

It Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time  
A musical comedy about convention running  
by Phil Lee  
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The latest draft version, as well as MP3s of the songs being used, can be found here:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/phil/fnordchan/musical/>

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Cast  
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The Convention Chair - Long-suffering and tightly wound, with a terrible weakness for taking on responsibilities when they'd be much better off running screaming into the night away from them.

Guest Relations - Not so much a People Person as a Pervert, but in a pleasant sort of way. And by "pleasant" I mean "creepy".

Panel Programming - The fangirl version of Guests with bishounen on the brain.

Video Programming - The old fogey who has to resist the urge to tell the kids to get out of his yard and who hasn't collected anime since the death of laserdisc.

Operations - Calm and suprisingly well adjusted; what are they doing in this musical?

The Gopher - Eager to please, entertaining to torment, they will one day channel their accumulated bitterness and hatred to become the next Chair.

Plus various and sundry extras and convention attendees!

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(Opening scene: The Anime Clubroom, as represented by two crew members standing in the background holding anime wall scrolls in front of them. The Cast is seated, with the exception of the Chair, who isn't on stage yet.)

Ops: And thus ends another successful meeting of the Carolina Cartoon Fanciers Film Appreciation and Croquet Society!

Panels: You know, it's been a really relaxing year so far.

Gopher: Mellow, even. I haven't been stressed out at all!

Video: I'm getting enough sleep for the first time since 1987!

Guests: And my therapist keeps sending me "Thinking of you, won't you please visit" postcards.

Ops: You know, as a happy and well-adjusted anime club, there's really

only one thing left for us to do.

Gopher: You mean...

Ops: That's right.

Guests: You really think we should try to pull this off?

Ops: I do indeed.

Gopher: Huh. Well, okay. I'll go buy the kiddie pool, the rest of you go to the grocery store and load up on Jello.

Ops: No, no, no. The other thing - let's put on an anime convention!

(Cue "The Lullaby of Broadway". This will require a bit of choreography work that's frankly beyond me, but early on the crew members should roll up the wall-scrolls they're holding and hand them over to two of the cast who twirl them around like canes. Later in the number, one scroll-holder unfurls it at the other and they hold it up like an arch, which the other cast members dance through, with the number ending in a kickline.)

(Ops)

Come on along and let's put on the anime convention  
For far too long we've got along without strife and tension  
Let's rent an inn and draw them in from across the nation  
Let's fill our nights with disco lights and sleep deprivation

(Video)

When convention staffers say "good night"  
it's only a cruel joke

(Guests)

Your friendly staffers don't sleep tight  
For three days long

(All)

Wake up, fanboy  
Wake up, it's only Friday night  
Drink up, fanboy  
Drink up, Mountain Dew's gonna make it right

(Gopher)

Come on along and let's put on the anime convention  
Let's overcome instincts to run and any apprehension

(Panels)

While others might think us all mad  
Why would they say we're crazy?  
We'll have a ball and after all

(All)

Just how hard could it be?

(Video)

"I'll blow my cash on this and that"  
You hear otaku saying

(Guests)

Let's have 'em play and spend all day  
At our fair con!

(All)

Wake up, fanboy

Wake up, you made it to Sunday

Thank you, fanboy

Thank you, for attending our soiree

(Ops)

We'll put on another con some other day

(Interlude - dance routine as described above)

(Ops)

Wake up, fanboy

Wake up, you made it Sunday

We'll put on another con some other day

Gopher: That's the best idea you've had since last year's Hostess Cupcakes(tm) eating competition!

Guests: We can invite Japanese guests!

Panels: We can have panel discussions on the aesthetic beauty of homosexual love in Japanese popular culture!

Guests: Hot Japanese guests!

Panels: Hot aesthetic beauty! Very hot!

Video: I can finally put my epic video collection to some sort of practical use!

Ops: I can keep you all from setting the place on fire, as usual.

Guests: Hot, I tell you, hot!

Ops: I'll also keep any potential guests from killing him.

Gopher: And I can do...stuff. I think.

Ops: It looks like we've got everything we need, except for someone to run this thing.

(Chair runs in from off-stage; everyone else turns to stare at them.)

Ops: Sorry I'm late, but there was someone up in the belltower and...what? (Looks around)

Ops: All in favor of having (name of actor) run our anime convention?

All except Chair: AYE!

Ops: Congrats, chief! You're in charge!

Chair: Like hell I am!

Gopher: But, it'll be awesome! We've just gotta put on a con!

Chair: Are you people insane? Don't you remember what happened to the organizers of the Tri-State Thanksgiving Trek-tacular?

Panels: Aw, the judge let them off with a suspended sentence.

Chair: Or the Babylon Jive Roller Disco Shadow War?

Video: They did a service to the community by discovering that natural gas pocket! Besides, only a few dozen people had to go to the hospital.

Chair: Look, putting on your own convention is a train-wreck waiting to happen. I absolutely, positively refuse to have any part in this whatsoever and that's final!

(pause)

Guests: Okay, fine. If we're not going to put on our own convention, I say we publish our own magazine. A nice glossy magazine with lots of full-color photos, perhaps candid shots of our own club members...

Chair (cutting him off): I'll do it.

(Everyone else looks at Guests.)

Guests: What?

Chair: So, we're putting on an anime convention. What are we going to call this thing?

Ops: Er...we hadn't gotten that far just yet.

Guests: I've got it! Anime...\_Sexpo\_! (Guests goes into a frenzy of winking and nudging.) Eh? Eh?

Everyone: NO.

Panels: Let's call it "YaoiCon".

Gopher: But...we're not putting on a yaoi convention.

Panels: That's what you think.

Video: We want something descriptive. Like, "Sweet Baby Jesus, Cartoons From Japan!"

Ops: We should try to draw in the younger crowd. I'm thinking "PokeCon".

Chair: Let's be honest and call it "BitTorrent Appreciation Weekend Durham".

Gopher: How about "Animazement"?

(pause)

Everyone: Nah.

Guests: Okay, here's one - Hentainomite! (Delivered, naturally, ala

Jimmy Walker)

Everyone: NO!

Video: We should look at what other conventions do and rip them off shamelessly.

Ops: I've got it!

