

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**New Audio Production Awards Established to Honor
The Firesign Theater's Comedy and Satire Legacy**

FREELAND, WA – January 23, 2015 – The most prominent awards worldwide for original radio drama – [The Mark Time Awards](#) – are adding four new awards to honor the historic contribution of The Firesign Theater to radio and audio production. The new awards and the long-established Mark Time Award for the year's best science fiction production and the Ogle Award for fantasy/horror will be presented during the [2015 HEAR Now Festival](#) in Kansas City, Missouri June 12th.

“With these four new awards, we are celebrating a renewed interest in audio arts, which are thriving in the first decades of the 21st century in part because of the huge popularity of streaming and digital media,” said Judith Walcutt, Chief Executive Officer of [Otherworld Media](#), which recently was selected to administer the Mark Time Awards. For the past 30 years, Otherworld Media has produced award-winning audio plays, radio broadcasts, and educational programming.

The new Mark Time awards honoring [The Firesign Theater](#) are:

The Nick Danger Prize for the best audio production in the mystery/detective fiction category, which is named after Firesign's famous satire of radio detectives of the 1950s. The original “Nick,” Phil Austin, and his wife Oona will be part of the judging team.

The Bradshaw, an award named after the late Peter Bergman's cop character in the Nick Danger episodes, will be given for “service to the field” and chosen by the MTA's advisory board.

The Betty Jo (But Everyone Knew Her as Nancy) prize honors the multi-gender vocal skills of Phil Proctor and will be awarded for best performances. Proctor and his wife, actress Melinda Peterson, will be among the judges for this award.

The Runyon, an award named for a beloved character created by Norman Corwin, the grand patriarch of radio theatre who died in 2011 at the age of 101. The Runyon will be given to producers younger than 18.

Audio Curriculum Pilot Launches This Spring

To support its commitment to inter-generational education, the Mark Time Awards is establishing an audio drama training program for young people and life-long learners to continue to foster new actors and new producers and to attract new audiences to audio theater. With development funding from the Leo Gilbert Wetherill Foundation, a Colorado private foundation, training classes will be offered this spring in Kansas City, Missouri under the direction of Otherworld Media's Judith Walcutt. These classes will pilot the curriculum of a new, national education initiative in the audio arts.

“For audio arts to continue its momentum, it is important to provide tools and a creative platform for new generations to discover and practice the art form of theatre — and movies — for the mind,” Walcutt said.

Entries for the Mark Time Awards for original audio theatre will be accepted from January 20th to March 20th, 2015. Submissions are limited to multi-cast productions completed by the March deadline. Judging will be based on originality of writing and adaptation, as well as overall production quality including performances, effects, music, and final mix. Guidelines and entry forms are available at www.marktimeawards.org. Awards will be announced on May 1, 2015 and presented at the HEAR Now Festival.

Now in its third year, the [HEAR Now Festival](#) focuses on the audio arts and industry, bringing together a consortium of audio producers and industry professionals from around the country. The 2015 festival runs from June 11 to June 14.

The Firesign Theater – “The Beatles of Comedy”

The Firesign Theatre comedy troupe performed for more than 40 years, producing dozens of albums, including three nominated for a Grammy for best comedy album. The troupe began performing on the radio in Los Angeles in the late 1960’s, and later was heard on National Public Radio, XM Satellite Radio, and the BBC. They toured nationally performing a live show that mixed new work from their Millennial Trilogy with their classics, such as Nick Danger, until the death of founding partner Peter Bergman in 2012.

The Firesign Theatre is known for unique, surreal and original satiric comedy, which changed the way people listened to and understood media — and the world — around them, whether on radio, TV, or Internet. The Firesign Theater has been recognized with top awards at the New York International Radio Festivals for their ground-breaking show *Fools in Space* for XM. They were accorded the rare honor of having their 1970’s album *Don’t Crush that Dwarf, Hand Me the Pliers* admitted to the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress. This honor is given to recordings considered “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant,” and their album is one of only a handful of recordings that are comedy-based.

The award presentation from the Library of Congress called the Firesign Theatre “The Beatles of Comedy.” *Entertainment Weekly* dubbed them “one of the greatest comedy acts of all time.”

Mark Time Awards Recognized Worldwide

The Mark Time Awards were established 17 years ago as part of the opening ceremony at **CONvergence**, a major event for science fiction fans held annually in Minneapolis. Supported by the fan base and administered by audio writer-producer Jerry Stearns, with a regular live “radio” performance co-written with Brian Price, the Mark Time Awards achieved international success, with prizes awarded to producers from Ireland, Belgium, England, Canada, South Africa and the U.S. With Stearns’ retirement, the awards have found a new home with Otherworld Media and a new presentation venue with the HEAR Now Festival.

Judges Chosen to Evaluate Mark Time Entries

In addition to the three surviving Firesign partners – David Ossman, Phil Proctor and Phil Austin and their spouses, judges for the 2015 Mark Time Awards include Jerry Stearns, Brian Price and William Stout. Other judges and new members of the MTA’s advisory board include:

- Actor and director Candace Barrett Birk of Minneapolis
- Mort Castle, noted horror author and writing teacher at Columbia College, in Chicago
- Actor and producer Richard Fish of Audio Cinema Entertainment in Bloomington, Indiana
- Audio writer and producer Fred Greenhalgh of FinalRune Productions in Maine
- Writer and producer Tom Lopez of ZBS Foundation in New York
- Producer Ben Manilla of San Francisco and U.C. Berkeley
- On-line learning specialist Kris Markman of Harvard University
- Multimedia Technologist Skip Pizzi associated with NPR, Microsoft, and the National Association of Broadcaster
- Radio host Gretchen Steiner of Portland, Oregon
- Leo G. Wetherill, Jr., Executive Director, Leo Gilbert Wetherill Foundation

The Mark Time Award images, including the new **Ogle** image named after the first film actor to play Frankenstein's Monster, Charles Ogle, have been designed by William Stout, long associated with the Firesign Theatre as album cover artist and illustrator.

Notices of Mark Time events will be posted at www.firesigntheatre.com and on Facebook on various pages devoted to The Firesign Theatre and its followers and fans of the audio arts. An archive of live Mark Time Radio Shows performed at CONvergence is available from Great Northern Audio, www.greatnorthernaudio.com.

News about the **HEAR Now Festival**, June 11-15 in Kansas City MO, is here www.hearnowfestival.org.

Media Contact:

Judith Walcutt, CEO, Otherworld Media
360-331- 2813 / oworld@whidbey.com
<http://www.otherworldmedia.com>



THE NICK DANGER PRIZE

Portrait by William Stout