

# cereal:geek<sup>®</sup>

animation of the eighties



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# editorial

Welcome to issue four of **cereal:geek**. This issue's theme is **horror**, and to be honest it was somewhat of a horror trying to publish this very issue (see what I did there?).

I had completed pretty much all of the issue's content ready in time for its release during the month of June, but as we all know by now, the course of self-publishing a glossy magazine never runs smoothly. Yes, **cereal:geek** sells, but not enough to come close to breaking even, and as a result I ran out of money! In order to get this issue published I had to take on a great deal of freelance work, which of course limited my time in completing this magazine.

One of the jobs I happily undertook involved working on Time-Life's DVD boxset release of *The Real Ghostbusters*. Flying over to Los Angeles I had the pleasure of meeting all those responsible for creating and contributing to the show. I plan on writing an article about this adventure of mine, and the work involved in making the set. Of course it will be a completely self-indulgent article, but what do you expect? :)

A strange connection is that because of its horror theme this issue was always going to heavily feature *The Real Ghostbusters*, a decision made months before I had even been approached about the DVD freelance work.

While there wasn't an abundance of horror in eighties cartoons, there were always horror-related episodes in a series, and that is something I wanted this issue to address. *The Real Ghostbusters*, *He-Man*, *Transformers*, *G.I. Joe*, and many other shows delved into the realm of horror every once in a while. More than anything I find the themes of horror say more about the writers themselves, often revealing their influences.

Speaking of writers this issue is very special in that not only do we have Robert Lamb contributing once again, but also one of the foremost writers of animated shows for the last thirty years, Larry DiTillio! Hopefully I can convince him to write a few more articles down the line...

I really do hope that you enjoy this issue, as I believe (even with the delays) it has been the one issue that I have enjoyed producing the most. Then again, am I not supposed to say that about every new issue?

One of the best things about working on **cereal:geek** is coming up with new ideas, and this has been the case when developing the content for issue five. Be on the lookout for it before the end of the year, and if it doesn't appear before the end of the year then I will see you all in 2009!

See you in issue five!

*James "Busta Toons" Eatock*



The cover of **cereal:geek** issue four was illustrated by Dan Schoening.

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If you have any **comments**, or if you would like to **contribute** the next issue please send an email to:

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# NEWS

## FROM THE EIGHTIES

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### GRABBED BY THE GOOLIES

Jake, Eddie and Tracy, collectively known these days as The Other Ghostbusters, are facing a lawsuit from a couple of stars from the seventies. Drac and Bella from the *Groovie Goolies* show are outraged at their likenesses being used in "The Girl Who Cried Vampire"

an episode of the *Ghostbusters*. "Why couldn't they just ask us to appear in the episode?" questioned Drac, who was also quoted as saying, "Yes, I'm aware that Peter Cullen voices me in this episode, but even that won't stop a lawsuit!"

*Continued on Page Six*

# WE'RE READY TO DECEIVE YOU

After successfully becoming the number one ghost-elimination company across the world, the newly crowned "Real" Ghostbusters are facing some damaging accusations. They are facing numerous allegations regarding over-pricing, fraudulent insurance claims, destroying property (including much of their own neighborhood) and even bullying tactics when it comes to invoicing on the job. Peter Venkman, Egon Spengler and Raymond Stantz were unavailable for comment. However Winston Zeddemore was more than willing to defend his friends. "The costs alone in powering that Containment Unit... let's just say we barely break even." He continued, "Given the amount of times that thing breaks down we now have a back-up generator, and a back-up back-up generator. Both of which ain't cheap to run. Ghostbusting ain't profitable. I don't even bother asking for a pay rise!" One store owner who would like to remain anonymous was quoted as saying, "I was only empowered for one removal. As it turned out there were four ghosts in total. When I told them of my situation Mr. Venkman said that I could pick the one I would like removed, and that they would



put the other three back! I had no choice but to pay." The Ghostbusters publicist Joe Straczynski has tried to distance himself from the allegations, and many question his future association with the group. He cited that the Ghostbusters have more important things to worry about at present, including Janine's forthcoming makeover and the fact that Slimer is beginning to speak more coherently.

*Continued on Page Three*

### SLAMMED?

G.I. Joe's special drill instructor Sergeant Slaughter is visiting the United Kingdom to participate in meetings regarding the licensing problems with the country's distribution of *G.I. Joe* as a brand. "From what I'm led to believe these crazy Brits have renamed us Action Force!" He continued talking loudly, "Not only that, when we charge into battle we allegedly scream 'Full Force!' What does that even mean?!" Mr. Slaughter had a very specific problem with his own name. "The worst thing is that I've been renamed Sergeant Slammer! When I meet the punk who came up with that name I'm going to show him why they call me Slaughter!"