(Cue Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious)

(Ops)

AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
We have to say that as a name it's really quite atrocious  
To stake a claim on such a name is a sign of psychosis  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!

(Guests)

When christening conventions with a unique sobriquet  
It's quite a strain to think of something short and sweet to say

(Video)

But any that roll off the tongue have all been done to death  
So fill your lungs and try to say this in a single breath!

(Cast)

Oh! AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
We have to say that as a name it's really quite atrocious  
To stake a claim on such a name is a sign of psychosis  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!

(Chair)

Talking up our to-do may inflict mental whiplash  
Is it our nom-de-plume or is it just plain balderdash?

(Ops)

We'll wow 'em with the biggest name of any con around  
They'll see it coming 'round the bend before they hear a sound!

(Cast)

AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
We have to say that as a name it's really quite atrocious  
To stake a claim on such a name is a sign of psychosis  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!

Panels (Spoken): Of course, we could call it  
DociousExpoTasticMagiConiAni.

Chair: But that would be stupid.

Panels: Indeed.

(Panels)

Among potential attendees it's sure to cause a stir  
As they try to wrap their tongues around your moniker

(Gopher)

No matter if pronouncing it will cause your brain to hurt  
Just so long as it fits on the back of a t-shirt!

(Cast)

AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!  
AniConiMagiTasticExpoalidocious!

Gopher: Well, that settles that!

Chair: Like hell it does. I refuse to be associated with anything that reeks of Mary Poppins.

Ops: Okay, do you have a better idea?

Chair: We're calling it Animosity. (Waves bokken threateningly) And if anyone has a problem with that I break their ankles.

(Everyone looks down at their feet for a moment.)

Panels: Animosity it is!

Gopher: But where are we going to hold this thing?

Chair: I was thinking the old Motel 6 on 15-501.

Video: Isn't that a bit...upscale?

Chair: Yeah, but ever since the West Wing burned down last year and the rest of the building took on all that water damage, business hasn't been so hot. I reckon I can get us a deal.

Panels: But aside from the Millard Fillmore Room the 6 doesn't have much in the way of convention space.

Guests: No problem! My uncle's the pastor of the Reformed Pentecostal Unitariarlists and I'm sure he'll let us borrow some of the tents they use for revivals. We can set 'em up in the parking lot!

Video: And we can declare the Waffle House next door the hotel restaurant!

Ops: I'm friends with the bum who's usually around the corner; I'll bet he's willing to be the concierge.

Chair: (actor's name), you're going to Japan next month, right?

Guests: Yeah?

Chair: Scare us up a few guests while you're out there.

Guests: I can do that. Do they have to have anything to do with anime, manga, video games, or Japanese pop culture in general?

Chair: Yes.

Guests: Damn. Well, I'll give it a shot.

Chair: Right then. Against all common sense it looks like we're running a con starting...oh, one year from today, Memorial Day weekend. And you'd all better get to work right away and make this thing happen.

Ops: Don't worry! We've got a solid year to pull everything together! No problem!

(Lights dim. The cast holds whatever exact pose they were in. Announcer: "51 weeks later..." Lights up.)

Ops: ...and that concludes the 512th "This Week's Kujibiki Unbalance Was Awesome" meeting. Any other business before we retire to the Student Union to play Guilty Gear?

Panels: Yeah. Aren't we throwing an anime con next week?

(Pause)

Ops: Oh shit. I knew I forgot something.

Chair: HOW COULD WE FORGET THAT WE WERE HAVING A CONVENTION?

Video: Speak for yourself. I set up the website and have been taking the registrations.

Chair: WE'RE COMPLETELY UNPREPARED AND YOU TOOK THEIR MONEY?

Ops: Hey, don't sweat it. We did no advertising whatsoever and haven't announced any guests...

Video: Well, actually we did announce -

Ops: ...so how many people are going to...wait, you announced guests?

Video: Just the one. Our esteemed head of guest relations told me he had everything under control.

(All turn towards Guests.)

Chair: I'm going to regret this, but I'm going to ask you anyway. Who exactly is the guest of honor for our little convention?

Guests: Akira Toriyama.

(pause)

Chair: As in the creator of Dragonball Z?

Guests: Yep!

Panels: And not just any old Akira Toriyama you found on the street?

Guests: Nope, it's the real thing!

Ops: And how exactly did we manage to pay for his airfare?

Guests: Oh, he said he'd take care of everything.

Chair: Really?

Guests: Really.

Chair: Wow. Okay, well done! When is he flying in?

Guests: I don't know. I haven't talked to him in a while.

Chair: I'm going to kill you.

Guests: Hold on a sec, I've got his business card right there. I'll give him a call!

(Guests begins talking on his cell phone)

Guests: Akira-san! How's it...what? Oh, his agent? Right, could I speak to Toriyama-san? It's me Guest Relations-san for Animosity. You know, the white guy. Japan doesn't have that many white guys walking around does it? Well, I was the guy with all the hawaiian shirts. Huh? No, you haven't won a trip to Hawaii, I need to talk to Toriyama-san. What? Oh, he's in Hawaii? Okay, when's he going to be back in the office? July?

Chair (diving at guests, having to be restrained): KILL YOU! KILL YOU!

Guests: Uh-huh. I don't suppose he's going to be dropping by North Carolina next week for our anime convention? Wait, why are you laughing?

Chair: KILL!

Guests: Okay. Okay, well, thanks for your time! (hangs up)  
So...there's a teensy eensy problem.

Chair: Oh no. There's no problem whatsoever that killing you couldn't possibly solve. Come here.

(Chair begins advancing towards Guests, dragging the folks restraining them along. Guests hides behind Panels, who promptly drags him out and starts shoving him towards the Chair. Ops walks between the two with their arms outstretched before blood hits the floor.)

Ops: Now, hold on just a second. Giving in to the urge to slaughter him on the spot isn't going to help right now.

Guests: That's right!

Ops: We've got a lot to do at the convention, so let's not kill him until we absolutely half to.

Guests: That's...hey, wait a minute...

Panels: Hrm. A blood sacrifice might appease the crowd when they realize we don't actually have the world's most popular manga artist on hand.



Chair, relenting: Okay. Fine. We won't kill him...yet. Now, exactly how many people have pre-registered?

Video: Oh, not more than, say, three, maybe four...thousand.

