

It's what you don't see that will amaze you.

Like the fact that this used to be a bedroom.



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NERD CITY, U.S.A

[POPULATION: MOST OF US]

Welcome to Seattle, where companies like Microsoft, Boeing, Amazon, F5 Networks and now offices of Google and Facebook are beacons of nerdiness, drawing techies the world over. But our city's geekiness goes much deeper, evidenced by a wealth of book nerds, comics junkies, film fanatics and chic geeks. And that's why we love it here. Nerds can fly their flags of personal obsession high (and tote huge bodies of knowledge in their smartphones). So with this issue we're celebrating our local nerderati and our serious case of geek love.

BY BRANGIEN DAVIS, JOHN LEVESQUE, DANA STANDISH AND MARK RAHNER

PHOTOGRAPH BY HAYLEY YOUNG; GROOMING: GLYNNE DAVIES FOR AJENTSE; HAIR AND MAKEUP ASSISTANT: MAGGIE WENDT. MODELS: LEFT TO RIGHT: NIC PERLEROS/TOPO SWOPE; LISA CORONADO/DRAMATIC ARTISTS; JON JOHNSON/SMG; JAGGER GRAVNING; SARAH CARROLL/TCM. CLOTHING: PATTERNED DRESS, VELOURIA; RED PUMPS AND BOOTS, SOLE FOOD; SPECTACLES, PULP LAB



[the comics nerd]

[the book nerd]

[the gamer]

[the gadget geek]

[the music nerd]

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY:
Cayla Lambier,
Anna Samuels +
Jennifer Lee

NERD HALL OF FAME

A proud roster of Seattle geeks with wide renown



JEFF BEZOS
Voted most likely to lead
an Amazon expedition
MOTTO: "Caveat emptor."



RICK STEVES
Organized senior class trip to Amsterdam
for \$73.29 per person
CATCHPHRASE: "Legalize it."



BONNIE DUNBAR
Burning desire: Cashing in frequent
flier miles on a used space shuttle
MOTTO: "Higher, higher!"



KEN JENNINGS
Favorite makeout song:
"(Our Love's in) Jeopardy"
CATCHPHRASE: "'Bodies of Water'
for \$200, Alex."



BILL GATES
Books he's been meaning to read:
The House Without Windows
and *The Rich Are Different*
MOTTO: "There's a patch for that."



CLIFF MASS
Best pickup line: "Wanna create
a new convergence zone?"
CATCHPHRASE: "Do you believe
this weather?"



NANCY PEARL
Dewey decimal club (1, 2, 3, 4);
nonfiction club (1, 2); fiction club (3, 4)
CATCHPHRASE: "Shhhhh!"

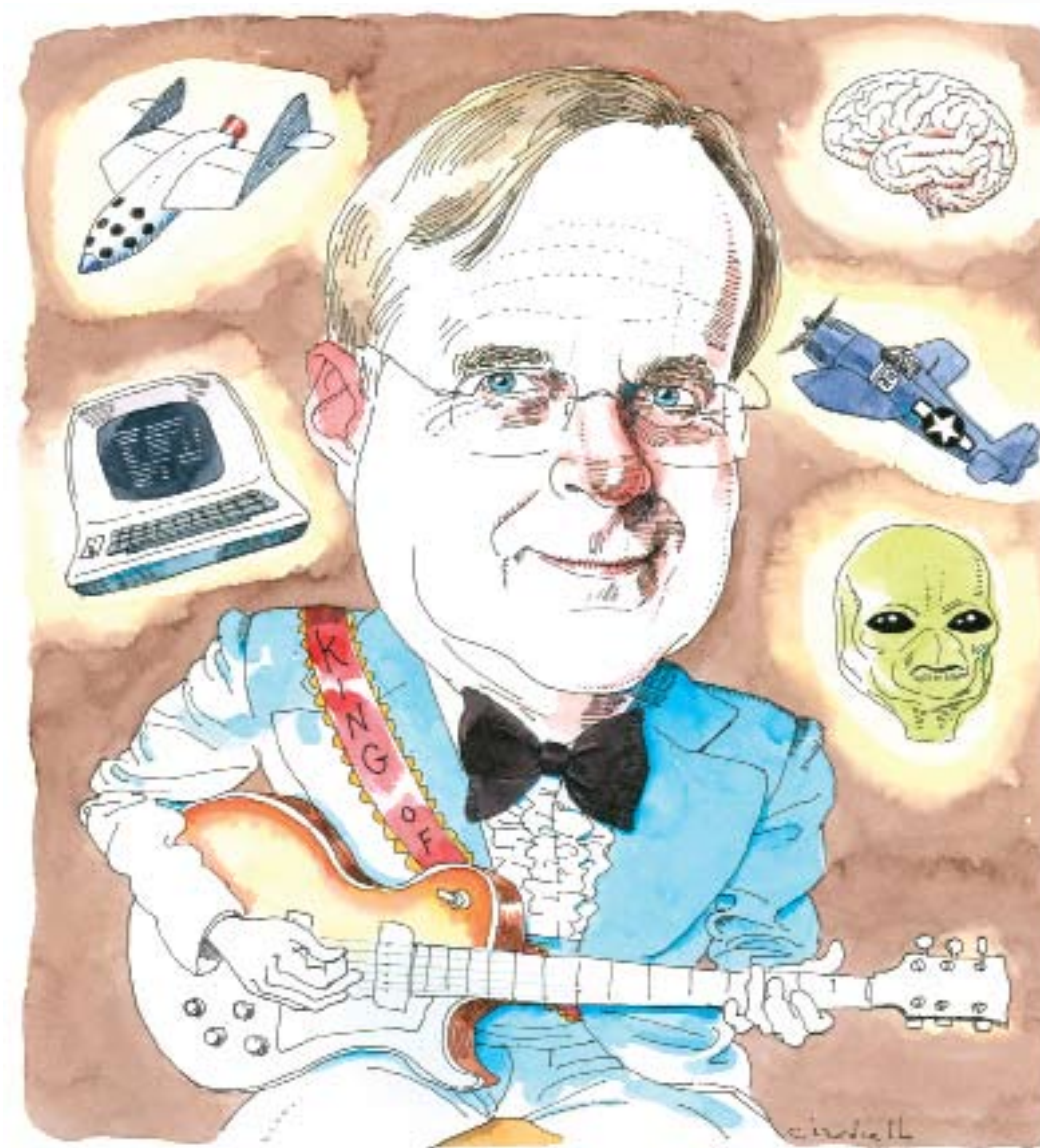


KENNY G
Undergraduate major in accounting,
undergraduate minor in sax therapy
MOTTO: "Just put your
lips together and blow."



CISCOE MORRIS
Dream job: Plant manager
MOTTO: "Ooh la la!"

Jeff Bezos, Amazon.com CEO; Rick Steves, European travel expert, marijuana advocate; Bonnie Dunbar, astronaut,
Museum of Flight consultant; Ken Jennings, *Jeopardy!* champion; Bill Gates, Microsoft cofounder; Cliff Mass, UW professor, meteorologist;
Nancy Pearl, career librarian, author; Kenny G, smooth-jazz musician; Ciscoe Morris, KING 5 TV gardening guru



THE NERD KING

The honorary prom king of the nerd high school that is Seattle, **PAUL ALLEN** is quite the overachiever. From extraterrestrial day trips to jamming with the fellas, this wildly successful Seattleite is a paragon of geeky projects.