### THE ICEMAN COMETH

The Etherian ice queen Frosta is currently in a lot of hot water with the Marvel universe over her means of transportation. Iceman, an amazing friend of Spider-Man, has publicly stated, "I don't care that she's amazingly hot. She blatantly copied my way of traveling from location to location using an ice bridge! Stan and Jack had me doing that in the sixties and now this really beautiful single female..." At this point Iceman trailed off, but was quoted as saying that he would be prepared to settle out of court, preferably in his apartment with Frosta.





Snapped by Photographer Cody  
Constable Dr. Venkman, Dr. Spengler  
and Dr. Stantz point the finger of  
blame at their clientele.





# VOICE ACTOR SPOTLIGHT

## FRANK WELKER



In terms of the truly great voice actors, most people would say that the greatest of them all was undoubtedly Mel Blanc. As for second place, I would hazard a guess that most people would undoubtedly say that would be Frank Welker.

Frank's acting career began in the late 1960s when, after attending college in California, he found work in Hollywood. Early on-screen acting roles included parts in two live-action Disney movies. However, around this time Frank was also carving himself a place in animation history with a career as a voice actor. One of his earliest voice acting roles, which would also become his most long-serving role, was that of Freddy, the ostensible leader of Mystery Inc. in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* As the happy, easygoing, yet commanding Freddy, Frank created an instantly likeable voice that ensured he was one of only three permanent cast members of subsequent *Scooby-Doo* series for the next fifteen years. Frank also displayed his ability to create the sound for just about any creature with his vocal cords.

In addition to Frank's myriad roles in *Scooby-Doo*, he also provided voices for other series in the 1970s, including *The Barkleys*, Filmation's *Sabrina The Teenage Witch*, and the hopeless sidekick Marvin from the very first *Super Friends* series. While mainly providing voices for Hanna-Barbera and on occasion Filmation, Frank also did voices for several other studios' shows, such as *The New Fantastic Four* for DePatie-Freleng in 1978. By this point, and on into the early 1980s, it would be safe to say that most of Frank's roles outside of Freddy consisted of animals, or squeaky-voiced mischievous characters. In 1981 this changed when Frank was given one of the three starring roles in Marvel Productions' *Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends*. As Iceman he armed the character with a considerable amount of wit and charisma earning his place as an equal to Spider-Man himself.

The next couple of years would see two more seasons of *Amazing Friends*, and in 1983 a plethora of characters for *G.I. Joe*. That very same year Frank created an almost literal 'throat-ripping' voice as the villainous Dr. Claw from DIC's *Inspector Gadget*. Frank's

ominous tones were used to great effect for the shadowy villain. Perhaps as a portent of what was to come, Frank's role as chief villain Dr. Claw was supplemented by a similarly-positioned role in a subsequent series...

With Frank playing a core cast of no less than ten characters in *The Transformers*, it is easy to see why his work on this series from 1984 is regarded as a voice acting highlight. From the cold and calculating Megatron, to the utterly insane Galvatron, Frank truly made his mark on this series as never before - even considering the hundreds of roles he had played up to this point.

Aside from providing a myriad of unearthly sound effects for films in the eighties, 1986 would see Frank involved in another long-lasting 80s franchise as both the boundlessly enthusiastic Ray Stantz and the gluttonous Slimer in *The Real Ghostbusters*, in an almost unprecedented continuous five-year run for such a series. So popular was the character of Slimer that Frank brought to life, the green ghoul controversially became the star of the show. Being constantly in demand over the next decade (and indeed to the present day) Frank's subsequent roles are far, far too numerous to list here. A few noteworthy highlights include Frank's involvement in the two franchises he has been identified with the most over the years, as well as another memorable role straddling the line between his special vocal effects and voice acting work.

In 1998, Frank once more returned to his earliest signature role as Freddy in *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island*, the first in a continuing series of latter-day *Scooby* adventures with a more modern twist. Notably he was initially the only returning actor from the original series to reprise his role. This in turn led to Frank as both Freddy and now *Scooby-Doo* himself appearing in the all-new *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* series, alongside fellow original series star, Casey Kasem.

From 1999 Frank took time to play yet another animal role as the alien Nibbler in *Futurama*. Like most things on the series, Frank's casting was a clever choice: while Nibbler does typically come out with traditional chimp-like sounds for the most part, there's a lot more to the character than that. More recently, while Frank was passed over as the cinematic voice as Decepticon Leader Megatron in 2007's live-action *Transformers*, Frank did reprise the role in the video game based on the movie and also in the direct-to-DVD semi-animated prequel to the movie, showing that, even with another actor incumbent in the role, Frank himself certainly keeps up the association in every other media!

