

From: Ben Roimola <Ben.Roimola@sci.fi>
Date: Mon Jan 27, 2003 12:48:46 Europe/Helsinki
Subject: Finncon X Agents newsletter January 2003

(This is a newsletter sent to all agents of Finncon X - Eurocon 2003)

Greetings Finncon agents!

This is the first in what I hope to become a monthly newsletter to all you excellent Finncon agents out there. As this is the first newsletter it's going to be a bit longer than what probably will be the norm, but I thought I'd tell you as much about Finncon (past and present) as I can without turning this into something in the scale of modern fantasy epics. ;)

If you don't feel like going through all of this, here are the condensed facts that you need to know:

-----CONDENSED FACTS STARTS HERE-----

Finncon X - Eurocon 2003 - Baltcon 2003

<http://www.finncon.org>

*Time: 1-3.8.2003 (main con days are August 2nd and 3rd)

*Place: The town of Turku in the south-western Finland. The con will be held in the main buildings of the University of Turku (10-15 minutes walking distance from the absolute centre of the town).

*Membership fee: FREE! (Entrance to the party on Saturday evening will probably cost something like 5 euros, but there is absolutely no entrance fee to attend the main con programme).

*GOHs: Karolina Bjällerstedt Mickos (Sweden), Jonathan Clements (UK), Boris Hurtta (Finland), Steve Sansweet (USA) and Michael Swanwick (USA).

*Accommodation: There will be some kind of cheap accommodation (like sleeping in your own sleeping bag in a school hall or something like that), more info on that later in the spring. For now we have made a deal with a couple of hotels in the centre of town. Prices are 76 euros/night at Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs (this is the hotel where the GoHs will stay) and 62 euros/night at Sokos Hotel City Börs. The prices are the same for single and double rooms and THIS IS THE PRICE PER ROOM NOT PER PERSON. So, for example two persons sharing a double room at Hotel City Börs pay 31 euros per night per person. These hotels are situated just across the street from each other in the absolute centre of the town. The Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs is considered to be one of the best hotels in town, so these prices are actually very good deals. Read more about accommodation below or on our web page.

NOTE: Tall Ships Race will be held in Turku during Finncon, so all hotels in town will probably be booked full during the con weekend. If you want to stay at a hotel you really should make your reservations as soon as possible.

*Writing competition: BALTASTICA 2003 - The Baltic Science Fiction and Fantasy Short Story Contest. As a part of the Baltcon programme of Finncon X there will

be a speculative fiction short story writing contest open to all persons residing in the Baltic region. More info at <http://www.finncon.org/baltastica/>

*Web page: You'll find all you need to know about Finncon at our web page at <http://www.finncon.org> If you are missing some information, just let me know.

*Banner: Feel free to put the Finncon banner on your web page (and try to get

other people to do the same). Paste this code snippet to your page to get the banner

<p>

</p>

-----CONDENSED FACTS END HERE-----

Ok, now that we've got the facts of the fact out of the way, lets start blabbering. Here's an index about what I'm going to take up in this newsletter:

- A short history of Finncons & what's a Finncon anyway
- Finncon X - Programme, GoHs and all that
- Accommodation
- Web pages and the banner
- What you can do

*** A short history of Finncons & what's a Finncon anyway ***

Finncon is the name for the Finnish national science fiction and fantasy con. The first Finncon was held in Helsinki in 1986. Since the second Finncon, Finncon 89 in 1989, Finncons have been free of membership charges.

Why do we keep Finncons free? Well apart from being the great gathering of all things fannish and sf in Finland, Finncons are also a kind of showcase of sf, a great PR-happening which in it self spreads information about what science fiction and fantasy is to the general public. With a free con that gets mentioned in most of the local and national newspapers, on radio and television it's easy for people to just drop by and see what the fuss is all about.

Finncons today get anything from 3000 to 6000 visitors during the con. Finncon X is aiming for 4000 visitors.