Chair: ARGH!

Ops: You do realize we're going to have roughly twice that many show up at the door.

Chair: ARGH!

Ops: Look, you just go lie down and we'll take care of everything.

(Ops staggers off-stage.)

Gopher: How exactly are we going to do that?

Ops: I have no idea.

(Lights dim. Everyone now changes into the staff costume - a black Animosity t-shirt and blue jeans. However, everyone has something to go along with their outfit that distinguishes them. Video wears suspenders. Guests has a hawaiian shirt on also. The Chair totes a bokken around at all times. Ops wears a hat. Panels wears several buttons. The Gopher, alas, has nothing. The word "FRIDAY" is projected onto the screen (or spoken over the mic from off-stage.). Raise lights. Ops is standing next to a small desk and is talking into a walkie-talkie.)

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Ops: Ops, go ahead. You need slave labor to help set up the dealer's room? Hold on a second. HEY! YOU TWO, OVER HERE!

(Two con attendees walk up.)

Attendee 1: What's up?

Ops: I heard they sighted Toriyama over by the dealer's room and that he's giving away sketches to anyone who helps out.

Attendee 2: Hot damn!

(The two attendees rush off the stage as Panels walks in.)

Ops (on walkie-talkie): They're on their way. If anyone asks you about a sketch just smile and nod.

Panels: Aren't they going to be mad when they realize you lied to them?

Ops: I didn't lie. I mis-heard this rumor that I just made up on the spot. I like to think of it as "solitaire telephone".

Panels: Is that why you're hiding out in here?

Ops: Who's hiding? This is the operations room, the nerve center of the entire convention! This is where all the activity is coordinated! This

is a buzzing hive of volunterism and comunal energy!

(Panels looks around the empty stage and then looks pointedly at Ops.)

Ops: Okay, so it's not quite so buzzy just this minute. Just wait until the con is in full swing and things are really jumping!

Panels: What happens then?

Ops: I close the door and hide out in here.

(Video walks on stage)

Video: Right then, the video room is set up and the cartoons they are a-playing!

Ops: Did you need my DVD player?

Video: I dunno much about that sort of new-fangled nonsense. Everything we're showing is on laserdisc, God's own video format.

Panels: But, none of your laserdiscs have subtitles.

Video: Subtitles?

(Chair runs on stage, frantic.)

Chair: Quick, you've got to hide me! Oh, god, here they come!

(Chair dives behind Video as a very small mob of attendees storm across the stage chanting "TOR-I-YA-MA! TOR-I-YA-MA!")

Ops: So, how did the opening ceremonies go?

Chair: You mean the lynch mob tryouts? It was utterly horrific. Then I announced that Toriyama hadn't quite shown up yet and things got really ugly.

Panels: And that's when you started running for your life?

Chair: No, that's when I threw Guest Relations to the wolves. Then I started running for my life.

Ops: You left the poor guy behind to be torn limb from limb by an angry mob of fans?

Chair: Yeah. So?

Ops: Won't he enjoy that a bit too much?

Chair: Well...with luck they might kill him.

Panels: Let's just hope he survives long enough to run his panel at Noon: "The Online Anime Fandom Community And Why It Hates Me Personally"

(Guests walks onto the edge of the stage with a microphone.)

Guests: Some of you think I've created this online persona so I can hide behind a computer screen and be a perverted sleazeball. Nothing could be farther from the truth! That's how I act all the time!

(Guests walks off as the next Panel is mentioned, handing off the mic to whoever is delivering the dialogue; repeat as necessary.)

Panels: Later on we've got "Why 'Anime' Aren't 'Cartoons': A Desperate Attempt In Rationalization."...

Attendee 1: Animation in the US is cheap, soul-less kiddy-fare churned out for the uncaring masses, unlike anime which is art. That's because it's made in Japan.

Panels: ..."Pocky: The Truth Behind The Treat"...

Attendee 2: Have you eaten this stuff? It's frosted twig! It tastes like flavored cardboard! You're paying three bucks a box for this crap! What is wrong with you people?

Panels: ...and, of course, "Science Ninja Team Gatchaman Is The Greatest Cartoon Ever Made, You Ungrateful, Ignorant Punks".

Attendee 3: Back in my day you didn't have any of that computer animation! No, it was all done by hand...up hill...both ways...through the snow...without shoes! And WE LIKED IT THAT WAY!

Video: Oh, man, that's going to be a great panel.

Panels: He's also moderating "Fans Today Know Nothing - Nothing! - About Giant Robot Shows", "The Cartoon Network Is An Affront To Humanity", and "Why Won't Those Damn Neighborhood Kids Learn To STAY OFF MY LAWN!"

Ops: Oh, man, that's going to be a great panel.

Chair: Well, you guys have fun with all that. I'm off to judge the anime music video contest. Hey, Gopher!

(Gopher walks on stage.)

Gopher: What's up, chief?

Chair: You ever make an anime music video?

Gopher: Nope!

Chair: You ever seen any anime music videos?

Gopher: Uh...no.

Chair: You know what a music video is?

Gopher: Oh, sure!

Chair: Good enough. Come on, you're going to help me judge this thing.

Gopher: But I don't know anything about AMVs! What do you want me to do?

(Chair picks up a bottle of liquor.)

Chair: Every time I say "next", pour me a shot of this until I pass out. Then announce that the contest is over.

(Dim lights, clear the stage. The Chair and the Gopher sit up front as the AMV reel is started up on the screens. I haven't worked out all the details just yet; the default gag is that each and every video is set to Heino's "Blau Bluht Der Enzian", with other bad videos in between. The Chair watches a few moments of each video, then yells next, at which point it moves on to the next gag. The interval between "NEXT!"s picks up pretty quickly (and the chair begins to slur noticeably) until it's over - i.e. the chair hits floor.)

Gopher: Oh, thank god. Er...I mean, show's over folks! But, don't worry, I'm sure the next event will be starting any minute now!

(Pause. Gopher looks around a lot, looks at their watch after a moment, and then chuckles nervously.)

Gopher: Yep. Any minute now. Annnnnny minute now. Um. Guys?

(Ops comes walking on stage.)

Ops: Oh, is this event already over? I thought her alcohol tolerance was higher than that. Ahem. Your attention please! I regret to inform you all that Hell has been cancelled.

