

# DRINK TANK

# 300

**BLOODY  
300TH  
ISSUE!**

**NOW WITH  
MORE HUGONESS\***

**\* LEVEL OF HUGONESS UNCONFIRMED**

# No. 1 - Cover by Stephen Sprinkles

## No. 2 - Editorial by James Bacon

### No. 3 - Art from Delphyne Woods

This is a Fanzine.

That's what it is. Many people in here are many things, but there is one thing for sure, we are all fans of some sort or another, and many who are professional, are good enough to give their time, efforts art and words for our altruistic craziness. For which I am very grateful.

It's great to be at 300. Bollocks, I haven't edited 300 issues of Drink Tank, I am afraid that I would have to stop con-running to even get any where near that mark, but I have had a brilliant time editing the ones that I have helped edit. We have a system and it works real well for us, that's for sure.

I like how we are suddenly empowered, the Hugo win was so unexpected. And then within about 10 minutes of the awards finishing, I was already touting for submissions for this issue. It was like we were Chromed up, people very kindly agreed, and I love that. Most writers and artists, work so hard, and many do not earn a living, and I appreciate that they give their time for free for our fanzine. It's our hobby, but it is so nice to have such a wonderful mix of writers.

Sometimes, I just want to hear what someone has to say, and that's good enough for me, the uniqueness of fanzines is that they can be what they are, and with Drink Tank, well, each one has been very different.

It's always good fun though, and I am grateful to Chris for having involved me to such a large degree, I would never have suspected ten years ago, that I would not only be doing this amount of fan writing, but also editing, sourcing, seeking thinking reading and suggesting.

It's fun.

Even as I type this, I should say, we are working on Journey Planet - we have 3 interesting issues - Sherlock Holmes, Blade Runner and Comics, so if you feel the need to write on

these subjects, do let us know.

But it would be real nice to hear what you think of this zine. Did you like it? Was it what you expected? Why did you download it?

I was stunned into silence when Chris told me that a number of Drink Tanks have had over 10,000 downloads. Like... thats crazy, but yes, some issues on Scribd have been downloaded 60 times and one 14,000. Its pretty amazing. And thats just Scribd. Over on efanzines we get good uptake too, but I just have to wonder who the 30,000 people who looked at our fanzine win are...

My mom saw that Hugo Video. Initially I could see she was unsure, sorry for Chris. Later, she came to me.

'Chris is such a really nice guy, isn't he' I could feel something in the tone. 'yeah, a great fella mom'.

'I noticed that he thanked his Mother and Father' she said quickly followed by a 'such a nice chap'.

You see, even in winning, sometimes I lose.

The Drink Tank is fun, Chris steamrolls on, at such a pace, and I come along as and when I do and generally I love it a lot. It's a unique zine, really, and for all anything negative anyone can say, especially when we are having an acute bad spelling day, we make the time, we find the time and we do it. We don't talk about it, or ponder it out or procrastinate. We do it. Chris cannot procrastinate easily, it's an ailment, and I am mildly hyper, I expect.

Its great to think that in many offices, probably after most people have left, a sneaky ream will be placed into the printer, and then, this Fantastic Fanzine will get printed. I approve.

I am especially pleased so many fans whom I hold in such high regard, as well as professionals, find themselves in these pages. Some of the art is real wish fulfilment.

But, do get in touch, do let us know what you thought,



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and do check out Journey Planet, Ansible, File 770, Chunga, Challenger, SFinSF, Procrastinations and, of course, Bannana Wings. They are all excellent too.



## No. 4 - Editorial by Christopher J Garcia

This issue is, without doubt, the biggest undertaking I've ever undertaken. I mean really, it's hard enough to put together a regular issue and it's even tougher to get stuff for a theme issue and then to try and do a theme issue with 300 people involved, well, that's just nuts! Still, there's nothin I love doing more than putting together a zine.

To me, it's just about the most fun you can have sitting at a computer.

It's all about doing the zine to me. The act of putting together a zine is the best part of zines in my eyes, and that is not a widely held belief. I keep encountering folks who don't get why I'm not big on spell-checking or accuracy checks or even doing any real editing, and I always answer the same: to me, that's no fun at all. Fun is what I do just about everything for. And

No. 5 - Photo by Mo Starkey

that's what The Drink Tank is all about.

So, I'm all over this issue, as I often am in these pages, so I don't need to say much, but I do have to give thanks to a number of people who have made 300 issues possible at all. Bill Burns is one. If it weren't for eFanzines.com, there'd be no Drink Tank, no Claims Department, no eI, no Journey Planet, no Chris For TAFF, no nothin'! While fanzines in various other areas have all but died out, largely replaced by blogs, podcasts and what have you, eFanzines.com has managed to keep zines a vital part of Fandom and not just allowing those who have always done zines to keep going, but even bringing in new folks with new material that's awesome! Thanks Bill!

Of course, I have to talk about James Bacon. At times, I feel bad for the guy because The Drink Tank is often so strongly associated with me that he gets overlooked. I couldn't do much without him, and this issue proves that more than anything as he got about half of the submissions. It's hard because I love The Drink Tank and with my methods, it's not always easy to include James on things because I'm always full-steam ahead! I'm working on it though.

Not hard, but working on it nonetheless.

This issue has some amazing stuff and I've loved reading everything. There's stuff about Fandom, stuff about history, about art, about music, about everything! We've got some fiction, which you don't often see in these pages, and there's some poetry too! There's even some Python code, which is something I never thought I'd run! Folks from five countries (US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) as well as more than two dozen folks who have never contributed to The Drink Tank, which makes me happy. I love bringing in new folks and even if they never even read another issue, just having them around for this makes me smile.

Ultimately, this issue is a snapshot of a moment. This is a zine full of folks who are around now, writing about stuff that is around now. It's not a capture of what Fanzines of the Now are about, and it's not a capture of what fanzines mean. It's a look at the people who are around and form a part of the lives of those around The Drink Tank. These are pieces that are from people of fandom, from people in the wrestling world, in the arts, in writing, in science fiction, the places where James and I live our lives. That makes this issue very special to me.

Even if it cost me several nights of sleep!

Let's start with 2011 Hugo winner: Tara O'Shea



## No. 6 - "A Passionate Love Letter to Raymond Chandler (Deceased)" by Tara O'Shea

I spend a lot of time having to shamefully admit to people in the SF community that I don't actually read science fiction.

I love SF media--and could wax eloquent for days if not weeks about series like *FarScape*, *Star Trek*, or *Doctor Who*. But when it comes to genre reading, I am a pulp girl. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* makes me happy deep in my soul, as do Ray Bradbury's short stories and I have a growing collection of *The Saint* that I'd probably grab before my laptop, in a fire.

But the love of my literary life has been and will probably always be Raymond Chandler.

I was twenty years old when I first picked up my mother's Vintage Crime trade of *The Simple Art of Murder*, which reprints an essay and several short stories featuring Chandler's Phillip Marlowe. It opened my eyes to the wonders of hard-boiled detective fiction and as the years went by, I devoured everything I could get my hands on with Chandler's name on the cover.

When I ran out of Chandler, I turned to Dashiell Hammett and James M Cain. When I ran out of them, I tried James Ellroy, Walter Mosley, Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer and GK Fickling's Honey West novels. I read and re-read my growing horde of Black Lizard trades, acquired at second-hand bookshops and airport bookstores as I criss-crossed the country going to this or that convention.

But nothing fired my soul quite the same way as Chandler.

The Los Angeles he wrote about was a mythically noir Wonderland. I'd grown up in Chicago--in its own way just as mythic and full of characters I recognised, up to and including our corrupt politicians and

art deco Financial district--but the world of 1930s Southern California was as exciting to me as John Carter's Mars, or Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. It was alien and strange, full of spiky plants and spiky people, cheap boarding houses and smoke-filled local bars.

But best of all, Phillip Marlowe restored my faith in humanity.

When you dive headfirst into the works of Hammett and Cain, after a while it drains you. All the men are stupid, and all the women are evil, and you lose faith in people as a whole. The Continental Op novels are fantastically written, and lush in their own spare, dark, noir way. *Mildred Pierce* is a heart-breaking tale of a mother who cannot help but love her femme fatale of a daughter. But Chandler's Phillip Marlowe has a core of human decency that motivates his actions-- even when said actions are questionable (and they almost always are).

More than that, he's heartbreakingly human. He gets the shit kicked out of him on a daily basis, and you feel for him as he bleeds. It's the part where after a beating he continues to get back up that makes him my favourite hard-boiled hero. He keeps on trying, because he believes in the truth and knows right from wrong-- even when he commits wrongs on the path to right.

Now, if only he'd taken a rocketship to Mars, I can hear you thinking. And yeah, maybe that would be a grand adventure. But the Californian desert is still an alien landscape to me, and that seedy side of the golden age of Hollywood just as exciting as a space station hanging in the cold vast darkness between glittering stars.

No. 7 - Film Noir by Kyvie



## No. 8 - 300 by Steven H Silver

When Christopher J. “Chuckles” Garcia<sup>1</sup> told me that he was going to have an issue of *The Drink Tank* dedicated to the 300, I pulled out my copies of Herodotus<sup>2</sup> and Diodorus Siculus<sup>3</sup>, planning on reading up to offer profound insight into the myth of the 300 Spartans (along with their 4,000 allies) at the Battle of Thermopylae against the hordes of Persians (between 70,000 and 300,000).

But here’s the thing, by the time you get to the story of Leonidas<sup>4</sup> in Book VII of Herodotus’ *Histories*, you’ve read so many other cool stories that the battle of Thermopylae comes as something of an anticlimax. As an historian, Herodotus’ tack record is not particularly impressive. He had a tendency to the gullible, or perhaps he didn’t really believe everything he was told, but he had an ear for a good story. He compiled these over the course of the *Histories* and they make the book a much more interesting text than, say, the Bible with all its begats.

Over the course of the *Histories*, Herodotus frequently describes the alien Egyptian culture, noting that everything in Greece is reversed in Egypt, from the rivers running north instead of south to the Egyptian writing from right to left instead of the Hellenic left to right. Egyptian women were barred from the priesthood, even when the deity worshipped was female and the Egyptians went inside to defecate but outside to eat, the opposite of the Hellenic practice. Egypt was also the home of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Cheops<sup>5</sup>, best known to modern people as the builder of the largest pyramid at Giza (the earliest was built by Djoser<sup>6</sup>, which predated Cheops by about fifty years). Herodotus tells the story of how Cheops, in an effort to raise much needed revenue, prostituted out one of his daughters, telling her what amount she should charge the men with whom she had sex. Not

content to charge only what he demanded, Herodotus claims she also charged each man bring her a stone, with which she built one of the pyramids of Giza.

Throughout Herodotus’ *Histories*, the writer focuses on nobility behaving badly. We learn of Periander<sup>7</sup> the Necrophile, who murdered his wife Melissa and then slept with her corpse. Later, when he couldn’t find an item a friend had given him, he ordered that all the women in Corinth should be brought to the temple to Hera and stripped naked. He then took all their discarded clothing and burnt it as an offering, not to Hera, but to his own murdered wife, who revealed through a vision where he could find the missing item. Periander had also taken 300 sons from the wealthiest families in Corcyra and arranged to send them to Sardis to be turned into eunuchs. The boys managed to escape their fate, but Periander’s actions further poisoned the relationship between his home of Corinth and the people of Corcyra. Despite these actions, Periander is considered one of the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece.

Periander had come into power legitimately, but others came up with intriguing ways to seize the reins of power. Among these was Smerdis<sup>8</sup>, the earless Mage, who usurped the throne of Persia from Smerdis, son of Cyrus the Great<sup>9</sup>, by pretending to be him. When the subterfuge was discovered through the actions of Darius<sup>10</sup> and his daughter, who was one of Smerdis’ concubines, it resulted of the slaughter of as many magi as could be found in Persia, an event celebrated annually by the Magophonia, or Killing of the Magi. Following Smerdis’ death, Darius took power, possibly having killed a pretender to the throne, possibly using a ruse to claim and consolidate power.

Smerdis’s father was Cyrus the Great. Herodotus relates how Cyrus was leading an army through

Armenia and upon reaching the Gyndes River in the Matienian Mountains, one of Cyrus' horses was drowned in the rapid current of the river. Cyrus swore he would punish the river by making it so weak that even a woman would be able to cross it without difficulty. He ordered his men to fan out on both sides of the river and begin the work of diverting its flow through three hundred and sixty channels. Although on campaign, this task is said to have cost Cyrus an entire season of campaigning, giving the Babylonians nearly a full additional year to prepare for battle with the Persians.

Not content to relate the oddities of foreign cultures, the evil of the powerful, and the course of battles, Herodotus also wrote of strange fauna, such as the gold mining ants of India, larger than foxes, faster than camels. The fruits of their labor were enjoyed by the Indians who had to be careful lest the ants swarm and dine on their flesh. He also,,,

What, the 300th issue of *The DrinkTank*, not the story of the Spartans. To quote Emily Litella<sup>11</sup>, "Never mind."

#### Endnotes

- [1] b. 1974 CE.
- [2] c. 484-425 BCE.
- [3] fl. 60-30 BCE.
- [4] d. August 9, 480 BCE.



No. 10 - Photo by Howeird

- [5] Reigned c. 2589-2566 BCE.
- [6] fl. 27th century BCE.
- [7] Reigned 627-585 BCE.
- [8] Reigned 522 BCE.
- [9] 576-530 BCE.
- [10] 550-486 BCE.
- [11] 1975-1979 CE.



## **No. 11 - 300**

### **By Julian West**

Leonidas really let us down. Couldn't bring the full army because of some religious bullshit. He tried to tell me that what he'd brought was more valuable than what we had. He'd his own guard, and about three slaves per man. Also he'd picked up a few along the way. I've more men, he said, and they're better soldiers than yours. Better than anyone in Greece. It's not what you've brought, I said, it's what you've left behind. You've an army in Sparta. Do you know how many we left? Not one. Every single hoplite is here. Nobody home but women, boys and old men.

When it started, it went well. Of course it did. The Persians had unlimited men and plenty of time. They used up a little of both sizing us up. What they learned was very simple. A phalanx in a narrow pass is going to be impossible to break through. They had shorter spears, worse shields. We could have stayed there for weeks. Some of us thought that would happen. Of course, that depended on the Persians being really stupid, and not bothering to outflank us.

So when they did, we were a bit stuck. There was enough time for the army to get away, if we had a rearguard. Volunteers, please. Well, after the stick we'd given him, Leonidas was honour bound, wasn't he? That was bad enough. I'm trying not to catch his gaze, when the Thebans stick their hands up. Only the fucking Thebans.

We don't have much choice then. Is it worth it? I mean, we aren't going to survive this, but at least we'll be remembered. When people talk about Thermopylae, they'll remember Demophilus and his thousand. When they talk about honour and sacrifice, they'll say Thespian.

**No. 12 - Stephen McCarthy**



### No. 13 - Introduction by Christopher J Garcia

My worst idea...You're looking at it.

Thinking it was possible to get 300 people to work on a single zine! What sort of madness is that?

OK, that might not be true, but it makes for a good first line, no?

What you're about to read are some awesome pieces from some awesome people about their worst ideas, and just about every one of them is way better than any of mine.

I spend a lot of time writing about the various bad ideas I've had. There are some that are obviously bad, and some that are only bad once they are put into action. I have a lot of those. A whole lot of those. Too many to list in an article of those.

But really, my worst ideas are from my frequent delving into the world of screenwriting. I've written about 20 different screenplays over the years, exactly two of them have been produced. That's about average for many screenwriters, I think. I've been lucky enough to make some terrible ideas into fully realised, terrible scripts.

Take Good Hitler. It was a concept based around the idea that Hitler and Eva had a kid who the US who was found in the bunker and taken into the US where he had a kid. That kid, Johannes Gutman Hitler, found out about his Grandpa's wrong-doings and decided to try and make amends by doing the little things like donating to Jewish sperm banks in an attempt to impregnate million Jewish women. He coaches a JCC soccer team, speaks at local school (in a fiery Nuremberg Rallies sort of way) about the need to avoid littering. It's a terrible idea, a largely offensive, certainly insensitive film, but one that I ran with

And here are several other bad ideas, most of which are probably better than that!

### No. 14 - My Worst Idea Rachel Bloom

When I was at NYU, I co-directed a sketch comedy group called HammerkatzNYU. By the time it was my senior year, I had been writing and performing sketch for 4 years and thought I was pretty hot shit. That margin of what I thought was funny and what other people thought was funny was starting to get smaller, which, in my opinion, are some of the most important turning points for any writer. Since it was my senior year and one of my last shows, I submitted a sketch that I was SURE was hilarious. The sketch featured two hosts of a Hollywood entertainment show doing a special about Billy Crystal, and it's slowly revealed that the female host (played by me) had previously had a passionate but toxic affair with Billy Crystal.

We find out that Billy Crystal had been scary, abusive, and, a dangerous thug. The first line introducing this premise was, "Ok, let's talk about Billy Crystal. He is a movie star, Tony winner, and a gangsta." I had recently-ish gone through a breakup, so I think I thought a sketch about a woman publicly bashing her ex that everyone else adored tickled me.

Anyway, the sketch died. It just...died. Not a single laugh. And there is nothing more crushing than when something you are 100 per cent sure is hilarious fails. I am embarrassed to say that, as far back in time as I like to pretend this was, this was only about 2/12 years ago. Ugh. The only part that got any laughs was a montage at the end of Billy Crystal movie clips set to some hardcore gangsta rap. Some members of the group also briefly changed Billy Crystal's Wikipedia page to read: "Billy Crystal resides in Palisades, California. He is a gansta" and, edited by my friend David: "In 1997, Crystal fatally shot 10 members of the Blood gang in Los Angeles, CA. This incident was documented in the 1998 smash hit "My Giant."

### No. 15 by Rebel Award and Hugo Winner Brad W. Foster

# No. 16 - My Worst Idea by Ken Marsden

We were somewhere around Phonsavan, on the edge of the Plain of Jars, when the drugs began to take hold. I remember saying; "Maybe I'll nod off for a while. Don't eat all the Lays." But deep down I knew it was the last I'd see of my crisps.

We'll call my travelling partner Brian, just for the sake of ease, and because that is his name in real life. Brian is one of those people who has a deep reserve of energy, endorphins, know-how and make-do. A proper pain in the arse, in other words. Nothing can upset him, and everything is all done in the pursuit of something that will make him giggle.

So, it was an obvious choice for us to go on the road in South East Asia. Me being the map reading, go-to-bed-early one, and Brian being the entertainment manager. This story found ourselves in Laos, one of the quieter less populated lands of the former French Indo China peninsula. It's a beautiful place, very mountainous, and covered in forest as far as the eye can see. This despite the actions of the US Air Force's Ranch Hands spraying of Agent Orange during the late 60s and early 70s.

As it is, a lot of old war material and scrap is dotted all over the landscape. Old bomb casings are used as pig feed troughs, or as strong stilts for elevated huts and houses. Old fabricated runway planking is used as walls and roofing. And, of course, old weaponry is used for hunting; you might wing a wild boar with shotgun pellet, but with a 7.62mm copper jacketed bullet that sucker is going nowhere except in the cooking pot.

So as time went on and the war ended, and communism became fairly impotent in the region, the tourists arrived. Which in turn attracts the bandits. Tourists generally carry nice shiny things, and fat wallets, which to the average rural bandit is honest pickings. There had been a spate of robberies where tourist busses had been stopped in the highlands and all tourists searched for booty. A rumour went round that two Swedish girls were shot because they refused to hand over their gear. Whether it was true or not is moot; the stories of bandits robbing travellers were dead real. To try ease nerves of jumpy tourists and get the tills ringing again, the Lao government decided to post an

armed soldier on each bus to ward off possible pirates, but mostly to put the sunburned masses at some sort of ease.

It was in this situation that we found ourselves. Having just visited the Plain of Jars, an amazingly surreal landscape with huge stone pots dotted all over the green hills. Nobody knows what they were for, but we came up with the usual theories; not least the Spinal Tap 'Stonehenge' one where the designer was given measurements in inches instead of feet, so the guy who ordered 400 x 6" stone mugs ended up with 6' stone urns.

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## No. 17 - SaBean Morel

**I was already fucked up beyond all reason, so another spoonful wouldn't hurt, right?**

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Anyway, on the way out on the bus, commenting on how much the landscape looked a lot like the Curragh of Kildare (except for the huge B52 bomb craters!), we pulled in to let our armed guard on. He was about eighteen or so, a private just out of school no doubt, and he went straight to sleep in the seat in front of us. AK47 across his lap and his mouth open catching flies. I decided it was time for my nap too, so I warned Brian about not eating all the crisps and off I went to sleep.

I'm not so sure how long later it was or how I awoke, but I turned to look at Brian and there he was giggling and blowing up the crisp bag into a large balloon. It was a bag of Lays Paprika flavour, the big bag version, and I remember being slightly miffed at the fact that they were mine. Then I remembered the sleeping soldier...but too late! The bang of the crisp bag coincided with my hitting the floor as the young trooper in front leapt to his feet scrabbling for his rifle with one hand and wiping the cack from his eyes with the other. His rifle had clattered onto the floor and I could see it under his seat. Brian, meanwhile, was holding his himself so as prevent pissing his trousers with laughter. Bad idea!

# No. 18 - My Worst Idea by Kim Newman

As I look at this white screen, several things come to mind as nominees for a 'my worst idea' award.

First off, and in all seriousness, saying 'yes' when asked by James Bacon to write a contribution for *Drink Tank*. As a freelance, you try to avoid turning down any sort of gig or exposure ... memory of those periods when no one was asking and none of the calls to editors were returned (three long weeks in 1983, in my case) is a powerful incentive to take anything that comes along, no matter how wildly overcommitted you are. At this moment, I could (and perhaps should) be fulfilling outstanding commissions to write film reviews for Screen International, *Empire* and *Sight & Sound*. These, I need not add, are paying gigs. *Drink Tank* pays in karma. Well, that's always needed. And these things – writing pieces from 90 to 1700 words for various outlets – tend to get ahead in the queue of more nebulous work that needs to be done. I could be writing a prospectus for the three novels I want to do in the next few years, and working out which will get tackled first – but this is the sort of thing that always gets bumped back until the shrieks from agents and editors become heart-rending.

Other bad ideas

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Getting – ahem – intoxicated at a World Science Fiction convention and shouting 'hey, fat boy ... yes, you with the beard!' at a corridor full of fans, while trusting Paul McAuley to secure the escape route lift. I can still recall the lurching, jouncing, bristling horde lumbering angrily towards us after that little bon mot, and have mercifully blanked my memory of what came next.

Taking a meeting Neil Gaiman set up with a computer games

publisher whose claim to fame was inventing the Swear Box (it sat on your desk and uttered profanities at random intervals, though I don't think he had a working prototype) and who literally went white with terror when I mentioned that I had an agent who'd look over the contracts. Along with Eugene Byrne, we outlined a way-cool (and probably impractical for the primitive programming of the '80s) mystery game called Neutrino Junction, then never heard back from the publisher after we turned in the proposal. Neil persuaded me to take the second biggest bullshit meeting of my life too.

Carrying a functional swordstick as an accessory during my nattily-dressed goth period. Not easy to explain to the friendly London police, though I'm glad this was 1983 before mandatory prison sentencing for carrying a blade. The most illegal thing I ever did was, along with Alex Dunn – now a Green Party activist in Bristol – taking down every 'vote Conservative' sign in a rural Somerset constituency just before the 1979 election. I don't regret that, though the result of the election suggests we didn't have much national influence.

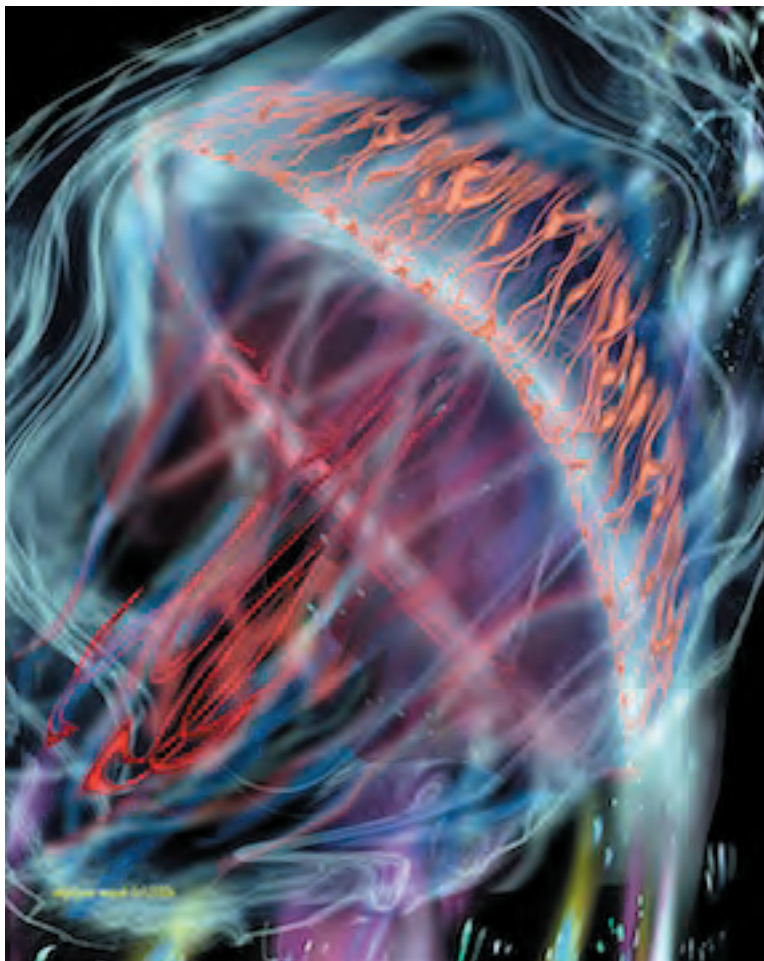
I think all those signs are still hidden under floorboards somewhere.

I similarly don't regret the Czech girl who was on their national volleyball team but really wanted to play cricket. Though injuries were involved.

