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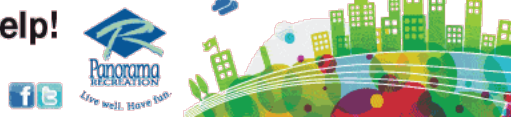
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# Victorian-era revellers set to invade Empress Hotel

By Matt Whelan - Victoria News Published: April 12, 2012



Rick Van Krugel and wife Linda Rogers create steampunk inspired jewelry in their kitchen studio. The Victoria Steam Exhibition takes place on April 20.

Don Denton/News staff

Updated: April 13, 2012 3:00 PM

Polish your brass-rimmed, leather-lined goggles, ready your steam-powered airships, and make a note of this on your teak-panelled iPad: the third annual Victoria Steam Exhibition arrives April 20.

So what, in the name of Queen Victoria, is steampunk?

"It's early industrialism's vision of itself in the future," said event impresario Jordan Stratford. "The appeal of steampunk is its absurdity. There's no way you could take all this stuff seriously."

The festival will offer a more contemporary breed of Victorian the opportunity to immerse themselves in this antediluvian subculture. A conglomeration of jewelers, tinkers, milliners, artisans, anachronists, leather, metal and glass workers will be on hand for a celebration of steampunk art and culture.

It'll be an interactive affair, with about half of attendees milling around in top hats, lace corsets and doiled glove cuffs, while sporting jetpacks, ray guns and other items of Jules Verne-inspired technology.

On Friday night, an absinthe tasting will be held at Victoria's esteemed Union Club, a building that dates back to

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times when today’s steampunk art works would have resembled the prototypical tools and technologies of the day. Local historian Chris Adams, who runs the popular Discover the Past Ghost Tours around Victoria, will be giving a lecture on the history, culture and appreciation of absinthe, while guests enjoy flights of the fabled spirit. A tour of the clubhouse’s grandiose 1884 architecture will follow.

Over the weekend, carousers can emerge from their anise-induced hazes at the Empress Hotel while taking in talks, presentations and book signings by such steampunk somebodies as Ann Vandermeer, Jeff Vandermeer, Kristina Erickson and Robert Brown.

Jeff Vandermeer wrote the book – quite literally – on steampunk (*The Steampunk Bible: An Illustrated Guide to the World of Imaginary Airships, Corsets and Goggles, Mad Scientists, and Strange Literature*), while Erickson and Brown front the band Abney Park.

“Ann and Jeff are bastions of the genre,” said Stratford. “And Abney Park are the quintessential steampunk band.”

There will also be literary readings, along with continuous panel discussions on costuming, history and prop making.

This year’s featured guest is Victoria’s own Ian Finch Field, whose leather and metal work has been featured in the steamwork-staple publication 1000 Steampunk Creations as well as the video for Justin Bieber’s Santa Claus Is Coming to Town music video.

“Ian is a great example of a local boy done good,” said Stratford.

Saturday night brings the boisterous brass-band antics of Bucan Bucan, the banjo-and-beat-box-based blues of Tarran the Tailor and the caricatural titillations of Cherry Poppins to the Steampunk Cabaret Burlesque, also to be held at the Empress.

Bene! Superlative! Top! How much?

A \$50 weekend pass will allow steampunk enthusiasts and newcomers alike access to all events at the Empress Hotel while an additional \$50 will get you into the absinthe tasting and lecture at the Union Club on Friday night.

About 400 zeppelin pilots, mad scientists, lusher and vaudevillians are expected to attend.

“Steampunk exists to provoke, entertain, amuse and inspire,” said Stratford. “It’ll be a maelstrom, a hell of a lot of fun.”

For tickets and information go to [www.victoriasteamexpo.com](http://www.victoriasteamexpo.com).

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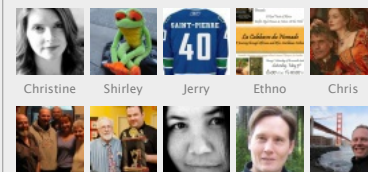
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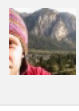
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