This doesn't mean that there are 4000 people at the con all the time. This also doesn't mean that all these 4000 people are sf-fans. This means that during the con weekend 4000 people will visit the con and pick up the free con booklet. Yes, that's how we keep count of the number of visitors at Finncons, we count how many con booklets are given out. The print run of the con booklet for Finncon X will be something like 5000 copies. After the con we count how many of those we have left and that tells us approximately how many people have visited the con. Yes, you are absolutely right: some people might take more than one booklet, but on the other hand some people might not take a booklet at all, so in the end it all evens up more or less.

Of these 4000 visitors the majority are people who are not active in fandom. They might even be people who don't know what sf is. But they are people who are curious and want to find out more. They come in, take the con booklet, look around, listen to some of the programme and then leave. Some might turn around at the door and leave right away, while others might get hooked and stay the whole con and later join one of the national sf-clubs.

No matter how many people will visit the con, one thing is for sure: 99,9% of Finnish fandom will be there. This means a core group of something like

200-500 people who will be there because it's Finncon and who definitely know what sf is. So, you don't have to be afraid to come to Finncon and think that all you'll see are mundanes, non sf-fans or proto-fans, there are a lot of us REAL fans here just waiting to meet fans from other parts of the globe!

So far Finncons haven't been able to attract many fans from other countries, but we hope to change this with Finncon X. Even before Finncon was elected to be the Eurocon 2003 we had decided to have a lot of programme items in English. As Finncon X is also Eurocon 2003 and Baltcon 2003 we are determined to make Finncon X the most international Finncon ever, and this we hope to achieve with your help!

Finncon X will have an English programme track running through the whole con. We will also have some programme items in Swedish (Finland is a bilingual country with Swedish as a minority language). And you can rest assured that 99% of all the Finnish fans have no problem in communicating with you in English. We Finns might be a bit shy in the beginning, but the language is not a problem. ;)

Most Finncons have been held in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Two cons have been held in Jyväskylä (in central Finland) and one in Turku.

There isn't a voting about when or where the next Finncon will be held, instead there is a discussion within the Finnish fandom. Some group just gets the urge to arrange a con, they ask around "We would like to arrange a Finncon, is this OK, or does somebody else have similar plans?". If no one else has thought about arranging a Finncon that year its a go.

As arranging big cons like Finncons are quite a heavy burden there is a natural rotation within the main sf-groups in Finland (Helsinki, Jyväskylä and Turku (and probably Tampere in the future)). As there is no fixed system behind the rotation there isn't necessarily a Finncon every year. By this time we know that Jyväskylä will arrange a Finncon in 2004, but 2005 is still completely open.

A list of all the past Finncons

*1986: Finncon 86 (23-25.5.1986), Helsinki. GoHs: Brian Aldiss (UK), surprise GoHs: Sam J. Lundwall (Sweden) and Börje Crona (Sweden).

*1989: Finncon 89 (12-13.8.1989), Helsinki. GoHs: John Brunner (UK) and Tom Ölander (Finland); fanGoH: Martin Tudor (UK).

*1991: Finncon 91 (10-11.8.1991), Helsinki. GoHs: Iain Banks (UK) and John Alexander (UK?).

*1993: Finncon 93 (7-8.8.1993), Helsinki. GoHs: Terry Pratchett (UK) and Bryan Talbot (UK).

*1995: Finncon 95 (17-18.6.1995) Jyväskylä. GoHs: Bruce Sterling (USA), Vonda McIntyre (USA) and Storm Constantine (UK).

*1997: Finncon 97 (16-17.8.1997) Helsinki. GoHs: Norman Spinrad (USA/France) and Ian McDonald (UK).

*1999: Finncon 99 (14-15.8.1999), Turku. GoHs: Connie Willis (USA) and Philip Pullman (UK); fanGoH Arvid Engholm (Sweden).

*2000: Millennium Finncon (18-20.8.2000), Helsinki. GoHs: Neil Gaiman (UK/USA), Stephen Baxter (UK) and Ken MacLeod (UK).

*2001: Finncon - Baltcon 2001 (14-15.7.2001), Jyväskylä. GoHs: Jonathan Carrol (USA/Austria), David Langford (UK), Stelarc (Australia), Richard Stallman (USA) Guy Windsor (UK/Finland) and Johanna Sinisalo (Finland); fanGoH: Ahrvid Engholm (Sweden).