Frank Welker is a veritable human menagerie of sounds and special effects, and while especially associated with both Freddy, Megatron and Slimer, his countless other past and indeed future roles in animation and live-action productions will ensure his rightful place next to the great Mel Blanc as one of the greatest voice actors of all time.



# TOP TEN

## HORROR EPISODES

Horror stories abound in the wild world of 1980s animation, as writers would often come up with ever increasing conflicts for the heroes to overcome, eventually spilling out into a full-blown tale of terror. Presented below for your delight and delectation are ten of the most spine-chilling episodes of the 1980s. Sit back, relax, and pay no attention to what you think you see out of the corner of your eye ...

### 10. SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS: "THE TRANSYLVANIAN CONNECTION"

Many series from the eighties featured homages to horror icons such as Dracula and Frankenstein's monster, but "The Transylvanian Connection" (also known as "The Bride of Dracula!") went several steps further by featuring Dracula, the monster, and even the Wolfman! Along with Dracula's predictably creepy castle and a night-time setting, this episode was full of classic horror imagery!

### 9. THUNDERCATS: "THE TOWER OF TRAPS"

While villains don't get much creepier than the evil Mumm-Ra - a reanimated corpse - one of the more horror-movie-like episodes of the series was "Tower of Traps", which didn't feature him. The episode itself spotlights the three youngest ThunderCats, Lion-O, Wilykit and Wilykat, to enhance the impact of the sinister tower. The tower itself is an appropriately creepy place, even more so once Lion-O discovers its former custodian, the deceased Baron Karnor. To top off the episode, the Baron himself is graphically depicted as a corpse, still sitting and rotting away on his throne after many years!

### 8. THE SUPER POWERS TEAM: GALACTIC GUARDIANS "THE FEAR"

By far the darkest episode of the *Super Friends* twelve-year run was "The Fear", the first time Batman's origin was depicted on film. Using Scarecrow as the main villain, the episode does an excellent job of showcasing a slightly more serious Batman for the eighties, as he ends up being crippled by his natural fear of Crime Alley, where his parents were murdered in front of his eyes as a child. With scenes of Scarecrow's fear-inducing effects on Batman and other characters, along with Batman's flashback to his past, this episode succeeds in showing a darker side to the Original DC Animated Universe.

### 7. ULYSSES 31: "THE SEAT OF FORGETFULNESS"

As a Japanese-French co-production, *Ulysses 31* was full of moments noticeably more disturbing than many seen in most contemporary U.S. produced series and "The Seat of Forgetfulness" was replete with them. Perhaps the most sinister was the vision of a horde of silent slaves being forced to work on huge clockwork-like machinery. All the while, the ominous voice of Ulysses' captor simply states, "Even in death, you will find no peace". It is then that the true horror becomes apparent: these slaves are dead, and are still being forced to work for the callous Gods of Olympus. A genuinely disturbing concept for an eighties animated series.

### 6. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: "CITY AT THE EDGE OF MIDNIGHT"

Appropriately enough in a pure fantasy-styled series, there was no shortage of spooky demonic forces to challenge the heroes within *The Realm*. Even so, special mention should go to "The City at the Edge of Midnight", featuring an opening sequence set on Earth in which a child is kidnapped by the evil Nightwalker using a dimensional gate from under his bed. The idea that, even in what may seem to be the safest place on Earth, the Realm may still pose a threat to you is truly the stuff of nightmares!

### 5. BRAVESTARR: "THE PRICE"

By far one of the scariest single moments in any eighties series has to be in "The Price", where explicit drug user Jay does not survive to the end of the episode. His lifeless body is discovered by Bravestarr and his mother, who wails right up to the end of the act. With the final scene showing Bravestarr tending Jay's grave, this episode used fear to inform young viewers of the dangers of drug abuse.

### 4. THE TRANSFORMERS: "DARK AWAKENING"

The makers of *Transformers* were very gutsy in writing out Optimus Prime the way they did in *Transformers: The Movie*. However, that was nothing compared to what they did to him next! Somewhat perversely, one of the early episodes of season three, "Dark Awakening", resurrected Optimus Prime, only to bring him back as an effective Quintesson-controlled zombie who dies yet again at the end of the episode. With an opening visit to the Autobot mausoleum, containing the dead characters from the movie,



the sight of one of the dead Autobots actually falling out of his tomb, and a far more visceral second death for Optimus Prime, this episode is full of disturbing imagery!