Gopher: What happened?

Ops: The guy who runs it said this place was already hellish enough.

Gopher: Okay, I can't argue with that one. So...uh...now what?

Ops: Well, next door they're still running the karaoke contest. Check this guy out:

(The two look towards the screen. Cut to footage of Michigan J. Frog from the Looney Tune "The Singing Frog" on screen, tearing through "The Michigan Rag".)

Gopher: Gosh! Well, if karaoke is still running and Hell has been cancelled, is that it for the evening?

Ops: No, there's still the dance to go. I couldn't find an actual DJ, but the Research Triangle Polka Kings promised me they'd wow the crowd with their oompah-disco arrangements. They'll be setting up in here any minute now.

Gopher: Do we need to stay and help?

Ops: Depends. Do you want to see our attendees bumping and grinding on the dance floor?

(Ops and Gopher both look at the audience.)

Gopher: I'm beginning to realize that there are some things the volunteer spirit can never quite compensate for.

Ops: Let's make a break for it.

(Ops and Gopher run off stage, leaving the Chair slumped over. Dim lights, clear stage.)

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(Projected or intoned: SATURDAY. Raise lights. Ops is standing there with a bottle of soda.)

Ops: Another morning, another gallon of soda to start the day.

(Video walks in.)

Video: Well, I didn't want to hafta do it, but there's been a slight change in the video schedule. My laserdisc player is on the fritz, so we're going to have to switch over to the VCR.

Ops: Let me guess - you keep a big pile of VHS tapes around just in case something like this might happen?

Video: VHS tapes? Oh, no, no, no, no, no. (Pause.) Betamax, naturally, but not VHS.

(Guests swaggers in, grinning.)

Guests: Gooooood morning! And how is everyone doing this fine day?

Ops: You're looking remarkably chipper for someone who is going to be drawn and quartered when the howling mob realizes you don't have a guest to present to them.

Guests: Oh, that won't be for hours yet. Right now, I'm living life in the moment! You see...I've found someone very special here at the convention.

Video: A Japanese guest, perhaps?

Guests: Even better! I've found...true love!

Ops: You mean true lust.

Guests: Love, lust, what's the difference. (Points off-stage.) There she is, sharing her radiant beauty with artists alley! Just take a look at her!

(Brief pause)

Ops: You mean the girl who's only dressed in her underwear and a pair of bunny ears?

Guests: Yep!

Video: Actually, that's not so much "dressed in" as it is "falling out

of".

Guests: One of her many charms!

Ops: And isn't she a bit young for you?

Guests: Well...I suppose that depends on how you define "young".

Video: Under the age of eighteen?

Guests: Of course, since when have I let myself be limited by other people's definitions?

Ops: Wait a second, how old is she?

Guests: Oh, she's a freshman.

Ops: In college?

Guests: In high school.

(Cue "(Just Like) Romeo & Juliet). Video and Ops act as back-up singers.)

(Guests)

Walked in the con early this morning  
And there she was standing in the dealer's room  
Found the girl (Video and Ops: The Girl!) to make me a lovin' fool  
It's too bad (Too bad!) that she is in high school  
I've fallen for somebody who is thirteen  
A-just like Romeo and Juliet

Please don't say that I'm a pervert  
Say instead that true love can conquer all  
Let her know (her know) that I just can't wa-it  
Even though (though) she is total jailbait  
Somebody's family is going to try to kill me  
A-just like Romeo and Juliet

(Cue assorted doo-woping to be worked out among Ops, Video, and Guests)

Just like Romeo and Juliet!  
Just like Romeo and Juliet!  
Just like Romeo and Juliet!  
Just like Romeo and Juliet!

Others call it cradle robbing  
But please don't look on me with hate  
After all it isn't my fault  
That she was born too late

Ah, our affair is May/December  
Or is it more like April and July?  
I'll show her that love can be bolder  
Even if I'm a decade older  
I'm going to face charges of statutory  
A-Just like Romeo and Juliet

(More doo-wopping)

Just like Romeo and Juliet!

(Repeat until end of song, with Video and Ops leaning in close to Guests for the final line...and then jumping violently away from him as the song ends.)

Video & Ops: GAH!

Guests: Isn't love beautiful?

Ops: Look, I think she's not really your type. And if you don't agree with me I'll be forced beat you into a coma.

Video: I'm not a violent person by nature, but your peculiar urges strike me as unnatural, so count me in for the whole "safe sex through head trauma" thing.

Guests: Oh, speaking of unnatural, I've got to get to my next panel!

Ops: Another one? Dare I ask?

Guests, innocently: Oh, you'll see.

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(Dim lights, place the table and two chairs on stage, along with two mics. Raise lights. Guests and Panels are sitting there, along with a pitcher of water.)

Panels: Hello, everybody and welcome to Hentai versus Yaoi: The Final Battle! I'm the expert on steamy boy on boy action...

Guests: ...and I'm the expert on steamy everything else on everything else action. We'll be deciding once and for all which of us is utterly depraved and which is socially well adjusted.

Panels: Relatively speaking, of course. So, any questions before we get down to just plain yelling at each other? Yes, you.

Attendee 1: Hi there. I was wondering if either of you feel that pornographic animation is degrading to women?

Panels: What women?

Attendee 1: How about degrading to men?

Panels: God, I hope so.

Guests: I feel that hentai portrays women in a strong, positive light, especially when they're fending off naughty tentacles. Ya gotta be strong to keep those things away from you!

Attendee 1: I thought they didn't actually keep the tentacles away.

Guests: Well...it's ambiguous. I mean, sure, it looks like all sorts of

terrible things are happening, but with those little mosaic squares in the way, who can tell, really?

Panels: Next question!

Attendee 2: Do either of you write fanfiction? If so, what do you write about?

Panels: Hrm. It's hard to give a complete list, but if you've ever seen any two men look at each other for more than two seconds in any given cartoon, just assume that I've written about their torrid behind-the-scenes love affairs.

Guests: I don't write fanfiction myself, but I do have a sketchbook chock full of fanart drawings of anime characters that celebrate the beauty of the female form. The stark nekkid female form.

Attendee 2: Don't you feel that imposing sexuality on every cartoon character in sight is a bit...obsessive?