Several flatshares I voluntarily entered into weren't that clever.

And I saved Hanif Kureishi's life just before he made *London Kills Me*, one of the worst British films of all time.

Otherwise, I'm happy to abide by most of my ideas.





## No. 20 - Worst. Idea EVAR! (October 2011) by TAFF Administrator John The Rock Coxon

I racked my brain over what to write for this, the three hundredth issue of *The Drink Tank*. One of the ideas I had at *Renovation* was to do an entire issue of *Procrastinations* (my own zine) and include it as a pull-out section, but that seemed like a lot of work when I had a TAFF trip report to compile. I knew that the theme (or, at least, the original theme - the list of themes for the issue seems to be growing!) was worst ideas, and so I briefly contemplated writing about the time I dated a Devonshire vampire or the project I did in my final year that saw me write 29,000 words in three weeks and nearly die of a panic attack.

However, it occurs to me that my article needs to fit three basic criteria: Firstly, it needs to be about an idea bad enough that I can plausibly claim it's the worst idea I ever had. Secondly, it needs to be somehow related to science fiction or SF fandom (I know this isn't technically a prerequisite for fan writing, but humour me!). Thirdly, it needs to be interesting enough to actually write about. It needs to be an article with

a core concept worthy of the three hundredth issue of a Hugo Award-winning fanzine edited by two good friends of mine.

As such, I'mma write about the last British Worldcon, which was *Interaction*. The 2005 Worldcon, held in Glasgow, Scotland, would have been my first convention ever. I was sixteen at the time, and I was involved with fandom through ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha (the official *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* appreciation society). I had just started going to the twice-monthly Peterborough pub meetings (at which I met Tobes, and Max, and Cardinal Cox, and various other Peterborian fans) and I was eager to escape into the wider world of fandom. If you ask Christopher J. Garcia, I did attend. He will gladly tell you stories of my experiences at the con; eventually, I suspect my memory will be bad enough that I will believe him. This is, of course, another reason to put it into writing that I wasn't there!

I did rather want to go, though. British Worldcons happen roughly every ten years, which is enough

No. 21 - Photo by Christopher J Garcia

incentive to want to get to as many as you can! Initially I wasn't going to because I had exams to do (I was sixteen, that's what you do when you're sixteen), but James Bacon emailed me (07:57 on 16th May 2005, time-and-date fans!) and asked whether I would be going since he was interested in getting me to do some Young Adult programming. My response mentions that Flick was asked whether I'd do a panel for the convention. Sadly, I think that must have been an IM conversation since I don't have a record of it in my emails, but I mention it in the response to James, and I vividly remember it was one of the things I tried on my parents to let me go.

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## No. 22 - My Worst Idea by John Scalzi

**My Worst Idea was to go ahead and kiss that one girl in college just to see what it would be like, because the one girl's idea of kissing was to jam her tongue so far down my throat that I could feel the tip of it palpitating my epiglottis. That's not the way kissing should be.**

**It's just not.**

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The email I received from James about Worldcon and the YA programming was the first time I interacted with him in any real way. It was certainly the first email I ever received from him - and, rather hilariously, he introduces himself as a ZZ9er. At the time, that was my only real connection to fandom - how times change! In fact, the first time I met him was at the AGM of ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha in Nottingham, which must have been November 2005 (this was the year before Plokta. con pi, which was my first real SF event, in May 2006).

But anyway, that's diverging from the point. Ini-

tially, I hadn't thought Worldcon was something I *could* do but suddenly, people were expressing an interest in having me on panels, and it was something that didn't actually happen all that often. At sixteen, waiting 'til you're 25 before attending an event seems like a very silly thing to do! So, I looked at my finances, and my finances looked back. I had just enough money to get myself to Glasgow and find some very cheap hostel that wasn't too far from the venue. After working out the cost of membership and a place to stay, I didn't have much money for things like food, but I figured I'd just take a packet of Weetabix and survive off that for the week.

I took this plan to my parents. Unsurprisingly, my parents were unconvinced. "How would you get there?" I'd get the train! "Where would you stay?" The cheapest place I could find, in the roughest part of Glasgow. "What would you eat?" Er... "Well?" Weetabix. So, that was a no, then.

In hindsight, I wouldn't have eaten Weetabix. Things like TAFF have taught me that science fiction fandom is far too generous and kind to look at a sixteen-year-old who's down on his luck and not throw him a bone (or a Big Mac, or a cooked meal). Especially not when that sixteen-year-old is blowing every single penny he has in the world on being at a convention in a country he's never visited before. And to be honest, it was a Worldcon, so I probably could've just crashed on a sofa in some hotel lobby and nobody would've really cared, rather than seeking out a hostel. But that's all easy to say with the hindsight of someone who's actually been to cons, and it wasn't at all obvious to me, in 2005. It was even less obvious to my parents, who, even now, regard science fiction fandom with total bemusement. Although theirs is not an unaffectionate bemusement, it must be said!

But now, in 2011, I have other things to look forward to. London in 2014 (visit [www.Londonin2014.org](http://www.Londonin2014.org) for more details - you knew there was going to be a plug, c'mon!) is looming large on the horizon. In a move that would have made it a lot easier for me to attend Interaction at the age of sixteen, memberships are half-price for young adults (I'm hopeful that this makes its way to more cons - more young people would only do us good as a community). The next British Worldcon, the one that seemed so far away when I was sixteen and trying to get to Glasgow, will also be my first British Worldcon. With the benefit of hindsight, I don't think I'd want it any other way.

Bring it on!

# No. 23 - My Worst Idea Ever By Daniel M. Kimmel

Before I became a film critic and the recipient of a rave review in the Drink Tank for my book *Jar Jar Binks Must Die... and other observations about science fiction movies* I was a lawyer. I was a lawyer because I had gone to law school, and the reason I had gone to law school was that I had originally focused on a career in politics. I gave up on that for various reasons while in college but I never stopped to rethink why I was going to law school.

So I went to Boston University School of Law, graduated, passed the bar, and eventually found myself working for a national pet store chain. My focus was negotiating shopping mall leases. I was able to do the work, but thinking I could be a corporate drone was a bad choice. For one thing, having a sense of humor was not a plus but a drawback. Let me explain.

A typical commercial lease is about the size of a small phone book (a comparison that someone pointed out will soon be meaningless to many people). It's sixty or so pages of dense print and I had to read all of it. I would routinely send out letters pointing out that on page 32, section B, sub-paragraph 2 (viii) would not be acceptable to my client. These letters would go on for ten or fifteen pages, and then after the shopping mall lawyers went over it we would get on the phone and negotiate. They would give in on some things, not on others, and we would come to what my late contracts professor would have called "a meeting of the minds."

Every single one of these leases had its share of "boilerplate." This is standard language covering certain matters which weren't subject to negotiation. In ordinary instances these wouldn't even come up for discussion. This is where I would run into trouble. Every lease would declare that the tenant would "keep the premises free and clear of all insects, rodents, and vermin." I would object and insist that the language be removed. When the attorney for the other side asked how I could possibly object to such a basic responsibility of tenancy I would reply, "You're describing our inventory."

I would get one of two reactions. Either the lawyer would burst out laughing, recognizing the absurdity of telling a store that would sell hamsters, gerbils, and mice that it must be free of "rodents," or I would get what I called Robolawyer. Obviously the

paragraph would have to be changed, but Robolawyer, without a giggle, would answer, "Right. We'll get you some alternate language on that." I began to realize what people meant when they told me I didn't "sound like a lawyer."

I have no regrets about my legal education. It's informed my business reporting and has let me teach at the college level. But my actually BEING a lawyer? Not a good idea.



## No. 25 - Dave O'neill

"Could you write me 500 words on your worst idea?" said James. "Ok," said I.

On reflection, on some kind of Zen level, this could count as one of them. However, a few minutes of reflection made it clear that this probably wouldn't even make the top 10. There was the whole first marriage to deal with, not to mention driving to Reno from Seattle, or that time in the Karaoke bar in Taipei, or pushing through to dawn with a bottle of scotch in a hotel in Seoul after a chili eating contest. My life is veritably chock full of awesomely bad ideas...

But, once I sat down to think about, one of them really came to the fore. It was really bad, a huge, great, stinking turd of a stupid idea that nobody talked me out of. I suspect they did this on purpose.

It was the late 1980s, I was at University in the North of England, I was also Chair of the long named Science Fiction and Fantasy Society - a role not entirely incompatible with doing an engineering degree (ooo... there's another bad one for you)... anyway... I thought up the following:

"Why don't we build a UFO and crash land it in the middle of Preston town centre on a Saturday for Rag?" [Rag, for those outside of the UK, is a week where students allegedly raise money for charity.] I was in the engineering faculty; I was in a rented house with a garage; I was a Science Fiction fan; what could possibly go wrong?

As it turns out, pretty much everything. A friend supplied us with a bunch of stuff, including a vaguely round tractor tire inner-tube and a pile of wood on which to mount things... he also supplied some plaster of paris which, he assured us could be poured to give something a molten appearance.

Sadly, coming from the measure once, cut many school of engineering things rapidly went downhill from there. Between the plaster, which didn't really want to pour, and the electronics, which really only worked in the dark, we ended up with a very vaguely saucer shaped construction which weighed somewhere north of 500kgs and looked like it had a washing up bowl, spray painted silver, rather badly stuck to the top.

The spinning bits only worked once and then the motor broke, and the rest of the electronics were too feeble for use outside the dark garage I built it in. The only bit that did work was the radio control for the slightly weird sound effects which were actually

built by my friend Geoff who was far, far more capable than I.

All in all, it took weeks to build a hugely unconvincing lump of plaster which took 6 of us to push up hill on an old trailer and dump in the middle of the shopping centre. Police, who had been informed, turned up to laugh.

Worst of all? Some people actually bought it that was a UFO...

That didn't make me feel any better...



## No. 26 - Art from Delphyne Woods

## No. 27 - Advice from Strangers By David Moyce

I was riding the J Church home one night, leafing through a softcover book called something like "The LSAT Prep Guide."

The Law School Admissions Test is the standardized exam used by most US law schools. It has spawned countless books, preparation courses, practice tests, and the like. There is even, scarily enough, a book called "LSAT for Dummies."

A young woman was seated to my left, dressed in standard-issue Financial District garb: dark skirt, dark jacket, plain blouse, sensible shoes. At a stop near Dolores Park, she gathered up her briefcase and purse and moved toward the exit, which was right in front of my seat. As the doors opened, she leaned over and said to me in a stage whisper, "Don't do it!" Then she hopped off the streetcar without another word.

And I made two mistakes: I didn't follow the girl. And I didn't follow her advice.

# No. 28 - My Worst Idea by Grant Watson

In 2006 my wife Sonia and I were on our honeymoon in Europe (we usually live in Australia - and by usually, of course I mean always).

After six and a half weeks travelling through England, Scotland,

France, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic, we were set to fly out from Frankfurt. On our last night, while out having dinner at a wine bar with a hilarious waiter ("I will translate the menu for you. This one is chicken with... I don't know the word for that. It's a sort of vegetable. It's very nice.") I came up with what \*seemed\* like the best idea ever.

"It's our last night in Europe," I said, "and you and I have never done a pub crawl. We should do a pub crawl." Two bits of context. One: I'm not a big drinker. Two: Sonia has multiple sclerosis. Her balance is not sensational and she uses a walking stick to get around.

Pub #1 is a combination Thai-Hawaiian themed bar. We order the Dragon

Tiki cocktails, which are very fruity and come in goldfish bowls.

There are without question the largest alcoholic beverages I've ever seen - even larger than the silly ones you see in bad Hollywood comedies where you're \*supposed\* to think "holy crap, that's a hilariously big cocktail". It's the sort of drink that requires multiple toilet breaks before you've even finished it.

Pub #2 is an ordinary inner-city bar, populated mainly by bankers relaxing after a hard day's... whatever it is that bankers do. I'm not a banker. I don't know. I barely passed high school mathematics - I did fine when maths meant using numbers. The moment they added letters and weird symbols as well my brain fled the building. We order beers, and then two random German men strike up a conversation

with us because they want to practice their English. "Hi, my name is Hans," says one. "This is my friend Dieter."

"Hi!!" says Dieter, in an oddly high-pitched and strangely camp voice. Hans designs interstitial branding for a local TV network. Dieter is a policeman. Hans looks fairly ordinary. Dieter looks like \*every nazi soldier in every World War II movie we have ever seen\*. It's the most inappropriate thought to have, and I suspect every tourist goes to Germany with a paranoid litany in the back of their mind chanting "Don't talk about nazis. Don't \*think\* about nazis." The problem is that when you're drunk, all sorts of filters close up



shop and hide inside your brain, so you become \*extremely\* paranoid about thinking about nazis, and all you think about are nazis, and while you smile and nod at the polite, friendly strangers who have bought you another round of disturbingly large beers you're not actually paying attention because your brain is trapped in a groove, circling around at 33 1/3 revolutions per minute chanting "Don't think about nazis, don't think about nazis- holy shit I just thought about nazis. Oh shit, did I just say that out loud? I haven't mentioned nazis, have I? I should check and apologise- shit, no, that would mean I \*would\* start talking to the Germans about nazis. \*Stop thinking about nazis\*. Just smile, nod, drink up the beer and then we'll be Goering- fuck, going, I meant going. Shit, I didn't say \*that\* out aloud, did I? For fuck's sake, STOP THINKING ABOUT NAZIS."

By the time Sonia and I are walking back to our hotel we're pretty drunk, which means I'm holding Sonia up quite a lot without anybody around to hold \*me\* up, and our combined centre of gravity is rolling down the street like a listing galleon. "Where are we?" asks Sonia. I reply that we're heading back to our hotel. "Well what street are we on?"

"What does it matter?" I ask. "What street is our hotel on?"

"I don't know!"

"Exactly, so who cares what street \*this\* is? The hotel is \*that\* way.

We'll find it. I know where we are."

"Find out what street this is."

"It doesn't matter. It's whothefuckcaresstrasse."

"There's a sign over there. What does it say?"

"I don't know. It's dark. I'm short-sighted."

"Prop me up against the wall and check."

"It doesn't matter what."

"GO AND FUCKING CHECK THE NAME OF THE FUCKING STREET!"

I prop Sonia up, start to cross the street to squint at the street sign when from behind I hear this very small, panicky voice shriek "Grant!!", and turn just in time to see Sonia slide down the side of the wall to the pavement. Imagine her feet staying in exactly the same spot, her whole body ramrod-straight. She just pivots on the spot, breaking her fall with her face with the sort of sickening crack you can hear from several metres away. I rush to help, in an absolute panic. She's just lying there, dead still. For a moment I actually think maybe she \*is\* dead. Six and a half weeks in Europe and I've \*killed my wife\*.

Then, after a pause, the body shakes with drunken laughter. "Huhuhuhuh!"

A security guard who has been suspiciously trailing us for the length of the building has rushed over to help, and asks us panicky questions in German - which we do not speak. The words that keeps coming up are "Krankenwagen" and "Krankenhaus", which mean "ambulance" and "hospital" but when you're drunk and don't speak German there are just about the funniest words imaginable. So Sonia starts laughing even further, and the guard mistakes the shaking laughter for crying, and so he keeps patting her shoulder and telling her he'll call a krankenwagen to take her to the krankenhaus, which makes her laugh harder, which makes him say it more often. It's a vicious cycle that only breaks when I ask if he speaks English.

"Sprechen sie Englisch?"

"Nein."

"Ah... it's OK." I give him a thumbs up. "Er, de fraulein has, uh..." Why the hell not, I think, let's give it a shot. "...ah, multiple sclerosis?"

He stares at me blankly. I try a few more times without success. Eventually a passing banker stops, and \*does\* speak English.

"My wife is fine," I explain, "she just has multiple sclerosis."

"Ah!" says the banker, and turns to the guard. "Die fraulein hat multipla sklerose."

"Oh!" says the guard, suddenly relieved. "Multipla sklerose!"

I want to shake him a few times and punch him in the face. You stupid fucker, I think, how can you understand multipla sklerose and \*not\* multiple sclerosis? Did the extra 'S' at the end confuse you that much?! Holy shit, you fucking \*moron\*, I could kill you.

Eventually we hail a taxi, which takes us the two blocks left to our hotel, which is - due to a lack of research on our part - sits at ground zero of Frankfurt's red-light district. Across the street is either a brothel or the world's seediest strip club. Either way we kept amusing ourselves watching random middle-aged men stroll furtively down the street until an imaginary breeze blew them unwillingly inside the club at a hundred miles an hour. Every time one walked out we kept wanting to shout "Ah HAAA!!!" from our balcony then hide behind the curtains.

I sit Sonia down on the bed and check her out. Her face is already swelling up and going purple, and I make her apply the icepack I've grabbed from the hotel reception. "You've got a concussion," I tell her, "just lie

down and rest. I *\*really\** need to pee.”

“I’m fine!” shouts Sonia, while I’m in the toilet, a remark immediately followed by an almighty crash as she’s attempt to stand up, fallen onto the floor and hit her head on the bedside table so hard it’s ricocheted across the floor and shattered a wall-mounted power point.

“Why don’t you apply that icepack to the back of your head for a minute?” There’s already a lump forming under her hair.

“We never went to the sex shop,” Sonia suddenly complains. Earlier in the day we’d noticed a sex shop on the corner of the street, and had jokingly decided we should check inside to see if German porn was as bad as its reputation would suggest.

“I don’t think it matters.” I say.

“No, I want to know if they have Scheiße porn. Go check.”

“Sweetie, you have a concussion and bruising on your face and the back of your head. I’m not going to go check-”

“GO AND LOOK AT THE SCHEIßE PORN!! GO!!”

Reluctantly, and on the promise that she’ll try to get some sleep, I take the hotel room key, walk downstairs and end the last night of my honeymoon looking at pornography while my wife is upstairs with a concussion and a cracked cheekbone.

It turns out German pornography *\*is\** as frighteningly perverse as its reputation would suggest. Upon entering I’m immediately confronted by a DVD, placed on a shelf at eye level, titled “We Love Shit” – and they most certainly do. I make an involuntary noise and whip a hand up, to hide the sight from my eyes. The only problem with *\*that\** strategy is that my eyes avert to a DVD about tying knots around testicles until they turn purple, which makes me yelp out again and put my other hand up. Then the pee porn. Then the vomit porn. Then the porn I’m not willing to describe. It’s like a song and dance move, hands whipping from spot to spot, each movement accompanied by a little “Yah!!” noise of terror. The guy behind the counter makes a derisive noise, shakes his head with pity and goes back to his newspaper.

“Did they have Scheiße porn?” Sonia asks sleepily, when I return back upstairs.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” I reply.

12 hours later, we’re boarding an aeroplane at Frankfurt am Main International Airport. Sonia pauses when we pass the flight attendant, indicates to her black eye and purple cheek, then indicates to me and quietly whispers “*\*He\** did this to me.” Sonia finds her seat while the flight attendant stares at me in horror.

She stares at me in horror for 22 hours.

I’ve never been on another pub crawl since.



# No. 31 - Batman (1989) by Derek McCaw

I spent five years of four years in college missing the Bay Area. I just wasn't psychologically prepared to live in Los Angeles after growing up in Sunnyvale before it became an anchor point to Silicon Valley. When did I figure out that Los Angeles wasn't such a bad place? About a month before I graduated from UCLA and had already committed to grad school ...back in the Bay Area.

And I am nothing if not someone who follows through with a plan long past the point it needs my support. Case in point: a roundabout way of connecting this Drink Tank's theme of "My Biggest Mistake" with a story of heading back down to L.A. for a major geek out.

(Coming back to the Bay Area wasn't that big of a mistake – I do have a pretty good life here, and two great kids I wouldn't give up for anything.)

A year after returning, an event loomed on the horizon that would change fandom forever, and cemented for me that I absolutely belonged to it. That was the June release of Tim Burton's Batman, starring Michael Keaton and Jack Nicholson.

This was before the world wide web, so I didn't have a site where I could go and see the trailer. When an issue of Time magazine came out with a smattering of exclusive pictures, and it sold out before I could get a copy, I was at a loss.

Luckily my mentor teacher was also a big movie fan, and gave me permission to offer extra credit to the first student who came in with the magazine to show us the pictures. I pored over those few shots, Keaton in cowl and Nicholson in garish make-up.

It looked good enough for me, even though I had groaned when Keaton was announced as Bruce Wayne. It looked good enough for one of my buddies down in L.A., Mark, who called me and asked if I wanted to come down and see it opening day at the Chinese Theater.

The two of us convinced Kit, another friend we'd done theater with, that he wanted to come down, too, and so began the first journey back to L.A. a year after leaving it. Kit had rehearsal until late the night before, but he was excited and swore to drive straight

through the night and join us in line for the noon show, which we thought was the first that day.

Oh, how naïve we were, but again, Batman was kind of a game-changer for the industry. Dutifully, Mark drove over to the Chinese (in its time as "Mann's Chinese") to buy tickets the day before, and I drove down early so I could be well rested for the long awaited Bat Experience.

When I got to Mark's apartment, he had a strange look of guilt and longing on his face. "You know they're actually showing it starting at midnight tonight, right?" he asked me.

I can't recreate the right note of "aaagggghhh" that I hit, but I do remember lamenting that we hadn't made plans to just go then. We couldn't wait. You might be sensing the betrayal about to happen.

"I thought so, too," Mark continued, "that's why I went ahead and bought us tickets to the midnight show."

"What about Kit?" I asked. Mark whipped out three more tickets. "Oh, we're still going at noon." And so we made a pact that we would not tell Kit we'd already seen it, and act thrilled and surprised by every twist of the movie when he was sitting next to us.

We stood in line, late at night in Hollywood. We entered the theater and (ridiculously) gasped appreciatively that the curtains were closed over the screen (raised on Syufy Theaters with no curtains) with a Bat-signal shining on them. I'd thought I'd be too tired after driving down, but no, that was not a problem. I was much younger then.

Then the movie started, dark, operatic and everything I didn't know I wanted back in 1989. When Jack Nicholson let out his first Joker laugh, I whispered, "this is not Cesar Romero!" and shut up for the rest of the movie.

We thought it would be easy to keep our enthusiasm up the second time around. To us, it was. But despite our best efforts to act ignorant about what was coming, the bedraggled Kit, who had driven all night to share this experience with us, turned to us just before the movie started at noon and said, "you fuckers already saw this, didn't you?"

# No. 32 - My Worst Road Trip by Leane Verhulst

When I heard that the moral compass of the Boston in 2020 Christmas Worldcon bid, the man who sat on stage with tears in his eyes with a Hugo award in his lap, yes, the man known as Chris Garcia wanted to do an issue of the Drink Tank with 300 contributors, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. But what to write about?

One of the unofficial themes of this issue is “worst idea ever”. Hmmmm.... How about worst road trip ever?

It was mid-March 1997. I had just started going to conventions because of my love of Babylon 5. Now don't get me wrong, I have \*always\* read science fiction books, but it took my love of this show to get me out of my home and going to conventions. I had heard of this little convention in Konamazoo Michigan called ConamaZoo that was going to have the actor Jeffery Wilerth as a Guest of Honor (he played Kosh in Babylon 5), but I wasn't really sure I wanted to drive all the way there. You see, since I was new to the convention scene,

I hadn't really met anybody and so it would be a trip by myself to a place I had never been to meet people I didn't know. This was all rather scary for me at the time.

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes, mid-March in 1997. I was working in downtown Chicago. Since I

didn't know if I wanted to go, when I got up that Friday morning, I packed my suitcase just in case. It was in the trunk of my car as I drove to work so that I would be ready to go if I decided to go for it. The day here in Chicago was a beautiful day - sunny and warm as some early spring days are bound to be. It was a beautiful day for a drive. All morning at work I kept thinking about whether I should go or not. I finally decided that yes, I wanted to go and I asked my boss for the rest of the

day off. She said yes and off I went. Little did I know what was in store for me.

I drove south on Lake Shore Drive enjoying the beautiful lake and when I got to the turn that would take me to the interstates, I decided to keep driving south instead so that I could enjoy the lake view. I could always get onto the highway later. Heh. Yeah. I don't know how I missed the highway as I ended up a LOT further south than I should have been. I don't remember exactly how far south, but it wasted a few hours of the journey. Oops. Maybe I should have taken that as a

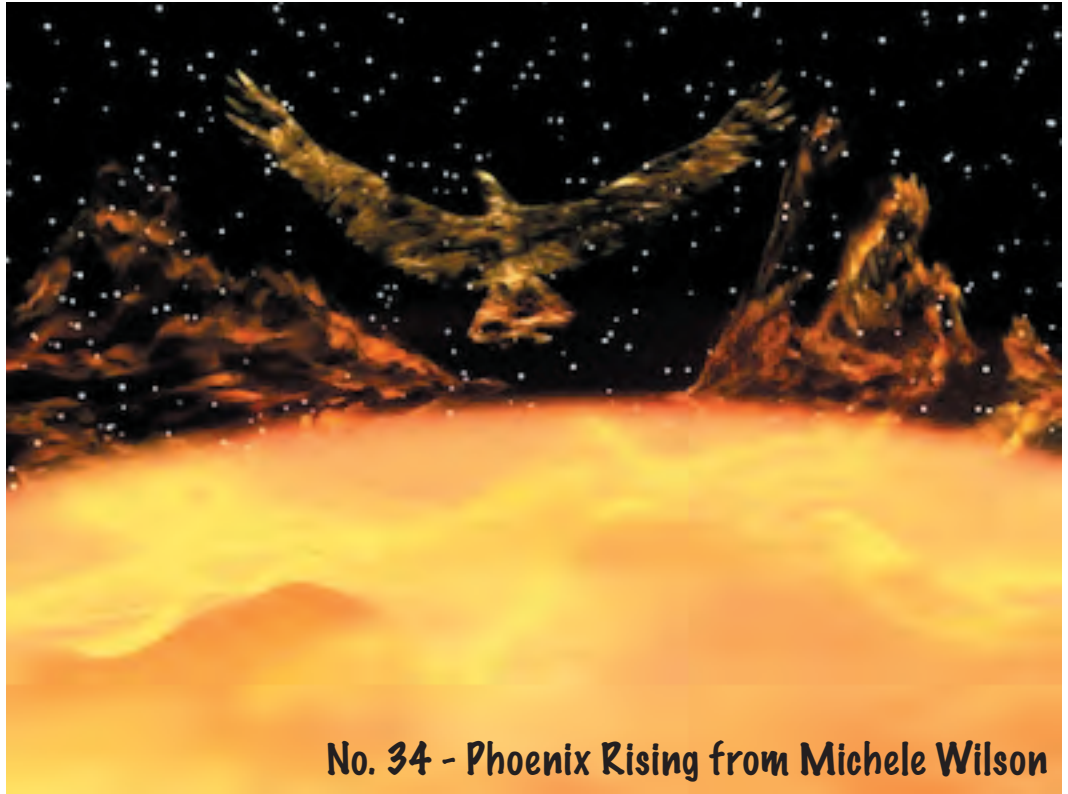


sign, but nooooo, I had to keep going.

