



Lady freak from Alaska.



A freak.



Father and son freak duo.

MST3K Photography: Trace&Amy (Sheehan); All freaks (Baranoski); Thirsty (Sheehan); us at podium (son freak); Brains at podium (somewhere on the Web)

Mystery Science Theater: Like Pigs to Shit

by Randy Mack

The second greatest thing about The Mystery Science Theater ConventioCon Expo-Fest-a-Rama 2: Electric Bugaloo was the freaks that came out of the woodwork to attend it. I mean, I'm no snob, but what a scene. It was like 500 Erkels, 500 Pee-Wee Hermans, and 500 Muriels got together for the express purpose of avoiding eye contact. Trust me, *no one* got laid at this convention. But I digress: you should have seen this festival-o-mutants. (The Minneapolis Convention Center apparently felt the same way, for they provided a well-dressed, heavily-armed Gestapo to surround us at all times. I personally felt the cattle prods were a little much, but then, some seemed to enjoy them.)

There was this one kid who spazzed out completely whenever anything MTS3K-related was mentioned. I mean, total convulsions. Hair flying everywhere, teeth chattering up and down, retainer spraying spit like a sprinkler gone berserk, glasses bouncing on her nose until they flew off and struck the person behind her. And it would cease immediately when you mentioned *Star Search*. Frankly, it was disturbing.

When people ask me about Minnesota, I say "Boy, those people sure can't do slogans." This is often enough to get me a funny look and a hastily-made excuse, leaving me alone to put the decals on my Hundred Years' War Model kit. Solitude, precious solitude. **STAY AWAY FROM ME!**

Ironically, Minnesotans do have a problem with slogans. Either that, or they're brilliant at them. But probably not. I kept a log of funny and ironic and interesting slogans, graffiti, and bumper stickers that I saw, but they wouldn't let me leave the state with them, so here are the other ones:

"Swell! Let's go!" —motto of the State Fair

"We Play Just Enough Hits to

Keep Us on the Air" —radio station slogan

"The best State Fair ride isn't on the Midway, it's on an MCTO [Minnesota Council Transit Authority] bus" — ad on public bus, featuring a photo of terrified kids on a ride

"Trespass and Be Prosecuted" — spray painted on the side of a creepy old building by the Convention Center

"Blossom and Die!" — graffiti on the side of a garage

Our plane ride was made more dramatic by two interesting bits of coined-wordage (or word-coinage): our flight was on NorthWestern Airlines (even though Minnesota is not in the northwest), so our airplane was covered with stickers and signs that said **NWA** in huge red letters. This made the crackers nervous. Also, NWA's motto is "Some people just know how to fly," leaving its natural conclusion ("...You just have to *believe*.") to your imagination.

Finally, I saw more people in wheelchairs in Minnesota than I've seen my whole life. I never realized the extent to which you can have a wheelchair detailed. It's hard to pity an 8-year old whose wheelchair has flourescent hypodisks instead of hubcaps, fuzzy dice, a GameBoy built into the armrest, and bumper stickers all over it, including "If you don't like the way I'm driving, get off the sidewalk," and "Lost your cat? *Look under my tires.*"

Minnesotans are also unclear on the concept of escalators. Smart ar-

chitects put the bottom of down-escalator A next to the top of down-escalator B, so that as you descend, you just turn around and keep going at each floor. Minnesotans build theirs so that you have to walk all the way around an entire bank of escalators at each floor, which not only wastes a lot of time and energy, but spins you around for maximum disorientation. This was annoying, but had amusing consequences on the already-disoriented crowd.

Sure, the weirdo quotient was high, but it was never higher than at the MYSTie Costume ball, where Virgin-Central turned into the National Freak Show Headquarters. I can't describe it, so I won't try, but suffice to say, few costumes make weird-looking people look less weird. Mine was no exception.

Later, in the Mall of America, I saw a "personal convenience center" vending machine in the men's room. It contained all the emergency products your average mall-going midwesterner would need in a crisis: Advil, Dramamine, Tylenol, breathmints, and removable Harley-Davidson tatoos.

Finally, it was scary the way everyone chanted "**FOUR MORE YEARS!!!**" every time departing cast member Trace Beaulieu said anything. Spontaneous coordinated outbursts are alarming under the best of conditions, and having 2000 mutants do it in an enclosed space is enough make one... oh, forget it. Waiter...!

Fear and Loathing in Minneapolis... ...a daring escape from the Mariot ...the 'Play Doom with Mike' event goes to hell in a handbasket

by Dr. Thirsty

Things were not going all that well at the Mariot. Evidently, someone had tipped off the Manager about our outrageous booze bill and all-night Twister sessions. It made me angry, more than anything because I knew who it was. I, being the red-blooded, honest, and true American that I am, have never trusted prostitutes of any kind, but ladies of the evening hailing from Minneapolis had just topped my shit-list. The clerk on the phone appeared to recognize my general disposition.

"Yes, Mr. Thirsty. I was just wondering if you'd prefer to pay your room service and your... *other charges* in advance of your checkout on Monday." He sounded pretty nervous. Maybe the bill was bigger than I thought. It didn't matter, though. I was still angry.

"Why in the hell would I want to do that?!" I roared. The voice on the other end hesitated. "Well, sir, um... our policy on excessive balances is quite clear on—"

"You listen to me, you little shit! You'll get your fucking money

when I check out, understand?! And hurry up with that goddamn ice!!" A long pause... I thought maybe I had gone too far, especially since we hadn't ordered drinks in over twelve hours. Then he answered, calmly and deliberately: "Yes sir, whenever you're ready to—" I hung up the phone and began to panic.

"They're comin' for us. They've tracked us down, man! We're fucked!!" My editor, a hundred and sixty pound white caucasian, had already guessed my gameplan... He was one step ahead of me. "As your editor, I advise you to pack only the *essentials*."

He was right, of course. I loaded my para-military pouch belt with everything I could scour from the floor of the hotel room. The pickings were slim considering the general wreckage, but I knew the mescaline could go a long way and the pint of tequilla would be good for a snort (not to mention the remaining half-pint of ether).

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why did 2500 freaks like us fly some place called Eden Prairie?)

by "TV's Frank" (Frank Coniff) and then by Dr. Forrester's mother (played by writer Mary Jo Pehl). Tom Servo got a new voice (writer Kevin Murphy). Joel left the show and writer Mike Nelson stepped in as the mads' new test case. Finally, Trace decided to leave and no one really knows how he will be replaced when the show goes into its eighth season, now on the Sci-Fi Channel.

Although there have been many changes, the

plot remains the same. The poor human is still stuck up in space watching horribly cheesy movies with only his trusty 'bots as companions.

What's truly amazing is the popularity MST3K has gained throughout seven seasons and a big screen movie. The show has always been, and always will be, an extremely low budget, "cow-town puppet show" (in the words of Mike Nelson), run by a close-knit group of

about ten people who make up Best Brains, Inc, the MST3K production company which is located in neighboring Eden Prairie.

People all over the United States and around the world follow the show religiously. The first ConventioCon ExpoFest-A-Rama two years ago brought over 2000 people from all over, and this year's Labor Day weekend ConventioCon ExpoFest-A-Rama 2: Electric Boogaloo, brought over 2500 people. •