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GrandCon: The Return

I have fallen/risen into doing a write-up after major cons so I can relive portions of it as I write, and have a reference for it and so on. So here is my stream of consciousness for GrandCon.

** Foreword **

We went to the first GrandCon 5 years ago and left with mixed emotions. We thought that we would give it a shot again and were excited that some of our favorite people were going to be there.

** Recap & Good Things **

FRIDAY

Hole in the Sky:

One of the main reasons we came back to GrandCon was because the ever-humble and exuberant +[Brendan LaSalle](#) was going to be running games. There are few people that can make me laugh from the pit of my gut and Brendan is at the top of that list. So with as much fanfare as two groupies could muster without security giving us the side eye we welcomed Brendan as the judge of our first game of the con. He ran us through Hole in the Sky. It was a tough journey and we lost many friends. Weezy, the brave but tired shaman, sniff... swung his mace a few times and volunteered one time too many. Who can forget Barken Birch the woodcutter and his lantern on a hot pig trick and when cornered scolded the enemy for their narrow-minded thinking. It was a great time meeting new people (Dave, Ila, and Steve).

Ghostbusters:

Being a child of the 80s Ghostbusters holds a special place in my heart. It was run in the Call of Cthulhu (6th Edition) system. The character sheets fit the theme pretty good, but I did not connect well with the GM. I felt they controlled my character and story more than me or other players. It became an early TPK within 1 hour 20 minutes and I was ok with that.

World Building (pt 1):

With my newfound free time I was available to go to the first part of the World Building panel ran by +[S Harsch](#), +[Brendan LaSalle](#), +[Matt Forbeck](#), and Martin L. Shoemaker. I cannot say enough about how great it is to hear stories and perspectives from a group like this and how honest and generous they all are. Here are my notes. 1.) Do not latch onto trends. 2.) Do not be Tolkien, trying to



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What is the conflict? 10.) DO YOUR RESEARCH. You are probably not the only one who has thought of something great. See what is out there. Has someone already published something similar (or exact) to what you want to do? What makes you different? I know there was more, but that is what stuck so far. Also go visit their sites and products! (<http://www.legendsmiths.com>, <https://twitter.com/brendanjasalle>, <http://www.forbeck.com>, <http://shoemaker.space>)

Neon Knights:

Guess what? It is another +Brendan LaSalle game! Ok, I'll tone it down...or maybe I won't. It was a full table and we were all experienced DCC players so we knew it was going to be a great time. I chose to play an Elf, Meeks Feldonte, as him and the King of Elfland have a "connection." We also had Mr. Ponte the brave halfling (Jeremy Ligman's son), Potato Pants the wily thief (+Jeremy Ligman), Dvana, with a Hard D, the Dwarf (+Laura Rose Williams), a brute of a warrior (Dave P.), the crafty Wizard (Jeremy 2), and reliable Cleric (Bret). Together we slaughtered orcs and armoires, figured out how to fit a gong into our pants, and danced the night away with the King of Elfland. In the end we came out ahead of the dastardly pink wizard. Now, I always have a sub-goal when I play in a LaSalle game and that is to get him laughing uncontrollably. I think we succeeded.

SATURDAY

Mushroom Kingdom Classics:

Playing in this has been on my wish list for a while, so I felt lucky that +Wyl Majure was running it and I could get in a game. The classes were spot on for the theme and everyone recalled the sounds/music of the game. There were several early epic rolls by our party's ""super"" koopa (Shane Harsch), and many antics to be had. Sometimes we used our intellect and sometimes we just had to let the koopa with the peg leg lead the way. We found the turnip thieves and triumphed over the ghosts. There were some some deaths, but I was glad that "Death Captain" the toad instructor survived to play again. Thanks for playing: +Laura Rose Williams, +Geoff Groff, +S Harsch, and +Wyl Majure

World Building (pt 2):

I was able to attend the part 2. Here are my notes: 1.) Be giving, Be generous. If you do not have an opinion try out someone's perspective. if you are going to collaborate, do that. Do not go in with just your way. 2.) Decide who decides before you start or who or what breaks ties. If you do not do that you will lose people, friends, and projects. This cannot be emphasized enough! 3.) First time, do a self published PDF, next try and partner with a publishing



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generous to the next person asking for advice. 10.) Get a hawaiian shirt!

And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead:

It always starts so innocent. Izzy Sparks just wanted to rock, so he helped form Dark Star. A band that just wanted to be awesome by living hard and playing hard, but the multiverse had other plans for us. When time and space rip apart and you are offered an out of this world gig with better pay, you take it! Hard to say now whether that was a good choice or bad. If the dead could speak they might give an opinion. When your character is plastered, a choice is just another reason to drink more. So when the shit hits the proverbial cosmic spaceship and you question whether you are just tripping or that guy really died, what do you do!? That is right, you put on your platform boots, pull up the bellbottoms, unbutton your shirt, and merge with a long-dead wizard, because the show must go on! We battled the enemy, crashed our way across the galaxy, killing thousands and dragging their bodies along our space wake, culminating in a sick concert in honor of the one true hell demon king. For an encore performance, we went back home and had a battle of the bands against an Old One who was just plain rude. Let me tell you, no one interrupts Boromir's bass solo or you are going to take at least 64 points of hard metal damage. Now we look for the next stage and remember those who have fallen. Terry will be missed. Say a prayer the next time you pick up a crossword puzzle book. The next time you see a flyer for Dark Star you know you will get your money's worth. Boston here we come!