*** MOST LIKELY TO SPACE OUT** Paul Allen and aerospace engineer Burt Rutan of Scaled Composites made history in 2004 with SpaceShipOne (scaled.com)—the first privately constructed manned spacecraft to successfully enter suborbital space. *** CLASS BRAIN** Founded in 2003, the Allen Institute for Brain Science (alleninstitute.org) is responsible for endeavors like the Allen Brain Atlas project, completed in 2006, and the first-ever summit for brain sciences. *** BEST SCIENCE FAIR PROJECT** Funded and managed by Allen's Vulcan Inc., Project Halo (projecthalo.com) is a research effort to develop a problem-solving artificial intelligence, currently dubbed "Digital Aristotle," with the goal of creating an artificial tutor and/or scientific assistant with the ability to consider and answer novel questions. *** MOST DEDICATED HOBBYIST** In 2000 and 2004, Paul Allen opened the Experience Music Project and the Science Fiction Museum (empsfm.org), permanently conjoining two of his hobbies

inside one very colorful, very misshapen building. *** BEST COMPUTER TUTOR** What started in 2006 as a digital documentation of ages-old computers has evolved into an impressive timeline of computer technology called the Living Computer Museum, which boasts a working VAX-11 (livingcomputermuseum.org; not yet open to the public). *** BIGGEST MODEL AIRPLANE COLLECTION** In 1998, Allen began acquiring World War II-era aircraft, which he renovated and put on display in 2004 as the Flying Heritage Collection (flyingheritage.com) at Paine Field in Everett. *** FIRST PLACE AT BATTLE OF THE BANDS** What kind of multitasking software developer and noted philanthropist would Allen be without a short-lived musical career on his résumé? From 1996 to 1999, Allen played guitar and wrote lyrics for Grown Men (grownmen.com), a rock group that performed original material. Sadly, the band's single self-titled album cannot be found on iTunes or Amazon—perhaps there's a copy in storage at the EMP?

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE CIARDIELLO

► **WINE NERD**

ERIC LEVINE [Former Microsoftie and founder of CellarTracker and GrapeStories, wine-reviewing databases (cellartracker.com; grapestories.com)]

NERD STATS: Personal collection: 3,000 bottles. Database: tracks 21 million bottles. Has published more than 4,000 tasting notes to his website.

HOW IT BEGAN: “It just seemed natural to build a proper SQL database and host it in the cloud.” (Huh?)

NERD CRED: Staying up until 5 a.m. after tastings to write up the wines while the memory is still fresh; custom bar-coding every bottle in his collection.



9
**NERDS
OF NOTE**

NERD VARIETALS

Meet a few of the local geeks who take their specialized knowledge to the max

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
HAYLEY YOUNG

► **MUSIC
GROUPIE**

LIZ RILEY
[Cofounder of local music-reviewing website Three Imaginary Girls (threeimaginarygirls.com)]

WHEN SHE KNEW SHE WAS DIFFERENT:

“I remember telling some coworkers I was driving to Portland that night—a Tuesday—to see a Seattle band, reasoning, ‘They’re so good!’ They explained that’s not normal.”

NERD CRED: “I was at the first Horses [renamed Band of Horses] show and picked up their homemade EP.”

TRUE CONFESSION: When she realized the yearly amount she spent on live shows and records far exceeded her car insurance cost, she contemplated getting rid of her car.

► **COMPUTER ICON**

ROBERTO HOYOS [Founder of Throwboy, maker of computer icons and chat lingo pillows (throwboy.com)]

THROWBOY ORIGINS: “I made some pillows that resembled Mac OS X icons as a Christmas present for a girl I was dating.” The girlfriend blogged about the pillows, and the blog went viral.

WHY PEOPLE LOVE THE PILLOWS: “People love being able to express their geeky side beyond just their computer and gadgets.”

NERD STATS: Ships roughly 50 orders a day (1-12 pillows each).

TYPICAL DAY: Toggling between sewing machine and computer.

NERD CRED: Streamed live 24/7 from the Throwboy factory (his apartment) during the Christmas rush.



► **DIRT DOCTOR**

DAVID MONTGOMERY
[Professor of earth space sciences at the UW and author of *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*]

NERD CRED: 2008 MacArthur “genius” grantee for his pioneering work on dirt and the evolution of topography.

EXTRACURRICULARS: Front man for local folk-rock band Big Dirt.

FAVORITE CHILDHOOD PASTIME: Looking at maps.

FAVORITE BOOK: *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (published in 1684). “It attempts to explain European rocks through the biblical story of Noah’s flood.”

BIGGEST DIRT ADVENTURE:

“Sinking up to my hips in boiling quicksand in the Philippines.”

MOST UPSETTING THING ABOUT DIRT: “In 150 years, at the rate we’re going, we’ll be completely out of soil.”

► **BOOK WORM**

SUMMER ROBINSON [Founder and proprietor of independent bookstore Pilot Books (pilotbooksseattle.com)]

FAVORITE CHILDHOOD PASTIME: Reading Emily Dickinson.

CLAIM TO NERD FAME: “We carry exclusively books published by independent publishers...for the hard-core literary types.”

NUMBER OF PUBLISHERS SHE CARRIES: More than 200, both domestic and international.

IDEA OF A FUN ROAD TRIP: Powell’s bookstore’s independent publishers section.

NERDIEST THING SHE’S EVER DONE IN PUBLIC: Set up an outdoor poetry factory on Capitol Hill.

NERD CRED: The upstairs “lending library” at the store is composed of her personal book collection (and bookshelves).



▼ **STAR WARS FANATIC**

GUS LOPEZ [*Star Wars* collector and founder of the online *Star Wars Collectors Archive* (theswca.com)]

NUMBER OF ITEMS IN HIS COLLECTION: “I have lost count. Easily thousands. Over 1,400 different *Star Wars* cereal boxes alone.”

PUBLICATIONS: Co-authored three books about *Star Wars* collectibles, including the recently released *Star Wars Year by Year*.

SPECIALTY: Hard to find stuff: cast and crew items, toy prototypes, movie props, awards, food collectibles.

NOTABLE ITEMS: A massive laser cannon from *The Empire Strikes Back*; Virgin Atlantic’s series of *Star Wars* barf bags for the *Revenge of the Sith* release; the original Death Star model used in the first *Star Wars*, currently on display at EMP|SFM.



▲ **NEWS JUNKIE**

ERICA C. BARNETT
[Cofounder of online news journal *Publicola* (publicola.net)]

NEWS SITES SHE VISITS DAILY: seattlepi.com, local newspaper and neighborhood blogs, *Seattle Transit* blog, *Crosscut*, *The New York Times*, *Talking Points Memo*, *The Atlantic*....

DREAM BEAT: “The one I have now! I get to cover the ongoing battle between the council and the mayor, the deep-bore tunnel, the debate over cars vs. bikes and transit—all the exciting stuff.”

