

Steampunk

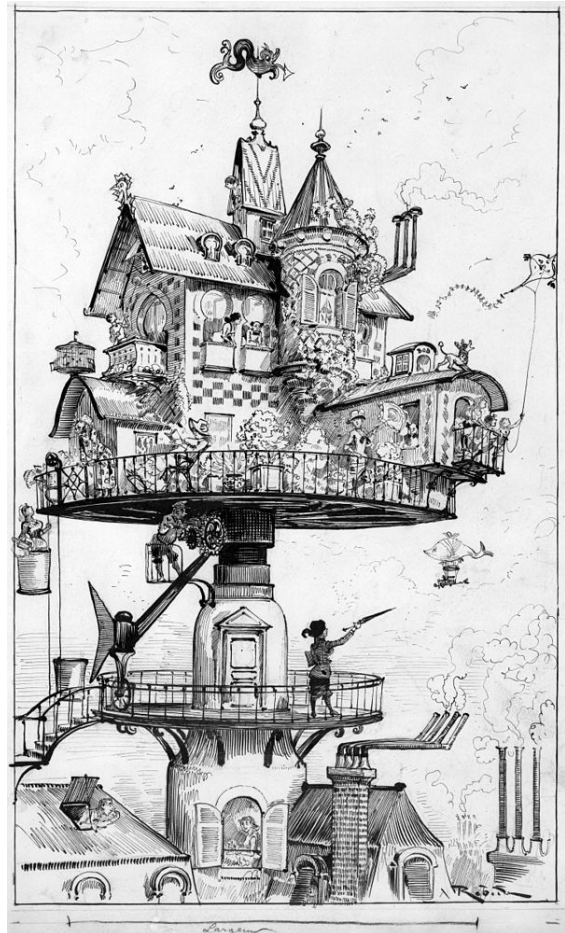
This article is about the genre of fiction and associated subculture. For other uses, see [Steampunk \(disambiguation\)](#).

Steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction or science



A steampunk-themed photo

fantasy that incorporates technology and aesthetic designs inspired by 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery.^{[1][2]} Although its literary origins are sometimes associated with the [cyberpunk](#) genre, steampunk works are often set in an alternative history of the 19th century's British Victorian era or American "Wild West", in a post-apocalyptic future during which steam power has maintained mainstream usage, or in a fantasy world that similarly employs steam power. Steampunk may, therefore, be described as neo-Victorian. Steampunk perhaps most recognisably features [anachronistic technologies](#) or [retro-futuristic](#) inventions as people in the 19th century might have envisioned them, and is likewise rooted in the era's perspective on fashion, culture, architectural style, and art. Such technology may include fictional machines like those found in the works of [H. G.](#)



*"Maison tournante aérienne" (aerial rotating house) by [Albert Robida](#) for his book *Le Vingtième Siècle*, a 19th-century conception of life in the 20th century*

[Wells](#) and [Jules Verne](#), or the modern authors [Philip Pullman](#), [Scott Westerfeld](#), [Stephen Hunt](#) and [China Miéville](#). Other examples of steampunk contain alternative history-style presentations of such technology as [lighter-than-air airships](#), [analogue computers](#), or such digital mechanical computers as [Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine](#).

Steampunk may also incorporate additional elements from the genres of [fantasy](#), [horror](#), [historical fiction](#), [alternate history](#), or other branches of [speculative fiction](#), making it often a [hybrid genre](#). The first known appearance of the term *steampunk* was in 1987, though it now retroactively refers to many works of fiction created even as far back as the 1950s or 1960s.

Steampunk also refers to any of the artistic styles, cloth-

ing fashions, or **subcultures**, that have developed from the aesthetics of steampunk fiction, Victorian-era fiction, **art nouveau** design, and films from the mid-20th century.^[3] Various modern utilitarian objects have been **modded** by individual artisans into a pseudo-Victorian mechanical “steampunk” style, and a number of visual and musical artists have been described as steampunk.

1 History

1.1 Precursors



Print (c. 1902) by Albert Robida showing a futuristic view of air travel over Paris in the year 2000 as people leave the opera.

Steampunk is influenced by and often adopts the style of the 19th-century scientific romances of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Mary Shelley.^[4] Several works of art and fiction significant to the development of the genre were produced before the genre had a name. *Titus Alone* (1959), by Mervyn Peake, anticipated many of the tropes of steampunk,^[5] and the film *Brazil* (1985) was an important early cinematic influence toward creating the genre. *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* was an early (1970s) comic version of the Moorcock-style mover between timestreams.^{[6][7]}

In fine art, Remedios Varo's paintings combine elements of Victorian dress, fantasy, and technofantasy imagery.^[8] In television, one of the earliest mainstream manifestations of the steampunk ethos was the original CBS television series *The Wild Wild West* (1965–69), which inspired the film *Wild Wild West* (1999).^{[4][9]} In print, the *A Nomad of the Time Streams* trilogy by Michael Moorcock, which began in 1971 with *The Warlord of the Air*, was also an influential precursor.^[10]

1.2 Origin of the term

Although many works now considered seminal to the genre were published in the 1960s and 1970s, the term *steampunk* originated in the late 1980s as a tongue-in-cheek variant of *cyberpunk*. It was coined by science fiction author K. W. Jeter, who was trying to find a gen-

eral term for works by Tim Powers (*The Anubis Gates*, 1983); James Blaylock (*Homunculus*, 1986); and himself (*Morlock Night*, 1979, and *Infernal Devices*, 1987)—all of which took place in a 19th-century (usually Victorian) setting and imitated conventions of such actual Victorian speculative fiction as H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. In a letter to science fiction magazine *Locus*, printed in the April 1987 issue, Jeter wrote:

Dear Locus,

Enclosed is a copy of my 1979 novel *Morlock Night*; I'd appreciate your being so good as to route it Faren Miller, as it's a prime piece of evidence in the great debate as to who in “the Powers/Blaylock/Jeter fantasy triumvirate” was writing in the “gonzo-historical manner” first. Though of course, I did find her review in the March *Locus* to be quite flattering.