### 3. HE-MAN AND THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE "HOUSE OF SHOKOTI"

The first season of the series could be quite atmospheric at times, and never more so than in the two-part "House of Shokoti". While Part 1 had a predictably sinister atmosphere with its isolated desert setting and menacing original villain Masque, it is Part 2 when the scares really kick in. Shokoti's temple is rendered as a very dark place, even for season one, complete with Lovecraftian tentacled monstrosities menacing not only He-Man, but the comparatively helpless youngster Stanlin. Even Skeletor never quite topped this amount of horror!

### 2. INHUMANOIDS "THE EVIL EYE"

Hasbro and Sunbow's most unusual series, *Inhumanoids* was filled with many horrific moments throughout its 13 episodes, such as D'Compose having his arm hacked off in full view in one episode, and the disturbing fate of evil scientist Herman Mangler, who not only ends up being dissolved in toxic waste, but is subsequently resurrected as the grotesque Nightcrawler! But by far the most disturbing sight in the series was the hideous Gagoyl, showcased in "The Evil Eye", a creature that hatches from an egg, devours its unborn siblings, is pretty much unstoppable, and has a transparent stomach. This monstrous creation must have created quite a few scares back in the day!

### 1. THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS "THE BOOGIEMAN COMETH"

Although it continued the hit movie's supernatural and comedy themes, *The Real Ghostbusters* was understandably a lighter affair. Nevertheless, many episodes did succeed in pushing the horror envelope quite far, with some credible and scary threats to our heroes. Topping them all however, are the two appearances by the unsettling Boogiemán. In his first appearance alone, he terrifies two young siblings and is also revealed as an entity so scary he was even able to spook the rational Egon! Now that has to be pure horror, and the perfect example in what was surely the scariest series of the eighties!





# THE ORIGINAL **REAL** GHOSTBUSTERS



One of the most interesting aspects of *The Real Ghostbusters* has always been the three-minute promo used to sell the series to ABC in 1986. The promo was unique in that it showed a series still very much in development with numerous design and character alterations forthcoming, giving the viewer an idea of how the series would work, whilst later influencing the introduction sequence to the actual series.

I first encountered the promo in 1989. In the UK a brief craze involved handheld reel players with a variety of thirty-second silent film reels of various animated series. Oddly a few of these reels featured *The Real Ghostbusters* promo. Those of us who watched this footage were left rather confused. Why did the Ghostbusters sport their movie costumes? Why was Slimer a bad guy? And why did Peter Venkman look different? As brief as the footage was, many elements did not ring true, and the madcap style of action (Ecto-1, driven by Slimer, riding up a bridge's support wires) seemed rather over-the-top when compared to a typical episode of *The Real Ghostbusters*.

Years went by and I forgot about the promo until the late nineties when I saw images on Paul Rudoff's Spook Central website. I recognized certain images from the aforementioned film reels, but there were other scenes that I had never seen before. It soon became apparent that all of this footage was taken from an animated promo used to sell the series.

In June of this year I had the pleasure of meeting Kevin Altieri who, after all these years, still had the promo in pristine condition on the very video tape he had originally transferred it to. I was thankful that someone had held onto the promo, but Kevin had done so with good reason; not only did he storyboard the promo alongside Eddie Fitzgerald, but he also directed it!

Back in late 1985 Richard Raynis informed Kevin that DiC were going to pitch a show based on the movie *Ghostbusters* to the ABC network. Being a fan of the movie Kevin leaped at the chance to work on it. Due to the incredibly quick turnaround there was no planned

structure to the promo; Kevin and Eddie literally drew scene after scene as the ideas came to them. Eddie storyboarded the Ghost walking down the street as a direct homage to John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*, while Kevin illustrated the heroes in many action-packed scrapes. The pair had no models to work with and based all of their designs on the movie, which is why in the storyboards the characters look like their movie counterparts, Winston even sporting a mustache!

Even though animation models were created for the animation team by Gabi Payn, these would later be changed when work commenced on the actual series. These early designs used in the promo closely follow the movie, with the Ghostbusters all wearing the same colored uniform, and their equipment looking a lot more cumbersome, and technical.

Aside from Slimer playing up his movie role of "villain" in the promo, as well as Egon's hairstyle illustrated slightly tamer than it would be in the series, one of the most important character changes was that of Peter Venkman. Early on in the production of the promo DiC had been told not to have the animated Ghostbusters resemble the actors from the film. However the Peter Venkman character that appears in the promo still bore some resemblance to actor Bill Murray, and when the time came to work on the series Peter's face and hairstyle were redesigned to look more angular and less round.