NERD CRED: “I’m the only reporter who goes to Transportation Choices Coalition’s monthly brown-bag lunches.”

NERD KNOWLEDGE: Knows the meanings of all these acronyms: SDEIS, PDC, CIP, BIA, RPZ, TIF, COBE and SEPA.



◀ **POETRY SCIENTISTS**

SIERRA NELSON AND RACHEL KESSLER [Performers—as Drs. Ink and Owning—in the *Vis-à-Vis Society*, which studies the science of poetry]

AUDIENCE SURVEYS CONDUCTED: “102.5 (approximately).”

ON THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD: “It’s a form of poetry—its structured ritual is comforting the way sonnets are.”

WHERE SCIENCE AND POETRY MEET: “All poetry secretly invites you to reflect on your own experience and circle your favorite answer—the answer that is most true, for you, right now. Our survey-poems just make that process more explicit.”

BEST THING ABOUT WEARING LAB COATS: “It’s very reassuring to everyone involved. Also, pockets.”



◀ **FOOD CHEMIST**

NATHAN MYRHVOLD [Master French chef; author of *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* (due out in March, modernistcuisine.com)]

BOOK STATS: Molecular gastronomy explained in 2,400 pages and six volumes.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE: Water baths, homogenizers, centrifuges, hydrocolloids, emulsifiers and enzymes.

NERD CRED: Ph.D. in theoretical and mathematical physics; postdoctoral work on quantum theories of gravitation with Stephen Hawking.

OTHER CAREERS: Former chief technology officer at Microsoft (where he led the team that developed Windows).

HOW HE BEGAN EXPLORING SOUS VIDE COOKING: “First, I wrote computer code to simulate heat moving through food.” (Duh!)



GAME PLAY

What better way to spend a rainy day than with a game? Perhaps it's not surprising that Seattle is home to an abundance of game companies—from console to video to online to good old board games—and gaming stores where you are encouraged to get your geek on, rain or shine. **BY CAYLA LAMBIER**

PREMIER PLATFORMS

MICROSOFT: ONLY KINECT

Say what you will about Windows, the Zune, Bing and other much maligned Microsoft products. The Redmond-based behemoth has kicked some major butt in the gaming world. It 2001 it entered the console gaming arena with the Xbox and, in 2005, cemented its position with the **XBOX 360**. Aside from sharp graphics and smooth gameplay, the 360 advanced the idea of an online marketplace and gamer achievements, and sold more than 40 million units since its debut. Last November, Microsoft blurred the line between game and gamer with the Kinect, a sophisticated set of cameras and microphones that literally turn the player into the controller. If only they could make Microsoft Word so seamless.

NINTENDO OF AMERICA: WHEEE!

Based in Redmond since 1982, Nintendo of America has been at the forefront of every gaming generation leap, and has dominated the AV ports of televisions since its 1985 release of the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). (Last fall marked the 25th anniversary of beloved goomba-stomping plumbers, the Super Mario Bros.) In 1996, the N64 brought video games out of flat graphics into the colorful 3-D world and, in 2001, upgraded us from cartridges to discs with the GameCube. In 2006, Nintendo released **THE WII**, which pioneered motion gaming and brought computer gameplay to entire families—the unfortunate side effect being the braggadocio of high-score moms.

THE ART OF THE ARCADE

»Redmond resident **Steve Wiebe** was the first person to achieve more than 1 million points in the original Donkey Kong arcade game (his battle to stay on top was the focus of the 2007 documentary *The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters*). In 2010, Wiebe regained the Donkey Kong champion title by scoring 1,064,500 points. »**John McAllister**, a Seattle locksmith, broke the Asteroids high score last spring during a 58-hour playing spree with 41,338,740 points!

HAYLEY YOUNG



HALO: REACH

VIDEO GAME DEVELOPERS

BUNGIE

BACKGROUND: After moving from Chicago to Redmond in 2001, Bungie released **HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED**, a game that would change first-person shooter (FPS) games forever.

KNOWN FOR: **HALO**, **HALO 2**, **HALO 3** and **HALO REACH** (FPS; PC/Xbox/360) introduced multiplayer gamers to the hyper-pious alien collective known as The Covenant and the nightmare-inducing alien parasite known as The Flood.

WHAT'S NEW: Bungie officially confirmed in multiple interviews that Halo Reach was the last installment of the Halo series and that the company would be turning its attention toward a new project. bungie.net

VALVE

BACKGROUND: Founded in Bellevue in 1996, Valve specializes in complex games with detailed plots and cutting-edge physics. In 2007, Valve released Steam, a hugely successful online gaming platform that manages more than 1,100 games.

KNOWN FOR: **THE ORANGE BOX** (PC/360), arguably the holy trinity of gameplay, which includes Valve's critically acclaimed **HALF-LIFE 2** (FPS), the wildly successful **PORTAL** (FPS/Puzzle) and the fast-paced, team-oriented **TEAM FORTRESS 2** (FPS).

WHAT'S NEW: Scheduled for release this year, Portal 2 will serve up all new physics-defying shenanigans. valvesoftware.com/games

POPCAP

BACKGROUND: In 2000, Belltown-based Popcap set out to develop games that were instantly addictive—and succeeded with Bejeweled. Since then, Popcap has won more than 100 awards and developed more than 50 games.

KNOWN FOR: **BEJEWELED**, **BEJEWELED 2** and **BEJEWELED 3** (PC/mobile), all puzzles of the “Match 3” variety (match three gems of the same type to clear the screen). Bejeweled is the only puzzle game other than Tetris to be inducted into the *Computer Gaming World* Hall of Fame.

WHAT'S NEW: Bejeweled 3, released in December, features HD visuals and fluid gameplay. popcap.com

GAME STOPS

PREFER TO PLAY GAMES AMONG OTHER HUMANS? PULL UP AN AVATAR AT ONE OF THESE LOCAL SPOTS

» **Gary's Games and Hobbies:** (Greenwood) D&D; garysgamesand-hobbies.com

» **Gamma Ray Games:** (Capitol Hill) D&D, Warmachine, etc; gammaraygamestore.com

» **The Dreaming Comics and Games:**

(U-District) D&D, Magic, etc; thedreamingcomic-sandgames.com

» **Blue Highway Games:** Queen Anne; Magic, Pokemon; blue-highwaygames.com

» **Pink Gorilla Games:** U-District and International District; video

game tournaments; pinkgorillagames.com

» **First Pick Games:** Wallingford; Magic, YuGiOh; search Facebook for schedule.

