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Writers of the Future Awards Ceremony

by [Kat Avila](#)

I went to worship at the altar of L. Ron Hubbard — or so it appeared. A giant photograph of the founder of Scientology draped the left half of the stage. Each Writers of the Future and Illustrators of the Future award recipient thanked Mr. Hubbard in their acceptance speech, prompting a coworker to nudge me to whisper, "They're talking about him like he's still alive."

I was admittedly leery of attending the 22nd Annual L. Ron Hubbard Writers & Illustrators of the Future Contest Awards Ceremony held on August 18, 2006, at the San Diego Air & Space Museum. But however one feels toward L. Ron Hubbard or the Church of Scientology, the international competition is regarded as an important talent discovery vehicle within the science fiction community. Support was verified by the star power of the contest judges at the ceremony, among them Brian Herbert, Frederik Pohl, Anne McCaffrey, Tim Powers, and K.D. Wentworth.

Two of the judges, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, shared this year's L. Ron Hubbard Lifetime Achievement Award. An issue of concern brought up by Niven during his acceptance speech was piracy on the Internet. He speculated the day may not be far off when authors returned to searching for patrons to sponsor their work and to expect more censorship if that should happen.

The Gold Award winners from among the 24 award recipients were Writers of the Future winner Brandon Sigrist of Minneapolis, Minnesota, for his short story "Life on the

Voodoo Driving Range", and Illustrators of the Future winner Eldar Zakirov from Uzbekistan.

Attendees of the awards ceremony were given complimentary copies of the awards anthology by **Galaxy Press**, publisher of L. Ron Hubbard's works. The anthology is advertised on the cover as "The Best New Science Fiction and Fantasy of the Year." I was able to get my copy signed by nearly all the award winners, including Larry Niven, the exception being Jerry Pournelle who appeared disinterested.



*Writers of the Future awards stage
photo by Kat Avila*

While the airplanes roaring overhead into San Diego International Airport were a bit of a nuisance during the ceremony, the Air & Space Museum was still a glamorous and appropriate venue. After the post-awards book signing party, the excited award recipients had another book signing to look forward to the following day.

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