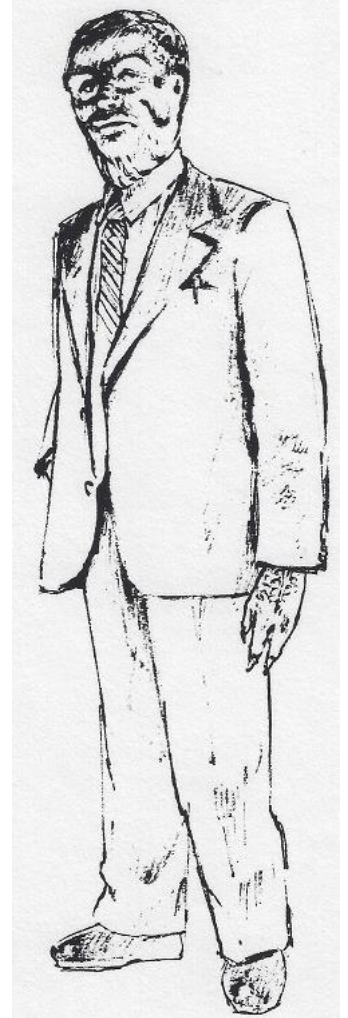
Soundtrack Composer), Neil Canton (Producer), Terry Erdmann (Fox Publicity—Conventions), Mike Fink (Special Visual Effects Supervisor), Damon Hines (Scooter Lindley), Carl Lumbly (John Parker), Dan Lupovitz (Assistant to Mr. Canton and Mr. Richter), Michael Nathanson (Executive in Charge of Production), Earl Mac Rauch (Screenwriter), W. D. "Rick" Richter (Director), Aggie Rodgers (Costume Design), Pepe Serna (Reno), Anne Thompson (Unit Publicist), and Billy Vera (Pinky Carruthers).

As we move forward into the project plan for 2023, we've outlined the first seven chapters of the book based on the information uncovered in documents and interviews. These chapters take us from the inception of Buckaroo and his world to the release of the film and the aftermath.

The next eight chapters, which cover the ups and downs of the franchise since the film's release to the present day, will be outlined next. A sample chapter is being written for the book proposal and we are exploring both official and unofficial publication options.

Conclusion

We're very pleased with the state of the book project right now, especially when we compare it to the project plan we created, having hit the targets we set out in 2022. We have defined the goals for 2023 and look forward to sharing our progress in a future newsletter. 🐾



From the Colorado Bureau Office and Great Sand Dunes Observation Post

Please note all dates, locations, and other details may be subject to change. Be sure to visit the links for updates and more info.

AUGUST

Cast Birthdays: Lewis Smith (Aug. 1), Kevin Rodney Sullivan (Aug. 3), Carl Lumbly (Aug. 14)

[Dragon Con](#) (Aug. 31-Sept. 4 in Atlanta, GA). One of North America's largest and most venerable genre-friendly gatherings. Actors, artists, authors, and probably other celebrities whose jobs don't begin with an A.

SEPTEMBER

Cast Birthdays: James Keane (Sept. 26), Ronald Lacey (Sept. 28)

[Nandor Fodor and the Talking Mongoose](#) (Sept. 1, U.S.). This film is a sly take on alleged actual claims from 1935 about an isolated farmhouse being visited by a spirit named Gef, who took the form of a mongoose. Look for Christopher Lloyd in a supporting role as real-life British paranormal researcher Dr. Harry Price (1881-1948). Starring Simon Pegg, Minnie Driver, and Neil Gaiman as the voice of Gef.

[National Be Late for Something Day](#) (U.S., Sept. 5). Even Buckaroo was late for the Jet Car test because he was performing brain surgery. Founded by the Procrastinators' Club of America, this is a semi-serious reminder that many of us overextend ourselves and need to relax and reevaluate our schedules. Or maybe just do it tomorrow.

[2023 Rugby World Cup](#) (Sept. 8-Oct. 28, various venues across France). Portugal returns for their first time since 2007, and Chile competes for the first time ever. How will defending champ South Africa fare?

[Billy Vera's Big Band Jazz](#) (Sept. 12, Los Angeles). Enjoy cocktails or an upscale dinner and catch Billy performing at [Herb Alpert's](#) Vibrato Grill.

[Fantastic Fest](#) (Sept. 21-28 in Austin, TX). One of the largest film festivals in the U.S. to specialize in horror, fantasy, sci-fi, and action. A few years ago John Wick held an

early screening here, so who knows what might be hiding in this year's line-up?

[OSIRIS-REx spacecraft returns](#) (Sept. 24, Utah). NASA's OSIRIS-REx is scheduled to return to Earth after seven years in space and its unprecedented landing on the asteroid Bennu in 2020. The craft is on course to deliver rock and dust samples from Bennu, in what is hoped to be a historic first.