» **Reset Games:** Video game tournaments in Bellingham and Tulalip; resetgames.com

Tools of the Dungeons & Dragons trade

GAME FACE

GET REAL WITH LIVE OPPONENTS (AND AVOID VIDEO CONTROLLER CALLUSES) WITH THESE LOW-TECH GAMES

[**HARD CORE**] **WIZARDS OF THE COAST** (Renton, founded 1990) The butt of countless nerd jokes, **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** has been granting gamers access to fantastic worlds since 1974. (Wizards of the Coast acquired the game in 1997.) Armed with a handful of dice, some intricately drawn maps and ever-evolving character sheets, players dive

head first into the tabletop role-playing game intent on slaying foul beasts and leveling up. Wizards of the Coast also produces the trading-card game **MAGIC: THE GATHERING** and the recently released Magic: The Gathering—Tactics (for PC/PS3).

wizards.com » **PRIVATEER PRESS** (Bellevue,

founded 2000) Privateer found success with its steampunk-themed tabletop game **WARMACHINE**, in which players side with factions, such as the technologically advanced Cygnar or the imperialistic Khador, and build armies. Detailed plastic and metal miniatures are often hand-painted by serious players. Companion game **HORDES** focuses on the “savage” factions of the world. privateerpress.com

[**NERD LITE**] **SCREENLIFE** (Seattle, founded 2001) In 2002, Screenlife took the “board” out of board game with **SCENE-IT?**, a trivia game played via DVD. Also available for video game consoles and mobile phones, Scene-It? tests knowledge of film, television and pop culture. Since its debut, nearly 20 million copies of the game have been sold worldwide. screenlifegames.com » **CRANIUM INC.** (Seattle, founded 1998;) Developed by former Microsoft employees, the elaborate board game **CRANIUM** was an instant success, requiring players to use talents from singing, drawing and sculpting to pantomiming, spelling and spouting trivia. Hasbro acquired the company in 2008 and shuttered the Seattle office a year later. Game over. hasbro.com/games/cranium

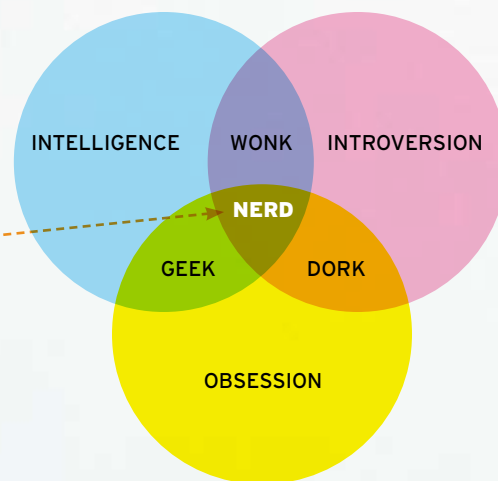
For more of our favorite Seattle geeks and nerdy innovations go to seattlemag.com

Console-ation prizes: the Xbox controller and Wii remote

QUIZ

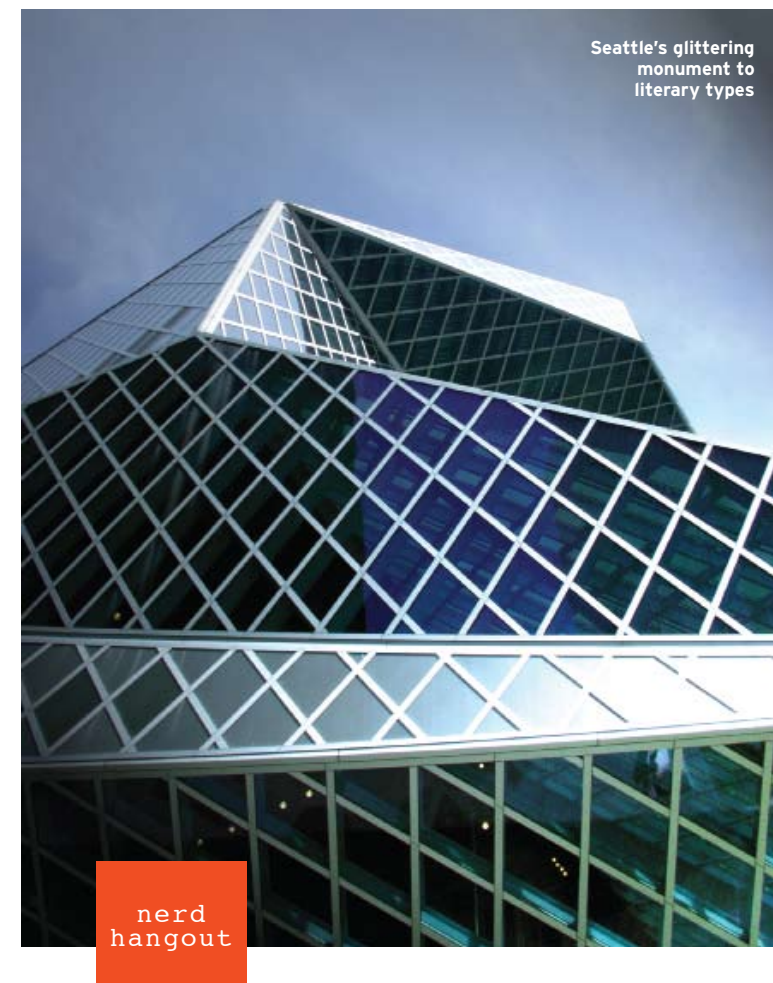
ARE YOU A NERD?

IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING WHETHER YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AMONG THE LOCAL NERDERATI (HINT: IF YOU FEEL AT HOME IN SEATTLE, ODDS ARE YOU'RE ALREADY HALFWAY THERE), TAKE HEART-AND THEN TAKE OUR QUIZ



BOOKS: You find yourself torn between a reading at Elliott Bay Book Company, a poetry class at Richard Hugo House and a talk at Seattle Arts & Lectures...	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()
SPORTS: You update the injury status of every Seahawk, Mariner and Sounder in your fantasy leagues...	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()
MUSIC: You utter the words "I saw those guys at Neumos before they got big..."	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()
GADGETS: You travel with a minimum of four chargers in your Tom Bihn bag...	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()
ENVIRO: Your morning routine involves reading the daily eco-newsfeed from <i>Grist</i> , pulling compostable items out of your neighbors' trash and strapping on your bike helmet...	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()
WINE: When drinking Washington wine with friends, you mention "terroir," "Horse Heaven Hills" and "licorice..."	RARELY ()	SOMETIMES ()	OFTEN ()	ALWAYS ()

SCORING: Rarely = 2 points. Sometimes = 4 points. Often = 6 points. Always = 8 points.
If you score 12-24: You are Too Cool for School. Please don't stuff us into our lockers. If you score 26-36: You are a Part-Time Geek. Keep working at it! If you score 38 or higher: Nerd Alert! Welcome to Seattle—you fit right in. **Note:** Award yourself 30 bonus points if you're actually reading the scoring explanation on this quiz.



THE NERD CATHEDRAL

Double nerd points go to the **SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY** for erecting a downtown pleasure dome dedicated to the pursuit of reading, as well as upgrading neighborhood libraries to pass ecological muster. Our citizenry passed the "Libraries for All" bond measure with a whopping 72 percent approval in 1998, and that resulted in the creation of downtown's Crystal Palace as well as the renovation of many local libraries, including the Ballard branch, which boasts solar panels and a "green roof" to aid insulation and reduce runoff. Seattle's reading population continues to vote with its feet and mouse fingers: According to the most recent poll (2009), pocket-protected patrons visited the library system or used its online resources more than 14 million times.