Personally, I think Victorian fantasies are going to be the next big thing, as long as we can come up with a fitting collective term for Powers, Blaylock and myself. Something based on the appropriate technology of the era; like ‘steam-punks’, perhaps.

— K.W. Jeter^[11]

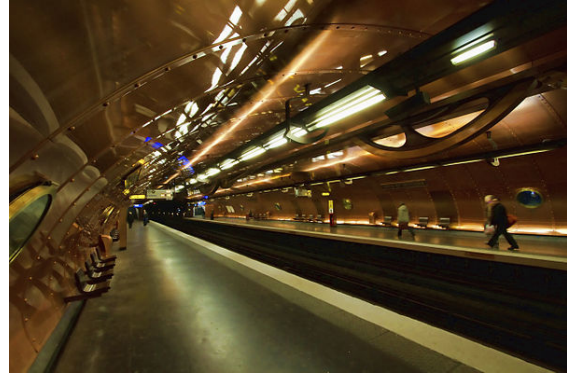
1.3 Modern steampunk

While Jeter's *Morlock Night* and *Infernal Devices*, Powers' *The Anubis Gates*, and Blaylock's *Lord Kelvin's Machine* were the first novels to which Jeter's neologism would be applied, the three authors gave the term little thought at the time.^[12] They were far from the first modern science fiction writers to speculate on the development of steam-based technology or alternative histories. Keith Laumer's *Worlds of the Imperium* (1962) and Ronald W. Clark's *Queen Victoria's Bomb* (1967) apply modern speculation to past-age technology and society.^[13] Michael Moorcock's *Warlord of the Air* (1971)^[14] is another early example. Harry Harrison's novel *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* (1973) portrays a British Empire of an alternative year 1973, full of atomic locomotives, coal-powered flying boats, ornate submarines, and Victorian dialogue. *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* (mid 70s) was the first steampunk comic. In February 1980 Richard A. Lupoff and Steve Stiles published the first “chapter” of their 10-part comic strip *The Adventures of Professor Thintwhistle and His Incredible Aether Flyer*.^[15]

The first use of the word in a title was in Paul Di Filippo's 1995 *Steampunk Trilogy*,^[16] consisting of three short novels: “Victoria”, “Hottentots”, and “Walt and Emily”, which, respectively, imagine the replacement of Queen Victoria by a human/newt clone, an invasion of Massachusetts by Lovecraftian monsters, and a love affair between Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson.



Truth Coffee, a steampunk café in Cape Town



Paris metro station "Arts et Métiers"

1.4 Relationships to retrofuturism, DIY craft and making

Superficially, steampunk may resemble **retrofuturism**. Indeed, both sensibilities recall “the older but still modern eras in which technological change seemed to anticipate a better world, one remembered as relatively innocent of industrial decline.”^[2]

One of steampunk’s most significant contributions is the way in which it mixes digital media with traditional hand-made art forms. As scholars Rachel Bowser and Brian Croxall put it, “the tinkering and tinker-able technologies within steampunk invite us to roll up our sleeves and get to work re-shaping our contemporary world.”^[17] In this respect, steampunk bears more in common with **DIY** craft and making.^[18]

hand, steampunk enthusiasts present a “non-luddite critique of technology.”^[21]

Various modern utilitarian objects have been modified by enthusiasts into a pseudo-Victorian mechanical “steampunk” style.^{[7][22]} Example objects include **computer keyboards** and **electric guitars**.^[23] The goal of such redesigns is to employ appropriate materials (such as polished brass, iron, wood, and leather) with design elements and craftsmanship consistent with the Victorian era,^{[14][24]} rejecting the aesthetic of **industrial design**.^[20]

In 1994, the Paris Metro station at Arts et Métiers was redesigned by Belgian artist **Francois Schuiten** in steampunk style to honor the works of Jules Verne. The station is reminiscent of a submarine, sheathed in brass with giant cogs in the ceiling and portholes that look out onto fanciful scenes.^{[25][26]}

2 Art, entertainment, and media

See also: [List of steampunk works](#)

2.1 Art and design

Many of the visualisations of steampunk have their origins with, among others, **Walt Disney's** film *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954),^[19] including the design of the story’s submarine the *Nautilus*, its interiors, and the crew’s underwater gear; and **George Pal's** film *The Time Machine* (1960), with the design of the time machine itself. This theme is also carried over to Disney’s theme parks in the designs of *The Mysterious Island* section of Tokyo DisneySea theme park and Disneyland Paris’ Discoveryland area.

