




COMIC-CON 2018: CHESLEY BONESTELL: A BRUSH WITH THE FUTURE

by Jana Monji

July 30, 2018 |  0

When San Diego Comic-Con originally started, it was about meeting the artists and writers behind comics and science fiction and fantasy—people like Chesley Bonestell. So, it's fitting that a documentary about him, "Chesley Bonestell: A Brush with the Future," should win the Comic-Con International Independent Film Festival's (CCI-IFF) Best Documentary Award.

Written and directed by Douglass M. Stewart Jr., the documentary is a straight-forward tribute to a man (1888-1986) who was born in San Francisco and died in Carmel. In between his artistic flair created one of San Francisco's landmarks (the Golden Gate Bridge) and in Hollywood, his matte paintings helped transport the audience to exotic locations like Paris in the 1939 "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and to the expansive offices and estate of the newspaper mogul in the 1942 "Citizen Kane."

Beyond California, you can see Bonestell's designs in the Plymouth Rock Memorial in Massachusetts, the and U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. among other buildings. But before he became an architect, he reached even further by illustrating worlds that we had yet to see after being inspired by seeing Saturn through San Jose's Lick Observatory in 1905.

Bonestell is sometimes called the "Father of Modern Space art" because he illustrated the covers of science fiction magazines (primarily "The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction") and book covers. But scientists invited him to illustrate their concepts of space flight and the terrain on planets. Sometimes reality didn't match the beauty austere beauty imagined by Bonestell (e.g. the moon).

So beloved was he by real scientists that he was awarded a medal by the British Interplanetary Society, won an International Fantasy Award for non-fiction in 1951, his paintings hang in the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Collection of Fine Arts and had a crater on Mars and an asteroid named after him.

The documentary includes interviews with Hugo Award-winning biographer of Bonestell, [Ron Miller](#); the visual effects supervisor for "Close Encounter" and "[Star Trek: The Motion Picture](#)," [Douglas Trumbull](#) and four-time Oscar winning sound effects designer [Ben Burtt](#) and archival footage of the late [Ray Bradbury](#).

At present there is no release date, but "Chesley Bonestell: A Brush with the Future" is scheduled to screen at the Long Beach International Film Festival in Long Beach, New York (August 1-4, 2018); at WorldCon76 in San Jose, CA (August 17 and 20) and at the Astronomical Society of the Pacific in San Francisco (September 11).

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