I made it back to the highway and finally made it to Michigan. Whew. The highway was pretty clear by this time and I was making good time. The car I was driving was a Ford Mustang GT 5.0. This is a car with quite a bit of zoom. However, it was a car that if it just

\*thought\* there was water on the road would start to slide, but I was pretty good with this car and always careful, even though I really liked going fast when I could. And guess what? I was going fast because that's what you do on a highway with only a few others on the road. <grin>

But, it was starting to get a little dark and that's when I noticed something. Something that scared me quite a bit. There, in the ditch, was that white stuff? OH MY GOD! It was! There's snow in the ditches! And I'm driving fast! In a car that likes to slide! And I'm in



### No. 34 - Phoenix Rising from Michele Wilson

the fast lane! Eek! So I carefully took my foot off the gas so I could start slowing down, and that's when I felt it. I started to slide.

I don't know how I didn't hit anything, kill anyone or kill myself. The car spun so fast I couldn't tell what was happening, and when it stopped, I was in the center ditch between the highway lanes. I sat there for a bit to make sure my heart would keep beating and my stomach would stay where it was before I got out of the car to see what I could. I stepped out into icy slush that instantly got my feet wet. It wasn't too deep, but it was deep enough and slick enough that there was no way for me to drive out of the ditch. I tried to push my car, but I had no luck. (Side note: I looked at my tracks from the spin and tried to figure out how my car spun, but I couldn't figure it out.) I thought about waving down someone to help me, but as I stood by my car watching others slide by, I realized that I would be taking my life in my hands if I went any closer to the road way.

So I sat in my car, with the heater on and the lights on, hoping a cop or a tow truck would soon happen by. You see, this was before I owned a cell phone and so I had to just wait and hope. After about an hour, a cop car slid to a stop and asked if I was ok. I told him I was fine and I asked him to call for a tow truck and he did. After another hour, the tow truck appeared and pulled me out of the ditch. I paid him and then I pulled out my map. (Yes, paper map.) How much further did I

have to go? It looked like I only had about another 40-50 miles. Much closer than trying to drive all the way back to Chicago in what was now a snow storm. So I kept going.

Since it was now snowing, I was driving slow. Very slow. In the slow lane. And things were going pretty well until I hit the white out. The snow was coming down so hard that I could not see anything more than a foot away from the car. Eek! So I slowly started pulling over to the side of the road. At least, I \*thought\* I was pulling over. Instead, I suddenly saw a concrete barrier to my left! Somehow, I had ended up in the left hand lane - the fast lane - and was next to a concrete divider! And then I saw lights in my rearview mirror! Oh, please don't hit me I thought! And they didn't, but I knew I had to get over and off the road. I watched my rearview until there were no more lights and then quickly (well, slowly, actually) drove my car over to the right to get off the road and onto the shoulder. I made it and parked there for a little while until the snow let up a bit.

I checked the map - only a little bit more until my exit. And then I'll find the hotel and I can crawl into a nice warm bed and pretend this little trip didn't happen. That's what I kept repeating to myself as I slowly drove down the highway.

Look! There's my exit! Wait a minute...there's an A and a B exit. Which should I take? My map doesn't say! Well, it's a 50/50 chance that I'll be right, so I picked

A. And guess what? I picked wrong. After driving for a little bit and having my surroundings get darker and darker as I drove further out into the rural area, I realized that I needed to turn around and go back. However, the road that I was on was not a good road to turn around on - the tops of the trees in the ditches were about even with the road bed. Eek! One little slip and I'll end up at the bottom of a VERY DEEP ditch! But I didn't want to keep driving out to nowhere, so I stopped the car and very carefully and slowly turned it around on this narrow little road with ditches that went down, down, down. Whew!

Back I went to the lights of civilization, or in this case, Konamazoo, Michigan. Driving very slowly because of the snow, and looking for the road that I needed to take to get to the hotel. The single lane road that I was on widened and became a two lane road. I kept to the right, the slow lane, because of the snow and cursed all those people who would pass me on the left like I was standing still. Didn't they know how dangerous it was to drive that fast? Grumble, grumble.

As I crept along, I came up to a stop light. As I sat there waiting for it to turn green, I was able to read the sign and realized this is the road I needed! The road I needed to turn left on! Which I couldn't do as it's illegal to turn left from the right-most lane of a two-laned road. Crap! I was going to have to go straight and then find someplace to turn around at and come back. Or.... I could wait until all the cars were gone and then make the turn. I mean, what are the chances that a cop will see? Especially if I make sure there aren't any cops around. I think you can guess what happened.

I made the turn and sure enough, flashing red and blue lights appeared behind me as if by magic. How? Where did he come from? There were no cars around when I made the turn!!! Grrr!

I pulled over and the cop eventually came over. Now it's mignight or so and he's being careful. He shone his light into my back seat and onto me and all over the car. He asked for my license and asked what I was doing. I admit it, I babbled and maybe shed a tear or two. I was tired and upset and had been through this horrible little trip and now I was about to get a ticket. However, after giving me the third degree about who I was, where I was going, and why I was going there, he finally pointed out the hotel I was looking for - it was just a little ways further down the street - and he let me go with just a warning. Whew!

I made it to the hotel ok, but a lot of other people did not. You see, they were smart and actually

looked at a weather forecast before they started their trip. If I had done that while sitting at my desk earlier that morning, I would have seen that a massive ice storm was heading for the exact area that the convention was being held. A lot of people saw this and stayed home so the convention was very under-attended. Very bad for the convention - I believe it ended up being their last year.

But I got Jeffery Wilerth's autograph and so I was happy. Wouldn't do it again though.



# No. 36 - Bourbon & Beer by T.K.F. Weisskopf

“My Worst Idea”—I’ve had many a worst idea, but taking my theme from the title of the zine, I’ll say my worst alcohol-related idea was at the con where I learned that Beer and Bourbon Don’t Mix.

It was Boshcon, 1982, in Birmingham, Alabama, a con conceived by Charlotte Proctor & Julie Wall as an excuse to get Bob Shaw back over the pond to visit Southern fandom. I certainly thought it was a wild success, since I got to meet Bob and spend some time listening to his charming northern Irish accent.

At the time I was still in high school, so the twenty buck registration fee was a significant sum to me, and I wanted to make sure to get my money’s worth. This was also the sum total of my expenses for the weekend since I was hitching a ride to Bham with friends from Huntsville, and crashing in their room, to boot.

Thus, cheapskate that I am, I determined that the best way to get value for my registration dollar was not just to meet the guest of honor, but to drink as much as possible of the free stuff available in the con suite. Since I don’t drink soft drinks the only liquid left to me was the beer. I don’t like carbonation, but I was willing to make an exception in this case.

To that point in my relatively sheltered life, I’d never had a lot of beer, so that was also the weekend I learned to overcome my dislike of bubbles, and learn to drink beer. That was Friday night. I have to say that part of the experiment was a success, putting me on the road to my present-day status of beer snob (still don’t like beer with lots of carbonation, though).

So far, so good. I’m not sure who had the bourbon at the con—Tucker wasn’t there, but his traditions had already infiltrated Southern fandom, so somebody had a bottle or two they were sharing about. And that was Saturday night. Start by drinking beer all day, then add bourbon. Taper off with beer. I had a plan.

Did I mention that it was also

part of my plan not to sleep much at the con, again to make the most out of my registration money? Hell, I was a teenager, I could sleep when I was old. Like now, for instance. No wonder I’m tired all the time.

Needless to say, Sunday morning dawned all too early for me. My gastrointestinal system was too young and feisty for me to have hangovers just yet (my first one came at Beachcon in 1996, come to think of it, after a night of mourning Bob Shaw’s death). But it did back up in dramatic fashion. Suffice it to say I was not feeling chipper that a.m. But in the con suite there was a call for a group to go to Denny’s for breakfast. And that’s when I learned my last lesson of the con: greasy breakfast food is just the thing for a dicey tummy recently awash with booze.

So my thanks to the New Orleans fans who included a newcomer that morning—Dennis Dolbear, John Guidry, Guy Lillian, et al. I learned many things at that con, but learning to hang out with the SFPA group was the best lesson of all. And I still don’t drink bourbon after beer!



## No. 38 - Watch Out! Here's The Nostril Pistol Kid! by Simon Clark

Watch out for the Nostril Pistol Kid!! If he comes to a convention near you, take cover. He could annihilate the dealer room with a single sneeze.

Okay. What inspired this particular Simon Clark fantasy of a boy with a quick-fire snout?

Well, it's all based on fact. We go back in time to when I was four. My father was a school-teacher. His great idea was to bring home interesting items from school.

Once it was a megaphone. My Dad proudly brought this exciting device home from the PE locker. He carefully demonstrated it outdoors with the volume set as low as it could possibly go.

The thing is, the megaphone had so much potential. It could do SO much more. Even I realized that at such a young age.

So, as my family watched television that night, I sneaked outdoors with the megaphone, switched on, turned the volume to max. I then took a tranquil moment to appreciate the power of such a device, and take a good, long look at all the houses nearby, where people were peacefully enjoying Coronation Street. I'm sure God shared the same emotion when he gazed at all that Cosmic dust and thought 'I could make a really good universe out of all that.'

I took a deep breath, and spoke. My words were thunder. 'WAR HAS BEEN DECLARED. BOMBS ARE FALLING. YOU ARE IN DANGER. WAR HAS STARTED. YOU WILL BE KILLED!'

The mighty voice, amplified to awesome levels by the megaphone, blasted the

town.

I remember my mother flinging herself through the doorway of the house. Her face, a stark, white mask of terror. She wrenched the megaphone from me. Then she went to have a little chat with Dad.

A week later Dad brought home a starting pistol. He demonstrated the gun in the garden. The explosions it made were wonderful.

Later, I found that the gun had been locked away. The disappointment was immense.

But I did find one of its coppery bullets on the living room floor. Dad must have overlooked this excitingly explosive nugget.

Just looking at the bullet was okay for a while. Then I wondered what it would smell like. For a four year old the natural development of the investigation prompted the question: 'Would it fit up my nose?'

When I pushed the bullet it slipped smoothly up my nostril.

The main problem I faced: it didn't come back down again.

What followed was an awkward confession: 'Mum, don't be mad at me, but...'

Then the trip to the hospital. A bemused doctor tweezered the bullet out. It made a satisfying bang when he carelessly tossed the explosive ammo into the metal bin.

There... that's my worst idea. Sometimes I wonder if there were two bullets. And only one was extracted from my nose. Watch out! I'm the Nostril Pistol Kid!

And I'm just about to sneeze.



# No. 40 - My Worst Idea Was to Become a Fan of Doctor Who

## By Alissa McKersie

I was at my friends' house one night and they were watching a show on BBC America I had not seen. I didn't know what it was until later on. All I saw was a goofy looking guy with a leather jacket and boots talking to a young girl in, what looked like, a train yard. I had no idea what was going on in the show, but for some reason, I was mesmerized! By now, many of you know, I was watching Christopher Eccleston as The Doctor. And that moment changed me.

When I was young, my family used to watch Doctor Who on PBS. I remembered Tom Baker's Doctor, Sarah Jane Smith, K9, and the TARDIS from back then. Of course, it didn't actually register until I heard the theme to the show. That's when it all came flooding back.

I was fortunate enough to have a friend that had several of the "new" series of Doctor Who. I think I watched the first two seasons over a weekend! I LOVED this show! The only thing I had ever seen David Tennant in was Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (which I am also a fan of), so I did not have much to compare him to with this role. Over series three, I realized that I had become addicted to this show! By the time series four came along, I had learned how to get the episodes (shhhh) before BBC America aired them and cut them. (My justification for this was, of course, the fact that I would be purchasing the DVDs when they became available.)

There is a big drawback in being an American fan of a British television show: merchandising! It is SO hard to find things in the US for Doctor Who! I quickly learned that eBay and Amazon (especially the UK versions) are my friends! I even looked for Doctor Who Adventure magazines, because they have fun things like pens and notebooks! I even found a box of 100 stickers! But, I could never walk into a regular store and find anything Doctor Who.

Another disadvantage has been

depending on BBC America to air the show in a timely manner. Somewhere along the way, they woke up and must have found some advantage to airing it on the same day (still hours difference, but much better than weeks)!

And then there's the Specials...not a full season, only five episodes! At the end of which The Doctor regenerates! This was not fair! I was such a kid about the whole thing! And, of course, I cried...but if you ask anyone who knows me, that's not hard to manage. Not only did The Doctor regenerate, though. The whole show regenerated! New Doctor, new head writer, new logo, new theme! It was all new! But I wasn't an instant fan. I never bought series five. Series six is almost over, and I'm still not convinced.

I'm waiting. I'm waiting for The Doctor to captivate me again. I am now depending on the world of fandom to help continue my passion for the show. I just hope I don't end up waiting as long as Amelia Pond.



# No. 42 - All My Attempts to Cook Requiring Finesse are Usually Very Bad Decisions

## By Ang Rosin

All my attempts to cook requiring finesse are usually very bad decisions. Below: a description of what happened when I decided I need to have more interesting meals with “courses” to stop me from eating microwaved pies when I get in from work: “Now, I haven’t got a sweet tooth but decided that maybe a three course meal was the way to go to re-train my palate. Soup -quickly heated for the dangerous “just got in from work and hungry stage” – then a small main meal for exciting flavours and then a dessert as a treat.

“That is why my house is now a soup kitchen, with bowls of the stuff bubbling away. Last night the

first was made - Spinach and Potato. This is a good, freezer-friendly soup in the hands of an expert. In my hands, it is floor-cleaner. Why? Because I’ve not quite grasped the difference in dimensions between the pan and the blender. Yes, the bowl is the same size, but the bowl has a big gap in it half way up that the blade spins on.

“Not to be deterred I made some puddings. I made biscuits, which actually WORKED! Yes, they are small and, yes, they are fairly crunchy but that is good in a diet biscuit. Filled with confidence I made a lemon sponge, an accurate description of what I needed to mop it up when I finished. “People. Recipes are there to be followed and taking the following diversions led to a sponge that was better

suited to Shrove Tuesday:

- Being too lazy to read to the end of the sentence I added the lemon zest AND juice to the sugar and margarine for creaming.
- I tried to cure this by adding the rest of the ingredients leading to a gloopy soup containing floating bits of lard.
- I decided that given everything that had happened already it wasn’t worth whisking the egg whites to fold-in so just lobbed them in too, un whisked and “gave it a good stir”.
- At the end I realised that I had neither a pie dish or a suitable roasting tray to put “3 inches” of

water in. Instead I put the mix into the lid of a pyrex dish and then filled the dish itself with water and put the lid upside down on the top. This from a woman who has science A-Levels.

“After half-an-hour I opened the door expecting to see a golden brown sponge cake. Instead I had a fermenting pancake in a pool of lukewarm water. An hour later I had a burnt crust on top of a fermenting pancake in a pool of lukewarm water.

“After all that I couldn’t face making the fish-pie I was planning. Tonight I’ve had my three courses: some very thick spinach soup; egg and oven chips (hey, it’s a step) and; three really tough biscuits. Luckily my cold means I have no sense of taste.”



# No. 44 - Best Bad Idea by Seanan McGuire

Most of my no good, very bad, fuck-terrible, “were you high when you decided to do that?” ideas involve a) my environment, b) venomous things, or c) physics. The best horrible ideas involve two or more of the above. Which brings us to...sledding.

I grew up in Northern California, where “snow” was something that happened to other people. But a lack of proper environment never stopped a really determined group of kids, and we wanted to go sledding. Since we didn’t have snow (or sleds), we did our “sledding” by sliding down a nearby hill on chunks of cardboard. Years of kids had worn away all vegetation, resulting in a smooth dirt hillside that was perfect for our bizarre adaptation of a classic winter sport. Normal Rockwell drew ruddy-cheeked angels sliding across fields of pristine white. We were muddy-faced urchins plummeting through clouds of rising dust.

Even as a kid, I was hugely attracted to the idea that science could be used to improve everyday experiences—like sledding down Cardboard Hill. Our biggest problem was friction. People sledding on snow had very little friction, since they were on smooth metal blades, skating over smooth frozen water. We, on the other hand, had huge amounts of friction, since cardboard + dirt hillside does not = one of nature’s smoothest combinations. If we wanted to go faster, we needed to create a smoother surface.

Crisco is smooth.

Emboldened by this stroke of pre-teen genius, my best friend and I put our plan into motion. She stole her mother’s industrial-strength can of Crisco, while I stole my mother’s biggest cookie sheet (hi, Mom). We met on the hill with our ill-gotten gains, and proceeded to spend the next hour spreading an inch-thick layer of Crisco along our preferred sledding path. We were hoping to go a little faster, maybe even—gasp—twice as fast. It was a crazy dream, but we were batshit crazy dreamers with a cookie tray and a tub of Crisco. We were ready to rock.

I sat on the cookie tray at the top of the hill. She sat behind me. We pushed off.

We did not go a little faster.

We did not go twice as fast.

We went, roughly, five times as fast, which, when

sitting on the cookie tray, equated to HOLY FUCK WE’RE GONNA DIE fast. My best friend fell off the back of the tray, fracturing her wrist. I was not so lucky. The tray hit the base of the hill, where the ground leveled out—formerly an absolute barrier to our sledding adventures—and kept going. The tray sailed across the threadbare field. The tray hit the edge of the creek.

The tray kept going.

Being launched into the air above the frog pond by a flying cookie tray is one of those things that manages to be awesome and terrifying, all at once. I slammed into the chain link fence on the far side of the creek, creating a lovely waffle pattern of scrapes across my face, and clung there until some of the other kids could coax me down. My best friend was in a cast for six weeks. We never found the cookie tray. We both agreed that we would totally do it again.

And that was my best, worst, what-the-fuck-were-you-thinking idea.





## No. 46 - From Brian Nisbet

Games designers are full of bad ideas. Some of them are unique to the format, while some of them are much the same as every other type of writing.

When you're writing something for publication deadlines are nebulous things, arbitrary dates set to fit in with an arcane plan the writer is rarely privy to; when you're writing scenarios for conventions a deadline is a date upon which people plan to play your game, and if it isn't there the organisers and paying public have an awful habit of starting to raise their voices and point accusing fingers in your direction. Around the end of the last millennium I agreed to write two scenarios for a convention in Dublin, and then I did nothing for a couple of months. So, my worst idea was definitely the notion I could write roughly 20000 words in one day.

Yes, I said 20000. Two full scenarios, 12 full fleshed out characters at 1000 each, then at least 2000 words of plot, which could easily grow to 4000. In the beginning I'd had loads of time, the convention had even suggested that maybe I just write one game, but I'd persuaded them, I'd offered optimistic timelines, I'd told them of progress made. In short, I'd lied, a lot.

The eve of the convention rolled around. I had ideas, I had Word open on the laptop, I could print stuff out at the con and, well, one of the games wasn't needed until Sunday, what could possibly go wrong? Oh yeah, still, 20000 words. That's a lot of words. Then my girlfriend, who I hadn't seen in a couple of weeks, turned up. Surely you'd think, that's it, game over, no scenarios, writer hounded out of con and forced to spend the weekend in the pub? No. The lady was far

more sensible than I. She sat on the bed in my room and very pointedly refused to let me do anything other than kiss her briefly then get back to work. She was willing to provide me with drinks, but that was it. She wasn't going to even converse unless it was to discuss ideas. I had to write, she would read, that would be that. Never before that point had I been so motivated.

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### No. 47 - M Lloyd

**Worst idea? Marrying a prick who didn't want me for my money, only for my body. What an ass.**

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Oh how I wrote. Thank any muse you wish, the words flowed from my fingers. Things that could be copied for characters were, any shortcuts that could be taken, without ruining the game (because, ultimately and utterly, the game is the thing), were taken. I managed to invent an entirely new way of presenting a convention scenario using fewer words than I'd ever used before and, in the end, I had two scenarios that I could present to the convention and, most importantly, other people could understand.

I saved, I emailed, I sat back, I vowed never to do that again, never to promise and then ignore (I've mostly kept to this) and I certainly decided never to think I could write 20000 words in one day again. Of course I still spent most of the weekend in the pub, but in a universe full of words and chaos, one needs a few fixed points!

No. 48 - Photo by Christopher J Garcia

## No. 49 - 299 Bad Ideas and One Good One by Randy Byers

The worst idea I ever had was inviting 300 wrestlers to my house. It didn't help that they were Spartans. My girlfriend at the time was half-Iranian, and let's just say her boat was not floated. (Little known fact: She later went on to become the first female pitcher in Major League Baseball to join the exclusive 300-win club.) At first I was able to keep the wrestlers distracted with an episode of Futurama (the one where President Nixon gives everyone a tax rebate and Hermes buys a pair of boots for \$299.99), but they got restless after about five minutes. A restless wrestler is a wler, which is apparently either an FM radio station in Butler, Pennsylvania or the Battersea railway station in London that was closed and demolished after suffering air raid damage on 21 October 1940.

Things were obviously getting out of control by this point, so I sent the wrestlers off on a mission to crush the Club of Rome. This group was organized in 1968 by the Morgenthau Group for the purpose of accelerating the plans to have the New World Order in place by the year 2000 and to establish the ability to control each and every person through means of mind control and what Zbigniew Brzezinski called technontronics, which would create human-like robots and a system of terror which would make Felix Dzerzhinski's Red Terror look like children at play. So of course the wrestlers were turned into robots, and of course the robots wanted to go bowling — a game I hate. My ideas were just getting worse and worse. So in 1979 I called Bruce Pelz. "Send them to the Worldcon in Brighton," he advised. "Have them collate WOOF." Best. Idea. Ever!



No. 50 - Photo by Howeird

## No. 51 - Mike Carey

A long time ago I was close to getting a TV series commissioned for a network that shall remain nameless until I accidentally refer to it by name (it was ITV – there, that's got the tension out of the way). Maybe I wasn't as close as I thought, though, because when I look at the idea now it boggles me with its badness.

It was about a group of children who had super-human powers on account of... this is hard for me to write, so bear with me... on account of they had magical friends who were sentient shellfish. Each shellfish had a name and personality and an innate power which it kindly passed on to its human best buddy. So this was a super-group with whelks in their pockets. Really. That was the high concept.

The bad guys were the executives of an evil corporation which was pumping toxic waste into the ocean as part of an evil plot to force the super-powered shellfish to the surface. Once that happened, they would trap them and force them to empower a super-team of evil corporate drones who would then do more evil. Notice the prevalence of the word "evil" in the above: it was all over the pitch document, too. "So what's the villains' motivation?" "Umm... they're evil. They like to do bad stuff. To tiger prawns."

Sadly, the series never came about. I'm not exactly sure why. Maybe the producer I was working with accidentally showed the pitch to a sane person.



No. 52 - Photo by Howeird

# No. 53 - Wild Thing...you make my heart sing...

## by Deb Geisler

My "worst idea" was born in Sweden in 1962 and moved to the United States in 1963. For the next 18 years, Illinois was home (despite many miles of wandering). Eventually, I'd end up deserted on Interstate 70, about 40 miles east of Terra Haute, Indiana, nearly penniless, at midnight on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, 1981.

Before that, of course, we had a wild ride.

+ + +

Wild Thing was a 1962 2-stroke, 3-cylinder baby-blue Saab I bought used for \$400 while I was in graduate school at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. When the Saab first came to my driveway, it had a driver's seat that needed fixing (because it wouldn't actually sit up) and a failing alternator.

It really didn't get better.

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## No. 54 - Rachel Phillips

**My worst idea ever? I can't say for certain that it ranks with the rest of the ones you got, but I once ended up on a date with a fellow named Joe Hyde. I threw him out of the car when he got a little too fresh with me.**

**Now he's doing six life sentences.**

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The car first failed me on Interstate 57, just north of Mattoon, Illinois, en route to party time with friends at the University of Illinois.

After being stranded by the side of the interstate for an hour, burning my hand badly on the manifold, getting a lift from some kindly truckers (who earnestly told me, once we were at the rest area, why I should never take rides from truckers), and having to have a friend come get me...I was beginning to hate the Wild Thing.

Two days later, the car was repaired for only

another \$200. Including the earlier new seat and alternator, I'd put \$650 into a \$400 car.

+ + +

Because the car was a 2-cycle, it had...special needs. I'd pull into gas stations and the conversation would be predictable:

Me: "I'd like \$5 worth of gas, and would you put this quart of oil into the gas tank?"

Attendant: "Lady, the awwwl don't go in the gas tank."

Me: "Yes, it does."

Repetitive argument ensues. Eventually, I'd fire it up. Hearing the sound, they'd look at me and say, "Two-cycle engine?"

Me: "Yep."

They'd put a quart of oil in the gas tank.

+ + +

About a month after the Mattoon incident, it became obvious that the brakes needed work if the Saab was going to get me to Ohio for Thanksgiving. So another \$350 and I hit the road - heading out straight from the repair shop.

Just after Terra Haute, I started to relax. That was a mistake.

The car died just off of the exit ramp. The newly-repaired brakes were gone... so were 2 of the 3 cylinders...and other stuff. (All I knew at the time was that it failed to proceed.)

My sister and brother drove 7.5 hours each way to rescue me for Thanksgiving.