Seattle-Geekly.com: If you're wondering where to find out about hot, super-hero-themed costume parties, game nights and zombie conventions that might have escaped your radar, or hoping to read a review of the *Battlestar Galactica: The Exhibition* show at the EMP/SFM (on view through 3/4/2012), your search is over. Seattle-Geekly.com offers regular updates on all things local and geeky (including a helpful Geek Week calendar, so you can pace yourself). According to co-creator Matt Hammond, the clearinghouse gets about 5,000 unique visits per month. "For those of us that grew up pre-Internet, it was easy to feel isolated and was often difficult to find a community of geeks outside your immediate circle of friends," says Hammond. "We try to provide a connection to the larger geek community through the podcast, website and social media."



SIFF NERD

NERD VARIETAL

Attention, attendees of the Seattle International Film Festival: Have you checked

yourself for the early warning signs of a condition known as SIFF Nerd?

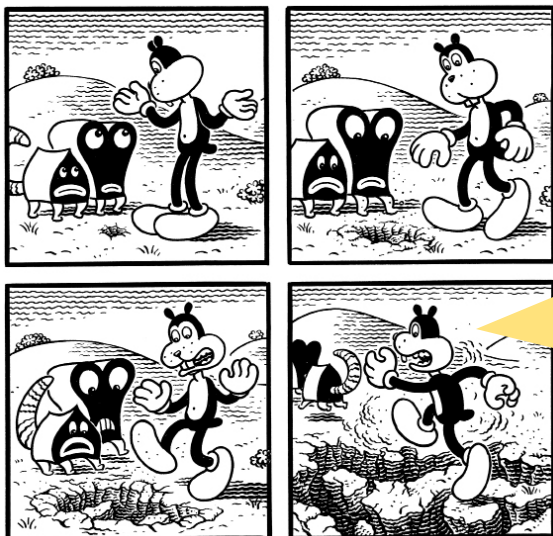
- ▶ Bone or joint pain from standing at the front of long lines, comparing how many movies you've seen with other platinum pass holders
- ▶ Nagging or persistent spouse, wondering if you really needed to see every showing of *Metropolis*
- ▶ Burning desire to recite lineups from previous years' festivals to anyone who will listen
- ▶ Growing thickness or lump in the part of your wallet where you keep your old ticket stubs
- ▶ Paleness from spending hours in a darkened theater just when the Seattle weather is starting to get nice

URGENT: There is no hope of recovery if you already possess "Fool Serious" status—available to full series pass holders. (The group has its own website, foolserious.org, and gives out its own separate SIFF Awards.) Instead: Enjoy the show!

nerd resource

FRAMED

Pow! Bam! Kaboom! A growing number of comic book professionals (no, that's not an oxymoron) are making Seattle their not-so-secret headquarters. Local comic creator **MARK RAHNER** gives us a sampling.



JIM WOODRING

Nominated for several Eisner Awards and named a "Stranger Genius" by *The Stranger* in 2010, the renowned Seattle-based comic writer and artist is revered for his brilliantly surreal comic "Frank" and his wordless graphic collection *Weathercraft* (2010). He recently received funding to create a gigantic steel dip pen (of the old-school sort), with which he plans to do public performances. jimwoodring.com

JOHN LUSTIG

Genius idea: Buy the rights to a bunch of romance comics from defunct Charlton Comics for a song and replace the dialogue with wisecracks. Now the "Last Kiss" panel appears thrice weekly on his website and at gocomics.com/lastkiss. Seattle-based Lustig also recently got Portland-based Dark Horse Comics to license a bunch of ridiculous "Last Kiss" swag-mugs, sticky notes, diapers. OK, not the diapers. lastkisscomics.com



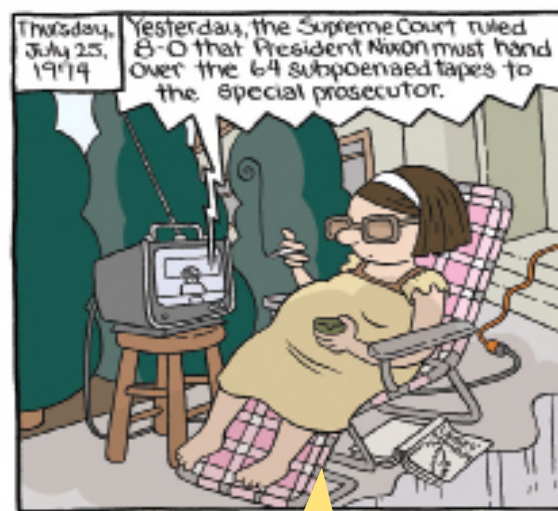
ERIC TRAUTMANN

The Raymond, WA-based writer is revamping the iconic '70s character Vampirella for Dynamite Entertainment, but with minor changes that include ditching the skimpy Speedo-style costume. Trautmann's other work includes "Action Comics," "Checkmate," "The Mighty Crusaders" and "Red Sonja." His wife Gabi owns Olympic Cards & Comics in Lacey. Guess what she stocks? erictrautmann.us



ELLEN FORNEY

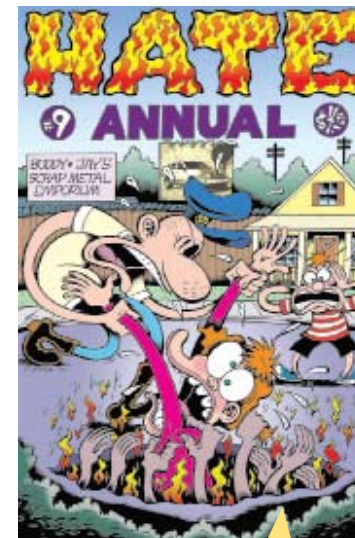
The Seattle cartoonist whose work has appeared regularly in *The Stranger* received an Eisner nomination for the 2007 collection *I Love Led Zeppelin*. Her other work includes "Lust: Kinky Online Personal Ads from Seattle's *The Stranger*" and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which she illustrated for Sherman Alexie. She teaches comics at Cornish College of the Arts. ellenforney.com



MEGAN KELSO

The award-winning Seattle comic artist/writer (married to cartoonist Jason Lutes) is known for her graphic short story collections, "Queen of the Black Black" and "The Squirrel Mother," and her comic, "Girl Hero." In 2006 she was tapped to write her serial comic "Watergate Sue" for *The New York Times Magazine*. Fantagraphics published her acclaimed graphic novel, *Artichoke Tales*, in 2010. girlhero.com

Clockwise from top left: "I Was Seven in '75," written and illustrated by Ellen Forney, published by Fantagraphics; "Hate," written and illustrated by Peter Bagge; "Watergate Sue," written and illustrated by Megan Kelso



PETER BAGGE

Applauded for his comic series "Hate" and "Apocalypse Nerd" (among others), the iconic Seattle comic writer has a new book due out this month from Fantagraphics. It's a collection of his 1999-2000 comic book series *Yeah!*, which follows the triumphs and trials of an all-girl band that blows Josie and the Pussycats out of the water. peterbagge.com