It is worth mentioning that the animation throughout the promo is of an incredibly high standard, and while it is clear that there were numerous Japanese animation teams working on it, they all appeared to be producing their best work.

To ask the question whether or not the promo served its purpose would be redundant. Not only did DiC manage to successfully sell the show to ABC, but it also became one of the longest running eighties cartoons with a staggering six years of production, including sixty-five syndicated episodes.

For an animated short that ran for three minutes and forty-nine seconds this was an impressive feat!



The opening scene shows individuals reacting to something off-screen. When an entire crowd scatters we see for the first time the ghost strutting down the street. The ghost turns sharply and is imprisoned within the no-ghost logo. Next we see the firehouse, with Ray, Winston, Egon and Peter awoken by the alarm. The guys waste no time in suiting up and hurriedly slide down the fire pole. The firehouse doors open, and Ecto-1 screeches towards the camera with Ray on the roof. As the logo fills the screen Ecto-1 swerves away from the camera and speeds past traffic. The next three shots perfectly sum up the Ghostbusters with Ray eagerly ready for action, Winston determinedly on the job, Egon calculating, and Peter in the backseat reading a comic. The camera follows Ecto-1 before zooming underneath the car and revealing their target; a Stay Puft truck spilling marshmallows, with a certain green ghost as the culprit.





As the guys begin to catch the Stay Puft truck, Ray, still atop the roof, fires his Proton Gun, the force of which throws him backwards. The green ghost flies out of shot, just as the beam strikes the truck, causing it to explode, liquefying the marshmallows. As the marshmallow sludge covers the windshield Peter attempts to catch Ray, but the pair fall out of the car. A confused Egon looks at Winston, last seen at the wheel of Ecto-1. Both turn in horror as they see the green ghost now in control, driving rather erratically towards a bridge. Within seconds Ecto-1 is being driven up the side of the bridge at increasing speed. When it reaches the summit the vehicle is catapulted into the air towards the city. Meanwhile a woman bothered by a horde of ghosts calls the Ghostbusters, who subsequently come crashing through her window. Egon and Winston are thrown from the car as the menacing ghosts loom over them.





Ray and Peter recovering from their fall from Ecto-1 spot a small demon pestering a man in a phone box. The pair race after the demon, but are stopped in their tracks by a large blue demon that leaps out of a manhole cover. Seconds later a large pink demon falls from the sky and lands on the ground with great impact. The floor beneath Ray and Peter collapses and the pair fall into the darkness below. They land on a subway track unhurt, but immediately notice an oncoming train. With seconds to spare a large hand grabs them, saving them from the speeding train. The Stay Puft Marshmallow Man looks at Ray and Peter, but a passing plane picks them up. The plane piloted by a ghost flies wildly over the city before leaving the guys hanging onto a drainpipe, which begins to tilt. Meanwhile Egon and Winston are running for their lives pursued by the group of ghosts, and exit the building with great haste.





Ray and Peter, still holding on to the drainpipe fall on top of Egon and Winston. Reunited the guys turn to see the large group of ghosts led by the green ghost and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. A determined Peter calls the guys into action, Egon throwing down a trap in front of the ghosts. The guys grab their Proton Guns and activate them, prompting the green ghost to escape just as the Ghostbusters fire. As Mr. Stay Puft watches Slimer fly past he reacts to the beams now surrounding him with great fury. Just as it appears that the green ghost is going to escape a beam grabs him and pulls him back. The trap sucks up all of the ghosts in, including the green ghost and Mr. Stay Puft, whose hat falls onto the floor. The green ghost's hand emerges from the trap and snatches the hotdog he had dropped, as Peter raises the trap and the Ghostbusters celebrate their victory.





## "Duppira al-kushni, askupati ani kalatum!"



No. I haven't gone insane. The above phrase was first uttered in the *Dungeons & Dragons* episode "Day of the Dungeon Master" by everyone's favorite spoiled brat Eric the Cavalier.

Having acquired the powers of a Dungeon Master Eric is determined to find a way back to Earth for he and his friends. Their quest is a perilous one and with each new danger Eric learns that being imbued with such incredible powers is not as easy as he first thought.

At the end of their journey Eric locates the Golden Grimoire and in an effort to find a way home he begins to recite the spell, "Duppira al-kushni, askupati ani kalatum."

The spell indeed works and a magical portal begins to open showing quite clearly the fairground park from whence they were taken...

## "Duppira al-kushni, askupati ani kalatum!"

A few years later, in the H.P. Lovecraft-based episode of *The Real Ghostbusters* "The Collect Call of Cathulhu", the jumpsuited paranormal eliminators seek the help of Alice Derleth to aid them in their latest, highly mysterious case.