Aspects of steampunk design emphasise a balance between the form and function.^[20] So too is it like the **Arts and Crafts Movement**. But John Ruskin, William Morris, and the other reformers in the late nineteenth century rejected machines and industrial production. On the other



Paul St George's Telectroscope installation at London City Hall (May 24, 2008)

The artist group *Kinetic Steam Works*^[27] brought a working steam engine to the **Burning Man** festival in 2006 and 2007.^[28] The group’s founding member, Sean Orlando, created a Steampunk Tree House (in association with a group of people who would later form the *Five Ton Crane Arts Group*^[29]) that has been displayed at a number of festivals.^{[30][31]} The Steampunk Tree House is now permanently installed at the **Dogfish Head Brewery** in Mil-

ton, Delaware.^{[32][33]}

The *Neverwas Haul* is a three-story, self-propelled mobile art vehicle built to resemble a Victorian house on wheels designed by Shannon O'Hare and built by volunteers in 2006 for presentation at the Burning Man festival from 2006 through 2015.^[34] When fully built, the Haul propelled itself at a top speed of 5 miles per hour and required a crew of ten people to operate safely. Currently, the *Neverwas Haul* makes her home at Obtainium Works, an "art car factory" in Vallejo, CA, owned by O'Hare and home to several other self-styled "contraptionists."^[35]

In May–June 2008, multimedia artist and sculptor **Paul St George** exhibited outdoor interactive video installations linking London and Brooklyn, New York, in a Victorian era-styled *telectroscope*.^{[36][37]} Utilising this device, New York promoter Evelyn Kriete organised a transatlantic wave between steampunk enthusiasts from both cities,^[38] briefly prior to *White Mischief's Around the World in 80 Days* steampunk-themed event.^[39]



Tim Wetherell's Clockwork Universe sculpture at Questacon, Canberra, Australia (September 24, 2009)

In 2009, artist Tim Wetherell created a large wall piece for *Questacon* representing the concept of the clockwork

universe. This steel artwork contains moving gears, a working clock, and a movie of the moon's terminator in action. The 3D moon movie was created by Antony Williams.

From October 2009 through February 2010, the *Museum of the History of Science, Oxford* hosted the first major exhibition of steampunk art objects, curated and developed by New York artist and designer, Art Donovan^[40] who also exhibited his own "electro-futuristic" lighting sculptures and presented by Dr. Jim Bennett, museum director.^[41] From redesigned practical items to fantastical contraptions, this exhibition showcased the work of eighteen steampunk artists from across the globe. The exhibition proved to be the most successful and highly attended in the museum's history and attracted more than eighty thousand visitors. The event was detailed in the official artist's journal, "The Art of Steampunk" by curator Donovan.^[42]

In November 2010, *The Libratory Steampunk Art Gallery*^[43] was opened by Damien McNamara in Oamaru, New Zealand. Created from papier-mâché to resemble a large subterranean cave and filled with industrial equipment from yesteryear, rayguns and general steampunk quirks. Its purpose is to provide a place for steampunkers in the region to display artwork for sale all year long. A year later, a more permanent gallery, *Steampunk HQ*, was opened in the former Meeks Grain Elevator Building across the road from The Woolstore, and has since become a notable tourist attraction for Oamaru.^[44]

In 2012, the *Mobilis in Mobili: An Exhibition of Steampunk Art and Appliance* art exhibit made its debut. Originally located at New York City's Wooster Street Social Club (itself the subject of the television series *NY Ink*), the exhibit featured working steampunk tattoo systems designed, respectively, by Bruce Rosenbaum of ModVic and owner of the Steampunk House,^[45] Joey "Dr. Grymm" Marsocci,^[23] and Christopher Conte^[46] showing very different approaches.^[19] "bicycles, cell phones, guitars, timepieces and entertainment systems"^[46] rounded out the display.^[23] The opening night exhibition featured a live performance by steampunk band *Frenchy and the Punk*.^[47]

In November 2014, *Sky Harbor Airport* in Phoenix, AZ opened a museum exhibit entitled "Steampunk: The Exquisite Adventure", featuring both local and nationally known Steampunk artisans. The displays were originally part of an exhibit at *Scottsdale Public Library*.^[48]

2.2 Fashion

Main article: *Steampunk fashion*

Steampunk fashion has no set guidelines but tends to synthesize modern styles with influences from the Victorian era. This may include bustles, corsets, gowns, and petticoats; suits with waistcoats, coats, top



Author *G. D. Falksen*, wearing a steampunk-styled arm prosthesis (created by *Thomas Willeford*), exemplifying one take on steampunk fashion.

hats,^[49] tailcoats and spats; or military-inspired garments. Steampunk-influenced outfits are usually accented with several technological and “period” accessories: timepieces, parasols, flying/driving goggles, and ray guns. Modern accessories like cell phones or music players can be found in steampunk outfits, after being modified to give them the appearance of Victorian-made objects. Post-apocalyptic elements, such as gas masks, ragged clothing and tribal motifs, can also be included. Aspects of steampunk fashion have been anticipated by mainstream high fashion, the *Lolita* fashion and *aristocrat* styles, neo-Victorianism, and the romantic goth subculture.^{[6][50][51]}

In 2005, *Kate Lambert*, known as “Kato”, founded the first steampunk clothing company, “Steampunk Couture”,^[52] mixing Victorian and post-apocalyptic influences. In 2013, IBM predicted, based on an analysis of more than a half million public posts on message boards, blogs, social media sites and news sources, “that ‘steampunk,’ a subgenre inspired by the clothing, technology and social mores of Victorian society, will be a major trend to bubble up and take hold of the retail industry”.^{[53][54]} Indeed, high fashion lines such as Prada,^[55] Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, Chanel^[56] and Christian Dior^[53] had already been introducing steampunk styles on the fashion runways. And in episode 7 of *Lifetime*’s “Project Runway:



Model *Ulorin Vex* wearing post-apocalyptic steampunk attire designed by *Kato*.