The Wild Thing? I left it there.

Eventually, an Indiana shop teacher gave me \$50 and mailed me the license plates - a deal, since Indiana would have charged me to tow the corpse to a scrap heap.

+ + +

Everybody needs a wild thing to come into their life and make it hell. Then you appreciate the calm, placid stability of German engineering.

And yet, when I get behind the wheel of my new BMW, I think wistfully that I'll never get to say, "Please give me \$5 worth of gas, and put this quart of oil in the gas tank."

# No. 55 - My Worst Idea Ever

## By Michael Carroll, aged 13 years and 391 months

Bad ideas are just that: bad. They're no big deal. Everyone has them from time to time. But a truly spectacularly bad idea is one that you just don't see coming. The sort of idea that on the surface is not only not bad, it's great.

But it's only after you've put in a lot of time and effort that the bad idea sheds its disguise and reveals its true face, and proves itself to not only be a wolf in sheep's clothing, but also a white elephant and a fox in the hen house.

As a writer of fiction, I depend on my ideas to keep bread on the table and the wolf from the door (note that this is not the same transfurite wolf from the previous paragraph: this wolf is a horse of a different colour), and far too often they turn around and bite me in the bottom while stabbing me in the back.

And the nominations are...

"Don't worry, I'll fix your computer for you."

Oh lordy, I shall never again utter those words! It starts innocently enough: a computer-illiterate friend needs help because they don't understand something simple like installing a virus scanner. I turn up at their house and – presto! – a mere eight or so tortuous hours later their computer is virus free. But it doesn't end with me losing a whole day for no reward other than offers of cups of tea (I don't drink tea, so I can't even make do with the tea as a reward; all I get out of it is the offer). No, what happens is that a couple of weeks later I get a call: "Our mutual friend told me you fixed his computer... Well, you don't know me, you've never met me and never even heard of me, but I run a medium-sized company and we're having trouble getting our network up and running. When would it best suit you to drive all the way out here to fix it for us for no money? How's eight o'clock tomorrow morning?"

"No, send your manuscript to me. I'll edit it for you."

I do this a lot. I don't mind doing it for friends – in fact, I'm more than happy to do it. But every now and then, one of those friends will abuse the privilege. I'll get a call at midnight saying, "I'm sending you the

manuscript now. It's 120,000 words – can you have it marked up and back to me first thing in the morning?" That's bad, but not as bad as, "I've never read your books but you gave my friend some advice on his short story. So I've attached my atrociously written Lord of the Rings-sized novel that has no punctuation or paragraph breaks – please edit it for me and can you also suggest some endings because I'm a complete dipstick and there really should be some sort of law passed preventing me from ever being allowed near a keyboard again. P.S. I'm borderline suicidal so please only say nice things about it."

"We should collaborate!"

Ah, that one. What fun. Collaborating with some authors is a joy. Brainstorming sessions, the development document going back and forth with new ideas added all the time, the manuscript growing and maturing with each pass. It's great. And then there's the other side of the apple, the side containing the witch-administered poison. This is when the collaboration starts out well, but quite quickly turns into something like this: "Great, great. Love what you've done. Swamped at the moment, so maybe what we should do is you do all the initial development work and the research, then I'll sit on it for a few months while lying to you that I'm tweaking it. Then just before you lose all hope, I'll tell you that it's perfect and I wouldn't change a thing, so you can go ahead and write the first draft under the delusion that I'll write the second draft. But I won't, of course. I'll just sit on it again for another six months and then when you start badgering me about it, I'll give the first chapter a quick read-through and suggest a change so radical that it completely invalidates everything you've done so far. Like, make them all cowboys and set it in Atlantis, that sort of thing. Then when you complain about that, I'll insist that we have to do it that way: Atlantean Cowboy stories are going to be huge in the next few years."

And (in the grand tradition of humorous sketches where the winner is never included with the nominees, even though in real award ceremonies that

never happens) the winner is...

“Let’s do our own comic!”

We’ve all been down this road. Sadly, sometimes it feels as though a whole herd of Paula Radcliffes has been down the same road only minutes before us...Yes, whether we’ve been inspired by 2000 AD or Warrior or Deadline or anything else that shattered the mould of its predecessors, we’ve all had that moment where we figure we can do it ourselves. Within seconds of the birth of this idea we’re gathering up sheets of paper and searching through the drawers for the half-used Pritt Stick we know is in there somewhere. “This is going to be great!” comes second only to “We’re going to be rich!” in the self-deluding stakes, though they are closely followed by “Hey, how hard can it be?”

I’ve done this more than once in my life. The first time, I was about ten years old. I can be forgiven for that: If we don’t make mistakes, how can we learn from them? Sadly, just because we do make mistakes doesn’t mean that we will learn. Even as recently as about five years ago, I had the idea of creating a comic. I even had a meeting with a couple of like-minded friends where we discussed how to go about doing it. Luckily, common sense kicked in before any money was spent, and we abandoned the project, but I am certain that in a parallel universe there’s a version of me cringing every time he passes the spare room that’s filled with unsold boxes of comics.

On a similar theme to “Let’s do our own comic!”, there’s also “We could form our own band!” but luckily for the music industry I’ve only barely enough musical knowhow to turn on the radio, so that never happened, but... There’s also “I could self-publish my own book!”. Yeah. That one I did. Not the best idea ever.

See, my New Heroes series of YA novels was doing rather well, but the publishers were dragging their heels about commissioning the fourth novel, so I figured, “Hey, I’ve got all these short stories already done, plus there’s those ideas that just won’t fit into the next book... I’ll do it myself! I’ll get a thousand copies printed, sell them for a tenner each through the website, and then I’ll be rich!”

(That’s a warning sign right there: any sentence that ends with “and then I’ll be rich!” is to be treated very, very suspiciously.)

So I did it. Wrote the stories, designed the cover, got quotes from lots of printers, and then had 1000 copies of the collection printed. How could it fail? The novels had a huge fan-base and had sold bazillions of



copies, so surely my 1000-copy limited edition would sell out in no time at all! Not so... I failed to take into account one very important fact: my readers were all in their early teenage years. They were too young to have their own credit cards or PayPal accounts. So those who were unable to persuade their parents to fork over the cash simply regarded the books with envious eyes for a while, then went, “Meh” and redirected their attention elsewhere.

Now here we are, four years later, and I’ve still got a heck of a lot of copies of that book cluttering up the house. I’ve sold lots of them, sure, but still not quite enough to have covered my costs (mostly because I figured it’d be simplest to include postage in the ten Euro price: I hadn’t had the sense to check the postage price first – each book costs three Euro to post!).

On the positive side, if the economy crashes even further, all those unsold books will be pretty useful as a source of fuel, or – with the liberal application of enough Pritt Stick – could be stacked up in front of the door to create a very sturdy wolf-proof barrier.

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About the author: Michael Carroll writes stuff, like the aforementioned New Heroes series (published in the USA under the series title Quantum Prophecy) and Judge Dredd for 2000 AD. He is tallish and baldish and Irish. You can find out more about Michael and his great works by visiting his very nice websites: [www.michaelowencarroll.com](http://www.michaelowencarroll.com) and [www.quantumprophecy.com](http://www.quantumprophecy.com)



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## No. 57 - From Espana Sheriff

Whittling a lifetime of bad ideas down to just one, 'worst', seems a Herculean task far beyond the scope of anything short of a tell-all, deathbed autobiography, or perhaps a Sun Records-era Johnny Cash tune. But it is a fair starting point for a throwaway piece of fan writing with which to appease the now hubristically aggrandized Drink Tank team and pad out this here gargantuan 300th issue, so let's see what I can come up with without actually doing any soul-searching or confessing to shooting that guy at Renovation that one night.

See, if you're like me, simply bad ideas are a dime a dozen; the Cheap Tequila Incident, the Sake Incident, the Tito's Mexican Vodka Incident... well, you might sense a theme there. But not all my poor decision making is alcohol-related, I was sober as a judge when I agreed to go to Con-X-Treme, and likewise when I got a perm that one time, luckily for me, before the advent of digital cameras. Stepping on the leash of the cat that bit my ankle and scarred me for life, in order to prevent it running away, well that wasn't my best notion ever. Come to think of it, walking a cat on a leash was not brilliant either. Running full tilt after the two teenagers that tried to mug me that one time, that might even have rated as worst idea ever, but I stopped before I caught them.

Then there are ideas that are clearly bad but turn out to be awesome in the end like 'hey, lets put on a fake convention!' 'hey, lets put on a fake fanzine lounge', 'hey, lets steal some couches!' all of which

sounds like bad ideas but turn out to actually be awesome and therefore retroactively become good ideas, although they really don't hold up to logical scrutiny when described out loud to someone who wasn't there at the time.

The other thing is, I think, that I am rather fond of bad ideas. My combined senses of irony and fatalism, as well as a somewhat philosophical turn of mind leads me to respond to a truly bad idea with a detached 'This oughta go well' most of the time. And irony being what it is, it often does go quite spectacularly well, except for the times when they didn't, but the fun thing about those is that they quite often make the better stories. A good idea well implemented is fine, I suppose, but a bad idea that spins out of control is so much better to tell. We all relate convention failures, horrible embarrassments and dating disasters with gusto-even to audiences that already know most of the details. But how often can you tell the story of that day that went just right? Success is boring, ultimately, but a good catastrophe is a joy forever, honed and polished in the retelling until you have a 24 karat masterpiece of shiny failure.

So, if you'll forgive me, I think I will stand beside my bad ideas and their results, the distress and humiliation they may have caused me during the relatively brief period I actually had to experience living through them is far outweighed by their enduring value as laughter (and sometimes cringe) inducing stories. And I do love a good story.



## No. 59 - A Bad First Impression by Tim Miller

I still remember the first time I was exposed to filk music. It was 1987 and I was visiting my girlfriend, Mary, at college. I was a fan of science fiction but not part of fandom, yet. We were hanging out in a friend of hers' room. Bill Jahnel is his name, and he knew I liked SF/F and was also a music geek so he decided to play me some of this "filk music."

Oh, what I heard. I thought it was the worst idea ever. The song was called "Technical Difficulties, Part II: The Hallelujah Chorus" by a filk group called "Technical Difficulties." I honestly mean no offence to the members of the band, Sheila Willis, Linda Melnick and T.J. Burnside Clapp, but I wanted to run into the hallway to get away from this.

I am sure that a large part of the problem came from the fact that I was listening to a cassette copy of a cassette copy which sounded like the original recording and at least one of the transfers was made on an old "realistic" mono tape recorder with "built in condenser mic." You know, the kind your dad may have used to record college lectures on in the 1970s.

Bill played me a few other tracks of similarly-sourced material, mostly parodies of classic folk songs that I was a fan of already. He was trying to expose me

to the music that he truly loved and thought that since my girlfriend liked it that I would too.

Sadly, all this did was leave a very bad taste in my mouth for anything called 'filk.'

Eventually, I married the girl. She still enjoyed filk and I still wanted nothing to do with it. You see, I liked "quality music," music with "production value," and was not a big fan of parody songs in general. Yes, that even included "Weird AI" (which did have "production value" and was "quality music"). I was also a fan of Bob Dylan and some old blues and country music so my wife would say things like "you should hear this Leslie Fish song," or "I have a new tape by Michael Longcor, I really think you would enjoy it." It all fell on deaf ears. If it was "filk" it was not for me. [Mary butting in here: we finally reached an agreement. He would listen to one Leslie Fish song for each Bob Dylan song I was forced to sit through.]

About 10 years later and Mary and I are a part of a LARPing group, and I am wearing a kilt at these things because kilts are cool and I am a good bit Scottish and I wanna wear a kilt, darn it. In fact, that was the only way she could convince me to get involved in the group in the first place. [Mary again: forget that; he came out of the woods brandishing a boffer sword

& shouting “You didn’t tell me this was would be fun!” Yes, folks, he LARP’d first and got the kilt later.] So what happens is, people start giving me these stuffed sheep because I am in a kilt and therefore I must like sheep in some unnatural way. About the same time, I go to my first SF convention in about 5 years. It is the very first Conestoga in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and they have a Music Guest at this con. Some guy named Tom Smith. So Mary tells me, “Oh, you have got to hear him, he has this great song about an evil sheep.”

“Hmmm,” I think to myself, “I like sheep, but I don’t like filk, now what should I do? Maybe I will go check out his concert.”

Well, later in the day I am hanging out in the con suite and somehow I get talking to this guy about British folk rock and he asks me if I knew the song “Matty Groves” and I said that I love the song “Matty Groves” and that Fairport Convention is one of my all-time favorite bands. So this guy pulls out a guitar and says he knows this great version where it is done as a talkin’ blues and begins to play me “Talkin’ Matty Groves Blues.”

I laugh out loud and really enjoy it, and we talk some more, then he introduced himself. “Hi, I’m Tom Smith.”

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### No. 61 - Kyla Gaige

**I kept a journal during high school. All my hopes and dreams in poems and stories. Two pages a day, every day, for every one of my teenaged years, and a few of my twenties as well.**

**My worst idea is that I didn’t burn them when I had the chance.**

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Trouble. That was filk performed by a filker and I enjoyed it. This is going against all my preconceived notions about how bad all filk music is. I like my preconceived notions, don’t mess with them.

So I go to his concert that night and really enjoy it. And he even did some parody songs. This is not right!

So we are back home again and I am a bit disturbed that I am actually enjoying this filk music that I swore I never would enjoy. After all, it all sucked, right? So we are doing some stuff around the house and Mary puts on this chick singing some Celtic songs and I

am really enjoying it and I ask what we are listening to. “Life’s Flame’ by Heather Alexander,” she says. “It’s filk, you know, so you don’t like it.”

Damn, another chink in the armor.

Next thing I know we are at Worldcon in San Antonio, Texas, in 1997 and I am the guy running sound at the filk stage for most of the weekend, so I am hearing lots and lots of performers and I am actually enjoying most of it. Heather had two concerts, so did Leslie Fish. Kathy Mar and Joe Bethancourt played too. Damn, this is some good music.

Just like any “open mic night,” it isn’t all perfect, but most of it was pretty good. Yeah, I heard a few of the “Ode to a Book I Read Once” or “The Ballad of that Star Trek episode I really like” songs but the good far outweighed the bad.

The final break in the wall came in 1999 when my wife was the InterFilk guest at the Ohio Valley Filk Festival. On Friday night I am in looking for my wife and end up in an open filk circle that includes Ookla The Mok, Urban Tapestry, Paul Kwinn, and Steve MacDonald to name but a few. If you don’t know filk, this is a quality crowd of performers. After that I had no resistance left. I had to admit that I was really enjoying this music and that a lot of filk is actually really, really good.

I kept working sound at the Worldcon filk stages for a few more years before I was dragged into publications and now this year, guest relations. I helped start a pretty good convention in Dallas called FenCon that has a strong music track and a good reputation around the country as a fun con to attend. Now I go out of my way to catch the filk performances at the cons I go to and am even on the board of InterFilk looking for new performers to send to cons around the country.

I guess the point of this is that first impressions can be wrong, or maybe it is “try everything twice, it might be an acquired taste.” All I know is that I was wrong to write off filk altogether based on one (or maybe three) bad impressions early on. There is a lot of great music around our fandom, do yourself a favor and check it out next chance you get.

The funny thing is, I probably never would have gotten into this wonderful subculture of fandom if it was not for my wife’s college friend, Bill. You see, he may not have given me the best introduction to filk, but he did convince me to go to my first convention, and without that group of fans I met over the past 23 years, I never would have learned to love this music called filk. Maybe it wasn’t such a bad idea after all.

## No. 62 - Why I'm Wary of Hair Cutting Places By Ray L. Manley

I went into a hair salon for the first time in almost 40 years. The gal behind the counter asked why it had been so long.

"My wife's been cutting my hair at home. She passed away a few months ago and I don't do well cutting my own hair. I'm a little nervous, though. The last time I was in a barber shop, I almost got beat up."

"Good grief! What happened, Mr. Manley?"

"Well, I went into the base Barber Shop in San Diego where I was stationed in the Navy. There was a Marine in there getting a haircut and shave too. The barber pointed to the other chair and said, 'Be right with ya.'

"While the Marine was getting that warm towel on his face, the barber got me taken care of and then he got out some of that foo foo juice they put on ya. The Marine holds up his hand and says, 'No thanks. My wife says that makes me smell like a whore house.'

"The barber turns to me and says, 'I suppose you don't want any either?'

"I says, 'Nah, go ahead. My wife ain't never been to a whore house.'

"I ain't been back in a barber shop since."



## No. 64 - Idea Time by Jan van't Ent

There's this thing about pondering one's worst idea, where the idea is that you can go past all the bright ideas to weed out the few common mistakes, and end up with the almost funny, absolute rock bottom, down the well, never to be spoken about, er, idea. But no worries, I won't go there. You see, I don't really do the whole idea thing. People might think I'm working to a plan, but no, there's usually a somewhat agreed-upon result that working towards to is deemed fun, or at least good. (This whole 300 Hugo's idea may be a case in point.) So one puts some back into it, in the spirit of amiably helping out, and usually it works out. Even if not getting the original aimed-for result, there's an achievement of learning, of working together, and getting things done. And no, I'm not indulging in pointing at worst experiences. These may be highly personal anyway; one person's success may be another's absolute shame. No, my problem usually has to do with time. A certain Lord with a box might come in blue, er, handy. I mean, there's all these interesting bits to puzzle over, to put together, to get some action, even to run for cover, or just to scribble down, and of course commit some lettering. There's nothing news in all these plans, and all the time there's this little voice bickering about there not being time to do, to help, to enjoy, to tag along. The plan to just do this tiny bit, to just help them along, and then sit back and relax, often ends up in joining the exhausted crowd afterward, wondering how time flies. Even while science is lightly hinting at some future help here, and going back, for now there's just too little of it. Time. Where has it gone? I'll saunter off, offering a sausage. (It's a Dutch thing: 'worst'.)



No. 63 - Art from Alan F. Beck

No. 65 - Art from Delphyne Woods



# No. 67 - THE ART OF LOCCING By Lloyd Penney

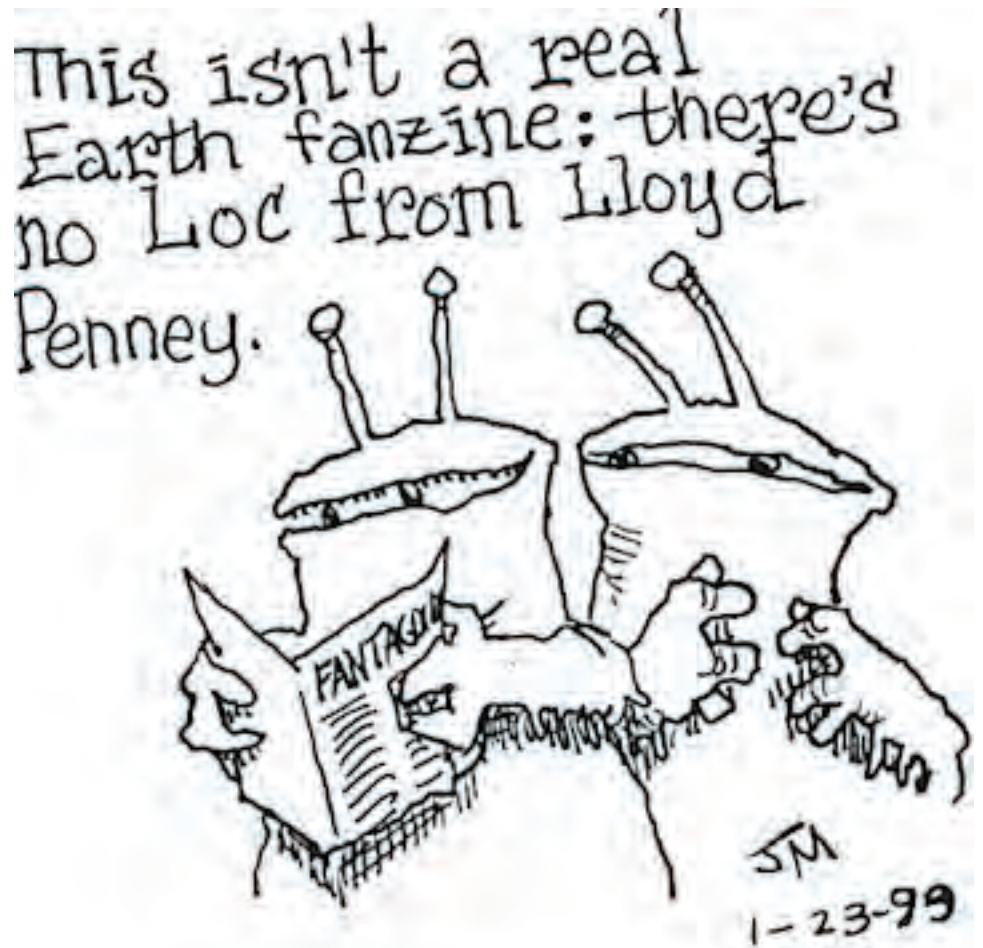
When I first found out about fanzines in the late 70s and early 80s, Mike Wallis, OE of our local APA, showed me what I could do within their pages. There was some pressure to take part, but I wanted to make my way into the local fandom, and I wasn't sure what I could do.

Mike laid it out fairly well... I could write articles, or draw artwork, or produce my own fanzine, or perhaps write letters of comment to fanzines, all of which would make sure I got future issues, and could build a good collection the way he had. It all sounded so good, being a journalism student...I could participate, and see my byline here and there.

I really needed an assignment editor (still do), so articles back then were out of the question for me. Fandom was still fairly new to me, so I couldn't write an article on it. I can barely draw a straight line, so artwork would not do. With

the help of Mike Glicksohn, who saw my initial efforts in the local APA, he showed me what I could do and must do to write a letter of comment for a zine, so in the local I went. And, I have been there now for the past 30+ years, and I have been quite comfortable, and welcomed by faneds all over the world. Mike showed me there was an art to the letter of comment, and I think I have added to that by not only creating the letters of comment, but managing my time with the technology I have to make sure I can respond to all the fanzines I get.

I am not writing up anything you don't already know...a good letter of comment should respond to the parts of the fanzine that engender some comments or feedback from the writer. I used to try hard to respond to everything, like in an apa, but it just got too difficult, especially when there was an article I just didn't understand or couldn't identify with, or had no real idea.



I usually add in some personal news, local fannish news, a few questions to reflect upon, and a little Cantor-style smartassery, plus anything else I could think of that might be of interest to the editor and his readers. It sounds fairly generic, but I have found anything that carries on the conversation within the letter column, and raises a smile or a laugh, is the best contribution you can make. Not only have I used Mike Glicksohn's letter writing as an inspiration, but also Harry Warner Jr.'s letters as well. Not only were their letters interesting to read, full of personal tidbits and other bits of news, they were fairly frequent. And as the fanzines started to stream in, not only through the mailslot in the door, but also through the computer IN box, that's what I wanted to do, too.

If there is an art to loccing fanzines these days, it's in keeping up with the large number of zines available. It may not be the renaissance we were hoping

for, but there are a lot of zine out there, and I'm happy to get them. I receive genzines, perzines, clubzines and everything in between. Then, I also get a lot of zines downloaded from Bill Burns' eFanzines.com. I keep a folder on my computer desktop to keep track of all the .pdfed zines that come in. That's my own zinish IN box. Paper fanzines are kept in a nearby accordion file.

Now that I know what's coming in, I need to find the time to write those locs. I bring paper zines to work with me, and all the .pdfed zines I have are loaded onto a USB drive. That way, they are always with me. A bit of time before the work arrives at my office? Start the letter of comment, and when the work arrives, e-mail the unfinished loc home, and finish it there. When we flew to the Reno Worldcon this year, I had with me my old Palm Tungsten PDA and its keyboard, and I had the .pdfed zines loaded on the SD card in the PDA. Got a couple of zines locced as I flew the friendly skies. Sometimes, I am at a library, and I will work on one of the terminals there, and save the full or partial loc to

the USB. When it's late, and I can't sleep, I will fire up an old laptop at home, and work on a zine off the USB. Failing everything else, I will usually have a paper fanzine with me, and I will make notes on a pad of paper. It all comes down to time management, using every scrap of time I can get my hands on, and using what I have at hand. The desktop folder and accordion file tell me what I have left to respond to, and right now, I don't have a lot left. That's good, but...oops, another couple just came in...

I challenge myself each year to write letters people will want to read, and to write certain numbers of them. This year, I figure I've written close to 250 letters. I am aiming to write more than 300, like I did last year. All I can say to warp this article is that if you create the fanzines and put them out, I will promise to respond to the issue with a letter of comment that, with luck, you will like. You might even get (no promises) the odd article... much like this one.



## No. 70 - BUSTING OUT IN RENO by GREGORY BENFORD

Thinking ahead of worldcon in Reno, I had decided in May to reissue my recently reverted novel *Chiller*. It seemed a good way to combine my fannish self with the pro in my life. Debut a revised novel at worldcon!—first time ever.

Published in 1993 under the pseudonym Sterling Blake, it was to be the opener in a series of “scientific suspense” novels. With my Bantam Books editor Lou Aronica I intended to write a series of novels exploring future technologies. I had long noticed that Michael Crichton and others captured the sizzle of science in novels like *Jurassic Park* and *The Andromeda Strain*, but at novel’s end the world returns to its previous state, the intrusive, exciting possibilities and threats dissolving like the dew of morning. I wanted to write realistic fiction about future prospects that didn’t end in the essentially conservative finish of the Crichton school. *Chiller* is about cryonics, beginning now and taking it into the future.

Alas, Lou Aronica got fired a few months before *Chiller* appeared. The crew that took over then, when Bantam was the #2 publisher in the country in profits, cut the book’s ad budget to zero and did nothing to promote it. Still, it sold well in the US and England.

My thinly disguised pseudonym got uncovered quite quickly, too, and may have helped sales. Still, soon enough Bantam’s new fiction head, straight from romance novels, let me know that I and other writers like Bill Gibson and Robert Silverberg were no longer wanted. Off I went. Bantam now ranks #6 in profits. The same people are still in charge.