LOCAL COMICS PUBLISHERS

CREATORS EDGE

Formed in early 2010, this Puyallup startup publisher's goal is to produce quality comics by local and independent writers and artists, with creators keeping the edge by owning 100 percent of their work. Its top titles are the horror anthology *Nightmares of the Macabre*, *ZFW: Zombies of Foreign Wars* and *Jeff*, about an average Joe who pops into a world with busty damsels and dragons. creatorsedgepress.com

FANTAGRAPHICS

So much has been written about this outstanding indie comics company that we'll politely suggest that you go see for yourself at the Fantagraphics Bookstore & Gallery in Georgetown. Suffice it to say that it's home to such talents as Seattle-based Peter Bagge, Jim Woodring, Megan Kelso and Ellen Forney, former Seattleite Charles Burns and infamously gifted grouch Robert Crumb. fantagraphics.com

Get Your Comix Fix

Behold, a few of our favorite local places for getting down and geeky

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKSTORE & GALLERY

Georgetown
1201 S Vale St.
206.658.0110
fantagraphics.com

COMICS DUNGEON

Wallingford
250 NE 45th St.
206.545.8373
comicsdungeon.com

ZANADU COMICS

Downtown
1923 Third Ave.
206.443.1316
U-District
1307 NE 45th St.
206.632.0989
zanaducomics.com

GOLDEN AGE COLLECTABLES

Pike Place Market
1501 Pike Place Market
(lower level)
206.622.9799
goldenagecollectables.com

ED BRUBAKER

One of the biggest and best writers of comics, Seattle-based Brubaker has amassed three Eisner Awards—the Oscars of the comics world—for best writer, and another for the best single issue ("Captain America," No. 601). Brubaker's run on the latter is notable for a) killing off Cap, b) resurrecting him and c) turning a cheesy title into a kick-ass espionage story. In addition to "Daredevil," "Uncanny X-Men" and others, the crime buff's noir comic "Criminal" is not to be missed, and his "Incognito" (about a supervillain in a witness-protection program) is in development as a feature film. edbrubaker.com

Clockwise from top left: "Frank," written and illustrated by Jim Woodring; "Last Kiss," written by John Lustig; "Vampirella," written by Eric Trautmann, art by Wagner Reis, © Dynamite Entertainment; "Incognito," written by Ed Brubaker, © Icon/Marvel

nerds
come
full
circle



THEN

In 1978, a group of talented—and notably hairy—software types gather for what turns out to be a momentous photo: Microsoft's 12 founding employees, including Bill Gates (front left) and Paul Allen (front right), just before the group moves the company from Albuquerque to the Eastside and begins the climb to computer domination via often glitchy, complex operating systems.



NOW

In 2008 a group of talented—and notably hairy—musical types gather for what may prove to be a momentous a photo: The 5 founding members of baroque-folk Seattle band the Fleet Foxes, including Robin Pecknold and Skyler Skjelset (who grew up together on the Eastside), just as they begin their climb of the musical charts via often catchy, complex harmonies.

MAN VS. MACHINE Local *Jeopardy!* champ **Ken Jennings** is back—and ready to take on a supercomputer! During his celebrated 2004 winning streak, Jennings went 74 consecutive shows undefeated. But does he have the smarts to beat a brainy IBM computer named Watson? Find out in a three-part episode airing February 14–16 on KOMO 4.



nerd
alert!

CLOSET NERDS

Seattle's nerdiness goes so deep that even people you think are too hip to be square possess secret geek credentials. Behold, a few of our city's nerds-in-disguise.

BY JENNIFER LEE

KIM THAYIL

KNOWN AS: Lead guitarist of Soundgarden
SECRET NERD CRED: Philosophy degree from the UW

VALERIE MORRIS

KNOWN AS: Valtron 3000, 2007 All Star captain of the Throttle Rockets of the Rat City Rollergirls
SECRET NERD CRED: UW Ph.D. in molecular/cellular biology; post-doctoral fellow at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

DIMITRI KIEFFER

KNOWN AS: Extreme adventure racer (once did the Iditarod on foot)
SECRET NERD CRED: Two degrees from the UW in international trade; 15 years at Microsoft

DAVE DEDERER

KNOWN AS: Guitarist and founder of The Presidents of the United States of America
SECRET NERD CRED: English literature degree from Brown; master's coursework in urban planning at the UW

DUFF MCKAGAN

KNOWN AS: Seattle-born hard rocker with a prolific band history (most notably, bassist of Guns N' Roses)
SECRET NERD CRED: Earned finance degree from Seattle U; finance columnist for *Playboy*

COURTESY OF MICROSOFT; FLEET FOXES: DAVID BELISLE; THAYIL: DON VAN CLEAVE

NERDCORE MUSIC

NERD GENRE

For a primer on Nerdcore, a niche hip-hop aesthetic in which lyrics cover pressing issues relating to Dungeons and Dragons and/or *Star Wars*, look no farther than Kirkland-based nerdcore band **Death*Star** (deathstarhiphop.com). “We rap about what we love, where we came from and what’s real in our lives,” says MC-3PO (aka Jess Hart). With songs about sci-fi, Saturday morning cartoons and building your own robot girlfriend (“Bride of Dorkenstein”), the band promises to “deliver the finest product from a dude’s basement as we possibly can.” Perhaps not surprisingly, Death*Star’s lyrics are totally awesome, such as these for “Not Geek Enough”:

*Girl you have to be sympathetic
For the pursuits in my life are McKellen magnetic
Call me positively geeky, but you're negatively nagging
Texas Instrument, calculating all the time I'm wasting
So I drop you like a franchise game, focus on the now
Devote my energies to Half-Life, Ninja Gaiden and WoW
Beam me up to a screening of an anime classic
Never heard of Akira!?!? My Kaneda's gone flaccid
Baby you're not geek enough for me
That's just the 8-bit reality
Baby you're not geek enough for me
I'd say live long and prosper but you'd miss my meaning*



Steve Perry (left) and MC-3PO of Nerdcore band Death*Star (not pictured, Nick Thompson)

DEATH*STAR: HAYLEY YOUNG

IN RELATED NEWS, we seriously regret to inform you that Seattle’s literary death-metal band **BlöddHag** is no longer producing eardrum-rupturing songs about famous sci-fi and fantasy authors, having played its final concert last spring. But we strongly encourage you to watch the documentary short *BlöddHag: The Faster You Go Deaf, The More Time You Have to Read* (streaming at wholphindvd.com/web-films/bloodhag), which follows the band on its King County Library “edu-core” tour. Do androids dream of electric earplugs?



NERD VARIETAL

WeATHER WONk

ATTN: This just in—the forecast for the foreseeable future

-- 10:55 a.m.: rain
-- 11:00 a.m.: showers with a chance of rain
-- 11:05 a.m.: sprinkles with a few sun breaks
-- 11:10 a.m.: rain turning to showers

If you’re too busy to go outside and see for yourself, check out **Seattle RainWatch** (atmos.washington.edu/SPU), the brainchild of UW meteorologist and locally worshipped weather guru **Cliff Mass** (cliffmass.blogspot.com), who proposed the “now-casting” system to give a neighborhood-by-neighborhood view of real-time precipitation. Puget Sound precipitation levels are tracked in one-, six-, 12-, 24- and 48-hour intervals, and forecasts are updated by the hour. Still not enough weather data? You can also hit refresh on the “Instant Precip” page as often as you need to.

