



GridLOCK DC 2015

Second DC Holmes Confab Builds on Success

by Nea Dodson



GridLOCK DC, the new Washington DC Holmes convention, learned well from last year. They built upon their triumphs – lots of good panel ideas and a wide variety of panelists – and learned from their mistakes. This time, rather than a small hotel in Alexandria, the convention was held at the same Bethesda hotel that hosts the Red Circle meetings and the mystery convention Malice Domestic.



Other innovations this year included a much larger dealer's room (staffed with many Holmesian tumblr artists and jewelry makers) and giving the Three Patch Podcast group a meeting and party room down on the same level as the rest of the convention. Three Patch used the opportunity to have a full track of discussions with the new generation of online writers and artists. They also hosted several parties, including the Diogenes Party (in which everyone was given tea and cake and strictly not allowed to speak) and a clever mixer in which participants were given a sort of paper

scavenger hunt – a sheet with blocks on it with instructions like “draw John Watson’s mustache” and “name an alternate universe,” all of which had to be filled out and signed by a different person. This was an excellent ice breaker, as you had to approach at least nine people to fill your sheet and claim a small prize!

But the dealer's room and even Three Patch were but the outward flourishes compared to the meat of the convention itself. If there was one problem with this year's convention, it wasn't that there wasn't enough to do – it was that there was too much to choose from! The panels ranged from introductions to the Doylean canon through a question and answer with costumed BBC Sherlock characters. Topics touched upon included Shakespeare and the Canon, Transcultural Fandom about how other cultures interact with and interpret the same media, Neurodiversity in canon, Queer readings of the canon, the reliability of Watson as a narrator, and fandom in the workplace. There were also panels just to express love for various media interpretations, including “The Greatest of Granada” and “Elementarsqueeee.”

And speaking of expressing love, the hallways were full of people expressing both their love and their creativity through cosplay. There were the standard BBC Johns and Sherlocks, but there was also Cake Mycroft, Retirement Holmes in a full beekeeping outfit, and even a Basil of Baker Street! Bev Wolov had a wonderful time as one of the judges for the costume contest.



The two biggest highlights for me were the two panels that I feel best spanned the history of Holmes fandom and the breadth of fannish culture – Story Hour With Peter Blau and the interactive costume Q&A.

Peter, as always, can hold a room spellbound talking about his extensive experiences, such as being there at the ASH picket of the BSI. Due to the upcoming Red Circle screening, the bulk of his talk was about William Gillette's effect on the canon itself, an absolutely fascinating subject. We all know about how Gillette popularized the deerstalker and the calabash, but did you know that Billy the page boy's name came from Gillette's play and then Doyle added it to his canon? I didn't!



The costumed Q&A was basically audience-participation improvisational theater. John, Sherlock, and Mycroft were answering questions ranging from "Doctor Watson, can you prove you were in the military? Isn't it suspicious that your war wound mysteriously moved around?" to (from Sherlock to Mycroft) "How many chocolate eclairs did you eat for breakfast?" (Most of Mycroft's responses were either a hard stare or a terse "Redacted." The éclair question got both.)

Halfway through, Moriarty strolled up to the podium to the tune of "Staying Alive," coolly asking his fellow panelists, "Did you miss me?" while Sherlock had to forcibly hold John back from lunging at him. The first question after that entrance was for "Mr. Richard Brook – can you explain the inspiration behind your children's story 'The Barber Who Gave Me A Bad Haircut And Then Was Found Dead In A Skip'?"

It was the audience questions that drove the panelist reactions, so it's only appropriate that it was audience improvisation that provided the perfect panel wrap-up. Moriarty had taken over moderation duties, standing at the podium and pointing out the next hand up to be answered, when suddenly a bright red laser sight dot swept across his chest. The audience started shouting and Moriarty (who couldn't actually see the laser) was looking confused as the wavering light started to narrow in on his heart.

That was when a Sebastian Moran burst out of the audience, shouting "GET DOWN! GET DOWN!" and tackled Moriarty to the stage. John reached for his prop gun, Sherlock peered into the audience, and Mycroft launched to his feet and aimed his umbrella at Moran like a gun (a move more Kingsman than Doyle).

As the audience whooped, Moran popped from behind the podium. The laser sight appeared on his chest. Moriarty pulled him back to safety.

And that was how the panel wrapped up – with Moran hustling Moriarty of the room like a body guard, while John covered the escape of Sherlock and Mycroft and the concomm (who had seen the innocent laser pointer) playing along about the "security breach."

For two days, GridLOCK gave us art, academia, costumes, parties, panels, and finally a floor show. What more could we ask from a weekend?