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Never have there been so many self-proclaimed “Dick-heads” gathered in Gilpin at one time as there were last weekend. There were approximately 30 of these fans of the science fiction author Philip K. Dick attending a festival in the author’s honor, held for the first time in the United States, right here in Gilpin County and Nederland.

The Philip K. Dick (PKD) Festival was the brainchild of Ward resident, David Hyde, who is a long-time fan of Dick’s works. The late author (Dick died in 1982) began writing seriously in the early 1950’s with his most prolific period coming a decade later, when he penned twenty novels in just seven years. (1962-1969). There are several movies based on Dick’s books. The movie “Blade Runner,” based on his novel, “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?” is probably mainstream society’s most predominant link to Dick. Fans, however, are viscerally linked, effortlessly quoting from their favorite works and even incorporating Dick’s creativity into their daily lives. Hyde references Dick’s “pink beam” in his email address and took the fungal identity of “Lord Running Clam” (a character in “Clans of the Alphane Moon”) as host of the festival. He had been thinking about a festival for several years, he said. Hyde, with numerous helpers, was the driving force in making the festival happen. Once he realized Gilpin/Nederland would be an ideal festival location, he went about organizing venues, events and speakers.

Hyde put together an impressive panel of speakers for the festival. Authors, David Gill and Sam Umland are also professors of English at San Francisco State University and the University of Nebraska, respectively. Marleen Barr is an author who teaches in the Department of Communication and Media at Fordham University. Patrick Clark, Frank Bertrand, John Fairchild, Frank Hollander, Erik Davis and Hyde are all Dick scholars who have published their own works. Speakers and fans living on both coasts and as far away as Japan, traveled to Gilpin to attend the PKD Festival. (The Rocky Mountain cool temperatures were a bonus commented on and appreciated by many.)

The picnic area and expansive deck at Roy's Last Shot served as home base for the three-day festival. Hyde opened there with thank-you's and introductions on Friday morning, August 13th. Panels and speakers filled the afternoon. Vendor booths with many of these authors' books and other PDK materials for sale were set up along side the volleyball court. Local businesses had been invited to participate, too. There was also a first-aid station and a children's area where playing with "slimemold" (another reference to "Alphane Moon") was a hit. On Saturday, it was breakfast at the Sundance Lodge and a stop at the Artists' Niche in Nederland, followed by a full afternoon of presentations and discussion at the Gilpin County Public Library. Partying to the rock music of Blu Simon at the Trackside Tavern/Stage Stop in Rollinsville finished off the night. Sunday morning was spent back in Nederland and then an afternoon silent auction and wind-up at Last Shot. All proceeds benefitted Paul Williams, founder of the Philip K Dick Society who was an editor and friend of Dick. Williams was struck by a car as he rode his bicycle in San Francisco in 1995 and now requires full-time nursing home care. In addition to the businesses mentioned above, Solutions Occupational Safety, Stateside Nursing International and Blue Owl Books sponsored the event.

Most of the folks attending this festival said they had discovered Dick's books as teenagers or in college. They stay connected online, through various publications and, now through the PKD Festival. "As I get further away from my college years," one woman in her twenties commented, "it's kind of fun to think there's an intellectual outlet – something I enjoy." She had come from Chicago for the festival and found plenty of intellectual conversation at the Gilpin library on Saturday where discussion included "the post-modern gnosis of PKD," "orthogonal time" the "circular relationship between dreams and writing," "metafictional PDK," "self-referentiality," "hypermediation," "the logos that animates the universe" and how some of Dick's books are "metaphors of reality," or "like a virus, are neither living nor dead" and "a kind of infection Dick wants to enter into the reader." Those who want to risk infection will find a plethora of PDK information online and a sampling of his books at the Gilpin County Public Library.

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I am a big PKD fan and a Gilpin County resident. I found out about the festival on Sat. night and went up to the Stage Stop around 9pm in hopes of catching some fans. I found nothing really, and back-tracing the steps of the festival back to the Last Shot, I heard bartenders talking of a complete lack of promotion of the event. Hopefully if the event happens in the future, the organizers will take the promotion side of it more seriously so that the great county of Gilpin can get some business out of it, and PKD fans of all sort can have a better experience.

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This was a great PKD festival! Thanks to all the fans from all over the world who attended and the locals here in Colorado too. We shall be doing the festival again in 2 years but, the next one will be in the San Francisco area. Follow events as we progress to The Philip K. Dick Festival 2012 in San Francisco here: www.philipkdickfestival.com - Lord Running Clam

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