Under the *Gunn*” reality series, contestants were challenged to create *avant-garde* “steampunk chic” looks.^[57] America’s Next Top Model tackled Steampunk fashion in a 2012 episode where models competed in a Steampunk themed photo shoot, posing in front of a steam train while holding a live owl.^[58]

2.3 Literature

The educational book *Elementary BASIC - Learning to Program Your Computer in BASIC with Sherlock Holmes* (1981) by *Henry Singer* and *Andrew Ledger* may have been the first fictional work to depict the use of *Charles Babbage*’s *Analytical Engine* in an adventure story. The instructional book, aimed at young programming students, depicts *Holmes* using the engine as an aid in his investigations, and offer program listings to perform simple data processing tasks required to solve the fictional cases. The book even describes a possible enhancement to Babbage’s machine; a device that allows the engine to be used remotely, through telegraph lines. Companion volumes, *Elementary Pascal - Learning to Program Your Computer in Pascal with Sherlock Holmes* and *From Baker Street to Binary - An Introduction to Computers and Computer Programming with Sherlock Holmes*, were also written.

In 1988, the first version of the science fiction roleplaying game *Space: 1889* was published. It is set in an alternative



Cover of Issue 3 of Steampunk Magazine

history in which certain discredited Victorian scientific theories were probable, thus leading to new technologies. Contributing authors included Frank Chadwick, Loren Wiseman, and Marcus Rowland.^[59]

William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's novel *The Difference Engine* (1990) is often credited with bringing widespread awareness of steampunk.^{[9][60]} This novel applies the principles of Gibson and Sterling's cyberpunk writings to an alternative Victorian era where Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage's proposed steam-powered mechanical computer, which Babbage called a difference engine (a later, more general-purpose version was known as an analytical engine), was actually built, and led to the dawn of the information age more than a century "ahead of schedule". This setting was different from most steampunk settings in that it takes a dim and dark view of this future rather than the more prevalent utopian versions.

Nick Gevers's original anthology *Extraordinary Engines* (2008) features newer steampunk stories by some of the genre's writers, as well as other science fiction and fantasy writers experimenting with neo-Victorian conventions. A retrospective reprint anthology of steampunk fiction was released, also in 2008, by Tachyon Publications; edited by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer and appropriately entitled *Steampunk*, it is a collection of stories by James Blaylock, whose "Narbondo" trilogy is typically considered steampunk; Jay Lake, author of the novel *Mainspring*, sometimes labeled "clockpunk";^[61] the aforementioned Michael Moorcock; as well as Jess Nevins, known for his annotations to *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (first published in 1999).



The August 1927 issue of *Amazing Stories* featuring work by H. G. Wells

Younger readers have also been targeted with steampunk themes by authors such as Philip Reeve and Scott Westerfeld.^[62] Reeve's quartet *Mortal Engines* is set far in Earth's future where giant moving cities consume each other in a battle for resources, a concept Reeve coined as *Municipal Darwinism*. Westerfeld's *Leviathan* trilogy is set during the First World War, fought between the "clankers" (Central Powers), who use steam technology, and "darwinists" (Allied Powers), who use genetically engineered creatures instead of machines.

"Mash-ups" are also becoming increasingly popular in books aimed at younger readers, mixing steampunk with other genres. Suzanne Lazear's 'Aether Chronicles' series mixes steampunk with faeries and 'The Unnaturalists' by Tiffany Trent combines steampunk with mythological creatures and alternate history.^[63]

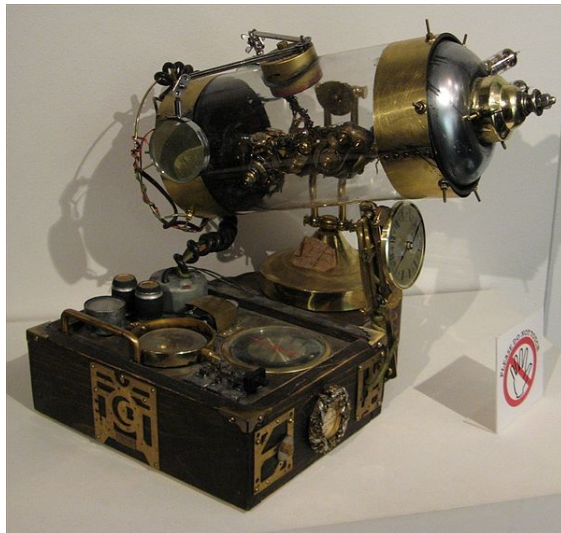
While most of the original steampunk works had a historical setting, later works often place steampunk elements in a fantasy world with little relation to any specific historical era. Historical steampunk tends to be science fiction that presents an alternative history; it also contains real locales and persons from history with alternative fantasy technology. "Fantasy-world steampunk", such as China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*, Alan Campbell's *Scar Night*, and Stephen Hunt's Jackelian novels, on the other hand, presents steampunk in a completely imaginary fantasy realm, often populated by legendary creatures coexisting with steam-era and other anachronistic technologies. However, the works of China Miéville and

similar authors are sometimes referred to as belonging to the 'New Weird' rather than steampunk.