OK, and then the BIG question: How do we arrange a con without a membership fee? It's actually quite easy, but it requires a lot of hard work. The preliminary budget for Finncon X is around 25000 euros (that's about 25000 USD). Most of this will be covered by cultural grants from different institutions and by sponsors. The rest will be covered by earnings that we get from selling Finncon t-shirts and other such stuff, adverts in the con booklet and the fee that dealer's have to pay for selling their stuff in the dealer's room.

So, it's a hard work of contacting possible sponsors and trying to convince them to sponsor us, filling application forms for all kinds of different grants, selling adverts to the con booklet and so on and so on. But it's worth it because it means that no one will have to pay to enjoy Finncon!

*** Finncon X - Programme, GoHs and all that ***

A preliminary list of programme items for Finncon X - Eurocon 2003 will be published in march on <http://www.finncon.org> and I will of course also e-mail it to you in the march issue of this agents newsletter.

What I can tell you at this point is that the programme will include talks by the GoHs, panel discussions and presentations on different sf-subjects, an art show, movies... All the things you can expect from an sf-con. Some of the main themes of Finncon X are Tolkien, Star Wars, anime and "science and science fiction".

The main con days are Saturday and Sunday. On Friday there will be different kinds of workshops for example for sf-academics. These workshops might or might not have a fee. You'll know more when I'll know more. :)

Most of the programme items on Saturday and Sunday will be of serious nature, but there will of course be some fannish events also. And parties!

The main programme will run from about 10-18 (10 AM to 6 PM) on Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday evening there will be a big party in a nearby pub.

There will probably be a Finncon warm-up party on Friday evening. There have even been talks about a warm-up party on Thursday evening and a dead-dog party on Sunday after the con, but these have not yet been decided on.

Most of the programme will be in Finnish, but there will be A LOT of programme items in English too and some even in Swedish. We plan to have some kind of English programme going on through the whole con.

More on all this in march. But one thing you should note already is Baltastica 2003. This is a Baltic short story contest as part of the Baltcon-programme of Finncon X. The stories should be written in English and will be judged by a jury consisting of sf-fans from the Baltic countries. The contest is open to residents of the Baltic countries. More information about deadlines and such can be found at <http://www.finncon.org/baltastica/>

You probably already know about the GoHs of Finncon X - Eurocon 2003, but here are a few words on each of them (the text is mostly from our web page):

Karolina Bjällerstedt Mickos is Finncons Nordic guest of honour. She is a

Swedish author who writes both science fiction and fantasy. She has so far published two novels (well actually one novel that the publisher split into two volumes).

Jonathan Clements, the anime guest of honour, has translated over 70 anime and manga, and worked as a voice actor and dubbing director. He is the resident anime expert on the UK's Sci Fi channel, and a contributing editor to Newtype USA magazine. He is the co-author of the Anime Encyclopedia.

Boris Hurttu is the Finnish guest of honour. He has been a well-known and appreciated SF writer for well over a decade. He has written both short stories and novels, some of which belong to the genre of SF, some to mainstream literature. Hurttu has also often been rated among the top ten in the annual Atorox competition for the best Finnish SF short story, and he has been successful also in the short story competition of the Portti magazine. He has published four novels and edited two short story collections.

Steve Sansweet is the greatest Star Wars fan in the world. He has turned his passion into an occupation and is nowadays responsible for Lucasfilm's fan connections. He has written (or co-written) ten books, eight of which are about Star Wars.

Michael Swanwick is an American science fiction author, who has earlier visited Swecon in Sweden and is also eager to become acquainted with the Finnish fandom. He has won several awards, for example the Nebula, the Hugo, the Theodore Sturgeon Award and the World Fantasy Award. Swanwick is the author of seven novels and tons of short stories. You can find a complete bibliography on his works on his home-page at <http://www.michaelswanwick.com/nonfic/biblio.html>

*** Accommodation ***

There will be some kind of cheap accommodation (like sleeping in your own sleeping bag in a school hall or something like that), but we haven't made any deals about that yet.