But by getting *Chiller* reverted I could begin anew. Much else has changed since 1993, but I believe it remains a fair description of cryonics and the people who believe in it. Rereading it to eliminate anachronisms, I was amused to see I had anticipated today’s e-readers and online newspapers fairly well when writing in 1990. Also some biotech, including a bath mat that cleans your walls as it crawls along.

I could use our brave new whirl of e-publishing, too. I gave Lucky Bat Books the revised ms. July 7 and at worldcon on July 17 they had 100 finished copies of a big new trade paperback—speedy indeed. Plus a new idea: e-book cards like big greeting cards, the first page the book’s cover, with info on the book inside and back, and a plastic card you could peel off to discover on the reverse the code to download the e-version in any reader you want. This allows book stores to sell e-books. All this cost me about \$4000, a good gamble considering I’d made over \$300,000 on the 1993 edition.

Both the trade pb and the e-cards sold well. I signed dozens. The e-cards give collectors something signed to put on the shelf. Just mailing the card lets the buyer send a gift to a friend. The hucksters liked that a lot.

I found the whole experience enlightening: moving into a new market with a big book, the second edition sporting a new introduction and long afterword.

Into the future! Even if you’re not frozen...



No. 71 -Photo from Greg Benford

# No. 72 - Harlan V. Fan by Ric Bretschneider

This is a story that has quite literally been sitting on my desk for years, in the form of a book that I still haven't read. The book has been waiting for me to put down in writing the origin of the inscription inside it, the story of a very awkward first meeting. The story you're about to read, every word of it absolutely true, some 30 years later...

I'm late.

I roar up to the curb in my blue 1970 Dodge Challenger, black vinyl top 383 stock California Custom edition. It's a Summer Saturday in 1981, and I'm about 15 minutes past the start time for a reading and autograph signing by one of my favorite writers, Harlan Ellison.

I luck out and park right in front of Recycle Books, on San Fernando St. in downtown San Jose. I climb out of the car and stand for a moment, wondering if I should leave. What's the protocol for an event like this? Am I dressed appropriately? I'm wearing Dingo boots, tan Levis bush jeans with snap pockets, and a powder blue shirt. My hair is about an inch lower than my collar, and my wristband has a leather flap snapped over the face of my watch. I'm six foot one, six three in boots, 180 pounds, and although I'm pretty shy still around girls I'm told that I'm kind of a hunk. That's important to remember when you're visualizing me later in the story, but for now all you have to know is



## No. 73 - Art by Ric Bretschneider

I'm intentionally looking about as cool as I can manage without looking like I'm trying too hard.

I'm not at all comfortable. But there it is, Recycle Books. We just called it Recycle, and it feels like home.

I love this store; most of my books are gently used paperbacks I've bought there over the years. After classes I typically spend an hour combing its shelves looking for new finds and things to fill from my want

list. A few weeks back I'd read on a poster that they were hosting Harlan (Can I call him that? Sure, everyone does.) for a reading and autograph session. I'd never been to an event with an author. Never seen an author live. But Harlan's works have been a foundation for me – so much of what I think a writer's work should be. And at this point in my life I still desperately want to be a writer.

**Incorrect Assumption Number One:** I reasoned that writers only sign hardback books. That offering them a paperback will not show enough commitment on my part to justify their signing it. But everything I own is paperback, so I started looking in the hardback section for something appropriate. The only thing I can find is a Science Fiction Book Club edition of *Approaching Oblivion*, which I have not read. OK, bonus, a book I haven't read. I buy it and mark the Harlan date in the small journal I keep stuck in my boot.

**Incorrect Assumption Number Two:** Writing something down means it will happen on time.

I woke up knowing that it was Harlan day. I ate lunch knowing it was Harlan day. I went to class knowing it was Harlan day. And yet, when it was time to go to Recycle, somehow I forgot.

The nice thing about the muscle cars from the 1970's is that they could go a long way to making up for bad planning. Unfortunately, although they broke traffic and speed laws without breaking a sweat, the laws of physics didn't bend. I was going to be late. Again, what was the custom here? Would I be interrupting if I walked in on him mid-sentence during a dramatic portion of his reading? Would they even let me in? Should I just turn around and go home?

And then I was there.

The door to Recycle had glass panels through which I could see there was already a crowd in the store. It was all backs, their fronts all facing away from me. A gentle opening of the door, a couple of steps, and I could join that crowd without anyone really noticing. I was aware that the wooden floor and my boots could join to create a very loud clumping sound, but I'd just not let the heels come down as I entered and everything should be fine.

**Incorrect Assumption Number Three.**

Silent, swift, and unassuming I stepped up to the back of the crowd. There was a heartbeat, a full luh-dumph, and then inexplicably the crowd parted. A

wide clear path opened, supernatural in its synchronous movement as still not an eye was on me. Not true, two eyes were instantly on me. Eyes in dark sockets, looking out from under a sweep of unruly light hair. They locked on me like raptor on prey.

"Would you like to approach Santa Little Boy?" Said the face holding the eyes. The face on the neck on the torso balanced on a tall stool. That smile beneath the eyes was full of mischief, and something at that point told me that none of it was going to work out with me joining the laughter.

I realized that my copy of *Approaching Oblivion* was held in front of me, in both hands. In all honesty Harlan was probably trying to be a nice guy, was realizing my confusion and embarrassment, was... oh, the hell with it. He saw a big, dumbstruck target.

Saying nothing, feeling the vacuum pull of the space created by those displaced bodies, I did approach Santa. And those boots did clump on the old wood of Recycle's floor. Tap-clump, tap-clump, tap-clump, there was no other sound in the room, and with each clump, I descended further into my dumbfounded state.

I held the book out and he took it, opening it to the first blank page and positioning a felt pen above it. "Want anything in particular?"

At this point, I should have known not to trust my mouth. Not to trust my brain, or any part of my respiratory system. He was asking me how I wanted him to sign the book, maybe my name, maybe my sister's name (I don't even have a sister), but not asking me to be clever.

No, not asking me to be clever at all. Because he's smarter than that, and smarter than I was capable of being at that moment in time. That moment when my brain and mouth teamed up against me. Convinced me that this would be a great time to break out an old chestnut of a joke. A whopper. Somehow, someone who was not me in any sense of the word started working my mouth and respiratory system to force wind out between my teeth and tongue to say the following condemnation of any potential cleverness on my part. Traitors.

"Well, a blank check would be nice."

A Zulu warrior would have pounced and drove his spear through my chest, ending it right there. A samurai would have taken my head in a single stroke, and sheathed his sword before it hit the ground. But a cat, a cat knows the pleasure of playing with its prey, especially when there's an audience handy.

"A blank check? A blank check. Let's see here."

He started to draw on the page, holding the book so most could see. A single stroke, changing direction at three right angles, continuing until complete where it started in the upper right corner. A rectangle. The chuckles started on both sides of the room.

“A blank check!”

He wrote Blank Check and put a checkmark in the rectangle.

“But for it to be a truly blank check, it should have nothing on its mind, right?”

A word balloon swirled up next to the drawing. And then inside the balloon, he wrote D U H !

His face admired this for a moment, and then snapped back up to me from his book, my book? His eyes smiled more than his mouth. The flat of his smile with one corner up in a smirk let me know the eyes were just putting on a show. The pen still in place, still ready to create more mischief.

“Anything else?”

At this point my traitor mouth and other parts had fallen back into my control, such as it was, and I was able to gain one last use of them.

“Your signature would be nice.”

And he flourished a signature onto the page then handed me back the book.

I backed through the crowd, not consciously avoiding presenting him my back, but more instinctively

wanting to make sure he stayed perched atop his stool. I’m sure I thanked him, it was the way I was brought up, comes naturally and without thinking, so it fit right in. When I reached the perimeter, the crowd closed back in, so eerie, and with that I left as quietly as I had entered.

It would have been understandable, I’m sure, for me to have peeled away from the curb, but somehow I felt better keeping the speed and noise down as I left the area. A short drive home and the book went back on the shelf.

I’m pretty sure my embarrassment didn’t subside for a week, but eventually I was able to tell the story and even join in the laughter.

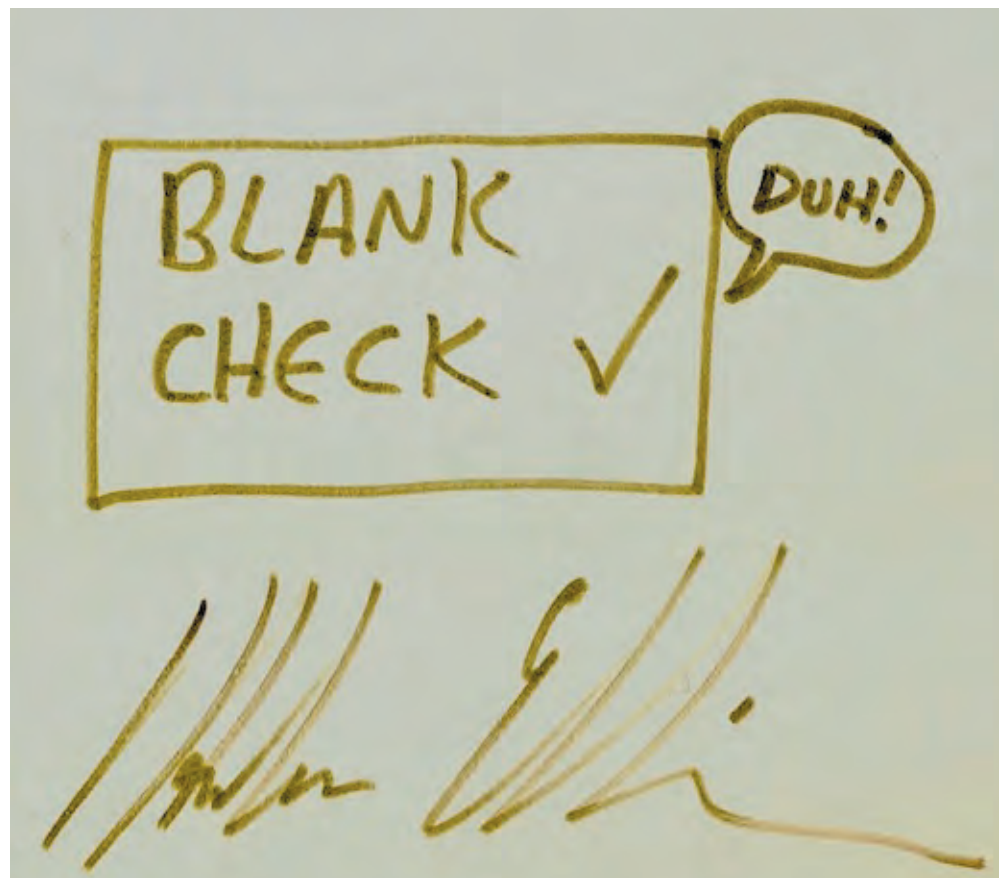
I might sum up by saying that I’m not big on getting my

books signed, never have been. It increases the value of them, yes, if you plan on selling them. When friends get published I do get them to write their names on my copies, but that’s more for fun. If I buy a book directly from an author at a convention I have them sign it, because it would feel impolite otherwise. But I don’t stand in line for an author to sign at a convention, or go to store signings. I don’t know if that’s more just me, or my Harlan story, or what. I just know I don’t really see much point in it.

Harlan is still one of my favorite writers, much to the chagrin of a few friends who think he’s a bastard. Oddly enough I think I enjoy his introductions, the more personal writing he does, more than his recent prose.

And I’ve seen him at conventions, asked him questions from the crowd, and even shared an elevator ride, all without mentioning our prior meeting. Would he remember? Man, I’ve read so many recounts of events where he’s spoken about bigger jerks than me.

But something in me likes to think he might have been able to see out the window of Recycle that day. That he might turn and look up at me in that elevator or convention room. And he might say “yeah, do you still have that cool Challenger?”



No. 74 - Harlan Ellison Art from the Ric Bretschneider Collection

# My Favorite Wrestling Match



No. 75 - Art by Jack Teagle

## No. 76 - My Favorite Wrestling Match An Intro by Christopher J Garcia

I wanted to include something about wrestling in this major issue, and it gave me a chance to get some folks I knew had never appeared in these pages. I was lucky enough to get some some folks who are awesome in every possible dimension, some who took it very literally, and some who went into different directions.

I've thought about this one a lot. I keep track of my favorite matches over time. The first one I can clearly remember is Magnum TA vs. Tully Blanchard in the I Quit cage match where Magnum dug the broken piece of a wooden chair into Tully's eye to make utter those two words, five letters: "I Quit." It was a brutal match, but I loved it.

I watched a show on ESPN in 1986 and until the mid-1990s, Nick Bockwinkel vs. Curt Hennig 60-minute draw for the AWA title held the belt for my favorite match. Even better was teh next weekend when the

AWA had the two of them talking about the match as if it had been a contest.

That was replaced by the legendary Pitbulls vs. Raven/Richards match from ECW that was one of the wildest storyline matches ever. That one featured a classic moment where Raven took a bump where the back of his head slammed against the edge of a table when being powerbombed off the top rope! The match was a nexus of just about every storyline that had been bubbling over in ECW, and even featured a great blade-job from Stevie Richards. We watched the hell out of this match during my Junior year at Emerson.

That lasted until the classic Michaels/Austin vs. Bulldog/Owen Hart match from RAW that I still consider to be the greatest free TV match of all time. I loved that match and it was one of the best worked matches of the late 1990s. Michaels and Austin were both at their peaks.

It was only one match that could replace those, a Japanese match that I watched for the first time on a train and then again when I got to the City before the reading I was going to started. And then again on the way back home. And twice again when I got home.

It was the 2003 entry in the Kobashi-Misawa feud.

You see, if you were a fan of Japanese wrestling, you'd know that Misawa was the head of Pro Wrestling NOAH and the finest pupil of Giant Baba, one of the all-time greatest stars of Japanese wrestling. You'd also know that Kenta Kobashi was the star who rose up in the shadow of Misawa and Toshiaki Kawada but had the greatest break-through year in history in 1993 where he became arguably the greatest worker in the world. It was 2003, ten years after Kobashi's big year and a few years after Misawa had fattened up, going even beyond 300 pounds.

The amazing thing is that this was a real passing of the torch. Misawa came in the champion and Kobashi was still the best worker in the company and while he wasn't the champion, he was obviously going to be champion and this show, at the Tokyo Dome, was obviously the moment when the torch was going to be passed.

And both guys showed up.

Now, when a wrestler shows up, they go all out, take bigger chances, make bigger moves. These are two guys who would go all out and put on giant matches, some of the best of all-time, including Match of the Year winners two consecutive years.. These guys were amazing, and this night, they went a step further.

Misawa, with the gut he had acquired over the previous few years, broke out his old dive through the rope to deliver an elbow to the face, only he went through with extra force and ended up busting his chin open, which was pouring blood. That added an element of danger to a match.

Kobashi took incredible risks and bumps and at one point, Misawa caught him in a Tiger Suplex position on the stage leading to

the ring and then, incredibly, dropped him off the apron onto the floor. It was a very dangerous move, easily the craziest I'd ever seen in a company that was famous for dropping people on their heads.

It wasn't just the big moves, it was the way they worked to make every move significant. There was a great moment where Kobashi takes a roaring elbow from Misawa and it looks like he got killed with it. It was amazing the way he sold it, the way he made it look like it had been the finish.

Only Kobashi kicked out of the cover. The crowd blew up! It was amazing.

This was a match that I believe will never be met when it comes to drama and as historical importance, it is almost unmatched. It started the famous Kobashi reign of more than two years and was the first of three Match of the Years for Kobashi in a row.

Misawa passed away in 2010. Kobashi had the two years as the champ, only later to be sidelined by injuries and then kidney cancer. He's come back recently, but it's doubtful that he'll ever reach this level again. This match is likely the best match that has ever taken place in Pro Wrestling NOAH. It's possibly the best match to ever take place in Japan (a big statement, as Kobashi, Misawa, Kawada, Vader and others had amazing matches over the last three decades) and to me, it's the greatest wrestling match in history.

I want to thank everyone for writing about their favorite matches. It's an impressive group and I'm so glad that they agreed to share!





## No. 78 - Chikara Pro's Mike Quackenbush

It was late, I hadn't showered, and I really needed a meal consisting of something other than pizza and cream soda. In spite of this, a new VHS videotape, recently arrived from Parts Unknown, persuaded me to stay up a little bit longer. It was called "These Days," and had been recorded a few months prior, at Tokyo's Sumo Hall. The card was a construction of Michinoku Pro, a struggling independent league based out of Japan's northeastern quadrant. They had been, at least for a year leading up to "These Days," the most cutting-edge group active on the world stage, but their geography and relative obscurity conspired to keep them from breaking through to a larger audience.

While this card contains more than its share of notable moments - the retirement of British mat master Johnny Saint, the final meeting of Dynamite Kid and Tiger Mask Satoru Sayama and more - it wasn't until the semi-main event hit the ring that I fully sat up on that dented futon and forgot how very past my bedtime it was. A massive 10-man tag team match came marching down the aisle, as the quintet of Kaientai Deluxe (the villainous combination of Dick Togo, Shiryu, Men's Teioh, TAKA Michinoku and Sho Funaki) took on an equally formidable fivesome in Gran Hamada, Super Delfin, Tiger Mask IV, Gran Naniwa and Masato Yakushiji. A wrestling smorgasbord of awesomeness.

In the next 32 minutes, these 10 men (or eleven, if you want to give the referee his due) craft a crazy fun match that builds and builds to the only acceptable conclusion. Yakushiji, the flashy rookie who evinces the greatest lucha libre influence here, is given his chance to shine, without overstaying his welcome. Naniwa and Delfin, often used as comic relief in other matches, adeptly balance the humor with the seriousness of this well-built match. The cranky veteran, Hamada, is really the anchor for his team, and the others know enough to react to him as someone of legendary status. No

character gets lost in the mix here. Everyone has their time in the spotlight.

It is the rudo grouping of Kaientai Deluxe (sometimes Kaientai DX for short) though, that propel this, and they are more than just the ideal foils for these five tecnicos. At times, they even outshine their more heroic counterparts - TAKA Michinoku was at his very in-ring best in this era, and Dick Togo began cementing his legacy as one of Japan's very best with matches like this one. The sorely underappreciated and overlooked Shiryu (now, the unmasked Kaz Hayashi,) works triple-time to make everyone look good, most often at his own expense. He's the lucharesu equivalent of SNL's Phil Hartman.

On that late, rainy night in State College, PA, I stayed up an additional 33 minutes just to rewind, and rewatch that epic 10-man tag. These Days, I see chunks of it in my sleep, spot for spot. It doesn't age. It doesn't get old. I like it more every time I revisit it.

After departing the Talking Heads, David Byrne set out to record an album soaked in the Latin and South American sounds that he loved. While working on Rei Momo, he commented to an interviewer that what he wanted to accomplish with this album was to "make music like the music I like." And as simple as that might sound, I found it quite insightful.

Upon forming Chikara Wrestle Factory at the end of 2001 (we opened on January 6th, 2002,) that Byrne interview rung in my head like an anthem. One day, the spawn of the Wrestle Factory would beget something new called CHIKARA. If CHIKARA could accomplish one thing, I thought, how rewarding it would be if it could make wrestling like the wrestling I like. The wrestling I like is perfectly encapsulated in that 10-man tag team match, from October 10th, 1996 at Sumo Hall. We can never be that match, but we can certainly try.

# No. 80 - My Favorite Wrestling Match by Sean Gorman

**Roddy Piper vs. Hulk Hogan**  
**“The War to Settle the Score”**  
**New York, New York**  
**February 18th, 1985**

I’ll be honest here.

There has never been a time in my life when I thought professional wrestling was legitimate. As a child, when my parents first noticed that I had taken a strong interest in it, they nearly tripped over themselves to set me straight.

“It’s not real!” they exclaimed with overwhelming zeal.

I get it and I got it.

Even at 7 years old, I got it. I had both seen and been in enough real fights in the schoolyard to know that what I was watching in the squared circle wasn’t quite genuine. Punching someone in the face in wrestling was one thing. Punching someone in the face in real life? Well, that was something quite different.

But what my parents didn’t understand, and what many people who are not fans of professional wrestling don’t understand, is that it doesn’t matter. Whether the outcome is predetermined or not is irrelevant. Wrestling is still fun, exciting, and even heart-breaking. You either get it or you don’t.

I got it.

So even armed with the fact that wrestling wasn’t “real,” I was still completely awe-struck by a man named “Rowdy” Roddy Piper.

I was 7 years old and, by my own admission, not the most popular kid in school. In a time when I should have developed camaraderie with my peers by playing little league or football, I was content to be alone watching wrestling or playing with Star Wars action figures. I was an outcast and people didn’t like me—just like Roddy Piper.

Except Roddy Piper didn’t seem to care. As a matter of fact, he seemed to delight in the people’s hatred for him. The more people despised him, the more vicious he became, and the more rules he broke.

I loved him.

And I devoured everything I could about Rod-

dy Piper—I read magazines articles about him and watched endless videotapes that featured his matches. His charisma was unmatched and, though I knew the world of wrestling was staged, his vitriol always seemed very much real.

Around this time, the local department store in town started renting VHS tapes. One of these tapes was “Rowdy” Roddy Piper’s Greatest Hits. During the summer, I would take my weekly allowance money and ride my bike uptown to buy a Coke and rent “Rowdy” Roddy Piper’s Greatest Hits. I literally rented it every weekend and watched it over and over again until I had to return it on Sunday afternoon. To this day, I can still recite every promo Piper cuts on the video.

This was where I became familiar with “The War to Settle the Score.”

It was 1985 and the WWF was about to cross over into the mainstream via the “Rock and Wrestling Connection.” Hulk Hogan was the world’s heavyweight champion and, without question, the biggest babyface the country had ever seen up to that point.

He was the complete antithesis of Roddy Piper. He was a hero who never broke the rules and always did the right thing: “Train, say your prayers, and eat your vitamins.” His charisma was equal to Piper’s...it was just on the opposite end of the spectrum.

The “Rock and Wrestling Connection” started very simply by Hogan becoming friends with Mr. T. and Cyndi Lauper. With the rub from mainstream celebrities, the WWF started to gain national exposure. Wrestling was about to get huge and in many ways “The War to Settle the Score” was the womb from which it was born.

Earlier in the year, Piper had interrupted a ceremony where Lou Albano and Cyndi Lauper were presented with a gold record by Dick Clark. Piper smashed the record over Albano’s head and kicked Cyndi Lauper when she came to his defense.

This was serious business at the time. In one masterful instant, Roddy Piper became the most hated man in America. Everyone was waiting with baited breath for Hulk Hogan to get his hands on Piper and they would finally get it on February 18th.

MTV was still a fledgling basic cable station at this time and the Piper/Hogan match was to be broadcast live during primetime that Monday night. A number of celebrities, including Kenny Loggins, Tina Turner, Little Richard, Geraldine Ferraro and Gloria Steinem, contributed to the pre-fight hoopla by taping segments for Mtv, in which they revealed their prejudices for the match. Local news agencies and papers all did stories about the event. It's hard to remember an event before or since that had so much mainstream coverage.

"Mean" Gene Okerlund and Gorilla Monsoon handled the commentary for the night and before the main event, the two of them did their usual spiel about "the electricity that was in the air." However, on this particular night their tone was a little different. On this night, it really meant something.

Shortly before the MTV VJ, Alan Hunter, handed things off to them for the live feed, Gorilla said the following:

"We've been in here many times when Madison Square Garden has been sold out, but to my knowledge and to my recollection, I can't honestly remember the type of electricity that is in this building on this particular occasion."

From there, the faint sound of bagpipes could be heard from the back, which meant that Roddy Piper was about to make his entrance.

An ensemble of kilted bagpipers came through the crowd surrounded by groups of police officers and Piper, decked out in a red "Hulkamania" t-shirt, walked to the ring with a cocky smile that soon turned to a snarl.

23,000 New York fans pelted the ring with trash and cups full of soda and beer. Extended middle fingers could be seen everywhere in the crowd.

Bob Costas was the guest ring announcer for the night and his voice could barely be heard over the clamor of boos that welcomed Piper to the ring:

"Thank you, Howard, this is indeed an honor and ladies and gentlemen...THIS is the Main Event! It is scheduled for one fall with a one-hour time limit and it is for the World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Championship."

Piper kneeled and gave the "I love you" sign with his two hands, which was a direct insult to "Superfly" Jimmy Snuka—a man who Piper had previously disgraced on national television by smashing a coconut over his head.



Hogan's music hit and thousands of yellow foam fingers popped into the air throughout the crowd. The overhead shot of the ring showed 23,000 fans in a legitimate frenzy. In wrestling, this sort of crowd reaction is called a "pop." To this day, Hogan's entrance to this match probably stands in the Top Five Pops of all time. The place was wild.

Hogan came to the ring flanked by police and escorted by Cyndi Lauper, Mr. T., and Lou Albano. After psyching up on the floor with Mr. T., Hogan climbed in the ring and pointed at Piper as if to say, "Your time is up."

Piper spit at him.

Hogan tore his shirt, Piper unfurled his kilt, and the two men circled each other like caged animals. It was on.

The two men locked up, but this quickly turned into illegal fisticuffs. They hit the mat and rolled around as if they were in a barroom brawl. It quickly became clear these two men hated each other and the audience was not going to see any sort of technical wrestling.

After several minutes of back and forth brawling, Piper raked Hogan's eyes, temporarily blinding the champ. With Hogan blind and defenseless, Piper seized the opportunity to apply the sleeper hold...except Piper's forearm was noticeably under Hogan's chin and hidden from the referee.

"That's a choke!" Okerlund and Gorilla screamed. "Come on, referee, check on it!"

As Hogan's lifeless body slumped to the canvas and the reality started to set in that Roddy Piper might actually win the heavyweight title by use of a chokehold, Mean Gene exclaimed, "If Piper gets away with this Madison Square Garden will be roofless just moments from now!"

The referee checked Hogan's arm. It went down once...then twice...but on the third and final check, it came up just a bit.