Self-described author of “far-fetched fiction” **Robert Rankin** has increasingly incorporated elements of steampunk into narrative worlds, both Victorian and reimagined contemporary. In 2009, he was made a Fellow of the Victorian Steampunk Society.^[64]

The comic book series *Hellboy* created by **Mike Mignola**, and the two *Hellboy* films featuring **Ron Perlman** and directed by **Guillermo del Toro**, all have steampunk elements. In the comic book and the first (2004) film, **Karl Ruprecht Kroenen** is a Nazi SS scientist who has an addiction to surgery and many mechanical prostheses, including a clockwork heart. The character **Johann Krauss** features in the comic and in the second film, *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008), as an ectoplasmic medium (a gaseous form in a partly mechanical suit). This second film also features the *Golden Army* itself, which is a collection of 4,900 mechanical steampunk warriors.

2.3.1 Steampunk settings



Steampunk-style composite apparatus

Alternative world Since the 1990s, the application of the steampunk label has expanded beyond works set in recognisable historical periods, to works set in fantasy worlds that rely heavily on steam- or spring-powered technology.^[9] One of the earliest short stories relying on steam-powered flying machines is “The Aerial Burglar” of 1844.^[65] An example from juvenile fiction is *The Edge Chronicles* by **Paul Stewart** and **Chris Riddell**.

Fantasy steampunk settings abound in tabletop and computer role-playing games. Notable examples include *Skies of Arcadia*,^[66] *Rise of Nations: Rise of Legends*,^[67] and *Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura*.^[4]

The gnomes and goblins in *World of Warcraft* also have technological societies that could be described as

steampunk^[68] as they are vastly ahead of the technologies of **men**, but still run on steam and mechanical power.

The Dwarves of the *Elder Scrolls* series, described therein as a race of Elves called the Dwemer, also use steam powered machinery, with gigantic brass like gears throughout their underground cities. However, magical means are used to keep ancient devices in motion despite the Dwemer’s ancient disappearance.^[69]

The 1998 game *Thief: The Dark Project* as well as the other sequels including its 2014 reboot feature heavy steampunk-inspired architecture, setting and technology.

Amidst the historical and fantasy subgenres of steampunk is a type which takes place in a hypothetical future or a fantasy equivalent of our future, involving the domination of steampunk-style technology and aesthetics. Examples include **Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Marc Caro's** *The City of Lost Children* (1995), *Turn A Gundam* (1999–2000), *Trigun*^[70] and Disney’s film *Treasure Planet* (2002). In 2011, musician **Thomas Dolby** heralded his return to music after a 20-year hiatus with an online steampunk alternate fantasy world called the Floating City, to promote his album, *A Map of the Floating City*.^[4]

American West Another setting is “Western” steampunk, which overlaps with both the **Weird West** and **Science fiction Western** subgenres. Several other categories have arisen, sharing similar names, including **dieselpunk**, **clockworkpunk**, and others. Most of these terms were coined as supplements to the **GURPS** role playing game, and are not used in other contexts.^[71]

Fantasy and horror See also: **Cyberpunk derivatives** **Kaja Foglio** introduced the term “Gaslight Romance”,^[72] gaslamp fantasy, which **John Clute** and **John Grant** define as “steampunk stories ... most commonly set in a romanticised, smoky, 19th-century London, as are Gaslight Romances. But the latter category focuses nostalgically on icons from the late years of that century and the early years of the 20th century--on Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde, Jack the Ripper, Sherlock Holmes and even Tarzan--and can normally be understood as combining supernatural fiction and recursive fantasy, though some gaslight romances can be read as fantasies of history.”^[73] Author/artist **James Richardson-Brown**^[74] coined the term *steampgoth* to refer to steampunk expressions of fantasy and horror with a “darker” bent.

Post-apocalyptic **Mary Shelley's** *The Last Man*, set near the end of the 21st century after a plague had brought down civilization, was probably the ancestor of post-apocalyptic steampunk literature. Post-apocalyptic steampunk is set in a world where some cataclysm has precipitated the fall of civilization and steam power once again gains ascendancy, such as in **Hayao Miyazaki's** post-apocalyptic anime *Future Boy Conan* (1978),^[70] where a

