

# The Bad Astronomer: An Interview with Dr. Phil Plait

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Dragon\*Con 2009

# The Daily Dragon

Dr. Phil Plait, astronomer, lecturer, and author, was a popular guest of the Dragon\*Con Space and Skeptic tracks in 2008, and he's back with us for 2009! At the end of last year's convention, he snuck with us into the Hilton's VIP lounge for some questions and fawning.

**Daily Dragon (DD):** What do you like in science fiction literature?

**Phil Plait (PP):** For a long time, I had stopped reading written science fiction. Just lack of time, and wasn't sure what was coming out anymore. There were so many new authors, and I didn't want to keep buying books, and the library didn't have much, and all that. But back when I was, and I'll come back to that in a second, back in the beginning when I

was in high school, college, mostly hard science fiction: Larry Niven, Pournelle, David Brin... golly ...Greg Bear, Asimov, Heinlein, all those. I was raised on Heinlein and Asimov and Bradbury, and all those guys. And I liked the hard science fiction because I'm not doing astronomy and science because it's a job. I love this stuff, and so reading about it is really exciting.

So, I was always into the hard stuff, but I like internally consistent science fiction. The science is well defined, and it's stepped around whenever the plot needs it. That's the kind

of stuff I like.

of stuff I like.

**DD:** How do you feel about not-hard science fiction?

**PP:** Well, I like character-driven stuff. I love Firefly. Firefly may be one of the best television shows ever made, and the science in that is important but secondary to the characters. And it's used in the plot to get from point A to point B and why the Reavers came up, and all that kind of stuff. The science wasn't as important as the characters, so I do like science fiction settings, but I really do like strong, character-driven work.

(Read the complete interview on the *Daily Dragon* website, and be sure to check out Dr. Plait's panels and discussions at this year's Dragon\*Con!)



## Charity Auction to Benefit the American Alzheimer's Association

This year, Dragon\*Con joins the fight against Alzheimer's disease. Proceeds from the 2009 Dragon\*Con Charity Auction will go to the Georgia Chapter of the American Alzheimer's Association.

Some of the items that will be auctioned off include:

- \* A one-of-a-kind handmade

celebrity quilt.

- \* Signed books from Neil Gaiman.

- \* An autographed copy of Kevin J. Anderson's new book, *Paul of Dune*.

- \* Over 50 of the Playmate *Star Trek: The Next Generation* action figures and other assorted *Star Trek* memorabilia.

- \* The Limited Edition *Star Wars* action figure set "The Lucas Family," never released to the general public. In the set are: Baron Papanoida (George Lucas); Chi Eekway (Katie Lucas); Terr Taneel (Amanda Lucas); and Zett Jukassa (Jett Lucas).

Help Dragon\*Con make this year's charity auction a success!

## Dragon\*Con Parade Signup

Be part of the 8th Annual Dragon\*Con Parade! Come to our table just outside Convention Registration in the Sheraton Thu 4-9:30PM or Fri 9AM-9:30PM to sign up, check in, and

pick up your parade ribbons.

The parade starts at 10AM Sat from Woodruff Park and ends at the Marriott's back entrance.

## Munchkin US-SE Tournament

This year, Steve Jackson Games is holding the 2009 U.S. Southeast Regional Munchkin Tournament at Dragon\*Con. Expect swarms of Men in Black to invade the gaming area! Will you be one of the three craftiest munchkins competing at the finalists table?

The tournament for the three remaining seats will take place

on Friday at 2PM, 4:30PM, and 7PM. The Final Round will be held Sunday at 6PM. Registration is free. Sign up at Board Gaming, Galleria (Hil).

Related events include the Munchkin Gauntlet and the Saturday Night Space Pirate Amazon Ninja Catgirl (SPANC) party. Win prizes for good costuming and good game play!

## The Late Show on DCTV

New for 2009, the *Dragon\*Con Late Show* will bring you each day's news, events, and schedule changes. Broadcast live each morning, Fri through Mon, at 9AM (so early it's late!) to each of the four host hotels on the DCTV channels, it'll also be rebroadcast throughout the day and podcast.

Tune your dials to DCTV:

- Hyatt: 41 Marriott: 42  
Hilton: 3  
Sheraton: 74 or 76

# Schedule Changes

\*The default is the Hyatt if no hotel is indicated.

## Additions

**"Space Satellite and Telescope Institute"** with Laura Burns and Tyler Desjardins. Fri 11:30AM, 203 (Hil).

**"Designing Spaceships for Science Fiction and Fantasy"** What makes a great sci-fi spaceship? Jeff Carlisle discusses. Fri 2:30PM, Hanover A-B.

**A.J. Hartley** will be signing autographs Fri 4PM, M301-304 (M).

**Tracy Scoggins** will be on "Babylon 5 Guests" Fri 4PM, Reg VI-VII.

**"Film Festival: Action! Guns, Kicks, and Blood"** Shootings, stabbings, and schoolgirls. Starring Patrick Warburton and Ted Raimi. Fri 4PM, Learning Center.