(Guests and Panels look at each other, then back at the audience.)

Panels: Why, is there something wrong with that?

Attendee 2: Oh, no, not at all.

Guests: Come on people, enough with the softball questions. Yaoi versus Hentai! Let's get down to brass tacks! You over there, hit us with a really good one.

Attendee 3: Uh...well, to be honest I think you're both just, you know, perverts.

Panels: Well, we knew that already.

Guests: The question is, which of us is really prurient?

Panels: After all, your run of the mill hentai can't compare with the erotic beauty of two incredibly gorgeous men with huge eyes in love.

Guests: And you can't really call it erotic unless huge knockers are involved.

Panels: Hah! You wouldn't know eroticism if it bit you! Not that you would be so lucky.

Guests: I'll have you know that I am constantly in tune with the sensual aspect of Japanese animation, unlike that tripe you watch.

(The two stand up and walk around the table to face each other.)

Panels: Oh, no you aren't!

Guests: Oh, yes I am!

(Cue "Anything You Can Do")



(Panels)  
Anything you can view I can skew better  
I can skew anything better than you

(Guests)  
No, you can't!  
(Panels)  
Yes, I can!  
No, you can't!  
Yes, I can!  
No, you can't!  
Yes, I can, yes I can!

(Guests)  
Any filthy you can see I can make ruder  
Lewder and lewder I'm ruder than you

(Panels)  
No, you aren't  
(Guests)  
Yes, I am.  
No, you aren't  
Yes, I am.  
No, you aren't  
Yes, I am, yes, I am!

(Guests)  
I find innuendo in my old Nintendo!

(Panels)  
I can invent sub-text, no matter the context

(Guests)  
I see sex in all TV  
(Panels)  
No matter what's on?

(Guests)  
Yes.  
(Panels)  
So does my Mom!

(Guests)  
Anything you can say, I can say sleazy

(Panels)  
No matter how cheesy, sleazier than you

(Guests)  
No, you can't (leering)  
(Panels)  
Yes, I can (more leering, back and forth and escalating)  
No, you can't, Yes, I can  
No, you can't, Yes, I can  
No, you can't, Yes, I can  
No, you can't, Yes, I can  
Yes, I can! (with butt-grabing)

(Panels)  
Anything on TV I can make cheaper  
I can make anything cheaper than you

(Guests)  
Cooking shows?  
(Panels)

Hill Street Blues.

(Guests)

Pokemon?

(Panels)

Evening news.

(Guests)

No, you can't!

(Panels)

Yes, I can, yes, I can!

(Guests)

I can slash anime without subtitles

(Panels)

I can speak Japanese better than you

(Guests)

Dekinai!

(Panels)

Dekiru!

Dekinai! Dekiru! (They both go back and forth, their accent becoming increasingly awful.)

Dekinai! Dekiru!

DEKIRU!

(Guests)

I like calimari molesting futanari

(Panels)

I like pretty boys making squealing noises

(Guests)

My hard drive is full of porn!

(Panels)

And nothing but?

(Guests)

Yes.

(Panels)

Hook me up with some smut, ya perv!

(Guests)

I can get turned on by watching Akira

(Panels)

I get my jollies from Akira, too!

(Guests)

Tetsuo!

(Panels)

Kaneda!

Tetsuo! Kaneda!

Tetsuo! Kaneda!

TEETTTSSUUUUUOOOO! KAAANNNNNEEEEDDDAAAA!

(Together)

KANEDAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

(Panels)

Any dress you can cross I can cross better

Kinky or leather I'm better than you

(Guests)

Leaf of fig?

(Panels)

Sailor suit!

(Guests)  
Sumo thong?  
(Panels)  
Robot suit!  
No, you can't! Yes, I can, yes, I can!

(Guests)  
Any depth you can reach I can sink lower  
(Panels)  
I can descend even lower than you!  
(Both begin sinking to the floor.)  
No, you can't! Yes, I can!  
No, you can't! Yes, I can!  
No, you can't! Yes, I can! Yes, I can! (Hits floor, hops right back up.)

(Guests)  
I can degrade Pocky!  
(Panels)  
Bullwinkle and Rocky!  
(Guests)  
Erotic Sanrio!  
(Panels)  
R2 and C3PO!  
(Guests)  
I can pair off Kirk and Spock!  
(Panels)  
You think that that's new?  
(Guests)  
Yes.  
(Panels)  
It's new to me, too.

(Guests)  
Anything you can say I can make sultry  
(Panels)  
I can make anything smoother than you  
(The two begin sounding sexier and sexier, while also drawing closer)  
No, you can't...yes, I can...  
No, you can't...Yes, I can...  
No, you can't...Yes, I can...

(Chair runs on stage and tries to separate them)

Make it stop, make it stop!

(Guests and Panels together)

No you can't, no you can't!

(The two embrace triumphantly, the Chair slaps their forehead and looks disgusted, dim lights)

\*\*\*

(Raise lights, Ops is back to hiding out in - wait for it - ops. Ops looks around furtively, then pulls out a flask and takes a drink just as

Video walks in.)

Video: Isn't it a little early in the con to be hitting the sauce?

Ops: Sauce? What sauce? This is...Mountain Dew.

Video: Mountain Dew in a flask?

Ops: I'm trying to make my brutal caffeine addiction look a bit classier.

Video: Say, that's not a bad idea! Can I have a swig?

Ops: No. Did you need something?

Video: Well, my poor old Betamax deck struggled valiently but died in the line of duty a mere 9 hours into the Yamato movie marathon.

Ops: So what's the backup plan?

Video: I've setup a 16-millimeter projector and am showing a film print of "Alakazam the Great". Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go try to dig up my print of "Flying Ghost Ship".

Ops: Yes, you do that. I'm sure they'll love it.

(Video walks off-stage)

Ops (Through Walkie Talkie): Ops, to Chair. How's the dealer's room looking?

Chair (over mic): Well, we only got the one dealer - Joe-Bob's Japaheeno Guns 'n Hooters Cartoon Movie Emporium - but he's doing a brisk business.

Ops: Joe-Bob have to shoot anyone just yet?

Chair: Well, there was one close call...