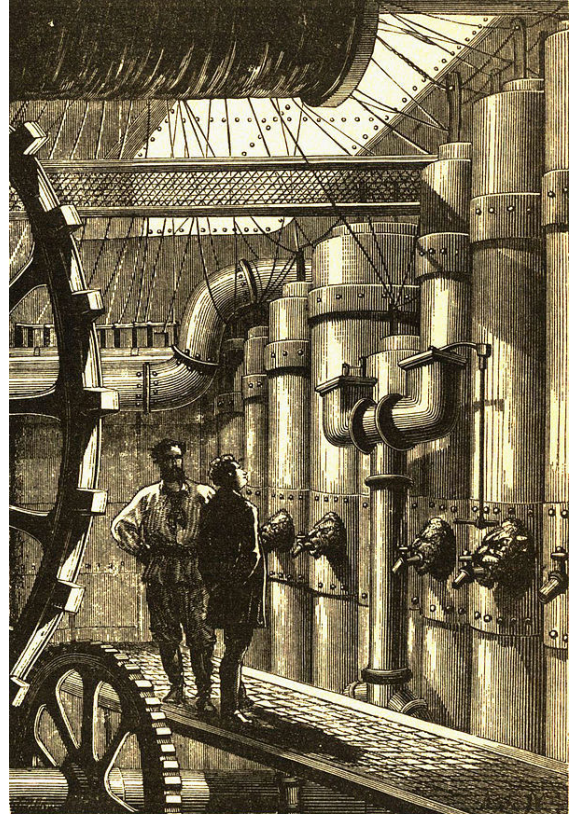


A steampunk horror costume

war fought with superweapons has devastated the planet. Robert Brown's novel, *The Wrath of Fate* (as well as much of Abney Park's music) is set in A Victorianesque world where an apocalypse was set into motion by a time-traveling mishap. Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker* series is set in a world where a zombie apocalypse happened during the Civil War era. *The Peshawar Lancers* by S.M. Stirling is set in a post-apocalyptic future in which a meteor shower in 1878 caused the collapse of Industrialized civilization. The movie 9 (which might be better classified as "stitchpunk" but was largely influenced by steampunk)^[75] is also set in a post-apocalyptic world after a self-aware war machine ran amok. Steampunk Magazine even published a book called "A Steampunk's Guide to the Apocalypse", about how steampunks could survive should such a thing actually happen.

Victorian In general, the category includes any recent science fiction that takes place in a recognizable historical period (sometimes an alternate history version of an actual historical period) in which the Industrial Revolution has already begun, but electricity is not yet widespread. It places an emphasis on steam- or spring-propelled gadgets. The most common historical steampunk settings are the Victorian and Edwardian eras, though some in this "Victorian steampunk" category can go as early as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and as late as the end of World War I.

Some examples of this type include the novel *The Difference Engine*,^[76] the comic book series *League of Extraor-*



Original illustration of Jules Verne's Nautilus engine room

dinary Gentlemen, the Disney animated film *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*,^[4] Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan* trilogy,^[77] and the roleplaying game *Space: 1889*.^[4] The anime film *Steamboy* (2004) is another good example of Victorian steampunk, taking place in an alternate 1866 where steam technology is far more advanced than it ever was in real life.^[78] Some, such as the comic series *Girl Genius*,^[4] have their own unique times and places despite partaking heavily of the flavor of historic times and settings. Other comic series are of a more familiar London as in *Victorian Undead* which has Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Watson and others taking on zombies, *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*, and *Count Dracula* with some advanced weapons and devices.

Karel Zeman's film *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* (1958) is a very early example of cinematic steampunk. Based on Jules Verne novels, Zeman's film imagines a past based on those novels which never was.^[79] Another early example of historical steampunk in cinema includes Hayao Miyazaki's anime films such as *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), containing many archetypal anachronisms characteristic of the steampunk genre.^{[80][81]}

"Historical" steampunk usually leans more towards science fiction than fantasy, but a number of historical steampunk stories have incorporated magical elements as well. For example, *Morlock Night*, written by K. W. Jeter, revolves around an attempt by the wizard Merlin to raise

King Arthur to save the Britain in 1892 from an invasion of Morlocks from the future.^[9]

Paul Guinan's *Boilerplate*, a 'biography' of a robot in the late 19th century, began as a website that garnered international press coverage when people began believing that Photoshop images of the robot with historic personages were real.^[82] The site was adapted into an illustrated hardbound book *Boilerplate: History's Mechanical Marvel*, and published by Abrams in October 2009.^[83] Because the story was not set in an alternative history, and in fact contained accurate information about the Victorian era,^[84] some booksellers referred to the tome as "historical steampunk."

2.4 Music



Robert Brown and Finn Von Claret from Abney Park

Steampunk music is very broadly defined. Abney Park's lead singer, Robert Brown defined it as, "mixing Victorian elements and modern elements." There is a broad range of musical influences that make up the Steampunk sound, from industrial dance and world music^[51] to folk rock, Punk cabaret to straightforward punk,^[85] Carnatic^[86] to industrial, hip-hop to opera (and even industrial hip-hop opera),^{[87][88]} darkwave to progressive rock, barbershop to big band.

^[89] Joshua Pfeiffer (of Vernian Process) is quoted as saying, "As for Paul Roland, if anyone deserves credit for spearheading Steampunk music, it is him. He was one of the inspirations I had in starting my project. He was writing songs about the first attempt at manned flight, and an Edwardian airship raid in the mid-80's long before almost anyone else..."^[90] Thomas Dolby is also considered one of the early pioneers of retro-futurist (i.e., steampunk and dieselpunk) music.^{[89][91]} Amanda Palmer was once quoted as saying, "Thomas Dolby is to Steampunk what Iggy Pop was to Punk!"^[92]

Steampunk has also appeared in the work of musicians who do not specifically identify as steampunk. For example, the music video of "Turn Me On", by David Guetta and featuring Nicki Minaj, takes place in a steampunk

universe where Guetta creates human droids. Another music video is "The Ballad of Mona Lisa", by Panic! at the Disco, which has a distinct Victorian Steampunk theme. A continuation of this theme has in fact been used throughout the 2011 album "Vices And Virtues" in the music videos, album art, and tour set and costumes. In addition, the album *Clockwork Angels* (2012) and its supporting tour by progressive rock band Rush contain lyrics, themes, and imagery based around steampunk. Similarly, Abney Park headlined the first "Steamstock" outdoor steampunk music festival in Richmond, California, which also featured Thomas Dolby, Frenchy and the Punk, Lee Presson and the Nails, Vernian Process, and others.^[91]

2.5 Television and films

The Fabulous World of Jules Verne, 1958, directed by Karel Zeman

The Fabulous Baron Munchausen, 1962, directed by Karel Zeman



Arliss Loveless character in steampunk wheelchair costume from the film *Wild Wild West*

The 1965 television series *The Wild Wild West*, as well as the eponymous 1999 film, featured many of the elements of advanced steam-powered technology set in the *Wild West* time period of the United States.