When the Ghostbusters are captured by a Shoggoth Alice begins chanting a spell, "Duppira al-kushni, askupati ani kalatum!"

Once again in an eighties animated series the spell is effective and the monster turns to stone, shortly before crumbling into a pile of small rocks.

So how is it that two separate cartoons, produced years apart by completely different studios, can feature the same incantation?

The connection both of these episodes have is that they were written by Michael Reaves!









# FROM LITERATURE TO CARTOONS: WHAT H.P. LOVECRAFT DID FOR THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

by Ross May - illustration by Cody Constable

Tonight I shall be telling you about a strange individual, a man of such warped personality but unfathomable creativity that his work seems not entirely sane... or even human. I am speaking, of course, of Howard Phillips Lovecraft. You are unfamiliar with him? Well you might know of his contributions to the genres of horror and science fiction. You see, without him we would not have, or would only have in far different form: the *Alien* movies, *The Evil Dead* movies, *Hellboy*, Stephen King novels and movies including *It* and *The Mist*, the modern depiction of zombies... and a special little something called *Ghostbusters*.

## THE AUTHOR

Lovecraft's own life reads like something out of a gothic tale. Born in 1890 in Rhode Island, his father contracted syphilis which caused the man to go insane. Lovecraft senior was committed to hospital where he died when his son was still a child. Lovecraft Junior and his mother were unusually

close, both clinging to one another but at the same time resenting each other. Think of Norman Bates and his mother from *Psycho* and you get the general idea (interestingly enough, Lovecraft would become friends with *Psycho*'s author, Robert Bloch). In 1919 she suffered a nervous breakdown and was committed to the same institution as her late husband and, just like him, she passed away there.

Lovecraft had poor health, was depressed for much of his life and at certain times contemplated suicide. Not exactly unsocial but certainly not one for crowds or craving company, he preferred to spend much of his time alone in thought. An avid fan of Edgar Allan Poe and other gothic storytellers, Lovecraft spent his forty-six years of life writing horror short stories and poems, selling them to pulp magazines, particularly *Weird Tales*.

The man's legacy is one of marrying the supernatural with science fiction, something explored before with works like Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* but never taken to such cosmic extremes.





## SOME OF HIS SHORT STORIES

### "The Shunned House" (1924)

This was the first of a new kind of haunted house story. The two protagonists are doctors who investigate the house trying to uncover its mysteries, including why all its previous owners died prematurely. In addition to having apparitions combated by men of science, Lovecraft pioneered the idea that ghosts should actually have some scientific basis for existing.

Prior to this story ghosts were basically magic. They were incorporeal and incapable of being grabbed or fought against unless you yourself possessed magic. In this short story Lovecraft turns hundreds of years of ghostly tradition on its ear by figuring that phantoms should actually be composed of something, an energy or a body, even if its root is something that does not truly reside in our dimension. The implication it had on spirits in fiction is profound, and has been further developed by real-life paranormal investigators.

The idea that ghosts are - at least somehow and in some sense - tangible allows his two heroes to combat them with science. Their weapons of choice? A Crookes tube (an electrical device that was a precursor to X-ray machines) and flamethrowers left over from World War One. They have the tools, and they have the talent.

**The Real Ghostbusters Connection:** Pretty obvious, wouldn't you say? No proton packs or ghost traps, but this story seems to be the first example of scientists fighting ghosts.

### "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (1932)

Another seemingly haunted house story. The protagonist lodges in a room once occupied by a woman accused of being a witch. A student of mathematics and physics, the lodger explains his strange room in great detail. His description, however, defies all sense. Though this story has been adapted for film more than once, the descriptions of the room are so inconceivable that no amount of special effects could actually portray Lovecraft's scene in three dimensions ... which is entirely the point, as the room is more than three dimensional. The impossible structure to the room makes it a gateway to something beyond human comprehension.

**The Real Ghostbusters Connection:** The Shandor building from the first movie does not have the impossible architecture as is described here, but it does possess bizarre materials and design. As Ray says, it is "a huge, superconductive antenna that was designed and built expressly for the purpose of pulling in and concentrating spiritual turbulence." Like the short story, the building's weird composition ends up making it a gateway to another realm.

### "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926)

Possibly Lovecraft's best-known tale. Cthulhu is a monster of titanic proportions that sleeps at the bottom of the Pacific ocean until "the stars are right" for it to awaken and wreak havoc across the globe. Like the architecture in "The Dreams of the Witch-House", Cthulhu's description can never be fully realised as it does not even truly exist in Earth's plane of existence. The best way humans can describe Cthulhu is by saying it looks like a winged octopus,

dragon, and human all at the same time.

