

Interview: Bruce Boxleitner at 2013 C2E2 Talks Career, New TV Series

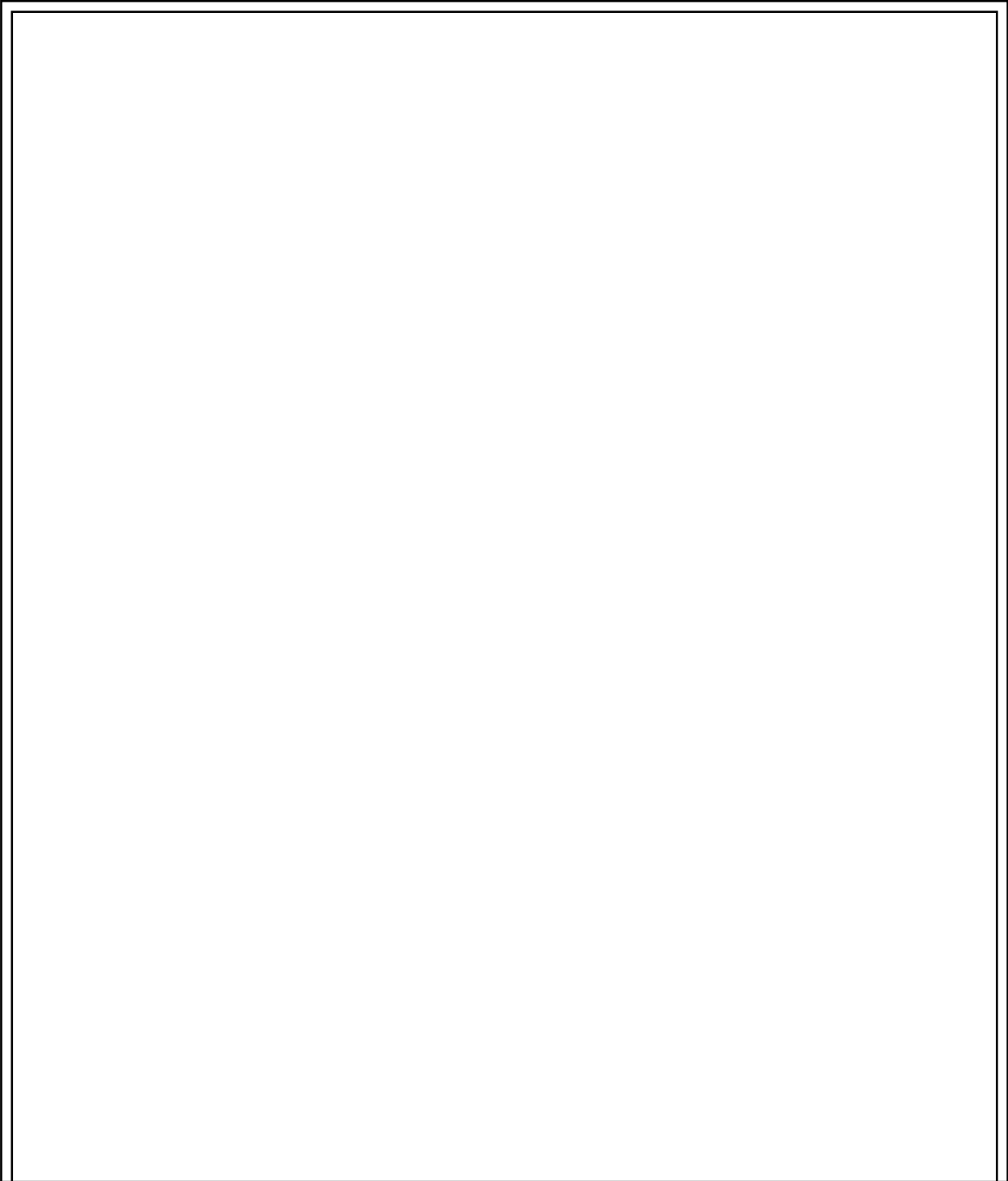
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CHICAGO – The Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo (C2E2) is happening in the Windy City over the weekend of April 26th-28th, with special guests, seminars, autograph booths and vendors covering the huge floors of the McCormick Place Convention Center. Among the special guests is Bruce Boxleitner, representing his former TV series Babylon 5, and several new science fiction projects.

Boxleitner is a local boy, born in Elgin, Illinois, and did his early acting training through the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago. He made his way to Los Angeles in the early 1970s and made his debut on the iconic sitcom “The Mary Tyler Moore Show.” He worked steadily during the 1970s, doing guest spots on “Gunsmoke,” “Hawaii Five-0,” “Police Woman” and “Baretta.” After a short run on the series “Bring ‘Em Back Alive” (1982), Boxleitner made his name on “Scarecrow and Mrs. King,” co-starring Kate Jackson, which ran for four years.

