

# Rhody Rambles: You Shoulda Been There!: Happenings around town

**NecronomiCon** 2019 was as big and robust a draw as ever, pulling in weird fiction fans from all corners of the Earth.

There were 20 to 30 people involved in planning the core programming, including a mini film fest and gaming convention that received rave reviews, an amazing arts show, walking tours, a complete book that was published, author readings, a hall of vendors, an elegant costume ball, musical events and much more, all with a weird fiction / horror theme. The density of events over the four-ish days of the Con is truly remarkable, and it's always a delight to voyage about the various venues, identifying other fans by their generally sarcastic-scary t-shirts or arcane, corseted garb. The event included podcasts, theater, poetry, LARPing and a series of graduate level academic seminars inspired by or connected to fringe science or strange history; yes, Lovecraftian lore may intersect real science in meaningful ways.

"Every year we've been going up and up in attendance - up about 12% over last year," announced event coordinator and founder Neils Hobbs at the event's wrap-up meeting. "This year we cracked over 2,000 attendees [not counting vendors and volunteers]."

"If we can give people who enjoy this genre some moments of peace and solidarity, then it's all worth it," added SJ Bagley, who helped plan the core programming. "You hope everyone finds something in the candy assortment of panels that speaks to what they're looking for," adds Hobbs.

"We will also continue to explore the world of weird fiction without a capital W - literature that's just off, odd or weird in voice that's not necessarily genre. We have perhaps the biggest platform in weird fiction, and we have a responsibility to open it up to all kinds of voices. We want everyone to feel welcome, and we want to hear all the voices, be inclusive. We have a responsibility to everything that's weird or different," explained Bagley.

The organizers also gave a shout out to Dempo Kurishima, this year's guest of honor, an established author from Japan.

Ideas for the next NecronomiCon included panels for beginning authors and for women authors who also are minorities - because, in the words of one attendee who falls into this category, "We live at the intersection of racism and sexism," reading lists, drunk trivia and more. Further celebration of the city was also promised for future events. "It's not 'NecronomiCon,' it's 'NecronomiCon Providence.' [The city's] history and the community you find here today are essential to the event - it's a great city to highlight. It's why we don't stick this in the convention center where you might not even leave. We make you wander around the city from place to place," said Hobbs.

The end of the Con featured the official announcement of the next iteration of NecronomiCon: 2021, Aug 17 -20 (which will be good tides for WaterFire). Until then, watch out for any displaced ghouls!

**Divine PVD** was a music festival that puts Providence musicians in the role of ambassadors for the city, bringing their musical, magical ways to other parts of RI. The first year took place in Jamestown, and this second year at the esteemed Knickerbocker in Westerly on August 17. The night's lineup took over

both stages with non-stop music that included a dozen acts, leading up to Jesse and the Tree People, Death Vessel and Ian O'Neil performing with members of Deer Tick, who rocked the house with amazing originals.

The festival is organized by PVD musicians and bookers Natale X and Chrissy Stewart, whose goal is to "bring PVD love to the rest of the state," according to Stewart. With its band of intriguing, soulful acts and eclectic vendors, the show achieved just that, and drew in a number of curious locals who experienced these bands and performers for the first time.

Divine PVD hasn't selected its location for next year yet, so if you live far enough from PVD that city visitors need to pack a lunch to come visit, suggest your town to the organizers at [fb.com/PVDlive](https://www.facebook.com/PVDlive)

**The Newport Art House** held their annual fundraiser and inaugural anti-gala event on August 23. This ball was a magical, transcendent experience, taking place on the extensive grounds – artfully hidden right in the center of the city – of 304 Bellevue Ave, the estate of respected local philanthropist Ron Fleming. The gardens were artfully lit, which created an environment where soft darkness would part as you rounded any given corner, where an unexpected splash of art would be discovered. That included live, real-time portraiture by Rupert Nesbitt; the entrancing, mermaid-like vocal stylings of Sweatpea Pumpkin; the Newport String Project; Carol Scavotto; Liz Kovarsky and numerous musical performances and inviting conversation nooks, set up with throw rugs and couches placed in oases of light sprinkled about the grounds. Everything from ballgowns to t-shirts were sported by attendees, and masquerade masks and exquisite head adornments were commonplace. The anti-gala had a suggested ticket price, but was "pay what you can" to keep the event accessible to artists of all income levels, in keeping with Newport Art House's mission to champion the up-and-coming arts scene. The bacchanal was dedicated to helping to "keep Newport weird." And weirdness was definitely achieved.

**The Avenue Concept**, PVD's guardian of public art and spaces, had a picturesque sunset launch party among towering sunflowers currently beautifying the wake of the old I-195. The well-attended celebration on August 30 recognized the launch of Avenue Concept's new annual magazine, *Ave.*, which chronicles the role of public art in public life, exposing some of the stories behind the art and artists. Guests enjoyed tunes on vinyl by Unkle Thirsty and beverages from Revival and Campus Fine Wines at the public art project 10,000 Suns (see story page XX), near the new pedestrian bridge in PVD. The glossy magazine will be available for purchase at The Avenue Concept and select local bookstores.