

1 Bruce, you've been one of the stars of the 2013 edition of Lucca Games. Being a guest of honour, you've seen both the public aspects and the behind-the-scenes of the convention. A comment about your experience here?

Andrea, I think the Lucca Games convention was the best I ever attended. There's plenty to see and do there, old Lucca is splendid, and the convention staff has been outstanding in their endeavor to treat their guests well. The colorful crowd of convention visitors, the breadth of game types and entertainment offered, and the general friendliness all around were very exciting. There wasn't a time when I was bored. I was also immensely pleased with meeting so many Mystara fans and providing them with more fun along the way. I must also thank you for the exquisite facilities I was given to enjoy during my stay. Kudos for a well-run show!

2 As one of the greatest Role-Playing Game designers, you have traveled a lot around the world, attending many of the greatest gaming conventions. What do you think are the key aspects characterizing Lucca Games?

The first thing would be the site of medieval/renaissance Lucca. It's definitely a winner. Though some might see the need to spread out the different venues to separate areas within the old town as a drawback, I actually found it refreshing, with or without the rain. Quaint yet charming, the setup enables visitors to better experience old Lucca. The proportion of people wearing costumes is surprising and fun to watch. The presence of the comic books festival alongside the general gaming platform (RPG, boardgames, CCG, video games, LARP, etc.) in addition to the focus on art and movies is unusual and supports a wider range of interests.

3 During the conventions' four days, you have met with the Italian public of gamers, fans and enthusiasts. What's your opinion about them? What do you think are the Italian public's peculiarities and characterizing aspects?

They're a fun bunch. The folks whose company I had the pleasure of sharing were boisterous, jovial, enthusiastic, and very friendly. When they get involved in any aspect of their hobby, they mean to do so "con piacere." Though giving it 120% of their hearts and souls, they remain nonetheless relaxed and open-minded.

4 Now, on a more technical terrain: what is your opinion about the Role-Playing Game hobby and publishing industry conditions, both in Italy and worldwide? How do you think the situation will evolve?

I can only judge from the point of view of someone focused on the old D&D Game and its equivalents. The most obvious is the fractured industry with so many independent publishers competing for what still is a hobby game market, not a mass-market one. This has become possible because it is now so much easier for anyone (including myself) with decent software to make game accessories. The advent of internet-based sales, e-books, and print-on-demand fills a territory once limited to traditional publishers and distributors. There are pros and cons about this. While it offers greater variety, it is becoming harder now to find people who share exactly the same game interests. Industries always have ups and downs. With a glut of ultra-specialized products on the market, eventually fans will retreat and regroup, at least for a while until a balance is found. Quality (writing style, innovation, graphic presentation) as well as flexibility will be factors keeping game products above water.

5 More specifically now, about you: we've seen in Lucca Games a lot of interest on your new gaming projects, followed by a seemingly unstoppable success on the Internet attracting new attention on the classic Rpg world. What about the future? Can you anticipate to us something about your current projects?

It's too early to comment on this. Until Calidar's first episode, "In Stranger Skies," sees print, it's hard for me to evaluate its short-term success, and therefore long-term ramifications. People who've looked into the project have sent positive feedback. Being a late-comer on today's market and, at least from a more comical point of view, a "revenant" from days long past, I have both a handicap and an advantage. Which will prevail is the big question. We should look at this again six months from now. In any case, if you really want to know, this die-hard undead has no intention of forever lurking in the shadows.

6 Having seen and sensed Lucca Games' organization, is there any suggestion you have about the future editions of the convention?

Don't change anything as far as the convention is concerned. So far, I think you are "acing" it! Crowd-control seemed pretty daunting, but I doubt there's a perfect solution for this challenge. As a guest, I would have liked to receive an electronic map of Lucca and the convention site(s) early on. Not being familiar with the event at the outset and finding the web pages hard to navigate (them being all in Italian proved more difficult than I want to admit—imagine someone with no knowledge at all of the language), a simple PDF map with all the events positioned on it would have made it easier to grasp the scope and layout of the convention before actually showing up. I did eventually find this pesky map on Lucca Games's website, though it took me a while. I know, it's a detail—but hey, you asked.

7 For the last question, the classic one: what are your recommendations for guests and participants to the next Lucca Games? Is there any advice you want to give them?

Just go! Have fun. Don't worry about the details. Be sure to stay longer. :)