CFinNC Rocked the Casbah

Posted At : October 19, 2009 3:47 PM | Posted By : Bob Silverberg
Related Categories: ColdFusion, CFinNC

I'm on the plane on the way home from **CFinNC**, a ColdFusion / Flex / AIR conference organized by **Jim Priest**, **Dan Wilson**, and the entire **Triangle Area ColdFusion User Group**. It was, quite frankly, outstanding. Everything ran smoothly, the sessions were pertinent, informative, and, dare I say, fun. I have been to a number of ColdFusion conferences in the past and CFinNC ranked right up there with them. In fact, I'd say it was far better than a few of the smaller, not-free conferences that I've attended. For a first-time, free conference it certainly exceeded my expectations. So congratulations to the whole CFinNC team for pulling off an amazing feat.

I enjoyed all of the presentations that I attended, and there were a few on my list that I didn't get a chance to see, either because I was presenting at the time, or because there were multiple simultaneous sessions that I wished to attend. That in itself is a testament to the quality of speakers and topics that the team brought together. Some of the session highlights of the conference for me included:

Andy Matthews on jQuery and AIR

I've been hearing a lot about how one can develop AIR applications using HTML and JavaScript, but never quite understood what that meant. **Andy** did a fantastic job of explaining how all of this works, showing us how to do it, and even managed to throw in some info on filesystem access and SQLite as a bonus. On a personal note, Andy introduced me to **Whiskerino**, which I plan on participating in this year. Who else is going to join us in that endeavour? <cf_beard> anyone?

Charlie Arehart on Hidden Gems in CFBuilder

I defy anyone to attend a **Charlie Arehart** presentation and not leave learning something. This guy is a human data warehouse (remember when that was a buzzword?) and, although I've been using CFEclipse for years and CFBuilder for months, I learned a ton of stuff.

Doug Hughes on Deploying ColdFusion Applications with Ant

Ant is one of those tools that I've known about and read about for ages, and always seems to be in the number two or three slot on my "tools to figure out how to use effectively" list. **Doug** showed us exactly how Ant can help us with a task that most of us have to do pretty frequently, including how to use his own Ant extension, **Ant4CF**, which is very, very cool. The next time I need to deploy something I'm going to take the time to write a deployment script using Ant, after which I'll be able to thank myself time and time again.

Jason Dean on Securing CFML Applications

When you want to know about web application security, who you gonna call? **Jason Dean!** He is the man to listen to when it comes to web application security in general, and ColdFusion in particular. This was an intro-level session, and I think Jason did a outstanding job of explaining some pretty high level concepts in an understandable way. Even as a (somewhat) seasoned web developer, I learned a lot during Jason's session, including what the military do to secure their data.

Shannon Hicks on Searching Using Apache Solr

What did **Shannon** teach us? Verity sucks! No, I'm just kidding. Actually, I believe there was a slide (or two) with that sentiment on them, but the slideshow quickly turned into an interactive demo of how to use Apache Solr to create search experiences way beyond what could be done with ColdFusion and Verity. He took us through the configuration and showed us how to use an open source component that he has developed to make working with Solr even easier. And the best part? No need to wait for CF9. All of this will work on existing CF8 (and I assume 7, 6, 5, etc.) servers. I'm going to look into implementing a greatly enhanced search feature into one of my client's web sites using this stuff right away.

Dan Wilson on Model-Glue 3

You know what? I don't really give a sh!t what **Dan**'s talking about - I just like listening to him. I reckon it's impossible to be in the same room as Dan for more than 5 minutes without cracking a smile. Oh yeah, Model-Glue's not bad either.

Bob Silverberg on ColdFusion 9's ORM Integration

I know, I know, that's pretty lame, right? Saying that my own presentations were a highlight. But in fact they were a highlight for me. I really enjoyed delivering these presentations, seeing the look on people's faces that told me "I'm getting it", and also receiving personal feedback from people who enjoyed my presos and benefitted from them. That is the most rewarding part of presenting. So I'd like to thank, once again, Dan, Jim and the team for inviting me to present, and also to thank everyone who attended my sessions, and especially those people who took the time to give me feedback on them.

Looking back at that list, one thing that really jumps out at me is the fact that not only did I get something out of each and every one of those sessions, but I learned something that I am going to use right away. That's pretty cool, and means that this conference has really helped me to improve as a ColdFusion developer.

There were non-session related highlights as well:

The Speaker's Dinner

The team organized a dinner that included not only all of the speakers, but all of the volunteers as well. I think this was a great idea, as it gave me a chance to meet a lot of the folks who made this conference possible, and whom I may not have had a chance to meet otherwise. Of course the dinner was fun and it was also nice to see old friends and meet a bunch of folks who I only knew virtually prior to that.

The Networking Event

After dinner we all headed to the networking event, at a local nightclub, where all of the attendees had gathered. Again, it was a great chance to catch up with folks that I haven't seen since cf.Objective() in May, and to meet many new people. The atmosphere of the club was cool, but the music was a bit too loud for my liking. Perhaps it's my age showing, but I would have preferred to not have to yell just to have a conversation with the person next to me. Dan himself can attest to the fact that I started to lose my voice towards the end of the evening. I'm glad I had already delivered my presentations that day. Oh, and I shouldn't forget to mention that there were plentiful and delicious snacks available at the event, which I really appreciated (and consumed).

Hanging Out with Folks

The dinner and networking event were, as with everything else, well organized and lots of fun, but I also spent a number of hours in the hotel bar, socializing with friends new and old. This is always a highlight of any conference for me, and often the only chance you get to have real conversations with people.

Oreo Cookies

Who doesn't love an oreo?

Authentic Whole-hog, Pit-cooked Barbecue

My flight home was on Monday morning, so I had Sunday night to fill up after the conference had ended. Dan Wilson was kind enough to arrange an outing to **The Pit**, for some authentic Barbecue. Mmm, mmm, good. I got a chance to meet the woman foolish enough to marry him, and to chat with a few more developers that I hadn't met during the conference. Thanks Dan for arranging that.

Well, I think that about covers it. I wonder how close to Toronto I am now? (Remember, I'm in the plane flying home as I write this). I sure hope that I'm invited back to speak next year, but even if I'm not speaking there's no way I'm going to miss this conference next year. Maybe I'll see y'all there?