(Ops walks off-stage, crew runs up on stage with a table, a cast member walks up and dumps a random pile of crap on it (probably a box to keep junk from going everywhere), then starts yelling "ANIME CRAP, GETCHYER ANIME CRAP RIGHT HERE!" People immediately swarm the table, including one terribly conspicuous person who sneaks up and attempts to shoplift. Just when you think he's getting away.)

Joe-Bob: SHOPLIFTER! SIC 'EM!

(All staffers storm onto stage armed with baseball bats, doing their best evil laughter bit as they circle the guy and begin whaling on him. As this is happening the Chair walks up on the stage.)

Chair (pointing towards the audience): Remember - don't let this happen to you!

Voiceover (via mic): This message has been brought to you by the Animosity dealer's room.

(The Gopher runs on stage as the shoplifter is unceremoniously dragged off

by Joe Bob and the attackers.)

Gopher: There you are! There's trouble in the video rooms!

Chair: Define "trouble".

Gopher: One of the anime clubs volunteering has seized control of the video room, taken our head of video programming hostage, declared themselves the People's Revolutionary Japanese Animation Study Group, set fire to the projector, and is demanding we show nothing but digital fansubs for the rest of the convention!

Chair: And?

Gopher: Huh. Now that I think about it, that does sound pretty reasonable, especially as there were people in there watching anime for the first time all weekend.

Chair: Fantastic! You know things are looking up around here!

(Ops comes running on stage.)

Ops (to chair): There you are! It's time for the costume contest!

(Gopher begins slinking off stage)

Chair: Or, maybe they aren't. Gopher!

Gopher (starts and looks sheepishly at the Chair): Er, yes boss?

Chair: Guess who's helping me judge the costume contest?

Gopher: Oh, god, not again.

\*\*\*

(Dim lights partially, clear stage. The Chair and Gopher (being dragged against their will) sit in front of the audience at a table, with mics. The costume contest is a series of very, very quick gags with people dashing up on stage, launching into their skit, and being invariably cut short by the Chair and/or Gopher yelling "NEXT!" The Gopher acts as announcer. We should put on 5-6 skits running about 3-4 minutes total; I've included suggestions here but the cast is encouraged to come up with some of their own.)

Gopher: Good evening ladies and gentlemen! It is my great pleasure to welcome you to-

Chair: Make it snappy!

Gopher: Costume contest! Okay, it's the costume contest, let's get started! First off, The Naruto Players present "The Ninja Lord of the Rings"!

(Three people wearing Naruto headbands and cloaks run up on stage waving a large gold ring around. Vanilla Ice's "Ninja Rap" cranks up at the "GO

NINJA GO NINJA GO!" bit)

Chair: NEXT!

(A guy without a costume walks onto stage.)

Chair: What the hell are you supposed to be?

Contestant (while unbuckling their belt): I am the lovely soldier Sailor Moon and in the name of the moon I will punish you!

(The contestant attempts to drop trou; staffers rush onto stage and stop them before he can get his pants down, dragging the offender off-stage.)

Gopher: Okay, next contest! Introducing "Evangelion: The Musical!"

(A very loose rendition of Shinji, Asuka, and Rei run up on stage and launch into "Everyone Knows It's Shinji" set to "Wendy": Who's tromping down the streets of the city/Angsting for everybody to see/Who's reaching out to impress his father/Everyone knows it's Shinji!)

Chair: NEXT!

Gopher: Man, that was the worst Shinji I've ever seen. Okay, next up - Ghetto Robo!

(The cardboard box giant robot costume staggers on stage, collapses, and is helped off in pices by the staff.)

Chair: I liked that act. I didn't have to yell "next".

Gopher: And now the Rumiko Takahashi Appreciation Society will recreate the entirety of Episode 87 of Ranma 1/2!

(A small mob - basically dependent on how many sketchy Ranma costumes we can put together - runs up on stage. Ranma begins to take a deep breath and is immediately cut off.)

Chair: NEXT!

Ranma: But...we haven't had a chance to-

Chair: And you aren't getting one! There's no way I'm sitting through a 25 minute skit. NEXT!

(The Ranma cast looks confused, then a determined Ranma begins to speak.)

Ranma: Gosh, Akane, being a girl really is the best-

Chair: GET OFF MY STAGE OR I BREAK YOUR LEGS!

(The Ranma crew shuffles off sullenly.)

Gopher: Next up - The Fresh Prince of Bel-Aire!

(Cue "Katamari on the Rock" as staff members throw an assorted pile of brightly colored, easy to spot junk on stage. Out comes someone rolling

Sarah around like a katamari. Sarah picks stuff up as best she can. At one point the Prince stops rolling Sarah and points at a particularly obvious piece of junk. Sarah stands up, goes over to pick it up, drops back down, and is rolled off-stage.)

Chair: You know, I don't think we're going to be able to top that. Let's quit while we're ahead.

Gopher: Works for me.

(Dim lights, clear stage.)

\*\*\*

(Raise lights to reveal Ops in ops. Video walks on, barefoot, shirtless, wearing a headband and with a giggling girl on each arm.)

Ops: Um...you okay? Last I heard you were being held hostage by radical Maoist digisubbers with a penchant for cartoons made this century.

Video: I...I just had a transformative experience. It was the most amazing thing ever. They...they opened my eyes.

Ops: How so?

Video (reverent): Have you ever heard of something called...Cowboy Bebop?

Ops (to audience): Give him a break, he's been out of the loop for a while.

Video: And they had these things called DVDs! (cue maniacal laughter)

Chair: (walking up): What's up with him?

Ops: He just saw God.

Video (walking off with giggling girls): Onward! Show me this Full Metal Alchemist you speak of! \*more laughter\*

Chair: I never realized Stockholm Syndrome could be so therapeutic.

(Panels walks on stage.)

Panels: Just so you guys know, there's a couple of thousand people outside chanting "TORIYAMA!" and waiting for his panel to start. He's due on stage in...oh, five minutes.

Chair: That's it. We're all going to die.

Ops: A couple of thousand? I didn't think the Motel 6 parking lot was big enough to hold that many people.

(Guests walks on with the Church Organist, dressed in formal clothes, in tow.)

Guests: It's not; we've got 'em all waiting in the vacant lot next door. Luckily, my uncle came through with the revival tents, so we've got the

mob settled down reasonably well.