Thank you +[Brendan LaSalle](#) for a truly memorable story and so many laughs. Listening to Uriah Heep and Hawkwind as I write this (homework complete).

SUNDAY

Tomb of Horrors: Also known as the adventure intervention for liches with pit trap addictions. +[S Harsch](#), GM'd 8 of us through the ever-crunchy, poisonous, and spiky Tomb of Horrors. Now, we heard tales that no one has come back alive, but as a group we found that we had a lot of synergy. We had a rogue that was bred to find pit traps and secret doors who also was very melancholy and prone to throw himself into a pit of despair. We had 2 druids that saved our bacon more than once and still no one wanted to mention the elephant in the room. We had a wizard who was good at finding and triggering traps and who also figured some things about about him/herself by end of the adventure. There was a ranger who liked to shoot exploding altars, a fighter who became the best field medic, and a happy paladin of joy who made us all feel better. I played the Dwarf Cleric who had a knack for dying. In the end, we survived the Tomb of Horrors (barely). Thanks for trying to kill us, Shane.



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Maps Matter:

We came early to get in as much gaming as possible and to avoid lines as much as possible. We got our pre-registration sheet (not packet) and a con book. We looked at the table where we were supposed to be for the first game and the single map in the booklet. The map had everything laid out in one room (Red Flag #1). We got in line to wait for the event hall doors to open. We ran into our awesome GM and more people and waited. The GM's were not allowed to enter until 5 minutes before general admission (Red Flag #2). We get in, find our table #, and get set up. This is all very fast and hurried. It is LOUD. everyone is in an arena style hall (Red Flag #3). Now, we wait for others...and we wait...no one else is flooding in (Red Flag #4). The light bulb goes off. Where are all the other RPG people. So we go ask. We get our answer they moved the RPG's to another area. Now, we wait while people figure out where this other area is. We pack up and trek to the other side of the building through our own IRL dungeon crawl, narrowly running into people who were leaving thinking the GM ditched them. We wasted 40+ minutes This could have been mitigated by

- * Updating the map in the booklet
- * Handling out a one page updated map along with the booklets
- * Telling people RPGs have moved to a different room when picking up badges
- * Putting up a sign (one appeared mid-day Saturday)

The room we were placed in was a nice room, but it was severely cut off from the rest of the convention area.

K.I.S.S.:

In addition to the RPG room being cut off, the seminar rooms were also at various hole-in-the-wall locations for which most of the volunteers could not give good directions. So finding them was also a challenge. The DeVos Place was a nice place, but rooms names were variations of the same name (Overlook Gallery A vs Grand Gallery A vs River Overlook Gallery A) and there were no maps on the walls (that I could see).

Limited Food:

There was limited onsite food with limited hours. The concession stand was ok, but just a note an edible facsimile of a hot pocket should not be listed as a "calzone." Jimmy John's turned out to be the true heroes of the con. The booklet could have listed local delivery options/numbers (wasted opportunity to sell ad space).

Be aware of other events in town:

We had driven in and parked in the same structure attached to the DeVos Place for 2 days. On the third day (Sunday), we were greeted by the police blocking off



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several people and be greeted by low attendance or none. It would be one thing if it was 1 or 2, but I saw several GMs set up and pack up (thankfully, we could invite some to play with us). There was a stark contrast between the amount of people there to play an organized D&D guild event versus other mainstream or fringe RPG systems. This just felt to me like poor marketing and support by the con organizers.

Be Kind to Vendors, Artists, and Guests:

It felt like Vendors, Artists, and Guests were treated like secondary thoughts. Especially vendors. All of the booths were open and in the same area as game play. Vendors were asked to close at 6 pm, but all of their stuff is left open for anyone of ill intent to access. The amount of money that was just sitting open in the main event hall was scary. I cannot imagine how the vendors felt. Also, because of the split locations, it was more effort to get to the main event hall, thus reducing potential RPG consumer traffic.

**** Con-clusion ****

There may have been some rough spots during the con, but I had a good time overall. At its core, a con is about the people you meet and the people you return to. It was nice to run into +[Lonnie Spangler](#), +[Larry Hamilton](#), and +[Edward Kabara](#). See you when next we roll.*

*U-Con is right around the corner I hope to see you there!

** If I got your name wrong or did not mention you when you played in one with me please let me know and I will update the content.



6



5



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Larry Hamilton +1
Great write up!

[REPLY](#) +1

Sep
18,
2017



S Harsch (TekHed) +2
Fantastic write-up! Can I post a link to this on [legendsmiths.com](#) - [Legendsmiths](#) (mostly so I don't have to write-up exactly what you just said)?

Sep
19,
2017



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[REPLY](#) +1**Chris S**

Do you think that there's anything you saw here that we could take away for our own Extra Life event? I mean, this is a huge event that easily dwarfs what we're trying for EL, but maybe there are some takeaways with regard to how we might try to present our offerings to our limited guest set? Just trying to think outside of the box here.

Sep
23,
2017[REPLY](#) +1**Brendan LaSalle** +2

Thanks for the super kind words! Always happy to rev it up for y'all!

Sep
28,
2017[REPLY](#) +1**Shyloh Wideman** +1

+[Clayton Williams](#), Thanks for the World Building write ups. Wanted to go to those but unable to. Glad you were able to capture and willing to share. Some good insights.

Mar
21,
2018[REPLY](#) +1

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