**"Whoah! Devastator's Got Nards!"** Discuss the pros and cons of the latest live-action installment of Transformers and rumors about Transformers 3. Presented by GMX with GMX prize giveaways. Fri 7PM, Baker.

**"Virginia Hey Visualization Meditation Workshop"** 1 hr of discussion followed by 1 hr of guided meditation. See Ms. Hey in the Walk of Fame for more info. (Extra fee to attend workshop.) Sat 11:30AM, Piedmont (S).

**"Star Trek Authors Cavalcade: The Ladies"** Star Trek writers and editors discuss writing fiction in the Star Trek universe and the future of Star Trek adventures in print. Ann C. Crispin, Susan Kearney, Terri Osborne, Josepha Sherman. Sat 2:30PM, Savannah (S).

**"Film Festival: Urban Wolf"** An episodic thriller as an American tourist is stalked by a hidden CCTV operator in Paris. Q&A with director. Sat 2:30PM, Learning Center.

**"TrekTrak Presents Captain Janeway"** Q&A with Kate Mulgrew. Sat 4PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"Dragon\*Reading: A.J. Hartley"** Sat 5:30PM, Roswell.

**Claudia Christian** will be on "Improv with Dean Haglund" Sat 7PM, Hanover C-E.

**"Planning your own 'Long Expected Party'"** Have you ever thought about organizing your own event? Come talk to other fans and find out the why-tos and wherefores. Sat 8:30PM, L506-L507 (M).

**Tommy Castillo** will be on "Iron Artist" Sun 9:30AM, Cent I.

**"Film Festival: Religion, Free Thought, and Belief"** Documentaries on the attempt to put up an "Atheist Tree" and an actual reenactment of the crucifixion—with nails. Q&A with filmmakers. Sun 2:30PM, Learning Center.

**"Teenage Bikini Vampires and Death"** Filmmaker Devi Snively brings her morbid, twisted humor to three shorts of a babysitting Death, a vampire who wants a tan, and tap-dancing zombies. Q&A follows. Sun 5:30PM, Learning Center.

**"Dragon\*Reading: Sean Shoshak"** Sun 5:30PM, University.

**"Brain-machine Interfaces, or the Brain as a Machine"** The current state

of open-source hardware for biopotential recording, machine learning, neurobiology, biological motor learning, and brain-machine interfaces for prosthetic (and other!) control. Sun 8:30PM, 202 (Hil).

## Cancellations

**David Prowse** will not be on "A Clockwork Orange Remembered" Fri 11:30AM, Cent II-III; "Meet the Stars of Star Wars" Sat 4PM, Regency VI-VII; and "Meet the Stars of Star Wars" Sun 7PM Atrium Ballroom (M).

**Peter Facinelli** will not be on "Twilight Time" Fri 2:30PM, Grand A-F (S).

**"Unbelievable Flying Objects: The Art and Science of Spaceship Design"** Fri 2:30PM, Hanover A-B.

**"Tobe Hooper: Iconic Director"** Fri 4PM, Learning Center.

**"Flynn's Folly"** Fri 5PM, Hyatt Concourse.

**Scott Adsit** will not be on "Animation Voice Acting" Fri 5:30PM, Int'l North.

**Kate Mulgrew** will not be on "Star Trek: Voyager Stars I" Fri 5:30PM, Grand Ballroom A-F (S) or The TrekTrak Show" Sat 1PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**Tobe Hooper** will not be on "Writing for Film and Television" Fri 8:30PM, Manila/Singapore/Hong Kong.

**"Making Your Costume Extraordinary"** Sat 11:30AM, L506-L507 (M).

**"Live Long and Prosper: TrekTrak Presents Leonard Nimoy"** Sat 4PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**Friar Bryan Small** will not be on "What is Your Apocalypse" Sat 5:30PM, L504 (M).

**"Jumpgate Evolution"** Sun 10AM, Augusta (S).

**"Tobe Hooper on Short Film"** Sun 5:30PM, Learning Center.

**"Medical Device Development: Thrills, Excitement, and Crazy Research!"** Sun 8:30PM, 202 (Hil).

**Charisma Carpenter and Julie Benz** will not be on "Working with Joss" Mon 10AM, Crystal Ballroom (Hil).

**Joe Flanigan** will not be on "Stargate Multiverse Supergate Panel" Mon 10AM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"An Hour With Draco Malfoy"** Mon 11:30AM, Cent II-III.

**Katherine Kurtz** will not be on "Last Chance: Ask the Authors" Mon 11:30AM, Cent II-III.

**Sean H. Shaw** will not be on "Peepshow" Mon 1PM, Hanover F.

**"HolyWar: DiscoveryInstitute's Assault on Neuroscience"** Mon 1PM, 202 (Hil).

**Charlaine Harris** will not be on "Plotting or Plotting?" Mon 2:30PM, Manila/Singapore/Hong Kong.

## Corrections

**"Cassini: Past, Present and Future"** will be Fri 11:30AM not 10AM, 203 (Hil).

**"X-Files Retrospective"** RW Goodwin

(producer/director), Sheila (Margaret Scully), and Dean (Langly) reminisce about X-Files. Fri 5:30PM, M106-M107 (M).