* DID YOU KNOW?

Bill Nye the Science Guy, who first gained fame as the mad experimenter on the local sketch comedy show *Almost Live!*, didn’t just play an inventor on TV. He has earned U.S. patents—for a magnifying glass made with water and an abacus that works like a computer—and is developing an improved toe shoe for ballerinas.



NERD
VARIETAL

RECUMBENT BIKER: IN LESS BIKE-SAVVY CITIES, PEOPLE MIGHT THINK “RECUMBENT” REFERS TO SOMEONE WHO IS STILL IN ELECTED OFFICE. HERE IN SEATTLE, WE KNOW IT’S THE WAY WE GET TO THE OFFICE. ALL-WEATHER SHORTS, WRAP-AROUND GOGGLES, PLASTIC FRONT-MOUNTED BUG SHIELD, WOOL SOCKS WITH BIRKENSTOCKS: PLAN TO WEAR IT LOUD AND WEAR IT PROUD IF YOU BUY ONE OF THESE LAID-BACK BIKES.

TO THE MOON!

geeks
in
space

The space race is back! And this time it’s personal. Apparently, everyone wants to leave the Earth, especially our abundant cadre of local tycoons.

♥ Charles Lindbergh won a whopping \$25,000 prize for his transatlantic flight in 1927. Now the goal is civilian space travel and the prize has grown to \$10 million, thanks to the **Ansari X Prize**, which was won by local rocket fanboy Paul Allen and his SpaceShipOne team.

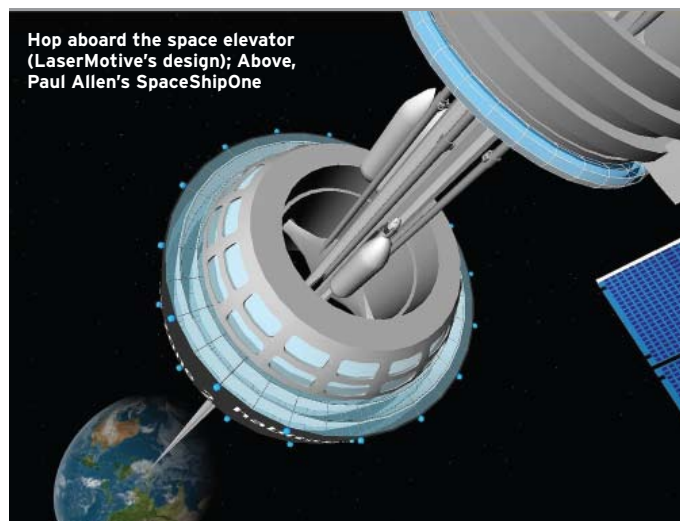
♥ Not to be outdone is Amazon.com CEO Jeff Bezos, whose company **Blue Origin** is using its \$3.7 million stimulus package award to develop a system for manned space flight. While Amazon was launched in Seattle, Bezos’ current launch pad has moved to west Texas, where vertical take-offs and landings do not draw as much attention from air traffic control.

♥ Seattle’s own **LaserMotive** recently won \$900,000 in a contest at the NASA-sponsored 2009 Space Elevator Games. LaserMotive aims to prove the feasibility of using power-beaming systems for launching satellites and other objects into orbit above the Earth. A warning to free-agent Seattle Mariners: You could become one of those “other objects.”

♥ Back here on Earth, astronaut Bonnie Dunbar and the **Museum of Flight** have launched a fundraising campaign to bring one of the retired space shuttles to its aerospace station in South Seattle. (To donate, visit museumofflight.org.)



Hop aboard the space elevator (LaserMotive’s design); Above, Paul Allen’s SpaceShipOne



OPPOSITE PAGE: HAYLEY YOUNG, PHOTOGRAPHED AT BOP STREET RECORDS

NERD FASHION

GEEKS GONE CHIC

Seattleites have long been proud flag bearers of cerebral smarts, so it’s no surprise to see local fashionistas sporting nerd pride with chunky specs, high-waters and hip cardigans. From quirky vintage accessories to trim, fitted attire, these intrepid individualists (each spotted on Seattle streets) prove that our nerds have ditched the pocket protectors for hip-to-be-square cool.

EXHIBIT A: Jenny George

Sasquatch Books administrator George doesn’t believe in pants. The bespectacled Ballardite dresses in bold, monochromatic dresses and skirts found at local indie havens like Velouria. “I’m a girly girl,” George says of her sexy, old-school-librarian vibe. “I only wear dresses and heels, even to the grocery store.” She accessorizes her throwback look with vintage accessories that suit her spunk, ranging from bold family heirloom necklaces and knee-high stockings to her collection of 1950s Lucite purses.

EXHIBIT B: Mychal Cohen

Musician Cohen (his orchestral rock band Campfire Ok releases *Strange Like We Are* this month) describes his style as one part preppy nerd, one part form-fitting classic. “I like to be concise, yet quirky,” Cohen says. “But well-fitting pants are non-negotiable.” Cohen rolls up his trim-fit pants to show off desert boots or boat shoes, and tops off his look with a thick-collared sweater or his favorite military-surplus peacoat. While he always buys pants from Levi’s, the vintage fiend combs the racks for garments and his collection of retro eyeglass frames.

On Jenny: Cynthia Rowley black eyeglasses, Northwest Vision Clinic; 1960s moss green vintage dress, Red Light; Sheer Lycra stockings, Nordstrom; black Mary Jane heels with buckle strap, eBay.com find; Birna Sigurbjornsdottir hammered steel cocktail ring, from Velouria; personalized silver cuff, Fancy. **On Mychal:** Vintage tortoiseshell frames, Seattle Vision Clinic; vintage navy and cream stripe sweater layered over cream button-up, Lifelong Thrift; Levi’s 511 jeans, Levi’s; Clarks brown leather desert boots, Urban Outfitters.



store directory on page 103

GEEK FESTS!

If there were any doubt as to Seattle's nerd cred, one need look no farther than the enormous number of festivals, events and gatherings that take place in our fair (some might say pale) city. At any and all of the following: Nerds, unite! BY ANNA SAMUELS



COMICS, SCI-FI & FANTASY

EMERALD CITY COMICON

MARCH 4-6 *Washington State Convention Center, Seattle; emeraldcitycomicon.com*

WHO ATTENDS: Secret superheroes. **WHY GO:** Dating back to 1970 in San Diego (and 2003 in Seattle), this is a mecca for comic book enthusiasts—and with good reason. If the countless local and international comic book vendors don't do it for you, perhaps the celebrity appearances will get your heart racing. (This year promises William Shatner!) For a more intimate approach, try the

Jet City Comic Show (9/24; jetcitycomicshow.com) the single-day event said to be for serious comic book fans.

NORWESCON

APRIL 21-24 *Doubletree Hotel, SeaTac; norwescon.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Bookish sci-fi fans. **WHY GO:** While the convention (which, since 1978, has ranked as one of the largest regional sci-fi/fantasy conventions of its kind in the U.S.) features costumes and gaming, people primarily attend to fulfill literary desires. Each year, the Philip K. Dick Award is presented to the most

distinguished and original science fiction novel of the year.