After a number of character parts in the late 1980s and early ‘90s, he took on another identifiable role as Capt. John Sheridan on the cult series “Babylon 5.” Much like “Star Trek,” the show used science fiction as a vehicle for commentary on social culture. In the movies, Boxleitner had a role in the original “TRON” (1982), and reprised his character nearly 30 years later in “TRON: Legacy” (2010). In recent years, he has written a couple of science fiction novels and is currently developing a new TV series called “Lantern City.”





Bruce Boxleitner at 2013 C2E2, on April 26th in Chicago
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com talked to Bruce Boxleitner at C2E2, where he plans to give a presentation seminar on the new series, autograph memorabilia and meet fans.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you did your initial training in acting locally, what remains with you today from that Chicago 'school'?

Bruce Boxleitner: I left here 41 years ago, but I love this city and still do, every time I come back. I think I got a good Midwestern work ethic. I always stuck to it and worked hard. Didn't Carl Sandburg call this the city of broad shoulders?

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the key to getting into that audition pipeline in the 1970s, that got you so many character parts in those familiar sitcoms and dramas back then?

Boxleitner: A good agent, and a casting director that takes a liking to you. I mostly did stuff on CBS-TV, and that was through Pam Polifroni. She was on the CBS lot with 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show' and 'Gunsmoke,' and I pretty much worked that lot. She cast me on shows there.

The story of my first job on 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show' came about because Ed. Weinberger, the executive producer of MTM, owed my agent a favor. He read me, and those five lines helped me pay for my Screen Actors Guild card.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the peak for you in regards to 'Scarecrow and Mrs. King,' and what defined to you what the series could do?

Boxleitner: One of the interesting elements of the show is that we always had a new set of producers and writers each of the four seasons. So Kate [Jackson] and I did a lot of improvisation between the two of us on the scripts. My favorite were the European episodes we did in the summer of 1984, they were the most interesting. They still had that cold war flavor. James Cosmo, who is here representing 'Game of

Thrones,' was one of the guys I put away in a Bavarian prison for thirty years on the show, and now he's doing better than I am. [laughs] See what happens?

HollywoodChicago.com: Given that in the most recent part of your career, you've been involved in science fiction like 'Babylon 5,' what is it about that particular genre that invites so much symbolism and different energies, beyond a look at the future and different planes of reality on other planets?

Boxleitner: Because the imagination for such tales is without limit. I think now that science fiction is so much more mainstream, whereas in the middle part of the 20th century it was more oriented towards kids. In Hollywood, all the powerful producers of today – like Steven Spielberg – they loved sci-fi when they were kids. So now the genre is treated with reverence, and films like 'Avatar' and 'The Dark Knight' are nominated for Best Picture Oscars. It has finally come into its own, in a grown-up way.



Bruce Boxleitner as Capt. John Sheridan in 'Babylon 5'
Photo credit: Warner Home Video

HollywoodChicago.com: As the 'TRON' franchise was revived, how did you first get wind of it, and how were you involved in the revival process?

Boxleitner: I was basically a hired actor, but I was grateful to be there, that they wanted the original actors. Jeff Bridges I understood, because of his movie star status, but I was glad to be a part of it again. TRON speaks to today, since the original film was ahead of its time. Now we're in the age that the 1982 film predicted. I'm amazed about the appreciation of the original, and certainly 'TRON: Legacy' is carrying it on. I'd be honored to be invited to the next one.

HollywoodChicago.com: What are the details of the new TV series, 'Lantern City,' that you are doing a panel at C2E2 for, and that you are trying to produce?

Boxleitner: Like TRON is speaking to today, we're speaking to another 'today,' in an alternate world. The series is called 'Lantern City,' and the themes are rooted in 'Steampunk.' Although that theme has been danced around in Hollywood, my co-executive producer [Trevor Crafts, seated next to Boxleitner] and I have an idea for a long term series along the lines of 'Game of Thrones' and 'Boardwalk Empire.' It has compelling characters and story lines, but with it's the look that is garnering the most commentary so far. Most people are saying they've never seen anything like it before, and that's good. In this day and age, to have a potential audience that isn't familiar with something is hard to do.

HollywoodChicago.com: Trevor, when are you anticipating a pilot situation?

Trevor Crafts: Around 2014, that's when we anticipate having a pilot done. It's been great with the fans, were up to over 100,000 on Facebook. We have 300,000 Twitter followers. We've done it backwards in production, engaging the fans first. In this new market of television, the fan following is such a crucial part of the overall media. It's changed the fabric of television, and we're trying to be at the forefront of not only a new genre of TV, but in the new way TV is produced.

Boxleitner: And it all started with Expos like this and the San Diego Comic Con. When Hollywood discovered Comic Con, it made it once of the biggest marketplaces for new ideas. You go directly to the people for which you are producing these movies and TV shows.

Bruce Boxleitner will present his "Lantern City" TV series on April 27th at 6:30pm in Room W471 at the Chicago Comic & Entertainment Expo (C2E2), McCormick Place Convention Center, Chicago. For more information [click here](#). [17] For a full schedule of events for April 27-28, and to purchase tickets for C2E2, [click here](#). [18]



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