Then his arm went higher and higher until he raised his index finger in triumph. The crowd erupted. Hogan shook violently and powered out of the hold by getting on his feet and ramming Piper into the corner turnbuckles.

Except.....

In the process of doing so, both men inadvertently knocked the referee out cold.

Hogan and Piper were down themselves. While a stunned audience wondered what would happen next, Piper's cohort, "Mr. Wonderful" Paul Orndorff,

came into the ring. With "The Rowdy One" now conscious, both Orndorff and Piper started relentlessly kicking Hogan. Once again, it seemed like a very real possibility that Roddy Piper would become the world's heavyweight champion by deliberate cheating.

And then Cyndi Lauper jumped up to the ring.

She screamed at Piper and Orndorff to stop their vicious assault, which they soon did. But then the two men started circling Lauper like two jackals ready to pounce on their prey.

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## **No. 82 - Manny Sanford Savage versus Steamboat at Wrestlemania 3. There is no other right answer.**

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And then Mr. T. jumped up to the ring.

He reasoned with Lauper to get down and she calmed herself enough to do so. But just as T. had his back turned, Piper shoved him and motioned for him to step in the ring.

T. reluctantly did.

Mr. T. was about to take them both on, but as he faced Orndorff, Piper blindsided him and he and "Mr. Wonderful" began putting the boots to T. just as they had with the fallen champ.

By this time, Hogan was revived and charged after Piper and Orndorff. The crowd was crazed at this point.

The two cowards quickly jumped out of the ring now that the odds had become even.

And then, in a flash, dozens of New York City police officers stormed the ring and the ringside area. It was total chaos. They held back Hogan and T. and they held back Piper and Orndorff. The four men tried unsuccessfully to get at each other before Piper and Orndorff were escorted to the back.

Howard Finkel announced that Hulk Hogan had won...by disqualification.

In other words, "The War to Settle the Score" settled nothing at all. As Mean Gene put it, "What should have been a good, clean wrestling match turned into a melee."

And thus, "The War to Settle the Score" passed into history.

It might seem odd to a lot of people that what I consider to be my favorite wrestling match of all time



has very little criteria for what many wrestling fans would consider a “good match.”

Not only is the match itself less than ten minutes long, but the wrestling during that time is, especially by today’s standards, average at best. And beyond all that, the finish of the match is completely inconclusive. Nothing is even slightly resolved.

But that’s the genius of it.

Those who know wrestling history know that this is the match that set up the main event of the first Wrestlemania. And those who know wrestling history know that the first Wrestlemania is what brought about the WWF’s dominance in the 1980s and has brought us to where professional wrestling is today. In many regards, this match was one of the most important in the history of wrestling itself.

The important thing to note is that it couldn’t have happened without the dazzling charisma of both Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper and their respective ability to get people to love and hate them. It couldn’t have happened without the creative booking power of George Scott and Pat Patterson and their ability to make people want to see more. And it couldn’t have happened without the celebrity rub from Mr. T. and

Cyndi Lauper or from the larger exposure that Mtv provided.

In that regard, “The War to Settle the Score” is a flawless match—brilliant in design and brilliant in execution. It achieved exactly what it set out to achieve.

The match garnered a 9.1 Nielsen rating, which, even by modern standards, is astounding.

For me personally, I have chosen “The War to Settle the Score” as my favorite match because it has stayed with me for my entire life.

It excited me as a young child and it excites me today as someone who has been entrenched in the wrestling business for some time.

I’m not ashamed to admit that I still get goose bumps during the ring introductions.

As a child, the match excited me because I wanted to see the climactic clash between good and evil in the innocent way only a child can. It excited me because I was emotionally invested in the characters on the screen.

As an adult in the wrestling business, it now excites me for what it achieved in the wrestling business. As far as booking and wrestling psychology is concerned, “The War to Settle the Score” is an amazing triumph.

Many older wrestling fans have decried that the wrestling business is dead. “It’s not what it used to be.” They say that Hollywood writers have made the storylines too implausible and the scripted personalities are dull and indistinguishable.

Watching the genuine fervor in the crowd during “The War to Settle the Score,” it’s hard to disagree. As someone who has watched wrestling for a long time, it’s difficult to remember a more authentic reaction from an audience before or since. “The War to Settle the Score” makes a very compelling argument for those who say wrestling was “better back then.”

But it’s also the same thing that keeps me moving forward in the business here and now.

When I step into the ring and hundreds of fans erupt into a “Gorman Sucks!” chant, I know that kind of crowd reaction is still achievable. I know that what I learned from Roddy Piper 25 years ago is still relevant today. I know the business that I fell in love with still lives.

The flame that burned twice as bright might only now burn half as long, but “The War to Settle the Score” is a constant reminder to me that there is still hope of the torch being passed.

## No. 84 - A Discussion from Fran Dowd

Thanks for that, I haven't had a home-made curry for ages.

- *I remember when you used to make one, every Saturday lunchtime. Minced beef, with loads of little side dishes – tomato, banana, grated cheese. Very Seventies.*

After Mam and I did the shopping in the morning, while we dropped you off to get your library books for the week.

- *And I'd read the first one before lunch, and another one in the afternoon. Unless there was a good rugby match on.*

And that was the only thing that stopped us switching to ITV for ...

- *Dickie Davies and World of Sport Wrestling! I always liked Les Kellet, the comedians.*

Who was that other one, that went on to be an actor? He was in Porridge the other day.

- *Brian Glover? I saw him at the Crucible once, playing Porthos in the Three Musketeers. Brilliant. There was Pat Roach, too, that was in that thing where they go to work on the building site in Germany.*

I never cottoned to the really flashy ones though – *Adrian Pretty Boy Street, that sort. He used to tag with that Bobby Barnes, the hairdresser. Tibor Szakacs, Johnny Saint, the clean ones that did the acrobatic work, that was more my style. And Mam would make pancakes or dropscones for tea. I still smell them when I hear the Dr Who theme tune.*

You sent me a DVD with some old wrestling matches, for Christmas, didn't you?

- *We could watch some of it later, if you want. And I could make pancakes for tea.*

Yes, I'd enjoy that.

- *Have a bit of a snooze now, while I wash up. Do you want your oxygen?*



## No. 86 - from Bob Ryder

My favorite match was a televised match on the old Mid South Wrestling program. Ric Flair was NWA Champion and had come to the territory to defend against Ted Dibiase. Dick Murdoch had mentored Dibiase and came to the ring before the match to try to convince Dibiase that he should step aside and let Murdoch have the match. The result was Murdoch ramming Dibiase's head into the ring post and busting him open.

During the commercial break Bill Watts told the audience that Dibiase had suffered arterial damage but that he insisted on continuing. The match started after the break with Dibiase making a valiant effort before the blood loss got the best of him. Murdoch attacked him again after the match. Great storytelling that firmly established Dibiase as a top star in the area and set up a great feud with Murdoch.

Thanks,  
Bob Ryder

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## No. 87 - Steven McLean

**Thousands of matches I've watched over the last forty years from around the world. I have no idea what my favorite match of all-time is, but I do know one thing - it was a Ric Flair match.**

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## No. 88 - The Greatest Wrestling Match I Ever Saw by Warren Buff

See, I'm not a huge wrestling fan. I appreciate it, but I never got into watching it regularly. A fellow I worked for out on the Outer Banks one summer tried to get me to try out for it once, convinced that with my size and long hair of the time, I'd be able to get into condition and do something with it. Not my thing, though. I do, however, really enjoy watching sumo. There's just something about a sport where elite athletes weigh several hundred pounds.

The greatest wrestling match I ever saw was a sumo match. Unfortunately, I didn't see it live. Nor did I see video of it. In fact, I only saw a photograph of it, taken a split second before the end. Not only that, but from the photograph, it remains unclear who the winner will be. I don't have the names of the competitors, or the date of the match, but by the quality of the shot, I suspect it was older than I am.

So, a brief digression, for those unfamiliar with the sport, into the rules of sumo: The object of a sumo match is to force your opponent to either touch the ground with something other than the soles of his feet or to touch the ground outside of the ring. In some rare cases, the referees can declare a wrestler the winner in spite of touching the ground first, if he has shown such skill that he is obviously superior to his opponent. There also are some illegal maneuvers which can disqualify a wrestler and failing to show up or such can also result in a disqualification, but as far as active methods of victory,

those two are it. Each is a viable strategy, and carries some risks. Usually, a wrestler who can get his opponent off the ground should be able to win, one way or the other. I once watched a 350-pound wrestler lift a man twice his weight, then place him down outside the ring, which was pretty hardcore.

So back to the greatest match I ever saw. It was clear that the method of victory would be that the losing wrestler would touch the ground first, but it wasn't clear who that would be. The wrestlers were grappling close, and one was going over backwards. In fact, he was going over backwards into an arch, his shoulder approaching the ground. And above his shoulder, in a hold, was his opponent's head, poking out just far enough that if the great man could arch his back far enough, fast enough, the other's head would touch the ground first. The big man had deceived his onrushing opponent somehow, tricking him into that headlock even as the momentum of the crash bowled them both over. Some incredibly fortunate cameraman had captured them in this moment, the single moment which could fully convey the events of the match without telling the winner, and it was beautiful.

I don't know who won. I don't know who was wrestling. I don't know when or where the match occurred. But I do know, without a doubt, that the gambit tried by the wrestler going over backwards took such quick thinking and athleticism that win or lose, it was the greatest wrestling match I ever saw.

No. 89 - Photo by James Kuwa

# No. 90 - From Joe Babinsack

*What's my favorite match?*

Ironically, it's a match where my most favorite wrestler actually lost, but in the history of the sport, the match for the WWWF World Heavyweight Championship on January 18, 1971 has significance for any true wrestling fan.

For almost eight years, Bruno Sammartino wore the belt of the World Wide Wrestling Federation. He defeated a who's who of challengers, re-established Madison Square Garden as the "Mecca" of professional wrestling, and proved his talent, dedication and charisma in the squared circle.

In terms of pro wrestling Champions, Bruno set the gold standard. His first reign, alone, bests any other rival, and no man alive has held the gold, in any promotion, for as long as Bruno held the WWWF belt during his two reigns, with nearly twelve years and over 4000 days of being Champion.

All things come to an end, but even after dominating the WWWF, thrilling fans and bringing them to the arenas, and notably Madison Square Garden once a month, if not every three weeks, no one expected Bruno to lose, and especially not to a man named "the Russian Bear".

Bruno's reign was like nothing seen in the sport for the past forty years.

His mastery of the sport, his athleticism, his drawing power, his ability to inspire his fans, his ability to keep people coming to the arenas, all these aspects are a lost art of professional wrestling.

Fans of the past two decades know that winning a Championship is a moment in time to be respected, where the winner is cheered and the spectacle of the crowning of a new Champion is historic, even in an age where title changes happen every few months, if that long.

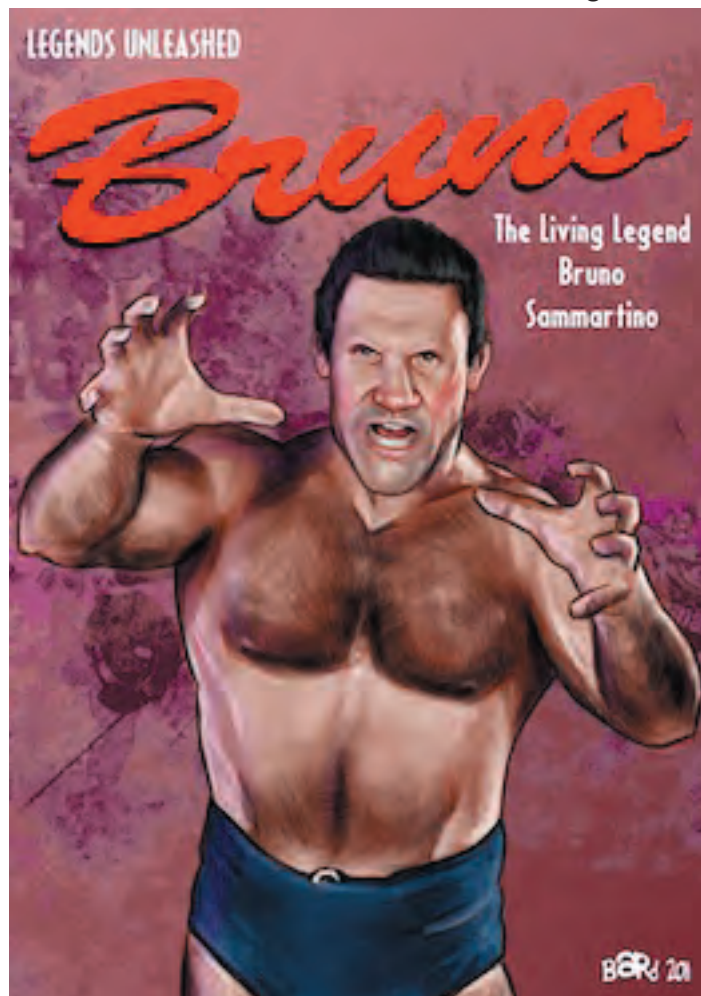
Few wrestling Champions have lasted longer than a year; there's always the search for the next big thing, a staleness that sets in, a sense that wrestling talent these days never knows what to do once on top.

But Bruno Sammartino was no mere professional wrestler, no run-of-the mill Champion.

By 1971 – the Italian born Legend; the man who survived World War II and settled with his reunited family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the one-time world class weightlifter and bodybuilder; the longest reigning Champion of all time – Bruno Sammartino determined it was time to heal his battered body.

On a cold night in January, Bruno stood in the opposite corner of Ivan Koloff, and the fans knew the setup well: Bruno fought his competitor hard in initial contests, and eventually, always, he vanquished his opponents. From Gorilla Monsoon to Bill Watts, from Wladek "Killer" Kowalski to Beppo Mongol, from the very best of the sport to some of the very best characters, it wasn't a strict formula, but there was a pattern, and Bruno Sammartino knew the secrets of success.

He could outwrestle Hans Mortier, overpower Haystacks Calhous, or out-



brawl Waldo Von Erich. He outfoxed Buddy Rogers, dismantled Gene Kiniski and left a trail of opponents defeated in his wake.

But time had come, and the 300 pound Russian Bear was primed for the battle.

The two had battled a few years earlier, and Bruno got the best of the powerhouse. But their matches were awe-inspiring, and Bruno talks of the two exchanging blows, trading slams and “looking like two bulls in the ring”.

That sort of violence reared its ugly head that cold night in January of 1971.

Almost fifteen minutes after the two squared off, Bruno charged at Koloff in the corner, but the Russian Bear caught him with a kick. A big bodyslam rocked the Champion, and Ivan Koloff scrambled up to the top rope in a heartbeat. Several seconds later, the challenger became the Champion after dropping a knee from that high perch. That knee landed across the chest, or the neck, but it really doesn't matter, because Ivan Koloff walked away from the squared circle the WWWF World Heavyweight Champion.

Security was prepared for various contingencies from a hostile crowd, but security wasn't needed.

The fans – boisterous fans who cheered Bruno almost every three weeks, vocal fans who booed the bad guys and saw Bruno as the ultimate of all heroes – were stunned into silence.

Bruno has told me that he thought that the final blow from Koloff must have busted his eardrum. He asked his manager, Arnold Skaaland a question. Skaaland replied that it was “spooky” how quiet the arena was, and Bruno realized he could hear, that there was nothing wrong with his ears.

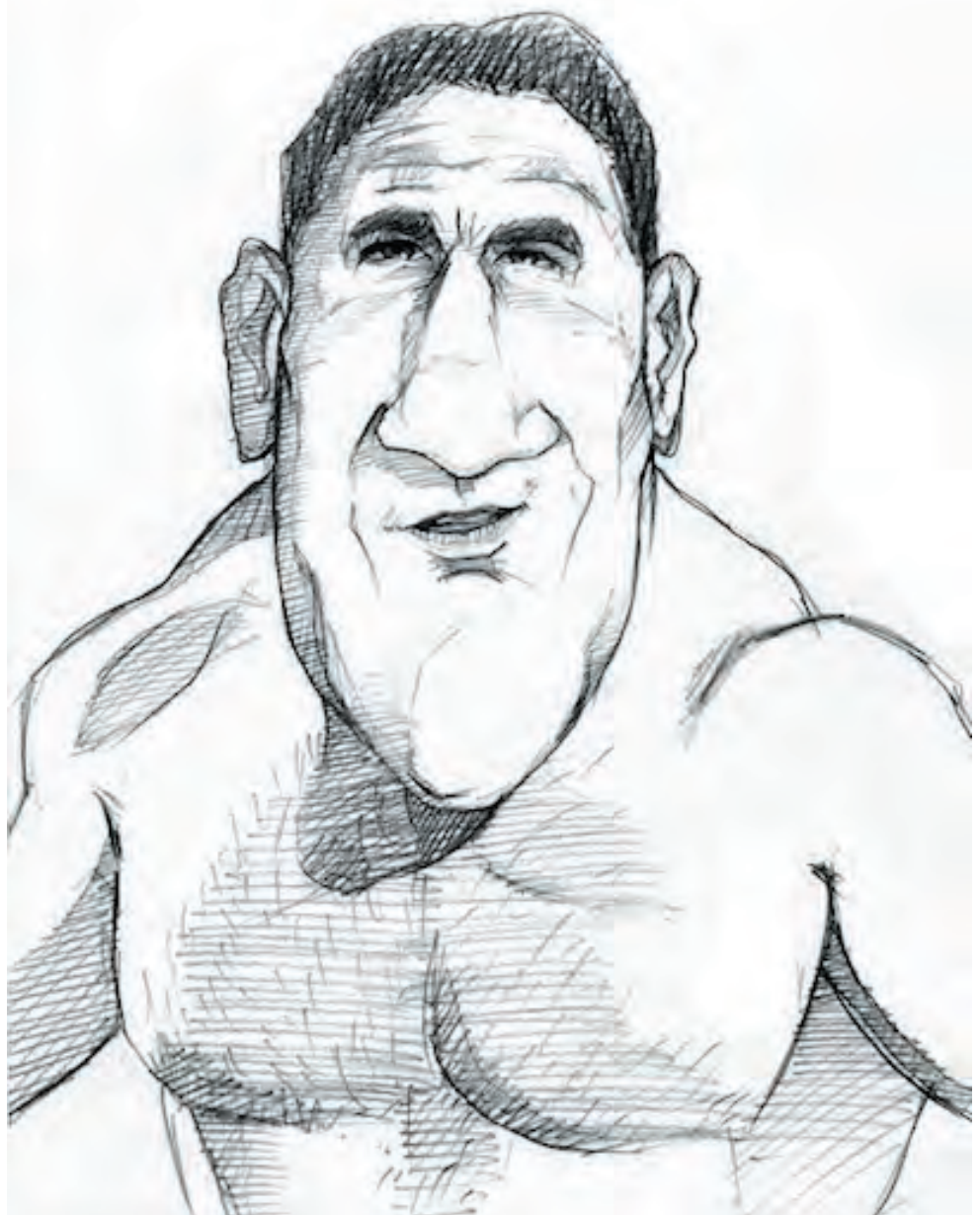
The crowd left Koloff alone, and gave Bruno all the encouragement in the world. They told him that they loved him. They told him that they loved him. They told him that he would be Champion again. They told him how much they appreciated him.

The world of professional wrestling is loud, obnoxious and these days, often too vulgar for my biggest hero.

But that day a classic battle determined the most important Championship of the era, and in losing, Bruno Sammartino impacted his profession at a level that is incomprehensible to modern creative types in the WWE or TNA.

Ivan Koloff may not have held that belt long, only three weeks, but his career was made and he wrestled into the 1990's, often based on the reputation of beating Sammartino, a claim only few mean in the sport could ever claim.

Joe Babinsack can be reached at chaosonejoe@yahoo.com. He writes often for the www.f4wonline.com site, as well as The Allied News (Grove City), on the subjects of pro wrestling and Mixed Martial Arts.



# No. 93 - Jay Crasdan

I can't remember the name of the gorgeous Japanese girl in the pink, but the bull in the ring was Combat Toyota, a name like a truck and a body to match; all made-up to look like a Road Warrior extra who had been dismissed from the set early to fight in a match with the hot chick. As I understand it, this was the tradition of Japanese Women's wrestling: the Butch against the Femme, the Hot against the Hog. This was also a retirement match, Toyota was retiring, but she was the villain.

It was a Japanese barbed wire match, and Chris made me watch while these two chicks went at it with blood and violence and explosions and then the big girl was lifted off her feet and dropped straight down onto her head and that was the end. Even after all teh blood and the explosions and seeing them throw each other into the wire, that drop seemed to put Toyota directly onto her head.

I jumped when she landed, squealed at the impact of the finish.

Sometimes, I wonder why Chris isn't a serial killer. He has tapes FULL of these matches and he watches them regularly!!!



## No. 95 - Elizabeth Campbell; Darkcargo.com

I am picking up the pieces of my shattered dreams, demolished by the Librarian of Doom. I have been cast once again, savagely, into the land of indecision, my once-clear path blocked and confused by towers of the TBR pile.

As a personal challenge, I have been reading Embassytown by China Mieville. It's been a rewarding, character-building struggle with wondrous rewards. This book is definitely an intimidating challenge for me. The college-decimated reading skills compounded with the "multitask" virus I contracted at my corporate hell job makes it difficult at best to read a complex novel. In short, I have trouble concentrating when I read.

Regardless, I didn't want to miss out on Yet Another Mieville and set myself the goal of reading it. Sitting quietly, no distractions, timer set for 30 minutes, all that. I got through the first third, which was a lovely tour of Mieville's unique voice and introduction to the world building in the novel. In the next third, I became much engaged with the characters, found Hook #1, and was just about to turn the page for the Buildup of the Resolution for the Climax Yet to Come.

We had things to do in the next town over, and my husband and I stopped at the library on the way out of town so that I could pick up a book on hold for me

and renew Embassytown so's Duncan can read it when I finish BEFORE MONDAY!! "Yeah! I'm so going to accomplish this! Go Me!"

That was yesterday morning. My life is now a shambles. My reading self-confidence is now shattered and my goals, towards which I was so slowly and diligently building, are now scattered to the winds.

I handed Embassytown over to the Librarian of Doom and as she scanned it I asked for a renewal. "I can't do that, there's a hold request."

"Ok, whatever, let me have it back so that I can finish it and I'll return it on Monday."

"No, I've checked it in already"  
NOOOO!!!

We fought, me and that librarian lady. A simple tug of war over the counter escalated into a full-on cat fight. Name calling, hair pulling, teeth biting. She was like a mother bear protecting that cub of Book on Hold. It was fierce.

I lost, walking away in shame, empty handed except for the book that was placed on hold for me. I guess I'd best get to it. I'd hate for another librarian fight to ensue for the sake of my hold request.

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No. 96 - Art by Michele Wilson

# No. 97 - Random Wrestling Reminiscences by Joel Zakem

Ultimately, I suppose that I have my Grandma Edna to thank (or blame) for this. I was born in the early fifties and it is my firm belief that most (if not all) of those from my generation had a grandparent who regularly watched wrestling on television (though health issues kept Grandma Edna from attending matches in person), and who yelled at the TV and appeared to take it serious.

Since Cincinnati did not have its own promotion in the late 50's/early 60's, Grandma Edna was a regular viewer of "Big Time Wrestling" from Detroit. This was Ed "The Sheik" Farhat's promotion, which was shown, with local wraparounds, Saturday afternoons on Cincinnati television. When I began watching it with Grandma Edna, I was enthralled by the antics of heels like The Sheik and Dick The Bruiser, as they battled it out with faces like Bobo Brazil and Flying Fred Curry. Even though I continued to watch wrestling after Grandma Edna passed away in 1965, for some reason I never considered attending a match in person.

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**No. 98- from the Journal of Johnny Garcia**  
**I loved Pepper Gomez and went to see him fight Ray Stevens at the Cow Palace. We were packed in and it was the hottest I've ever been. Somehow, Pepper lost.**

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This changed after I began college life at the University of Kentucky in 1971. At that time, two promotions were vying for raslin' fans on Lexington television. While the more established promotion was the CWA (run by Jerry Jarrett and Jerry Lawler out of Memphis), some of my friends and I preferred a smaller promotion which ran matches in a converted warehouse and had a late Saturday night spot on an independent TV station. A regular Saturday night ritual was getting together at someone's apartment to alter our consciousness, play spades and watch the late night grappling.

(While I used to think that this promotion was an early version of Angelo Poffo's ICW, that promotion, according to Wikipedia, did not start until 1978, which was three years after I graduated and left Lex-

ington. Therefore, I am not sure what the promotion was called. I do remember, however, attending several matches at that converted warehouse and cheering for a heel named Raquel Dubois.)

I returned to the Cincinnati area after graduation and, after obtaining cable, was able to watch more wrestling on TV. I was also able to attend a few matches live. Like Lexington, two competing promotions had targeted Cincinnati at this time; the WWF, which would hold shows at Cincinnati Gardens and the NWA (Georgia Championship Wrestling), which ran the newly built Riverfront Coliseum (now US Bank Arena). I always preferred the NWA to the WWF, and I saw what is probably my most memorable match at the Coliseum. While the main event saw "Nature Boy" Ric Flair retain the NWA World Championship against former champion Tommy "Wildfire" Rich (though, in typical Flair fashion, he won by holding on to Rich's tights), it was the previous match that I fondly remember since, in the days before the internet and before I knew about the "dirtsheets," I impressed a friend by correctly predicting the finish prior to the beginning of that match.

The match in question pitted The Fabulous Freebirds (Michael Hayes and Terry Gordy) against the makeshift team of Ole Anderson and Ernie "The Cat" Ladd. At this time, Ladd had recently returned to GCW and would work either face or heel, depending on who he was booked against. Knowing this, I correctly predicted that, during the course of the match, Anderson would do something to piss Ladd off. Ladd would then turn on his partner and join with the Freebirds for a three on one beat-down of Anderson. That is exactly what happened.