SAKURA-CON

APRIL 22-24 *Washington State Convention Center, Seattle; sakuracon.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Obsessive and festively costumed otaku, that is, fans of Japanese animation. **WHY GO:** This annual convention is a lively celebration of anime, manga, gaming and, of course, karaoke.

ZOMBCON

HALLOWEEN WEEKEND *Seattle Center, zombicon.com*

WHO ATTENDS: The living dead. **WHY GO:** Last October's inaugural festival proved successful, with throngs of dazed zombies trolling the Seattle Center, dragging their way to zombie discussions and screenings of "Films That Ate Our Brains" at SIFF Cinema. Last year's celeb appearances included *Fight Club* author Chuck Palahniuk and slasher-film icon Bruce Campbell.

STEAMCON

OCTOBER 14-16 *Hyatt Regency, Bellevue; steamcon.org*

WHO ATTENDS: People sporting old-school aviator goggles. **WHY GO:** Steampunk honors the Victorian era, with a 21st-century twist (think H.G. Wells and Jules Verne). At Steamcon (founded in Seattle in 2009), elaborately costumed attendees wind their way through author engagements, a concert series and a tea party, plus gobs of vendors selling handmade steampunk products crafted with old clockworks and newfound ingenuity.

LITERARY

SEATTLE ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 8-9 *Seattle Center Exhibition Hall; seattlebookfair.com*

WHO ATTENDS: Paper-loving people. **WHY GO:** Esteemed vendors show off (and sell) their antique book selections, from tomes about 18th-century music to first editions of *The Wizard of Oz*. If you can't wait until

October for your literary fix, stop by the Exhibition Hall on May 21-22 for the **Seattle Book and Paper Show** (seattlebookandpapershow.com)—a similar affair with a more contemporary focus.

SILENT READING PARTY

MONTHLY *Hotel Sorrento, hotelsorrento.com*

WHO ATTENDS: Book nerds tired of reading with their cats. **WHY GO:** It's the sophisticated version of snuggling up on the couch with a book, and takes place in the lush Fireside Room of the Sorrento Hotel. Warm up with a drink and spend the first Wednesday evening of every month being bookish and unsocial in public.

TECHNOLOGY & GAMING

PAX PRIME

AUGUST 26-28 *Washington State Convention Center, Seattle; paxsite.com/paxprime*

WHO ATTENDS: Game players. **WHY GO:** This gaming extravaganza (aka Penny Arcade Expo, founded in Bellevue in 2004) draws upward of 60,000 attendees, all clamoring for console, tabletop and computer game exhibitors, nerdcore concerts and panel discussions. Festivities culminate with the final



game of the Omegathon, in which randomly selected people compete in a grand challenge for a grand prize (past years have featured Skee-ball and Tetris).

BRICKCON

OCTOBER 1-2 *Seattle Center Exhibition Hall; brickcon.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Anyone who's ever wanted to live in LEGOLand. **WHY GO:** LEGO enthusiasts from across the country showcase their architectural know-how in constructing interactive and intricate displays. Don't miss Tacoma-based Certified LEGO Professional Dan Parker, whose incredible achievements include a 10-foot-tall LEGO Statue of Liberty.

FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION

MARCH 17-18 *Qwest Field Event Center, Seattle; firstrva.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Mr. Roboto and friends. **WHY GO:** This three-day tournament, featuring 100 teams of high-school-age competitors from across the region, is the local culmination of an annual robot designing and building project funded by tech giants, including Microsoft and Boeing. Winners head to the national championship in St. Louis, MO!

DORKBOT

MEETS ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH *Usually at Jigsaw Renaissance on First Hill, 7 p.m.; dorkbotsea.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Mad scientists.

WHY GO: It's the Seattle branch of a worldwide Dorkbot army, described as "people doing strange things with electricity." Drop in to discuss and get feedback on your latest project or invention. If you need inspiration before becoming a Dorkbot yourself, watch for the group's public events—presentations and installations by local artists and inventors.

SEATTLE POWER TOOL RACE AND DERBY

JUNE 26 *Georgetown; hazardfactory.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Industrial hacker dads and the families that love them. **WHY GO:** Why not transform that rusty chainsaw in the garage into a shiny new racer? Registration is open to the public, and the race itself may be the noisiest and most raucous you ever attend. As the website says: "Bring your own safety glasses and Band-Aids!"

THE SPROCKET SOCIETY

DATES VARY *Northwest Film Forum; sprocketsociety.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Celluloid junkies. **WHY GO:** The Sprocketeers celebrate film preservation through film screenings (as in actual film, not digital or video) and classes on the history of cinema in an attempt to "stave off the digital takeover!" Begun in

2007 as a series of backyard screenings in Ballard, the society now holds regular film events at the Northwest Film Forum. This month (2/9), see Michael Snow's classic experimental film *Wavelength* (1967).

OUTDOORS

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

LAST SATURDAY IN DECEMBER *Local parks; seattleaudubon.org*

WHO ATTENDS: Birders who enjoy counting. **WHY GO:** This annual bird count is the longest-running citizen science survey in the world. Small teams of birders comb the greater Seattle area with binoculars in tow and eyes peeled in a quest to contribute to the National Audubon Society database. Naturally, you can follow the count as it's tweeted on Twitter (twitter.com/SeattleAudubon).

MUSIC

MONSTERS OF ACCORDION TOUR

USUALLY DECEMBER

monstersofjazz.com

WHO ATTENDS: Not your polka-loving grandma. **WHY GO:** This annual West Coast tour is organized by Seattle accordion god Jason Webley and features a rotating selection of accordionists whose styles range from glam rock to zippy zydeco.

DECIBEL FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 21-25 *Venue T.B.A.; dbfestival.com*

WHO ATTENDS: Serious techno lovers. **WHY GO:** During this five-day music fest—founded in Seattle in 2003—top names in the electronic music industry hunch over their laptops and turntables to share thumping bass beats and energizing techno melodies. **S**



HIGHER LEARNING

Everyone knows about the recent outbreak of local TED groups, where eager learners spend hours soaking up esoteric info from experts. But where can you share those things that you're the expert on?

*** The PechaKucha** (Japanese for the sound of "chit-chat") craze is sweeping hundreds of major cities, including ours. PechaKucha nights are the great nerd equalizer: Anyone can participate, as long as he or she is willing to show 20 slides (on any topic), speaking about each one for only 20 seconds. Everyone's an expert at PechaKucha. To find out where you can show slides of your niece's art projects or photos of your trip to Greece without having enough time to bore everyone silly, visit pecha-kucha.org/night/seattle/.

*** Or, check out Ignite Seattle** (igniteseattle.com), where participants get five minutes of fame (adjusted for inflation) on stage, to "inspire, teach or just make people think." Recent events have included talks on bridge building using Popsicle sticks, a rundown of whale parasites, advice on "How to Get 5 Million People to Read Your Website" and a primer on surviving cancer. If you doubt learning how to sand-cast spare robot parts in your garage will cause potential love interests to beat a path to your door, stick around for five minutes to find out about online dating.