

SAN FRANCISCO, 5:29 AM, TUE AUG 5 | 28 POSTS IN THE LAST 24 HOURS | tips@io9.com |

STRUNG OUT ON SCIENCE FICTION.

What's Going To Happen In Whatever Happened To[MORE TOP
STORIES »](#)**CONTEST**

io9 wants to encourage mad scientists in every field, but especially in the area of synthetic biology. That's because synthetic biologists are the people who are going to build new life forms, like ligers and unicorns and people with claws and glowing eyes. OK, they might build bacteria that can clean up oil spills and repair damaged kidneys too. The point is, building new lifeforms is the science of the future and therefore you can never have too many garage laboratories and mad scientists devoted to it. That's why io9 is sponsoring a contest to find two of the best synthetic life forms you can design for us. The winners in our two categories will get either an all-expenses-paid trip to the kickass [Synthetic Biology Conference in Hong Kong](#) this October, or \$1000 and a chance to have their creature drawn by a cool comic book artist. Find out more below.

There are two categories in the contest, each with their own prize. The important thing to remember is that this contest is about creating cool new lifeforms that are also, in some way, entertaining. So each entry will be judged for plausibility (i.e. whether it is scientifically justifiable), creativity, usefulness, and entertainment value.

Our esteemed judges include synthetic biologist [Drew Endy](#) (MIT), evolutionary biologist and PLoS co-founder [Michael Eisen](#) (UC Berkeley), Spore game developer [Jason Shankel](#) (EA/Maxis), and biology researcher/io9 "ask a bio geek" columnist [Terry Johnson](#) (UC Berkeley).

Category One: BioBricks Lifeform

Using the BioBricks [registry of standard biological parts](#), propose a lifeform design that you could conceivably create in a lab. Must include a complete description of how you would make the lifeform, what it would do, and what possible hazards might be involved in creating it. You may design this creature with a team, but only one of you can claim the prize. You may enter lifeforms that you have entered in other contests, but you must state in your entry which contest(s) you've already entered. More points given if you've actually got a working organism.

Prize: All travel and hotel expenses paid trip to the [Synthetic Biology Conference](#) in Hong Kong in October, as well as the chance to present your research there.

Category Two: General Synthetic Lifeform

This lifeform can be more creative. Propose a scientifically justifiable lifeform, which could conceivably be created using current technology. Explain how you would create it, what it would do, and hazards involved. Unlike the BioBricks lifeform, this lifeform can be more speculative. It should be science fictional, but must remain

scientifically plausible. Your entry should be less than 3,000 words, please.
Illustrations and diagrams are a good idea.

Prize: \$1000, plus a cool comic book artist will draw your lifeform and you'll get a signed copy of the original art.

DEADLINE FOR ALL ENTRIES IS AUGUST 25 AT MIDNIGHT PST.

General Rules

1. Send queries and completed entries to madsience@io9.com.
2. On entries, please include your full name, an email and phone number where we can reach you, plus any information about other contests you may have entered your lifeform in.
3. Winners will be announced September 8.
4. All general [Gawker contest rules](#) apply.

COMMENTS

[Belabras](#) at [12:29 PM on 07/07/08](#)

aw, I was hoping Spore would count.

[Annalee Newitz](#) at [12:33 PM on 07/07/08](#)

[@Belabras](#): Sorry, gotta do better than that for \$1000 bucks or a trip to Hong Kong.

[Mathmos](#) at [12:51 PM on 07/07/08](#)

Bear in mind that novel attributes are useless with appropriate sensory and control systems. I for one would want to see good justification for any design claiming that a nervous system would self organize as needed.

[Annalee Newitz](#) at [01:08 PM on 07/07/08](#)

[@Mathmos](#): Ha! Yeah, we have 3 actual real biologists helping to judge the contest, so there will be none of that.

[Illuminatus](#) at [01:20 PM on 07/07/08](#)

[@Annalee Newitz](#): I just hope Wayne D. Barlowe is banned from competing. I feel like he might have an [advantage](#).

[TwistedChimp](#) at [01:21 PM on 07/07/08](#)

[@Annalee Newitz](#): Aw no fair, that means that semi-educated morons like myself have no chance :(

[Grey_Area](#) at [01:38 PM on 07/07/08](#)

[@TwistedChimp](#): Oh, I think folks like us can do this. My patented "Dog Wearing a Hat" is a shoo-in. Hong Kong here I come!

[blorp](#) at [01:43 PM on 07/07/08](#)

"More points given if you've actually got a working organism."

oh I think if you actually invent and *build* a new organism youve won this. You wanna tell the guy with the cobra/tiger/polarbear/electric-eel chimera he cant go to Hong Kong?

[ciscokidinsf](#) at [01:47 PM on 07/07/08](#)

Hi, I've been sent from the year 2509, where President Not Sure and VP Frito Pendejo have determined that this is when in the timeline a swarm of micro-bacteria generated from this contest alters the timeline and creates a blob covering New California and causes the loss of the city of SanLosVegas causing the great

where famine of 2508. Please cease and desist from entering this contest.
Humanity in the future will thank you. Brought to you by Carl's Jr. (Don't make me hunt your ass Bender style)

B at **02:26 PM on 07/07/08**

So, all the lifeforms I've been cultivating in my fridge don't count?

mikecap at **02:59 PM on 07/07/08**

TOMACCOOO!!!

gwax at **03:01 PM on 07/07/08**

Seeing as there could, theoretically, be intellectual property implications of this contest that go beyond the scope of Gawker's "Standard Contest Rules", I find myself wondering how potential patent rights fit in.

That is to say, suppose I have a really good idea, one that might be worth patenting and making millions off of, do I get to keep the patent rights to the idea if I enter it into the contest?

beelzebuddha at **03:01 PM on 07/07/08**

So... who is the comic book artist that will create the drawing of the GSL winner?

bonniegrrl at **10:30 PM on 07/07/08**

After this, can we have a Mad Scientist Dating Game?
I think I could swing that.

Terry Johnson at **11:31 PM on 07/07/08**

@**bonniegrrl**:

Bachelor #2: "If you were a death ray, what kind of death ray would you be?"

cis-action at **09:29 AM on 07/08/08**

I think the comic artist will be Chuck Wadey (chuckwadey.com). He was the illustrator of the awesome "Adventures in Synthetic Biology" Comic, co-written by Drew Endy and Isadora Deese. Check it out here: openwetware.org (Has 109 already covered it?)

bonniegrrl at **11:21 PM on 07/08/08**

@**Terry Johnson**: Bachelor #1: What is your ingredient X?

michaelleung at **12:26 AM on 07/16/08**

I live in Hong Kong, so whatever.

Wesman at **05:31 AM on 07/22/08**

@**Grey Area**: I'm going for dogs that can play poker.

Johnny Under at **05:01 AM on 07/26/08**

Sweet. I think I have some drawings of my flying velocirtweiler sitting around.

Argyle at **10:44 AM on 07/31/08**

What if I start replacing my girlfriends birth control with sugar pills? Does that count as building a lifeform?

Start a discussion:

Login with your username and password below. [Or comment on this post via email.](#)

username: password:

[Forgot your username or password?](#) [New User?](#)

[Archives](#) [About](#) [Advertising](#) [Legal](#) [Help](#)