Panels: Except for that part where they're chanting "TORIYAMA" and getting awfully impatient.

Ops: Were the tents free?

Guests: No, we're all expected to tithe any profit the convention makes to the church in exchange for the favor. However, I did a bit of haggling and he threw in the use of the church organist for free!

Organist: I don't think I've ever played for a congregation that was quite so bloodthirsty.

Chair: That's nice. Of course, this still leaves us without a Guest of Honor and an impending riot on our hands.

Ops: I didn't want to do this, but I don't think we have a choice. Do any of you know what Akira Toriyama looks like?

(Everyone looks around at each other and shrugs.)

Panels: I have no idea.

Ops: Now, do you reckon anyone out there knows what he looks like?

Chair: That's right! We can put any old Japanese guy up on stage and the audience won't know the difference!

Guests: But, we don't know anyone who's Japanese.

Chair: Minor detail, minor detail. Now we just need for someone to play the part...

(Everyone looks at the Church Organist.)

Organist: Oh, hell no.

Chair: Well, I'm not going to do it.

Ops: Me neither.

Panels: I'm the wrong gender.

Guests: Everyone already knows who I am.

Ops: And hates you.

Guests: Did we really have to bring that up.

(Brief pause.)

Chair: Oh, Gopher!

(Gopher runs up on stage.)

Gopher: What's up, chief?



Chair: Congratulations. You're now a world famous manga artist.

Gopher: WHAT?

Chair: Look, no one here actually knows what Toriyama looks like so you're going to play him during the panel.

Gopher: But, I don't know anything about this guy!

Guests: Well, we'll just have to give you a crash course in his comics work so you can impersonate him! How much time do we have?

Panels: About two minutes.

Guests: Then again, how much do you really need to know to talk about Dragonball?

Gopher: I don't speak a word of Japanese!

Ops: Neither does anyone else here. Don't worry, you'll be fine!

Gopher: But...I...

Chair: Look, you're the one who thought putting on a con was a terrific idea. Well, sometimes people are called upon to sacrifice themselves for their ideas, and this happens to be one of those times.

Gopher (hysterical): Well why can't someone else be the sacrifice?

Ops: There's a really, really good reason why it has to be you that we don't have time to explain right now. Just do it.

Gopher (to ops): Listen, do me a favor. If I ever volunteer for anything ever again - anything whatsoever! - kill me.

(Dim lights, clear stage.)

\*\*\*

(Raise lights. There are two chairs on stage and a podium on one side. The Church Organist is sitting off to the other side. Chair walks up to the podium.)

Chair: Alright, everybody, it's the moment you've all been waiting for. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you one of Japan's most popular manga artists, the creator of such classics as Dr. Slump and Dragon Ball. Ladies and gentlemen...Akira Toriyama!

(Church Organist starts playing "Rock of Ages" as the Gopher, wearing dark sunglasses and possibly a curly black wig, walks onto the stage, accompanied by Guests as his translator. Gopher looks ready to bolt at a moment's notice, but is shoved into his seat by the translator. Throughout the Q&A session, Guests scribbles down translation notes on his pad and Gopher speaks atrocious Japanese with an incredibly thick American accent.)

Gopher: Uh...howdy.

(Translator elbows Gopher hard in the ribs as the Chair chuckles from the podium.)

Chair: Toriyama-sensei is just practicing his English a bit. Right?

Gopher (questioningly): Hai?

Guests (translating): Right?

Chair: Right. So...let's jump right in with questions from the audience!

(Three COUP members are planted throughout the audience. A crew member takes the cordless mic to whoever is asking a question at any given time.)

Attendee 1: Hi there! First off, I'd just like to say what an honor it is to have you here today

Gopher: Thanks! (Guest elbows him again.) Er...a-ri-ga-to!

Guest: Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to be here in Durham today and I look forward to meeting each and every one of you! It warms my heart to know that my work has found such an enthusiastic reception here in America!

(There's a short pause as the Chair and Gopher stare at Guests.)

Chair (Nervously): Isn't it amazing what a nuanced language Japanese is? I never knew it was capable of conveying so much information with so few syllables.

Attendee 1: Gosh! Well, I just wanted to ask Mr. Toriyama what sort of projects he was working on nowadays.

Gopher: Um. Er. Ah...ah....

(Gopher leans over and whispers to Guests)

Guests: Toriyama-sensei wants to know what comes after Z in English.

Attendee 1: Er, that's the last letter of the English alphabet.

Gopher (laughing nervously): Of course! (elbow) Er, hai, hai! Um - DragonBall Zzzzzzzzzz. ZZ. Z.

Attendee 1: You're making a Dragon Ball sequel?

Gopher (hesitant): Haaaaiiii?

Guests: You bet.

Gopher (slightly more confident): Hai!

Chair: Alright, next question.

Attendee 2: Hello, Toriyama-sensei!

Gopher: Ko...ko-nee-chee-waaa!

Attendee 2: I was wondering who your favorite Dragon Ball character was.

(pause)

Gopher: Gah.

Guests: SOOOOOOOOOOO that's an interesting question.

Gopher: So?

Guests: SOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO NNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO...NOOOOOOOOobody has really asked me that before.

Gopher: No?

Guests: Sooooooooooooo nnnnnnoooooooooo! I don't know how to answer off-hand...except to say that it just might rhyme with...um...G-Goku.

Gopher: Son Goku?

Guests: Yes, Son Goku!

Gopher (looking pleased): Hai!

(pause)

Attendee 2: Did Toriyama-sensei really say all that?

Guests: As his translator, Toriyama and I have a deep and meaningful rapport. Trust me.

Chair: Let's keep things moving! Next question!

Attendee 3: Hi there. I think everyone here should know that I've seen pictures of Akira Toriyama before and the guy they've got on stage doesn't resemble him in the slightest.

Chair: Oh shit.

Attendee 3: Dude, I don't know who you are, but you aren't Akira Toriyama. Do you have something to say to that?

(Gopher stands up, takes off his glasses, and walks up to the front of the stage. Chair and Guests walk up to either side of Gopher. Cue "King of Spain".)

(Gopher)

Once I wrote the DBZ!

(Chair and Guests)

Now I don't even try!