I continued to follow wrestling (or raslin', since I was sort of back in the South) after moving to Louisville in 1983, occasionally attending CWA/USWA cards at Louisville Gardens. On more than one occasion, I saw the aforementioned Freebirds take on the Rock 'n' Roll Express, though both teams were past their prime. I also saw Jesse "the Body" Ventura challenge Jerry Lawler in what I believe were among the Body's last matches. Those reminiscences, however, will have to wait for another time.



# No. 100 Viking Wrestling by K. A. Laity

I spend an awful lot of my time explaining that no, Vikings did not have horns on their helmets. I know it's an uphill slog I will never win, but I keep at it. Partly because I am paid to do so (in the course of teaching medieval literature) but also because Vikings are cool and their real lives were much more fascinating than the lies most people get from cartoons (where most knowledge of history seems to originate).

I know what you think: Vikings were violent men who plundered, raped and pillaged across half the known world and wore helmet with giant horns on them. So not true! Okay, plundering yes, and raping now and then, sure—but they weren't alone on that count by any means: it was a common technique for getting stuff you wanted that other people had (still is). Pillaging doesn't come into English until the 14th century, so while you might refer to pillaging, nobody in England at the time did.

Here's a thing you may not know: the Vikings were great poets. Fact! What else are you going to do on long sea voyages? They carved wood, decorated their horn-free helmets, played board games and diced—and they composed poetry. One of the most famous Icelanders of all, Egil Skallagrímsson, was known for his ability to out-drink anyone, carve magic runes, crush huge numbers of opponents and compose poetry on the spot. His most famous poem is called "Head Ransom" because he calmed the fury of King Eirik Blood-Axe who wanted him dead. How? With a poem singing the king's praises. Beat that.

Not manly enough for you? Egil was also a world-class wrestler. No, they didn't have titles back then, but trust me. You didn't mess with Egil: he was the grandson of a werewolf and killed a boy with an axe when he was only seven. Icelanders still practice this medieval kind of wrestling, known as Glíma. There is no crouching or crawling around on the ground in glíma: you have to fight standing up. You have to step around each other to show your agility. Attempts

to merely shove an opponent down will get you nið ("scorn") because the contest rests on skill not brute strength and a sense of honour, drengskapr. For all their brutality, there was nothing that mattered more to the Vikings than earning respect from their enemies.

The medieval sagas of Iceland, like Egil's own story, talk about the sport, which was one of the non-lethal ways Vikings used to test one another. The tradition continues today and the national champion is known as the King of Gríma, or Queen in the case of women—yeah, Viking women rock, too—and wins the Grettisbelti or Grettir's belt, named after the saga hero and outlaw Grettir, who famously wrestled a draugr (a sort of mischievous zombie) named Glámr. Vikings—medieval or modern—all want the same thing: fame and honour—well, that and a poem.





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## No. 103 - When Faanish Gets Serious... by Andy Trembley

We are all entrepreneurs.

No. I'm not kidding. Blame it on a Tech Nation segment being re-run late on a Sunday night. Eric Ries, author of *The Lean Startup* was being interviewed by Moira Gunn, and he said some interesting things.

If you're an actfan, you're doing something out of passion, creating and innovating in our little community here.

No, you're not going to get rich (unless you take the path of Creation Entertainment). But that's not the point. Ries pointed out that entrepreneurship is a crappy way to get rich, and if that's your motivation becoming an investment banker is a much better path. Entrepreneurship is about creating something new, and in business getting rich through entrepreneurship is just one potential end of the process. It's not even the most common end.

When you're pubbing a fanzine, income just isn't a motivation. It's all creativity and getting your message out and knowing people are reading it. Same with costuming, filking, hosting parties. Can you afford to do it? The tools keep getting cheaper. Is the adulation of your fellow fans enough of a return on your investment? It had better be, because unless you turn pro, it's

all you're likely to get.

And it usually is.

Conrunning is where the real entrepreneurial spirit comes out, though.

Every con is a start-up.

No, I'm not kidding. You can't run a con without a minimum of business acumen. All the fun takes a lot of advance work to set up. Scheduling of program and events. Hotel contracts that allow parties. Travel expenses for guests. Tech for dances and shows. Registration processes to make sure you can pay for it all. A team of volunteers to make sure it happens. All with tenuous cash-flow.

Conrunners have only one thing to motivate volunteers: fun. Sure, there might be obligation, there might be a chance of refunds on registration costs. But those are small motivations. Fun is the big one. It's what tech start-ups invest in to attract and retain their employees. The possibility of a big pay-out when the company goes public isn't what it used to be. It's all about work that's fun, and a fun place to work. That's what every con should be.

Conventions run under a "burn rate" model like any start-up, but instead of venture capital it's reg-

**No. 104 - Art by Jacques van Heerden**

istration dollars. Registrations have to match up with due-dates for expenses. Registrations have to match up with projected costs. Unlike a start-up business, though, every con is expected to burn through most of its money and in the end flame out. Conventions are ephemeral things, not built to last, and beautiful lights in the sky should be the goal at the end.

And then there's the innovation. Conrunners have to get very creative about obtaining contracts, equipment and professional services at the lowest practical cost, so registration dollars can be turned back into features that benefit the attendees. Visionaries have to look for new events and program items. Department-level people have to consider new and different ways of presenting their departments. Even an

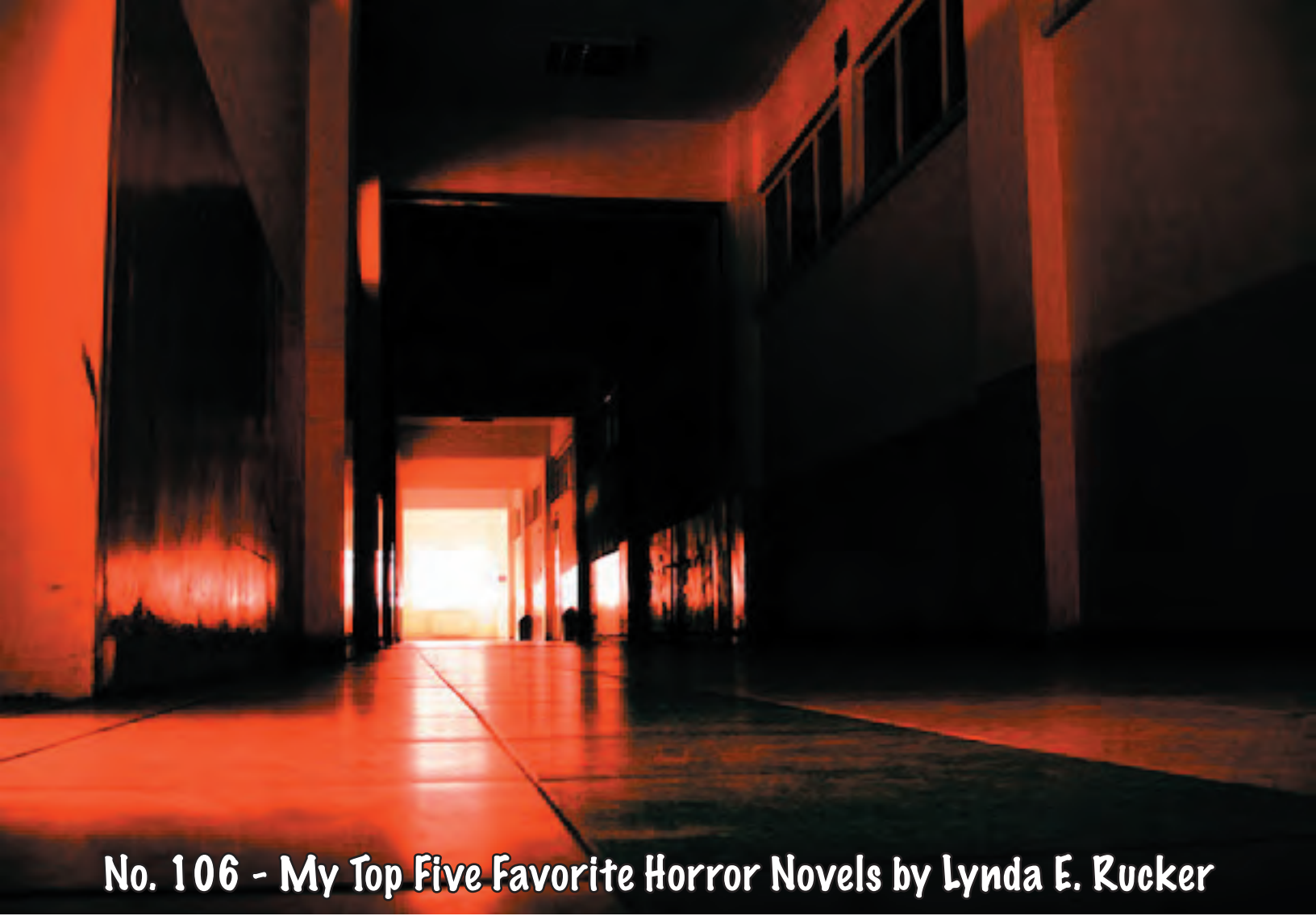
annual con has to reinvent a part of itself every year, or it becomes boring. A con can coast along on "I go because all my friends are there" alone, but not for long before it fades.

Look at start-ups. The best engender loyalty in both their employees and their customer bases. Now compare that to conventions and how volunteers and members relate to them.

We can learn from start-ups how to (and how not to) handle the operational side of running a convention, publishing a fanzine, releasing a filk CD, producing a great masquerade entry. But they might learn a little from us about engaging their people.

If you're an actifan, any sort of actifan, show your pride. You're an entrepreneur of community.





## No. 106 - My Top Five Favorite Horror Novels by Lynda E. Rucker

Right now it's Halloween season, the perfect time for spooky stories, but I'm told the 300th issue of the Drink Tank for which I'm writing this won't be along till December. But really, it's always time for scary stories at my house.

Unfortunately, finding something good and scary to read is sometimes harder than it should be. I love horror, but let's face it: a disproportionate amount of crap is churned out in the name of the genre. Sometimes it just feels like you're wading into a morass of splatterpunk wannabes, thinly disguised misogynistic fantasies, and vampire romance. But there's lots more out there. I like my horror supernatural, subtle, and literate, and these are my favorite horror novels from the last 50 years or so.

Caveat: I've recused myself from including anything by my favorite writer, Ramsey Campbell, because it's impossible for me to choose just one from his body of work. So, Campbell aside, these are my other favorite horror novels.

I. The Haunting of Hill House, Shirley Jackson (1959). Because journeys end in lovers meeting: and here the lovers in question are disturbed Eleanor and Hill House itself, not sane. Supernatural, but anchored and given weight by the troubled psychology of its characters, this is not just a haunted house story, it's the haunted house story, and possibly the best horror novel ever written—it definitely opens with the best first paragraph of any horror novel. I've probably re-

**No. 107 - Art by Klemenjero**

read this more than any other novel on the list.

2. **Dagon**, Fred Chappell (1968). Because it's Lovecraft as Southern Gothic, those unspeakable New England horrors migrated south to a North Carolina farm. This is the only book on my list I've never re-read; it's just too icky to return to again and again. Of work explicitly rooted in Lovecraftian fiction, this is the best. In detailing the decline of Peter Leland, *Dagon* explicates the fate of all those mad narrators and lost scholars over whom Lovecraft drew a discrete veil. But Chappell's a poet, not a pulp writer, so the narrative's power lies in his skillful evocation of madness, character, and place, not gross-out violence (although fear not, there's bodily degradation a-plenty).

3. **Our Lady of Darkness**, Fritz Leiber (1977). Because it's a terrific tale of urban horror as a down-on-his-luck pulp writer (is there any other kind?) in San Francisco uncovers the secrets of the occult science megapolisomancy—how structures and cities themselves predict and shape the future. I imagine that readers categorize Leiber depending on their first encounter with him—as the fantasy author of *Fafhrd* and the *Grey Mouser*, or as the SF author of the *Change War* stories. But I first discovered Leiber through classic horror stories like “The Girl With the Hungry Eyes” and “Smoke Ghost,” and while I've seen this novel described as both fantasy and SF, I'm staking a claim on behalf of the horror fiends.

4. **The Ceremonies**, TED Klein (1984). Because it's inspired by one of my favorite horror stories of all time, Arthur Machen's “The White People.” A New York City graduate student flees the distraction of the city and rents a room in a fundamentalist religious community in rural New Jersey so he can finish his dissertation on Gothic literature, but the otherworldly rituals at which the little girl's journal in the Machen story only hinted (I only do this at night in my room or in certain woods that I know, but I must not describe them, as they are secret woods. Then there are the Ceremonies...) are here set into terrible motion. Klein is a master with a tiny body of work—a handful of novellas, some short stories, and this single, nearly-perfect novel.

5. **The Red Tree**, Caitlin R. Kiernan (2009). Because its horror is simultaneously ugly and transcendent. I wrote extensively about my love for this book in an appreciation on the *Black Static* blog for Women in Horror month earlier this year (<http://ttapress.com/1031/an-appreciation-of-caitlin-r-kiernans-the-red-tree/>), and I can't better that here in just a few words, but I will say that Kiernan's story of the writer Sarah Crowe and her deadly obsession with the secret history of a farm house in rural New England and its unwholesome red tree is my favorite horror novel of the last decade (at least).



# No. 109 - LAS AGUILAS AZTECAS by Andy Hooper

Most readers are familiar with the major combatant nations of the Second World War, both Axis and Allied, but many are unfamiliar with the contributions of so-called "Minor Allies," nations that contributed human and material resources to one side or the other, despite in some cases being separated from the main theaters of war by intercontinental distances. Mexico was not prepared to participate in a modern war when two of its ships were sunk by German submarines in 1942, but her progressive and militaristic President seized the opportunity to declare war on the Axis powers. It took more than two years for Mexican personnel to enter a combat zone, but the brave pilots and support personnel of Escuadron 201 of the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force would make important contributions to the Allied campaign to liberate the Philippine Islands. They overcame persistent problems with a stubbornly monolingual and innately racist US military to become proficient with modern fighter aircraft and operated them at forward airfields under challenging conditions. Their experience is a little-known friendly chapter in the checkered history of Mexico's relationship with its pugilistic northern neighbor, and its only participation in a war outside its own borders.

## **A Mexican Adventure**

A few years ago, the distinguished documentarian Ken Burns stepped on a metaphorical rake when he failed to include the experience of any Hispanic-Americans in the initial release of his lengthy documentary on WW II, *The War*. Burns scrambled to add an appropriately heroic story to

the final version of his epic, but the incident was a fitting metaphor for the general anonymity of all Spanish-speaking veterans of the conflict. Spanish-speaking Filipinos struggled with the Japanese for four awful years; the Spanish "Blue" Division served with their German allies on the Russian Front, and was shattered outside Leningrad; and even Portuguese was represented in the Allied Corps that struggled along the Italian peninsula, where a division of Brazilian troops were engaged. But Spanish is seldom represented among the voices telling stories of the war. And language barriers are just one reason why many contemporary Americans have no idea just how much of the world participated in the fight against fascism.

The Republic of Mexico is certainly not a nation which would seem to have had any interest in the conflict's European genesis, nor would it have been particularly harmed by the ascension of Japanese hegemony in the Pacific ocean. But the close economic relationship between the United States and Mexico meant that the two were essentially indistinguishable to the former's enemies. When the German navy began concentrated attacks against shipping leaving American ports, it was

inevitable that ships from neutral countries would come under attack as well.

On May 14th, 1942, the German U-boat 564 sank the small oil tanker SS *Potrero de Llano*, off the east coast of Florida. The ship was operated by Pemex, and was bound for New York out of the port of Tampico. 12 of her crew of 35 were lost; the survivors were picked up by an American patrol boat. The U-Boat's commander, Reinhold Suhren, had



observed a large illuminated tricolor flag on the side of the ship, but because only Mexican naval vessels are allowed to display the full national ensign with the eagle emblem, Surhen concluded the vessel was masquerading as Italian. While Mexico's government was still debating its response to this incident, another Mexican oil tanker was attacked, on May 21st. SS Faja de Oro was returning empty from Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania to Tampico, when she was spotted off Key West by U-106, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Hermann Rasch. It ultimately took four torpedoes for the German submarine to sink the small tanker, which was set afire by the final hit; 10 of her crew of 37 were lost when the ship sank just after 4:30 in the morning.

This second sinking, so soon after the first, served to make it clear that the German navy had not attacked Mexican shipping by accident or mistake. Any ship bound for or sailing out of Allied ports were liable to be sunk without warning, whether their nation of registry was at war or not. Mexico's President, Manuel Avila Camacho, had pursued a long military career prior to entering politics, so it was predictable that he would offer a bellicose response to the provocation. His speech asking the country to declare war was carried on national radio, and for many Mexicans it was as memorable as Norteamericanos found Roosevelt's address to Congress after Pearl Harbor. The Mexican government agreed to declare war on Germany, Italy and Japan on June 1st, 1942. A number of patriotic or adventurous Mexicans enlisted and began training and working to modernize Mexico's armed forces. But President Avila was soon in Washington, negotiating his country's larger contribution to a continental war effort.

Mexican citizens had been traveling north for economic opportunity since the Spanish Conquest, but during the Great Depression, the United States adopted a series of policies directed at restricting Mexican access to its soil. There was also an official policy of repatriation – a euphemism for deportation -- directed at families who had come to the United States during the Mexican revolution of the early 20th Century. Over 500,000 were deported to Mexico during the 1930s. But with the advent of global war, the United States was suddenly confronted with the need to replace millions of laborers who were now to be inducted into the armed forces, or at the least, retrained and relocated to work on defense-related industry. The deported Mexican laborers were now urgently needed back in the United States, and Mexico agreed to allow its

citizens to freely depart to work in nearly every state of the Union. One notable exception was Texas, which declined to participate in the program, preferring to institute something it called an "Open Border Policy." For its part, Mexico declined to send any Braceros to Texas, citing abuse of its citizens in that state.

As many as 75,000 Mexican farm workers, and 50,000 railway workers, were present in the United States at any time between 1942 and 1947. Each one of them arguably replaced a pair of boots now free to approach German or Japanese soil. The program was also of sufficient economic value that it continued well after the war was over, and was not formally suspended until 1964.

### ***Isolation and Imagination***

President Avila was one of the first Presidents to serve in one of the 20th Century's most durable political dynasties, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. Still known as the PRM in 1942, the party controlled Mexico's Presidency for 70 years, until the election of Vicente Fox in 2000. Although an ostensibly revolutionary body and a member of the Socialist International, the PRI has always been dominated by capital, and responded to the interests of the wealthiest elements of Mexican society. It was a "progressive" party in that it followed a generally anticlerical line and resisted the influence of the Catholic church far more effectively than most of its predecessors. But it was more dependably pro-business, pro-investment, and quietly pro-American, despite the general mistrust for the U.S. felt by a majority of Mexicans. Mexico's entry into the war would serve to accelerate the economic development already underway at the end of the 1930s, and was part of a 40-year period of consistent expansion known as "The Mexican Miracle." Mexican oil, rubber, cotton and metals were all eagerly consumed by American industry.

But it was a much different matter to commit Mexicans to combat in the Allied cause. Mexico had no tradition of intervention in even regional conflicts; the nation had been far more concerned with the defense of its own sovereignty across its post-colonial history. The loss of its merchant shipping suggested its immediate attention should be directed at controlling the Gulf of Mexico and other territorial waters. President Avila sweepingly offered all of Mexico's armed forces for participation in the fight against the Axis. President Roosevelt prudently noted his counterpart's general lack of authority to back up his offer, and replied with

technical assistance and more modern equipment. The truth was, the Mexican armed forces completely lacked any of the logistic assets necessary to maintain an army on an overseas campaign. Any troops who went to fight alongside other Americans would need to be fed, housed, transported and given medical treatment by the larger formations to which they were attached. And there was also the issue of North American racism, which tended to denigrate any military potential in the Mexican people.



For these and other reasons, almost all the Mexican citizens who saw combat service during World War II did so in the ranks of the United States Army or Navy. Induction centers were not entirely rigorous in their review of willing applicants in the months after the attack on Hawaii, and citizens of many different countries served in US forces. Many became American citizens after the war, but retained many connections to their families and former communities. But there was also one occasion when Mexico sent its citizens to war together, and celebrated their departure as enthusiastically as any North American state or province.

The Mexican government proposed that Mexican aviators join the Allied air forces as early as 1942. President Avila ordered the creation of the FAEM or Fuerza Aérea Expedicionaria Mexicana, a unit that studied and prepared to meet the issues implicit in service outside of the Americas. Although legal permission to operate outside Mexico would not be enacted by Mexico's Congress until 1944, the work of finding and training pilots capable of modern combat flying was ongoing. It was announced that a new fighter squadron, known as "Escuadrón 201" would be formed especially for service with the Allied air force. The unit would require just 30 pilots, supported by 270 armorers, mechanics, clerks, cooks, drivers and riflemen. Competition, even for the support positions, was fierce. A series of examinations were held, and these were used to select the

final candidates. Because the education needed to become an aviator was mostly available to upper class students, most of the pilots were from aristocratic families. But the decisions were made on merit, and there were a few foundlings and orphans mixed with the fortunate sons.

Many squadron personnel were already pursuing flight training on their own by the beginning of 1944, but it took another six months to secure formal, final approval from both governments. American Amba-

sador to Mexico George Messersmith was willing to vouch for the Mexican government's commitment to the project, which helped secure a final directive from the White House. Escuadrón 201 was first mustered in Mexico City on July 18th, 1944. President Avila addressed the unit, which then boarded a train for the journey to the United States. The trip took nearly 36 hours to complete, because the train had to stop in every significant town and city so the locals could give their farewells. But when the train finally rattled into Laredo, Texas, the contrast was overwhelming. "No one was there," recalled one veteran.

### **Welcome to the Aquarium**

The decision to begin the Mexican pilots' training at Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas was presumably motivated by geographical proximity to Mexico and the possible presence of Spanish-speaking personnel. But it also immediately exposed them to the institutional racism of American society. In Texas, Mexicans were subjected to the same bigotry and segregation as black Americans. When a detachment of the 201st rolled into Majors Army Airfield in Greenville, Texas, one of the first tasks undertaken by American liaison officers was to convince the local store owners to take down the signs reading "No Mexicans. No Dogs."

Not that prejudice ended at the base perimeter. Very few instructors were interested in training the Mexican pilots, and those who were allegedly bi-lin-

gual proved to have only rudimentary skills in Spanish. In practice, the pilots received much of their instruction from Women's Air Service Pilots or "W.A.S.P.s." From August to October of 1944, Escuadrón 201 was dispersed to training fields at San Antonio and Victoria, Texas and Pocatello, Idaho. Weather conditions in Idaho proved too difficult, even in summer, and there was further delay as those pilots and instructors were transferred back to Texas. They were collected back together under the command of F.A.E.M. Colonel Antonio Cardenas Rodríguez in Greenville, on November 30th. Here the pilots would receive their first fighter planes, and use them to learn air combat tactics, gunnery and formation flying. Captain first class Radamés Gaxiola Andrade was appointed squadron Commander.

The pilots were enthralled by their experiences in the air, but on the ground, they were isolated and generally ostracized by Anglo officers and personnel. They responded by emphasizing their Mexican patriotism, adding Mexican insignia to their aircraft and dubbing the squadron "Las Aguilas Aztecas," or "The Aztec Eagles." Throughout their experience, officers thought to be bilingual had to be taught Spanish in order to communicate technical issues related to aviation. The situation was sufficiently frustrating that a special section of bi-lingual instructors, known as "Section I," was formed under the direction of US Army Captain Paul Miller. When Captain Miller was relieved by Lt. Col. Arthur Kellogg in January of 1945, "Section I" would become the liaison between the 201st and the Army's 58th Fighter Group. American observers apparently formed the impression that Kellogg was the de facto commander of the squadron, and his section clearly had considerable responsibility for the flow of information in and out of it. But the commanders of the 58th Fighter Group, which the Aztec Eagles would eventually join, always acted with respect for Captain Andrade's authority. It may have been helpful to allow more racially prejudiced elements of the American chain of command to believe that the Mexicans were under "white" supervision, but the Eagles were no one's colonial levy. One pilot who was particularly conscious of Anglo prejudice was Angel Sanchez Rebollo, whose dimpled face inspired the nickname of "Sapo" ("Frog"). Discouraged from contact with local girls during his assignment in Victoria, he still found himself dating a Texan teen named Nancy Hudson. Her father forbade the relationship, but they could not be discouraged, and eventually eloped to Brownsville in March of 1945. A Justice of the Peace wed them for \$2.00, and their marriage

lasted until Nancy's death in 1986.

Sapo Sanchez was billeted with three other pilots with equally colorful nicknames. Amadeo Castro Amarillo was so small he was called "The Shrimp," or "El Camaron." A big pilot with wide set eyes was known to the others as "The Fish," "El Pescado." And the diminutive Jaime Cenizo Rojas, who probably had to jump to reach his listed height of five foot, one inch, was known as "The Duck," "El Pato." This was because when Sanchez first saw him, his arms were filled with three seat cushions and his flying helmet, and the load obscured everything except Cenizos' spindly, bird-like legs. (He needed the three cushions to be able to see over the instrument panel.) Cenizos made a sign for the door of their tent that read "Welcome to the Aquarium," and this became an informal lounge for pilots in their off hours. The residents were among the first in the squadron to adopt the cartoon character "Pancho Pistoles," one of Disney's "Three Caballeros," as an unofficial squadron mascot.

#### El Jarro against Japan

The airplane which the Aztec Eagles were trained to fly was the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, a design dominated by its enormous radial engine. Through 1943, it was the Army's front-line fighter over Europe, but with the development of the P-51 Mustang, the Thunderbolt became the most important American fighter-bomber. Its robust construction made it unusually stable in a dive, even with bombs or early air-to-ground rockets slung beneath the wings. The milk-bottle profile of the aircraft led pilots to nickname it "The Jug," and Mexican pilots translated this into Spanish, "El Jarro." Squadron 201 had the "D" model of the Jug, with improved guns, fuel tanks and armor, and a bubble-top canopy that allowed 360 degree vision. If it was not America's most advanced fighter in the spring of 1945, it was still more than a match for anything it would encounter in the skies over the Pacific Ocean – and that was where Escuadrón 201 was going.