Despite leaning more towards gothic influences, the 'par-



"20,000 Leagues Under the Sea: Submarine Voyage" ride at Walt Disney World (1971-1994)

allel reality' of *Meanwhile, City* within the 2009 film *Franklyn* contains many steampunk themes, such as costumery, architecture, minimal use of electricity (with the preference for gaslight), and absence of modern technology (such as there being no motorised vehicles or advanced weaponry, and the manual management of information with no use of computers).

Two Years' Vacation (or *The Stolen Airship*), 1967, directed by Karel Zeman

Dinner for Adele, 1977, directed by Oldřich Lipský

The 1979 film *Time After Time* has Herbert George "H.G." Wells following a surgeon named John Leslie Stevenson into the future, as John is suspected of being *Jack the Ripper*. Both use Wells' time machine separately to travel.

The Mysterious Castle in the Carpathians, 1981, directed by Oldřich Lipský

The 1982 American TV series *Q.E.D.*, set in Edwardian England, starred Sam Waterston as Professor Quentin Everett Deverill (the series title is the character's initials, as well as the Latin phrase *quod erat demonstrandum*, which translates as "which was to be demonstrated"). The Professor was an inventor and scientific detective, in the mold of *Sherlock Holmes*. In the show, the lead character was known primarily by his initials, Q.E.D.

The 1986 Japanese film by Hayao Miyazaki *Castle in the Sky*, was heavily influenced by steampunk culture, featuring various air ships and steam-powered contraptions as well as the story line centering on a mysterious island which floats through the sky. This is accomplished not through magic as most stories would resort to but instead relies on massive propellers as is fitting for the Victorian motif.^[93]

The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr., a Fox Network 1993 TV science fiction-western set in the 1890s, featured elements of steampunk as represented by the character Professor Wickwire, whose inventions were described as "the coming thing".^[94]

The short-lived 1995 TV show *Legend* on UPN, set in

1876 Arizona, featured such classic inventions as a steam-driven "quadrovelocipede" and night-vision goggles, and starred John de Lancie as a thinly disguised Nikola Tesla. Alan Moore's and Kevin O'Neill's 1999 *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* graphic novel series (and the subsequent 2003 film adaption) greatly popularised the steampunk genre.^[50]

The 2007 Syfy miniseries *Tin Man* incorporates a considerable amount of steampunk-inspired themes into a re-imagining of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

The Syfy series *Warehouse 13* (which premiered July 7, 2009) features many steampunk-inspired objects and artifacts, including computer designs created by steampunk artisan Richard Nagy, aka "Datamancer".^[95]

The BBC series *Doctor Who* (which premiered in 1963) also incorporates steampunk elements. During season 14 of the show (in 1976), the formerly futuristic looking interior set was replaced with a Victorian-styled wood panel and brass affair.^[96] In the 1996 American co-production, the TARDIS interior was re-designed to resemble an almost Victorian library with the central control console made up of eclectic and anachronistic objects. Modified and streamlined for the 2005 revival of the series, the TARDIS console continued to incorporate steampunk elements, including a Victorian typewriter and gramophone. Several storylines can be classed as steampunk, for example: *The Evil of the Daleks* (1966), wherein Victorian scientists invent a time travel device.^[97]

Steampunk has begun to attract notice from "mainstream" American sources as well. For example, the episode of the TV series *Castle* entitled "Punked" (which aired on October 11, 2010) prominently featured the steampunk subculture and used Los Angeles-area steampunks (such as the *League of STEAM*) as extras.^[98] The GSN reality television game show *Steampunk'd* features a competition to create steampunk-inspired art and designs which are judged by notable Steampunks Thomas Willeford, Kato, and Matt King.^[99]

2.6 Video games

A variety of styles of video games have used Steampunk settings. *Borderlands 2* and the episodic sequel *Tales from the Borderlands* are set in a wasteland/steampunk environment, *The Chaos Engine* is a run and gun video game inspired by the Gibson/Sterling novel *The Difference Engine* (1990), set in a Victorian steampunk age. Developed by the Bitmap Brothers, it was first released on the Amiga in 1993; a sequel was released in 1996.^[100] Other steampunk-styled video games include the first-person shooter *BioShock Infinite* (2013), *Dishonored* (2012) stealth game, the role-playing games *Final Fantasy VI* (1994), *Final Fantasy IX* (2000), *Arcanum* (2001), *Dark Chronicle* (2002) and the late Middle Ages/Victorian age styled *Thief* series

(1998). The graphic adventure puzzle video games *Myst* (1993), *Riven* (1997), and *Myst III: Exile* (2001) (all produced by Cyan Worlds) take place in an alternate steampunk universe, where elaborate infrastructures have been built to run on steam power. *Guild Wars 2* has plenty of steam punk inspired content, the most notable are the Engineer player class, as well as the Charr race, with their industrial technology and aesthetics. Many steampunk themes can be found within *World of Warcraft* particularly the 'Gnome' race within the game. Many of the items which can be created via the Engineering profession are of a steampunk nature and also named in a similar fashion. The first person shooter *Timeshift* (2007), developed by Saber Interactive, was intended to have a significant steampunk element and some steampunk-style technology did remain, e.g. airships, in the final game. *Mega Man* also has significant elements of steampunk. There is also a free 2D tower defense game *Steampunk Defens*, developed in 2012 by Nickelodeon and Dreamgate, which features a fully steampunk-style theme.”^[101]

rather than a mere subculture.^[104] Other steampunk notables such as Professor Elemental have expressed similar views about steampunk’s inclusive diversity.^[105]