Cthulhu is not even the most powerful or terrifying of Lovecraft's creations, as it is merely a minor member within a pantheon of "Gods." Cthulhu is one of the "Great Old Ones," beings that arrived on Earth during its infancy from other dimensions and planets. All of human history will amount to a fleeting period before Cthulhu and the others become active again, turning the planet into a nightmarish place and destroying our society in the process. You know, human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria...

**The Real Ghostbusters Connection:** While "every ancient religion has its own myth about the end of the world," and Gozer's arrival might borrow from all of them, the climax to the movie seems especially Lovecraftian. Gozer comes from another dimension through a gateway, has no true shape or form, and ends up becoming a giant monster. The Great Old Ones as a whole would become part of The Real Ghostbusters plot "Russian About," and Cthulhu in particular would feature in "The Collect Call of Cathulhu."

Dan Aykroyd is a true believer in the paranormal, and presumably both he and Harold Ramis (his *Ghostbusters* co-writer) are familiar with Lovecraft's stories. It is something of a moot point, though, as I am not suggesting they plagiarized the author at all. What does matter is that Lovecraft's ideas have become a part of popular culture without most people even realising their origin. Even if the two had never read Lovecraft, even if nobody making the movies had ever heard of him, they were working with ideas that he came up with and later became regularly used concepts in science fiction and fantasy storytelling.

Perhaps if Lovecraft had not written at all then somebody else would one day have dreamt up the idea of science being used to fight ghosts. However, I am making the argument that *Ghostbusters*, its sequel, and all of *The Real Ghostbusters* owe their existence to Lovecraft's stories, and the stories of those who followed him.

## THE EPISODE DEDICATED TO H.P. LOVECRAFT AND HIS WORK

"The Collect Call of Cathulhu" originally aired October 1987 and was written by Michael Reaves. Reaves himself has said that the title is a mistake and it should be spelled "Cthulhu" as Lovecraft intended (though with a name like Cthulhu, is it any wonder it was misspelled?) Reaves also intended to do another Lovecraftian episode to be titled "A Fun Guy From Yuggoth", but this was never produced.

### Synopsis

The Necronomicon, a book of evil spells, is stolen from its display in the New York Public Library. The Ghostbusters are called to investigate and follow a psycho-kinetic energy trail into the sewers. There, they fight the monstrous spawn of Cthulhu but cannot damage or trap them and barely make it out alive. Knowing now that the stolen book is being used in a plot related to Cthulhu, Ray deduces that the thieves are likely a cult that worships the Great Old One and intend to awaken it from its slumber at the bottom of the ocean. Cthulhu can only be awoken "when the stars are right" - every sixty years - and tonight is that night!



Egon and Peter fly to Arkham, Massachusetts where they enlist the aid of occult expert Alice Derleth and return with her to New York. Meanwhile, Winston and Ray track down where the cult has been meeting. Alice and the Ghostbusters confront the cult members, who sick a monster called a Shoggoth on the heroes. Using magic incantations, Alice is able to defeat the Shoggoth but the cultists get away.

Without any more leads, Ray comes up with the idea to read old pulp fiction stories. Many of the writers of the tales used the *Necronomicon* as research, and his hope is that one of them may provide a clue on how to defeat Cthulhu. In a story titled "The Horror from the Depths," Cthulhu was lured to a power plant in hopes of electrocuting the monster, but the last page is missing and Ray is unsure if such a scheme would work.

Cthulhu is awoken off the shore of Coney Island and the Ghostbusters arrive too late to stop the cult. Proton streams prove ineffective against the giant. Going off of the pulp story, Egon instructs everyone to fire at a roller coaster, hoping to attract lightning. The plan works and Cthulhu is electrocuted, causing it to melt and disappear into the sky. Before the cult members are taken away by police their leader warns the Ghostbusters that Cthulhu is not truly destroyed, and will awaken again someday to obliterate human society.

The next day Alice says she intends to take the *Necronomicon* back to Miskatonic University where it will be safe, but Peter convinces her to spend a couple days in New York with him.

## Notes

This episode draws elements from many of Lovecraft's stories, but the two primary sources for inspiration are "The Call of Cthulhu" where the monster is awoken and "The Dunwich Horror" where the *Necronomicon* is stolen from a library so its information can be used in a fiendish plot.

## The Necronomicon

The *Necronomicon*, which roughly translates as "Book of the Laws of the Dead," is a fictional text that contains evil spells and dark secrets. In the stories, the revelations it can give readers are so frightening that most go mad upon learning them. It is one of the most prominent recurring creations in Lovecraft's stories, and was also used by a group of Lovecraft's writing acquaintances.