Give me a sales chart and watch me work it (Now I don't even try)  
I'm telling you I wrote the DBZ (Now I don't even try)  
And now I rock the convention circuit

Guests: Ichi! Ni! San! Shi!

(All three begin swaying back and forth; Chair and Guest make hand-jive esque motions with their hands)

(Gopher)  
Comic books, O Lord how I liked their looks  
Drawing big guys with spikey hairstyles fighting alien mooks  
Or little robot girls, inventors with Q-ly curls  
Dancing my way through the empty pages, giving each new idea a twirl

Once I wrote the DBZ (Now I don't even try)  
I raked in the yen at my editor's behest (Now I don't even try)  
I'm telling you I wrote the DBZ (Now I don't even try)  
And now I'm judging the costume contest

(Chair and Guests)  
Once he wrote the DBZ

(Gopher)  
I am in demand, I'm holding court for my fans, I hear them tell

(Chair, in a funny voice)  
Instead of ending the story...

(Guests, ditto)  
...throw in a fighting tourney...

(Chair)  
...and watch how it sells!

(Gopher)  
And just when the hero's won and you think I am finally done  
That's when I resurect the entire cast  
And usher in Volume Eleventy-One

Once I wrote the DBZ! (Now I don't even try)  
Hey Bleach, Hey Naruto, you knock-offs can bite me! (Now I don't even try)  
I'm telling you I wrote the DBZ (Now I don't even try)  
Now I'm seen lounging in your hotel lobby

(Chair and Guests)  
Once he wrote the DBZ!

(Gopher, speaking)  
Ladies and Gentlemen, I introduce to you a bunch of guys wearing big foam hats!

(Two cast memebers wearing exactly that come out and begin making fireball motions; they spend the rest of the song dancing and singing in the background)  
Kami-ha! Kami-ha-ha-ha-ka-mi-ka-mi-ha! Kami-ha-kami-ha! Ka! Mi! Ha!)

(Gopher, speaking)

Now some of you might be wondering how I came to be here in North Carolina instead of back in Japan drawing manga. Should I tell them guys?

(Everyone, yelling)

O-ne-gai!

(Gopher)

You see late last year I was staring at the clock  
And desperately trying to hurdle my terminal writer's block  
And just before the appointed time when my work was due out the door  
That's when it suddenly dawned on me - that's what my assistants are for!

(Everyone gasps, Gopher continues)

Deadlines thumping, shounen were jumping  
While my writing was Dr. Slumping  
I abandoned my nation for this impromptu vacation  
So next time you're in my autograph line  
Please remember my low-profile credo:

(Everyone)

I'm not white, I'm just incognito!

(Gopher)

Once I wrote the DBZ (Now I don't even try)  
I was counting the seconds until my retirement (Now I don't even try)  
I'm telling you I wrote the DBZ! (Now I don't even try)  
And now I'm chilling at Animazement

(Everyone else)

Once he wrote the DBZ

Gopher: Any more questions?

Attendee 3: Just one. In the last four pages of the 2004 Kanzeban edition of the Dragon Ball manga, Son Goku gives Kintoun to Uub rather than carrying him away himself. Why did you make that change?

(pause)

Gopher: How the hell should I know?

(Gopher walks off-stage. Lights dim.)

\*\*\*

(On Screen: SUNDAY)

(Raise lights. There's a planter standing in the middle of the stage. Chair shuffles onto stage, walks into the planter, and stares at it without comprehension. Ops walks on.)

Ops: Listen, I just talked to the hotel management. They want to talk to you about...let's see, how exactly did they put it..."gross violations of our contract".

Chair: Okay.

Ops: Also, we just had two dozen teenagers carted off to the hospital after some sort of bizzare cosplay accident.

Chair: Uh-huh.

Ops: Oh, and apparently your car's on fire in the parking lot.

Chair: Got it. (pause) Hey, send some gophers out there with a few cases of soda and see if they can put it out.

Ops: I'm on the case. (Gesturing towards planter) I'll also get this put back where it belongs.

Chair: No, no, that's okay. I kinda like it just where it is.

(Another pause. Ops looks concerned.)

Ops: Um...are you okay?

Chair (defeated): You bet. Never better. Don't worry about it.

(Ops shrugs and wanders off. The Chair sighs and looks at the planter some more. Cue "Tiki Torches at Twilight"; it's a long shot, but we might get Taka - the Animazement translator with the ukelele - to actually play the song live, but don't count on it.)

(Chair)

Hotel lobbies on Sunday, con guests all 'round the bar  
Fans from across the country are piling into their cars  
Duck into the dealer's room, buy some last-minute kitch  
Trading e-mail addresses with those who follow your niche

Making friends as the con ends, it happens every year  
Say goodbye to your peers and wear those cat ears  
Let's all post pictures on LiveJournal!

Hotel lobbies on Sunday, con guests all 'round the bar  
Fans from across the country are piling into their cars

(During the instrumental interlude, the rest of the cast walks out onto stage and lines up on either side of the Chair and the planter)

(Video)

Cartoons on all the t-shirts, munching on Pocky sticks  
Wrapping up video rooms with some samurai flicks

(Programming)

Bidding on hot bishounen in the art show auction  
For the next several weeks you'll live off instant ramen

(Ops)

Making friends as the con ends, it happens every year

(Gopher)

Say goodbye to your peers and wear those cat ears

(Guest)

Let's all post pictures on LiveJournal

(All)

Hotel lobbies on Sunday, con guests all 'round the bar  
Fans from across the country are piling into their cars  
Duck into the dealer's room, buy some last-minute kitch  
Trading e-mail addresses with those who follow your niche

Hotel lobbies on Sunday, con guests all 'round the bar  
Fans from across the country are piling into their cars  
Hotel lobbies on Sunday, con guests all 'round the bar  
Fans from across the country are piling into their cars

(Chair)

Hotel lobbies on Sunday...

(A random attendee walks up; with luck we can get Bex to do this)

Attendee: Excuse me, are you in charge of the convention?

Chair, sighing: Yeah, that's me.

Attendee: I just wanted to let you know that I had a really terrific time and I'm looking forward to next year's convention. You guys are putting this on again next year, right?

(There's a long pause as the Chair looks at everyone, then back at the attendee.)

Chair: Sure. What the hell.

(Lights dim, fin)