OCTOBER

Cast Birthdays: William Traylor (Oct. 8), Leonard Gaines (Oct. 13), John Lithgow (Oct. 19), Christopher Lloyd & Jeff Goldblum (both Oct. 22), James Rosin (exact date unavailable)

[Gerewol \(or Guérewol\) Festival](#) (early Oct., near In-Gall, Niger, Africa). This annual ritual of the Wodaabe Fula people welcomes tourists to watch, but the real goal is for the tallest eligible males to find mates. Singing and dancing become feats of endurance as young women watch the men thoughtfully for days. Facepainting and whiteness of eyes and teeth give the bachelors an additional edge. Can't make it in person? Watch Werner Herzog's [Herdsmen of the Sun](#).

["Ring of Fire" solar eclipse](#) (Oct. 14, best in Southwestern U.S.) This annular solar eclipse will be visible across much of North, Central, and South America, but viewing should be especially good in Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas for the "ring of fire" effect where the moon blocks most of the sun, leaving the blazing curved edges.

[Worldcon 81](#) (Oct. 18-22, Chengdu, China). For over 80 years the World Science Fiction Society, which oversees the Hugo Awards, has worked to make [Worldcon](#) a truly global affair. This year lands at vibrant Chengdu. Guests of Honor include international sci-fi authors Cixin Liu (*The Three Body Problem*), Sergey Lukianenko, and Robert J. Sawyer. Will Hanoi Xan make an appearance?

[Killers of the Flower Moon](#) (Oct. 20, U.S. wide release). The new Scorsese film is a crime drama set in 1920s Oklahoma. In addition to DiCaprio, De Niro, and Brendan Fraser, look for John Lithgow in the cast.

October 30: On this date in 1938, Lectroids hypnotized [Orson Welles](#) into using his

"War of the Worlds" radio broadcast to conceal the truth behind their invasion.

NOVEMBER

Cast Birthdays: Jane Marla Robbins (Nov. 2), Vincent Schiavelli (Nov. 11), Jamie Lee Curtis (Nov. 22), Michael Santoro (Nov. 23), Matt Clark (Nov. 25)

[National Sandwich Day](#) (Nov. 3, U.S.). Many chains and local restaurants offer discounts and other deals to mark this day, so check around. And heed the wise advice of the late Warren Zevon: "Enjoy every sandwich."

[Sitka WhaleFest](#) (Nov. 3-5, Sitka, Alaska). This year's theme is "Sound Science: Voices from the Ocean," focusing on how some aquatic species use underwater soundwaves for communication and sensory input. Events include snorkeling, wildlife cruises, social mixers, and an optional seal necropsy.

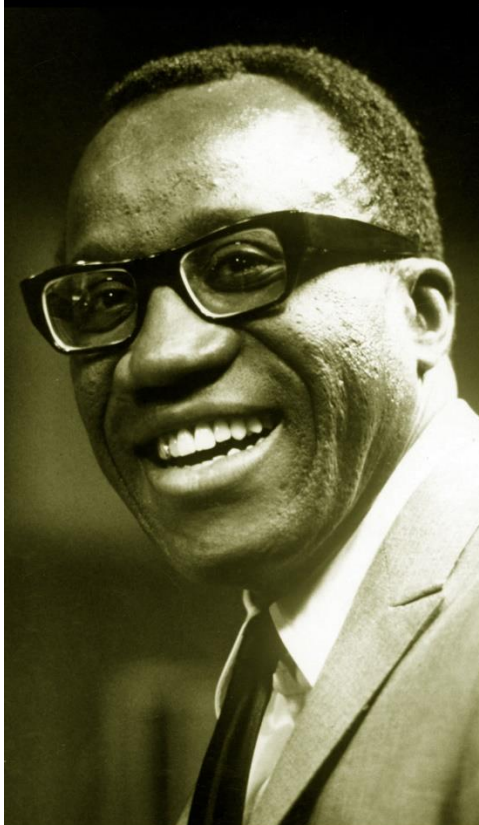
[National Saxophone Day](#) (Nov. 6). Today marks the birth of Adolphe Sax, inventor of the instrument which bears his name. Who's your favorite: Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Bleeding Gums Murphy, Zoot from the Muppets? We're fond of the late great [Jerry Peterson](#), who played with Billy & The Beaters and The Hong Kong Cavaliers.

[National STEM Day](#) (Nov 8, U.S.). A career in the sciences, technology, engineering, or mathematics may not be for everyone, but for those who do, it does BENEFIT everyone. So explore your options and see where your talents might lie.

[Philcon](#) (Nov. 17-19, Cherry Hill, NJ). A tradition since 1936, Philcon stands out these days by putting its emphasis on authors, artists, fan-driven panels, its famous Masquerade, and good old-fashioned filk singing instead of high-profile Hollywood entertainers.

[Mt. Fuji International Marathon](#) (Nov. 26, Japan). Who's up for running a marathon alongside some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world? This course is designed to showcase views of Lake Kawaguchiko and Lake Saiko, with Mt. Fuji looming over it all. If you're not up for a full marathon, a shorter route along just Kawaguchiko is an option, as is a charity fun run and a much shorter walking event.

In Memoriam



Bill Henderson

March 19, 1926
April 3, 2016



Rosalind Cash

December 31, 1938
October 31, 1995



George Bowers

April 20, 1944
August 18, 2012



Jessie Lawrence Ferguson

June 8, 1941
April 26, 2019