## The Cast

Every character introduced in this episode is named after other writers with whom Lovecraft corresponded. All these authors shared each others' ideas, so mentions of the *Necronomicon* and the Great Old Ones are found in plenty of stories not written by Lovecraft.

The characters Clark Ashton, Ted Kline, Alice Derleth, Wagner and Mr. Howard are named after Clark Ashton Smith, Otis Adelbert Kline, August Derleth, Karl Edward Wagner and Robert E. Howard respectively.

## Arkham and Miskatonic University

The *Necronomicon* in the episode is usually

kept at the Miskatonic University in Arkham, Massachusetts, just as in Lovecraft's stories. Both the town and the university are fictitious. Of note is that Arkham has an insane asylum, which was the inspiration for Dennis O'Neil when he created Arkham Asylum for the *Batman* comics.

## Shoggoth

Shoggoths are one of the more frequent creatures to appear and be mentioned in Lovecraft's tales. They are typically large things (no other word is adequate) composed of eyeballs and bubbles, and they look like they are made out of tar or jelly. By contrast, the Shoggoth in the cartoon resembles Cthulhu more than anything else. Alice's ability to turn the Shoggoth to stone with incantations is based on the way the protagonists of "The Dunwich Horror" kill the monster.

## Cthulhu

In "The Call of Cthulhu", cults across the world worship Cthulhu (is it just me, or does anybody else wonder why people would choose to worship something that is just going to destroy civilisation?) chanting the same strange words they do in this episode. Cthulhu's spawn are also mentioned in the story.

Alice gives a famous Lovecraft quote that is attributed to being written in the *Necronomicon*: "That is not dead which can eternal lie / And with strange aeons even death may die." It refers to Cthulhu and the other Great Old Ones, and confusion on humanity's part of understanding whether they are actually dead or just sleeping. Their dormancy is actually more comparable to mortal death than slumber, but since the Old Ones are immortal there is no finality to it.

The short story tells that Cthulhu will only rise up "when the stars are right," just as Ray mentions in this episode. What was not mentioned in Lovecraft's writings was that the stars would align every sixty years. In fact the original story seems to insinuate that such an astrological alignment occurs only after thousands, or even millions of years. Reaves just changed the rules for the sake of this episode. "The Call of Cthulhu" occurs in 1925, so to reach the mid-eighties when the Ghostbusters are active it would take sixty years. If you consider the original short story along with this information, then this episode is actually taking place in 1985.

Towards the end of the episode, several things occur in order to resolve the plot that do not really reflect Lovecraft's work. An entire city that houses Cthulhu is supposed to rise up out of the Pacific Ocean, when instead the creature just pops up out of the water next to Coney Island. The pulp story that Ray reads, "The Horror from the Depths," does not really exist and it suggests that Cthulhu can be stopped by electrocution.

This sounds too easy for such an awesomely powerful being and kind of bizarre as well, considering the Ghostbusters' proton streams can be likened to lightning bolts specifically designed to combat the supernatural.

But after so much build-up of how terrible Cthulhu is, one can see the Ghostbusters needed some quick way out if the story was going to be resolved.





# STRACZYNSKI AND DITILLIO

by James Eatock  
illustration by Dan Schoening

The story of Straczynski the butler from the *Galaxy High School* episode "Pizza's Honor" and DiTillio from *The Real Ghostbusters* episode "Ragnarok and Roll" predates both series by a few years.

Writers Larry DiTillio and Joe Straczynski first met each other during their work on *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. They both found they had something in common; they actually cared for the shows they were writing material for! Due to their sometimes obsessive level of dedication to each series they worked on they were both hired as permanent members of Filmation's writing staff.

Both departed Filmation after the first season of *She-Ra Princess of Power*, Larry going on to write for a number of different series, while Joe primarily wrote and developed shows for DIC; one of these shows was *The Real Ghostbusters*.

Penning the memorable episode "Ragnarok and Roll" Joe had the main villain aided in his evil quest by a short, deformed, kind-hearted sidekick whom he gave the name DiTillio. Around this time Larry was writing the *Galaxy High School* series for Tokyo Movie Shinsha. Learning of his "appearance" in *The Real Ghostbusters* he decided that revenge was a script best served cold and so wrote the episode "Pizza's Honor". In this episode Doyle Cleverlobe delivers pizzas to Tingle, a planet where many fear to tread. When Doyle arrives at the monsters' mansion he is greeted by the raspy-voiced, cockroach-like butler Straczynski!

I wish I could tell you all that the in-joking ended there, but it was only the beginning...





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