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For the first weekend in May, the sun is usually burning high, the flowers are all in bloom, there is an occasional puddle here and there from a recent passing thunderstorm and before too long there are…*ghouls, ghosts and goblins dead in your sights*? Well, in one part of the country, there definitely are.

FANGORIA had the opportunity to attend the National Haunters Convention and Halloween show, hosted annually at the "halfway" point before Halloween right outside Philadelphia in lovely King of Prussia, PA. The convention, which was open to Halloween enthusiasts from April 29-May 2, took place at the fabulous Valley Forge Convention Center. Fango immediately felt a slight fall breeze in the air and felt the bonfires a-blazin' when we shuffled into the lower area of the facility. Before too long, we were ushered into the Halloween-ghost-ridden town of your wildest dreams, complete with a freak sideshow and ever-evolving growing spider webs (courtesy of Minion's Web)—clearly, this is and has been the convention for all things Halloween!

With chills and thrills popping up here and there, fans could be seen lurking on the convention floors, slowly slithering their way into each vendor corridor. Before too long, Fango burrowed its way to the stage, and the director of stage entertainment, Chris Handa, immediately bellowed out to the audience to shuffle its undead way to the stage. With plenty of ghouls on hand, Handa quarantined a few lucky survivors to take part in the coveted FANGORIA Monster Movie Trivia session. As the remaining wanderers realized there was free loot to be had, they hurtled toward the front of the stage, and immediately the first question was asked: "What is the fictional town that Freddy Krueger haunts?"

Treating the audience to a handful of A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET questions on Friday (tying in with the current remake), Fango was met by a handful of knowledgeable brains that leaked genre-movie trivia like they wanted the surrounding zombies to munch on them. Taunting and testing audiences on their knowledge of arcane film facts, Fango met some of the magazine's most ardent fans and made new ones along the way. Giving away a vintage Fango issue #47 during day two, we staged a battle to the death for the fright aficionados at the con. We must note the fabulous folks from The House of Mysterious Secrets as being the final champions and taking home the grand prize of this glorious issue—way to go, guys!

Fango also got whisked to a handful of interesting seminars conducted by Halloween University, giving us the opportunity to learn how to run all things horror for your annual haunt. From marketing your attraction to ingenious ways to scare the hell out of your victims, this was a clear highlight of the convention. These classes allow future Halloween enthusiasts to learn the proper ways to create their own ghoulish events—Halloween memories for the youth of tomorrow in the making. There was even a behind-the-scenes look at a local haunt, the popular Shady Brook Farm in Yardley, PA. Here, congoers were treated to a homemade BBQ dinner and a backstage look at what makes Shady Brook go bump in the night each year.

After thus being schooled on all things spooky, Fango's second day began with a greeting by the ingenious Ghostbuster squads from Philadelphia and New Jersey, who immediately ushered us onto the con floor. With a ghoulish magic show taking place on the stage (thanks to

the brilliant Wacky Dracky and Morgan), Fango soon encountered some familiar faces among the venders. Scares That Care! 's Joe Ripple informed us of the charity work that his organization has been doing lately. From the silent auction held on the Haunter Convention's last day to the upcoming Horrorfind Weekend 12 (with genre vet Bruce Campbell on hand to help with the auction), Fango was thrilled with the amazing work this organization has been doing lately.

Scares that Care! was developed after the death of Ripple's business partner, celebrated B-filmmaker Don Dohler, from lung and brain cancer in 2006. As Dohler had been a care provider for his mentally disabled sister, his death influenced Ripple to provide a positive way of contributing money to the ill. Setting a goal of raising $10,000 each year, Scares that Care! reached it in 2008) for the John Hopkins Children's Cancer Center, and last year benefitted the Kennedy-Krieger Institute, which treats kids with brain and spinal cord injuries, autism, Down syndrome and other diseases or disorders. If you are not already familiar with this amazing organization, I urge you to view the website linked above and make an effor to attend one of its future events.

Before long, Fango stumbled upon the booth of special FX artist extraordinaire John Weisgerber's Gemini Company , and immediately filled in on his new "brain candle" creation. A graduate of Manhattan's School of Visual Arts, Weisgerber began the Gemini Company in 2001. He has worked as an FX technician for some of the best effects technicians in the industry, including David Miller (A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, NIGHT OF THE CREEPS) and the HELLRAISER and FEAST films' Gary Tunnicliffe.

After battling the oddities at Gemini's booth, Fango met up with Philly fave DJ Dave Ghoul (a.k.a. D.E. Christman) of Grendel's Den fame. Christman developed Grendel's Den over a decade ago, channeling his love for art. With beautiful imagery—some a combination of tangible objects and computer modeling—Christman's creations are reminiscent of Clive Barker's nightmarish, otherdimensional landscapes, some having a very H.P. Lovecraftian tone. Excited for that night's undead masquerade ball, which he was DJ-ing, Christman informed us about the upcoming Zombie Beach Party , taking place June 11

and coinciding with the
Wizard World Con
, which runs June 11-13 in zombie-filled Philadelphia. Surely Fango will be in attendance!

As one of the last stops on this writer's crawl, Fango checked out Philly haunt sensation Fright Factory
. Having been treated to a behind-the-scenes peek this past fall, we now met up with creator Robert Dudziek and was informed of their "zomteez" prototype shirts and the madness that is to ensue this October at the south Philly complex. Biting at your feet, screaming in your face and flailing horrific personas left and right, this is one of the most original and downright terrifying haunted attractions this horror buff has ever come across. Period. After departing Fright Factory's shiver-filled booth, Fango met up with some new faces and was treated to the inventive works at
Raven's Dream
and the genius sound design at
Audio Zombie
, along with the beautifully creepy booth decor of Loki's Workshop—a haunted attraction in itself.

Just like it was November 1, the con sadly came to an end after Fango handed out its last trivia giveaway on Sunday. After one of the best convention weekends this Fangorian can remember, I have already slotted the weekend aside for the tricks and treats at the next National Haunters show at the Valley Forge Convention Center May 5-8, 2011!

Special thanks to co-owners Michael Bruner and Robert Kocker, Rick "Gravely MacCabre", stage director Chris Handa and the rest of the National Haunters Convention staff for inviting FANGORIA to the 2010 edition!

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