**The Atlanta Radio Theatre Company** will present "The Call of Cthulhu" by H. P. Lovecraft and "Night Call" by Brian Phillips Sat 7:30PM, Atrium Ballroom (M); and "Rory Rammer, Space Marshal: Enemies Within!" by Ron N. Butler and "Omnilingual" by H. Beam Piper Sun 7PM, Reg VI-VII.

## Updates

**"TrekTrak Presents Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner"** moved from Atrium Ballroom (M) to Cent I-III, Fri 10AM. Will be broadcast live on big screens in Atrium Ballroom (M) and on DCTV.

**"Babylon 5 Guests"** moved from Fri 10AM, Cent II-III to Fri 4PM, Reg VI-VII.

**"Dragon\*Reading: Mike Resnick"** moved from Fri 1PM, University to Sun 5:30PM, Roswell.

**"Spotlight on Terry Gilliam"** will be 1 hr, not 2.5 hrs, Fri 1PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"British Media Gaming I"** will be 1.5 hrs, not 2.5 hrs, Fri 1PM, Valdosta (S).

**"BSG - Launch Tubes Active!"** moved from Fri 4PM to Fri 5:30PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"Stargate: SG-1 Supergate Panel"** moved from Fri 5:30PM to Fri 4PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"Is Mainstream Media Dying?"** moved from Fri 5:30PM to Fri 4PM, A704 (M).

**"Intro. to D\*C LARPS"** moved from Fri 5:30PM to Fri 5:00PM, Grand Salon B (Hil).

**"Arthurian Legend in British Media"** moved from Sat 11:30AM to Mon 10AM, Valdosta (S).

**"Zombie Squad"** moved from Sat 2:30PM to Sat 4PM, Int'l North.

**"What is Your Apocalypse"** moved from Sat 2:30PM to Sat 5:30PM, L504 (M).

**"Fading of the Cries Preview"** moved from Sat 5:30PM, Int'l North to Sat 7:00PM, Int'l South.

**"YA Literature Team Trivia"** moved from Int'l South to A601-A602 (M), Sat 7PM.

**"Court The Late Night Muse"** moved from Sat 10PM to Sat 11:30PM, L506-L507 (M).

**Margaret H. Bonham's** autograph signing moved from Sun 10AM to Sat 5:30PM, M301-304 (M).

**"An Hour With Draco Malfoy"** moved from Sun 11:30AM to Sun 4PM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**Adam Savage's** Sun 1PM autograph signing will be in Cloak Room, 2nd floor (Hil).

**"Twilight Time"** moved from Sun 4PM to Sun 11:30AM, Atrium Ballroom (M).

**"LARP Costuming and Props Exhibition"** moved from Sun 8:30PM to Sat 11AM, Grand Salon B (Hil).

**"The Music of the Ainur"** moved from Sun 7PM to Sat 10PM, L506-L507 (M).

**"British Media Gaming II"** moved from Sun 8:30PM to Sun 10AM, Valdosta (S).

## Daily Dragon Tweets

Don't miss the latest Dragon\*Con news. Follow @daily\_dragon on Twitter to receive tweets whenever we publish new schedule changes or articles.



## The Dragon\*Con Store

Get your official Dragon\*Con merchandise. Located in the Marriott on the Marquis Level.

FRIDAY: 11:00AM-7:00PM  
SATURDAY: 9:00AM-7:00PM  
SUNDAY: 9:00AM-7:00PM  
MONDAY: 9:00AM-4:00PM



## Your Shout-Outs Here

Got an announcement or a room party? A lost/found notice or a "Happy Dragon\*Con" wish? Say it in the *Daily Dragon!* It's free!

Fill out an Announcement Request Form in Chicago in the Hyatt. Deadline 7PM for the next day's issue.



## Princess Alethea's Traveling Sideshow

Books, bubbles, and mayhem! Join Princess Alethea Kontis and Leanna Renee Hieber, Janet Lee, Mike Lee, Chris McCormick, and Ada Brown. The first 50 attendees will get tote bags filled with books, buttons, bracelets, tattoos, and other prizes! This will be no dull reading! Fri 5:30PM, Roswell.



## To the one and only "Dragon\*Con Lady"

You rock my world!! Thanks for 16 fun-filled years at D\*C. Let's hope we can make it another 16.

—John Tackett



## Hello and all my love to Jason & Desi Jackson!

Can't wait to hang out with my favorite *Daily Dragon* reporters!

—Love, Mom



## Jon Eric Berlan (1968-2009)

Gamer, Geek, Fanboy, Friend; You will be missed!



## Wishing Gerald W. Page a Happy 70th Birthday

You've mastered seven decades and shown us all how it's done. Seventy congratulations, one for every year. Happy birthday, Jerry!