Spider sculpture by Daniel Proulx



A steampunk couple at Carnevale 2012 in Boise, Idaho

Because of the popularity of steampunk, there is a growing movement of adults that want to establish steampunk as a culture and lifestyle.^[102] Some fans of the genre adopt a steampunk aesthetic through fashion,^[103] home decor, music, and film. This may be described as *neo-Victorianism*, which is the amalgamation of Victorian aesthetic principles with modern sensibilities and technologies.^[6]

In September 2012, a panel was held at Stan Lee's Comikaze Expo, chaired by steampunk entertainer Veronique Chevalier and with panelists including magician Pop Hadyn and members of the steampunk performance group The League of STEAM, which suggested that because steampunk was inclusive of and incorporated ideas from various other subcultures such as goth, neo-Victorian, and cyberpunk as well as a growing number of fandoms, it was fast becoming a *super-culture*

Some have proposed a steampunk philosophy, sometimes with punk-inspired anti-establishment sentiments, and typically bolstered by optimism about human potential.^[106]

Steampunk became a common descriptor for homemade objects on the craft network Etsy between 2009 and 2011, though many of the objects and fashions bear little resemblance to earlier established steampunk descriptions. Thus the craft network may not strike observers as 'sufficiently steampunk' to warrant the description. Comedian April Winchell, author of the book, *Regretsy: Where DIY meets WTF*, cataloged some of the most egregious and humorous examples on her website, “Regretsy”.^[107] The blog was popular among steampunks and even inspired a music video that went viral in the community and was acclaimed by steampunk “notables.”^[108]

3.1 Social events

2006 saw the first “SalonCon”, a neo-Victorian/steampunk convention. It ran for three consecutive years and featured artists, musicians (Voltaire and Abney Park), authors (Catherynne M. Valente, Ekaterina Sedia, and G. D. Falksen), salons led by people prominent in their respective fields, workshops and panels on steampunk—as well as a seance, ballroom dance instruction, and the Chrononauts’ Parade. The event was covered by MTV^[109] and *The New York Times*.^[6] Since then a number of popular steampunk conventions have sprung up the world over, with names like Steamcon (Seattle, WA), the Steampunk World’s Fair (Piscataway, NJ), Up in the Aether: The Steampunk



“Wave Gotik Treffen” Leipzig/Germany Alexander Schlesier

Convention (Dearborn, MI),^[110] and Steampunk Unlimited (Strasburg Railroad, Lancaster, PA).^[111] Each year, on Mother’s Day weekend, the city of Waltham, MA turns over its city center and surrounding areas to host the Watch City Steampunk Festival, a U.S. outdoor steampunk festival.

Steampunk has also become a regular feature at San Diego Comic-Con International in recent years, with the Saturday of the four-day event being generally known among steampunks as “Steampunk Day”, and culminating with a photo-shoot for the local press.^{[112][113]} In 2010 this was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s largest steampunk photo shoot.^[114] In 2013, Comic-Con announced four official 2013 T-shirts: one of them featured the official Rick Geary Comic-Con toucan mascot in steampunk attire.^[115] The Saturday steampunk “after-party” has also become a major event on the steampunk social calendar; in 2010 the headliners included The Slow Poisoner, Unextraordinary Gentlemen and Voltaire, with Veronique Chevalier as Mistress of Ceremonies and special appearance by the League of STEAM,^{[116][117]} and in 2011 UXG returned with Abney Park.^[118]

Steampunk also has sprung up recently at Renaissance Festivals and Renaissance Faires, in the USA. Some have organised events or a “Steampunk Day”, while other Fests simply support an open environment for donning Steampunk attire. The Bristol Renaissance Faire in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the Wisconsin/Illinois border, featured a

Steampunk costume contest during the 2012 season. The previous two seasons featured increasing participation in the phenomenon.^[119]

Steampunk also has a growing following in the UK and Europe. The largest European event is “Weekend at the Asylum”, held at The Lawn, Lincoln every September since 2009. Organised as a not-for-profit event by the Victorian Steampunk Society, the Asylum is a dedicated steampunk event which takes over much of the historical quarter of Lincoln, England, along with Lincoln Castle. In 2011 there were over 1000 steampunks in attendance. The event features the Empire Ball, Majors Review, Bazaar Eclectica and the international Tea Duelling final.^{[120] [121]} “The Surrey Steampunk Convivial”, held in New Malden, Surrey (not far from where H. G. Wells used to live)^[122] takes place twice a year, and has spanned three boroughs and five venues.^[123] Attendees have been interviewed by BBC Radio 4 for Phil Jupitus^[124] and filmed by the BBC World Service.^[125] The West Yorkshire village of Haworth has held an annual Steampunk weekend since 2013,^[126] on each occasion as a charity event raising funds for Sue Ryder’s “Manorlands” hospice in Oxenhope.

4 See also

- Air pirate
- Alternate history
- Cyberpunk derivatives
- Dieselpunk
- Retrofuturism
- Retrotronics
- Tik-Tok (Oz)

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