What we have is a deal with two hotels in the centre of town. The prices might feel high, but these are very good hotels and these prices are actually a very good deal compared to normal hotel prices in Finland.

There are of course other (and cheaper) hotels in town also. You can find a list on <http://www.finncon.org/english/e.hotels.shtml>

I will make a list of hotels in different price categories and hostels and such that are close to the con. I will also make a map that shows the location of these, but that will have to wait till the February issue of the agent's newsletter.

If you can't wait till February (or you're just curious) then you can go this address (sorry for the enormous URL):

<http://opaskartta.turku.fi/cgi-bin/GifMap.dll?Theme=-%20Guidemap&West=69906.4&South=104897.9&East=70946.5&North=105698.0&Height=400&Width=520&Command=DisplayLink&Language=us&Info=105541.9,70888.4,Fincon%20X%20-%20Eurocon%202003&Page>

There you'll find a searchable map of Turku. The map that you are taken to

shows the con site in the upper right corner (it says "Yliopisto" in huge letters which is Finnish for university) and the market place in the lower left corner (the grey square; the con hotels are by this square).

Below is what we have on our web page about the official con hotel at the moment. NOTE: Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs is the hotel where the GoHs will be staying and Sokos Hotel City Börs is just across the street from there. Both hotels are in the absolute centre of town, on a 15 minutes walking distance from the con.

Official Con hotel 2003

Accommodation for visitors is provided by Sokos Hotels, Turku.

The official Con hotels are located in central Turku, within walking distance of the venue. The hotels offer rooms for Con visitors at special prices:

* Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs: 76 EUR / day, single or double room

* Sokos Hotel City Börs: 62 EUR / day, single or double room

In other words, the prices pertain to rooms, not to the number of guests. The room prices include an ample buffet breakfast, the current VAT of 8% and, in Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs, a morning sauna and swim. The special prices require a reservation for at least two consecutive nights. You will get the special price by mentioning "Finncon X" when making your reservation. The hotels are situated on the edge of the Market Place; the addresses are:

Sokos Hotel Hamburger Börs

Kauppiaskatu 6, Turku

Sokos Hotel City Börs

Eerikinkatu 11, Turku.

Direct reservations:

Turku Sokos Hotels sales office, tel: +358-2-337 3800, fax: +358-2-2311010, sales.turku@sok.fi.

N.B! The availability of special price rooms is limited. Tall Ships' Race will be organised in Turku on the same weekend as Finncon, so hotel rooms should be reserved well in advance.

*** Web pages and the banner ***

The web pages of Finncon X are up and running in Finnish, Swedish and English. Right now the Swedish pages are in need of updating, but that will be taken care of RSN (you know how it is with web pages, they just never seem to be completely done :)).

If you have a web page of your own please consider putting the Finncon X - Eurocon 2003 banner on your page. Just copy this code somewhere on your page to get the banner:

<p>

</p>

*** What you can do ***

As Finncon has no membership fee you don't have to collect membership fees or anything like that.

All we want you to do is spread the information about Finncon as widely in your country as possible. Mail information about the con to local mailing lists, post information in newsgroups and on web boards. Inform sf-clubs in your country about Finncon X, try to get local zines to publish information about the con. Try to get as many local sf-web pages as possible to put the Finncon X banner on their pages.

At this moment Finncon X has agents in Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Spain. If you know someone in some other (European) country who could be an agent for Finncon X let me (Ben.Roimola@sci.fi) know or forward this e-mail to that person and ask him to contact me.

All the best & don't hesitate to e-mail me with questions about Finncon X,

-Ben-

-- Who: Ben Roimola, M.Sc. in geology from Åbo Akademi university
What: Science fiction, fantasy, Macintosh, movies, swords, dogs...
Why: * What is Time to a Wolf? * Happy, happy, joy, joy! *
--> Sf-news in swedish: <http://www.enhorningen.net> <--
<http://www.finncon.org> Finncon X - Eurocon 2003 - Baltcon 2003
THE European sf-event of 2003