By February of 1945, when the pilots of the Aguilas had their graduation ceremony, the war in Europe was winding down. Even if the Mexicans were rushed to the front, there would be little for them to accomplish. This gave weight to the argument that the deployment of Mexican personnel overseas was of little value to the defense of the Republic. The men of the Aztec Eagles were generally shielded from the shift in political climate at home, but the possibility that they would never get to the war zone loomed over their

efforts throughout their training.

Mexico was also at war with Japan, and the Avila government was committed to making some contribution to final victory in the Pacific, not least so that Mexico would have an argument for expanding its territorial possessions at the expense of the defeated Axis. Its opportunity arose with the planned Allied liberation of the Philippines, which had been underway since October of 1944. The islands of Leyte and Mindoro had been secured by the beginning of 1945, and a bitter campaign to retake central Luzon and the capital city of Manila had been concluded just a few days before the Eagles' graduation. But there were still thousands of Japanese occupying the valleys and jungles of the island, and it would take another six months to overcome them. There was a real need for fighter-bomber formations like Escuadrón 201 to support the ground operation in the Philippines.

It was also easy for the Avila government to make a case for Mexico's contribution to the liberation of the Philippines, another Spanish-speaking nation with long connections to Mexico. The ships which had explored and claimed the Philippines for the Spanish Crown had begun those voyages in Mexico. The people of modern Mexico still felt a kinship with Filipinos, and were as sickened as the rest of the world at stories of their treatment by the Japanese Empire. This was a cause which Mexico could surely embrace, and Escuadrón 201 would be part of it, as long as Japan didn't surrender first. The only irony was that they would be pursuing this mission under the auspices of the US military, which was regarded as anything but a liberator by most Mexicans. This was something they could hardly get away from. When pilots entered a combat zone, it was (and is) customary for them to compose a letter to be sent to their loved ones in the event of their death. The pilots of Escuadrón 201 had to write their last letter home in a foreign language, or else the military censor would not be able to read it.

### ***Mud on the Windshields***

The squadron and its parent command prepared for tropical service through March of 1945, and arrived in the Philippines in April. With the prospect of actual combat, the FAEM belatedly formed a replacement group to train additional airmen, but in order to report to the war zone at full strength, every one of the squadron's pilots were to be deployed. They left behind the carefully maintained P-47s on which they had trained, and drew their ships from a selection of veteran

"Jarros" formerly used by the 35th and 348th Fighter Groups. The pilots were put through another series of training missions that emphasized navigation and safe operation under tropical conditions, during which the commanders of the 58th Fighter Group were satisfied the Mexican pilots were ready to join them on combat missions.

All Japanese combat aircraft has been destroyed or evacuated from the country some weeks before, so Escuadrón 201 had one mission available to them. They began flying low altitude bombing and strafing missions in support of the US 25th Infantry Division, as it fought its way through picturesque-sounding locations like the Balete Pass and the Marakina Watershed, eventually breaking through to the Cagayan valley. Pilots from Squadron 201 were directed to their targets by map coordinates, relayed by spotters in L5 Grasshopper observation planes, by white phosphorus spotting rounds fired by mortars or artillery, and sometimes by simply flying several "dry run" passes over the target area until they were sure they had identified it correctly. Occasionally, targets confirmed themselves by firing anti-aircraft guns at the Thunderbolts. The commander of the 25th Division commented that the Mexican pilots were indistinguishable from the rest of the 58th Fighter Group, and that the Group had made a critical contribution to his command's achievement of its objectives. They had one notable "friendly fire" incident, when they bombed an American infantry company, but this was found to be the direct responsibility of the American liaison pilots who identified the targets, and these were reassigned.

It was standard procedure to send small elements of an inexperienced squadron out with a larger group of veteran pilots. And for the first week, the Mexicans flew with an escort of experienced American P-47 pilots. The Mexicans were under their scrutiny in several areas. During one joint mission, pilot Reynaldo Gallardo made a particularly effective strafing pass against a Japanese target, his eight .50 caliber machine guns chewing up men and equipment. In a spontaneous gesture of triumph, Gallardo pulled his plane up into a roll as he climbed out of his run, a dangerous maneuver if the aircraft suffered a sudden loss of power. An unnamed American pilot blurted out "Look at that crazy Mexican!" and upbraided Gallardo for violating operational rules. Gallardo responded by promising to fight whomever had called him out as soon as they returned to their airbase at Florida Blanca, Luzon. When Gallardo climbed down from his airplane, he found that

the North American confronting him was six foot, two inches, and weighed over 200 pounds. Gallardo, a light-weight at best, did not hesitate to wade into the big gringo. Fortunately, they were shortly separated, but Gallardo's bravery became a subject of admiring comment, and the fight served to "break the ice" between the Mexicans and their North American comrades.

The Mexicans became full partners in the 58th Fighter Group. In July, they began to get new and up-to-date P-47s, which allowed for longer "fighter sweeps" over distant targets. The new planes were officially "Mexican" aircraft, transferred by "lend-lease," and with wings decorated with both the US Army Air Force star, and the tricolor of the Mexican air force. As the campaign for Luzon neared completion, the 58th began flying missions over the Philippine Sea and against distant targets on Formosa. They had what was probably their most impressive success on the 8th of August, when they flew a dive-bombing mission against the Formosan port of Korenko, and destroyed several small Japanese ships and fuel storage tanks.

Although the Mexican pilots gained some acceptance by their immediate colleagues, they remained largely a novelty in the eyes of most Americans. This was not true to the upper echelons of Filipino society, who were delighted to have a group of liberators who could actually understand it when they were thanked. The pilots had to have their pistols at hand when they took the dangerous jeep ride into Manila, as Japanese guerrillas were still sniping at unwary travelers. The Mexican pilots and ranking Americans all ate at the same restaurant, *Ciros*, which was still in operation after the destructive fight for Manila. One pilot wrote that a dish of white rice and a filet he described as "microscopic" cost him about 24 pesos, or \$5.00 US, and sent him into a spasm of homesickness for the food served by the "mother" of his old infantry battalion. The dinner was propitious, however, as it acquainted the pilots with Alfredo Carmelo, Mexico's Consul General to the Philippines. Sr. Carmelo was the first man to fly an aircraft in the Philippines, soloing in a Curtis Seaplane in 1920. A huge champion of aviation, he would remain an active pilot into his 70s. His services as translator and facilitator were of great value to the squadron while they were on Luzon.

Even a few of the squadron's ground personnel found themselves in line for a decoration, when they had an exchange of gunfire and captured some Japanese soldiers hiding near the airbase. The Japanese had been characteristically reluctant to surrender, and one

was wounded when he tried to throw a grenade at the Mexican patrol. The base meteorologist was part of the patrol, and was certainly the only weatherman in Mexican history credited with the capture of a POW.

Several other officers found a way to get "into the fight" during the campaign for Luzon. Two served as forward air observers during an airborne landing, and an intelligence officer, Capt. Blanco Ledezma, hitched a ride on an American bomber during a raid on Formosa on June 5th.

### ***Fallen Eagles***

Escuadrón 201 suffered its first operational fatality in June, while still integrating with the other squadrons of the 58th FG. 2nd Lt. Fausto Vega Santander, known as "Cachito" lost control of his aircraft during a practice dive bombing run and was killed in the crash. He may have been hit by anti-aircraft fire; sources differ on the cause of his death. Vega was certainly missed, but he had died many miles from the base. The next loss came when Lt. Jose Espinosa Fuentes volunteered to test-fly one of the P-47s that had been "handed down" by the 358th Fighter Group. The Thunderbolt's huge engine had lost power after takeoff. Standard procedure was to crash-land the airplane straight off the end of the runway. But that area was covered with tents and full of soldiers, so Espinosa turned his aircraft right, struck the Pampanga sugar mill, and died in the resulting fire.

The accident took place in front of Colonel Ed Roddy, the commander of the 58th Fighter Group, himself a decorated ace with 8 aerial victories. Seeing how the Mexicans were shaken by the event, Colonel Roddy approached the squadron commander Captain Andrade, and asked if he wanted to lower the Mexican flag on the base flagpole in honor of the lost pilot. An-



drade had to telephone his commanders at the FAEM to ask how to honor Espinosa. He returned to explain to Roddy that Mexican tradition held that no man was greater than the Republic, and that the flag was only to be lowered for the death of a beloved leader or statesman. Roddy responded by ordering the American flag lowered to half-staff in honor of Espinosa. This gesture impressed the Mexicans, and helped reinforce the belief that the Americans genuinely held their contributions in some regard.

This and other losses would have far more than an emotional effect on the Eagles. For example, Lieutenant of Artillery Cesar Velasco Ceron suffered a vehicle accident, which left him bewildered, able only to ask repeatedly, "What happened?" Velasco was one of two officers assigned to collect and collate intelligence for the squadron. There was no replacement available for him, and therefore the Squadron became very slow to take advantage of information sent to them through intelligence briefings. These difficulties were easily surmounted in a huge body like the US Army, but with only 300 total personnel in the theater, the Mexicans had no one to call on. Replacements would eventually be sent from Mexico, but they arrived just as the war was in its final days.

Second Lieutenant Mario Lopez Portillo died along with an American flight leader, Lieutenant Lee Houk, when they flew into a mountainside during a storm. One of the best pilots in the squadron, flight leader Captain Espinosa Galvan, was killed during a mission to ferry aircraft from Biak, New Guinea to the Philippines. Subtle mechanical issues could make a fighter plane's engine burn fuel far more rapidly than intended, and this was apparently what led to Captain Galvan's death on July 16th, 1945.

As a flight leader, Galvan was a critical part of the squadron's command structure. There was no adequate replacement for him. Then, on July 19th, the Squadron's Operations officer, Captain Pablo Luis Martinez Rivas, was also lost on a ferry mission off the west coast of New Guinea. His wingman, Lt. Guillermo Garcia Ramos, parachuted into the sea, and was rescued by an American army seaplane. But no trace of Rivas has ever been found, and the Mexican government did not acknowledge his death until 1947.

The loss of the second and third-ranking officers in his command left Captain Andrade unable to put a full squadron into the air. The squadron flew joint bombing raids and fighter sweeps, particularly over Formosa. But when the rest of the 58th Fighter Group moved on

to participate in the campaign for Okinawa, the Aztec Eagles remained behind on Luzon. Replacement pilots and officers were now "in the pipeline, but it would be the third week in August before the squadron could put 25 airplanes in their air at once. By then, two atomic bombs had been dropped on the home islands of Japan, and the military leadership of the Empire had been broken by an attempted coup by officers who could not face the prospect of surrender. Capitulation finally came on August 15th, 1945, which was still the 14th back in the States. The Mexican pilots were relieved and grateful that the war had ended; although only one of them had been killed by enemy action, 1/6th of their number had been lost, including several of the best officers in the unit. Two pilots had died during training in Texas, but had been replaced, and two more were killed while training to join the replacement group. Another soldier had become ill in the Philippines and was evacuated to a hospital in New Mexico, where he died, the unit's tenth and final fatality. They had paid a steep toll for making Mexico part of America's "Great Crusade." The Squadron flew its last combat mission on August 26th, 1945. A convoy of ships transiting the north Philippine Sea was thought to be potentially vulnerable to attack by suicide aircraft from Formosa, where some significant Japanese forces had yet to surrender. The Aztec Eagles appeared over the ships at 0600, and flights of P-47s were overhead for the next 12 hours, then handed off the watch to a squadron of P-61 Black Widow night fighters.

The squadron left the Philippines in October of 1945, and had to leave their Thunderbolts behind, as the aircraft had been "lent" only for the duration of the war. Despite being unable to roar over the capitol in their fighter-bombers, President Avila Camacho made sure the Aztec Eagles made a memorable return to Mexico City. He led the victory parade in their honor himself. The grand procession wound along the length of Madero Avenue, into the city's vast zocalo, where there was no way of counting the thousands of citizens who had come to cheer the national heroes. In his speech, the President promised a grand memorial to the lost eagles would be erected in Chapultepec Park, an enduring symbol of the nation's memory of their sacrifice. But like many wartime leaders, President Avila would be voted out of office before the end of 1947. His successor had no interest in lauding the achievements of the Avila administration, so the memorial was dedicated with relatively little fanfare. It still stands in Chapultepec Park today; observers say it is enormous,

like one end of a football stadium standing by itself – surely the largest monument, per capita, to any nation's dead in the Second World War.

### **Eagles for Life**

After the war, many members of the Aztec Eagles remained involved in aviation for the balance of their lives. Some stayed in the Mexican military, and served as both pilots and instructors, before moving into positions of higher responsibility. Among these, Angel Sanchez Rebollo probably took the prize for the highest profile. After mustering out of the army, he was appointed to fly the Mexican Presidential aircraft, and he served in that capacity under four administrations. Several others were among the first pilots to fly for the nascent Aeromexico airline, and accomplished remarkable advances in Mexico's use and reliance on air travel.

Mexican society could be said to have taken some measure of pride in the achievements of the Eagles, but they have not been revered as "The Greatest Generation" is in the United States and Canada. The country's involvement in World War II led to considerable economic growth, but no territorial gain, and Mexico has generally declined to participate overtly in any further international military action. After World War II, Escuadrón 201 was incorporated into the Mexican Air Force, and has operated in a variety of aircraft over the past 65 years. It is currently attached to the 4th Air District, headquartered in Cozumel, Quintana Roo.

Although Mexico has not been involved in any international conflicts, it has undergone numerous internal incidents and quasi-military actions. Escuadrón 201 most recently saw service in 1994, during the Zapatista uprising in the Mexican State of Chiapas. The Mexican Air Force has the responsibility of providing all the helicopters which the Army requires for air mobility, as well as those needed for its own operations, and the bulk of its resources are directed toward this goal. Escuadrón 201 was one of a small number of formations flying fixed-wing attack aircraft for the Fuerza Aérea Mexicana in 1994, and was called on to conduct a number of ground-attack missions against insurgents. They flew a militarized version of the Pilatus PC-7, an advanced training aircraft manufactured in Switzerland. The Swiss were shocked – shocked! – that the Mexicans could turn their aircraft to paramilitary purposes, and announced they would no longer sell them to Mexico. Despite this, Escuadrón 201 began to re-

equip with the Pilatus PC-9M in 2006. And since Pilatus has partnered with Beechcraft to produce more than 700 PC-9 Mk. 2 models for the US Navy and Air Force, Mexico will probably be operating these sturdy turbo-prop monoplanes for some years to come. So, 66 years after their service in the Philippines, the Aztec Eagles are still Mexico's aerial close support specialists, flying low and slow to put ordinance on target.

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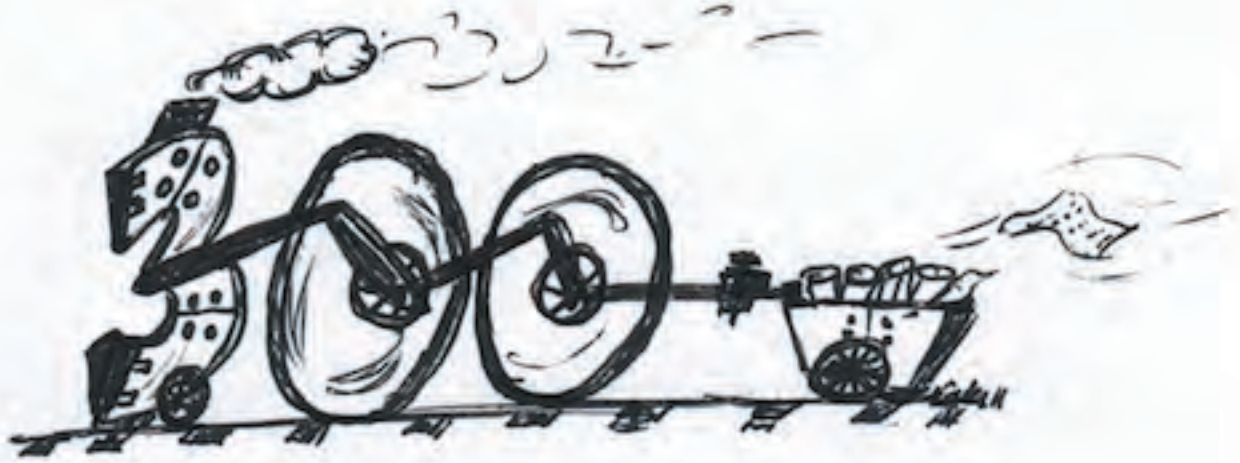
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# Plug Away!!!!!!



## No. 113 - Why The Plugging? by Christopher J Garcia

So, when I announced that people should send me things about their projects that they'd like to plug, I got a very curious question - How much for an ad?

Now, to some, this would make sense, to charge people to pimp their book, CD, convention, what have you, and there should be some payment to the periodical that does it, right?

Well, I don't think so!

You see, as a fanzine, we're all about giving folks a place to say what they wanna say. Isn't a plug just someone wanting to gush about their next project? Isn't it just a way to get folks interested in their projects the way I try and get folks interested in The Drink Tank by putting it out there?

Well, maybe not the same, but in the same ballpark, perhaps.

And so, my first plug is for a little project that I'm involved in called the Boston Christmas WorldCon Bid.

You see, I had a bet with Tim Miller about what who would win the World Series: the kind and virtuous San Francisco Giants versus the less kind and virtuous Texas Rangers. We were discussing the terms of the bet and I said "How about the Loser has to chair a carpet-bagger WorldCon in Boston WITHOUT NESFA?

Alas, that was turned down, but it gave TIm and

Helen Montgomery an idea.

And thus, the Boston Christmas WorldCon bid was born for 2020!

I encourage you to go and take a look at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Boston-in-2020-Christmas-Worldcon-Bid/249956438360594> and show support!

OK< one more, this time about a little thing called Journey Planet! You might have heard of it, the Nova Award-winning zine that James and I have done with a bunch of folks including Claire Brialey, Pete Young, Yvonne Rowse, and Emily McLeay. We've got ourselves some great issues (you can find them on eFanzines.com, but you knew that, no?) and most importantly, we've got three issues coming soon that we'd love to have y'all contribute to. There's the Sherlock Holmes issue, with a deadline of December 5th. We love Holmes and have got some varied stuff for ya! The next is Bladerunner, the greatest science fiction film of the 1980s (well, that and Bill & Ted's!). I'll be writing about Bladerunner's imagery and a piece about watchign Bladerunner with some friends.

And then there's the Giant Comics issue. James and I have done some comics issues before, but this one will be deep and broad and awesome!

And we're looking forward to having you send stuff to [journeyplanet@gmail.com](mailto:journeyplanet@gmail.com)!

## 115 - Unwoman 116 - Brad Lyau

On my new fan-funded album, *Uncovered*, I've produced cello-filled genre-opposite covers of classics made famous by such artists as Michael Jackson, Nine Inch Nails, Madonna, Front 242, Joy Division, Samantha Fox, Nick Cave, and Tori Amos. All songs were written between 1980 and 1995, and the album download (on bandcamp) includes personal stories about my connection to each song. My adaptations range from sultry to bouncy to ridiculously dark. Album link: <http://unwoman.bandcamp.com/album/uncovered-volume-1>

**Editor's Note - This is one of the best albums of the year so far (wait, double-checking to see if Arcade Fire has put anything out... Nope). and is worth the price of admission for the cover of Do You Love Me alone! Start with one simple fact: this is an album that was funded through Kickstarter, that gives some fine treatment to some awesome songs and never actually manages to feel gimmicky. That's a rare gift and one that Unwoman certainly seems to have. Covers albums are often hit or miss. This one is a hit.**

ANNOUNCING MY FIRST BOOK! ON SALE NOW!

Discover the world of French popular science fiction of the 1950s.

Title: *The Anticipation Novelists of 1950s French Science Fiction: Stepchildren of Voltaire*

Imprint: Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy, No. 24

Publisher: McFarland & Company

ISBN-13: 978-0-7864-5857-8, ISBN-10: 0786458577

Official Release Date: February 2011

You can order from [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), or other bookselling sites.

You can contact me on Facebook if you have any questions or comments.

Thanks for your consideration!

Bradford Lyau



# No. 118 - Westercon 65 "ConClusion"

## by Alex Van Thorn

*The End of Time. The Age of Aquarius. The Fifth World. The Turning of the Cycle. ConClusion.*

The 65th West Coast Science Fantasy Conference, also known as Westercon 65 or "ConClusion", is to be held in Seattle on July 5-8, 2012 in Seattle at the Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport. The guests of honor are author Robin Hobb, artists Frank and Brianna Wu, science guest Art Bozlee, and fan Chaz Boston Baden, and filkers Vixy & Tony.

In Mayan astrology, the crossing of the Milky Way (galactic equator) with the Zodiac (plane of the ecliptic) is considered to be the gateway to the Underworld. When the Sun, lord of the heavens, enters this region at the time of the winter solstice, they believed this would be a moment of transformation of the world, where evil is overthrown and the world is uplifted to a higher plane of reality, so they computed this date as the end of the thirteenth b'ak'tun, December 21, 2012. This is the beginning of the Fifth World (or Sixth according to the Aztecs). The book of Shadowrun describes this as a time of catastrophe and change, the ending of a time of science and reason and the beginning of a time of magic and spirituality, where creatures of legend and ancient powers re-emerge from the past. The theme of ConClusion is the moment of change, where all timelines come together and merge, bringing an end to the world as we know it and, hopefully, the beginning of a new and completely different time. Okay, so this is basically an excuse to allow us to have science fiction, fantasy, steampunk, cyberpunk, and whatever else people want to express to be together in the same time and place. The primary locus of Shadowrun is Seattle, also the location of the television series *Dark Angel*, which pastes a scientific rationale of genetic mutation and transformation onto this idea, so we are working with an established Seattle-based theme of culture and mythology.

So with our theme covering cosmology and costuming, eschatology and gaming, and media, we've got a great start for a convention! Plus we have wonderful guests. Robin Hobb is the author of the best-

selling *Farseer* series and related books, as well as the strangely brilliant cross-genre *Soldier Son* series, as well as science fiction and contemporary fantasy under her other pen name, Megan Lindholm, and she has recently collaborated with, um, herself to produce the short-story anthology *The Inheritance*. Our artist guest, Frank Wu, is known for putting images together that really do not belong in the same picture, while his wife Brianna Spacekat Wu does action-oriented manga-style art featuring skimpily-garbed skinny girls, and how can one go wrong with that? Our science guest is long-time fan, space enthusiast, and space pioneer-in-training Art Bozlee, who is involved in the private space venture XCOR that will be launching manned vehicles from sunny Curacao in the near future. Chaz Boston Baden, the bear-eared fan photographer, webmaster, and founder of *Anime Los Angeles*, is our fan guest. And we are grateful to our friends at ConFlikt for bringing a pair of Seattle's favorite filk performers, Vixy & Tony, winners of multiple Pegasus Awards.

We are in the Doubletree, site of many Norwescons, but our facilities plan is kind of upside-down and backwards from Norwescon: fan tables and exhibits in the ballrooms, and parties in the tower. It's across the street from the airport and down the street from the light rail station, so easy to get to whether you are coming from downtown Seattle or from Los Angeles. Our parent organization and core group is SWOC, the Seattle Westercon Organizing Committee, who also hosted Cascadia Con, the very successful NASFiC in 2005 as well as three past Westercons, the Seattle filk convention ConFlikt, and the regional conrunning conference conComCon. And our fanzine lounge will be the lair of the infamous master of fannish chaos and mayhem, Chris Garcia. So you can be sure that fun will be had, but remember that the funnest fun depends on YOU! So as the clocks tick down their remaining seconds, as the Changed Ones come together and raise their fists for freedom at the place, as the stars align on the Road to Xibalba (a Mayan word meaning "Tacoma"), be sure to get your fannish derrieres this July to Westercon 65!

## No. 119 - DeepSouthCon 50 by Julie Wall

We chose to bid for a DSC to be held in Huntsville because the first DSC was held there in 1962, and we think it's only fitting that it come full circle for number 50.

Now, thanks to you, we've won the bid and we plan a traditional DSC (with perhaps a new twist or two) that has an emphasis on Southern hospitality and the science in science fiction. Huntsville's centrally located and a fun place to visit – it's the Rocket City! Huntsville already has a fine annual convention in Con\*Stellation, hosted by NASFA. This, however, will be a one-time, independent con, with a committee drawing from all over the South. You've Flown Us to the Moon!—Julie Wall, Chair of DSC 50 Huntsville: Lunar Party

## No. 120 - SRN: The Signal Podcast!

SRN: The Signal is an Internet radio show of mythic proportions coming to you from Lisa Stock and Deborah J. Brannon. Broadcasting from Siren Rock (their moveable studio on the doorstep of the Atlantic) and various live locations, these two reporting sirens will be delivering news and commentary on the SFF and mythic genres. Television, film, comics, video games, literature - all will crash upon the rocks of The Signal's broadcast to be served up for your entertainment. Tune in for enlightening banter with regular contributor Keith Brooks, guest spots from notable creators, and a variety of music.

Are you ready to be ensnared? You can find out how to listen to SRN: The Signal at <http://srnthesignal.tumblr.com>.



No. 121 - Art by the Awesome Selina Phanara

Selina  
2011

# No. 122 - Phoenix in 2014 NASFiC Bid by Mike Willmoth

While attending the Fannish Inquisition during Worldcon 2011 in Reno, NV (Renovation), Mike Willmoth announced that Phoenix (AZ) was launching a bid to host NASFiC (North American Science Fiction Convention) for 2014. NASFiC is held only when Worldcon is overseas (off of North America). There have been only 10 NASFiCs since the provision for NASFiC was added to the WSFS (World Science Fiction Society) Constitution. Phoenix hosted the 1987 NASFiC (CactusCon) which was Mike's first convention attended; he was Senior Staff for the Computer Game Room. So he hopes to come full circle by bringing it back to Phoenix. By bidding now Mike plans for the bid to attend as many North American sf/f conventions as possible before the event is held should they win the bid.

London UK is bidding for Worldcon 2014. They are the only current bidder. The vote for Worldcon

2014 will be at Worldcon 2012 (Chicon 7) in Chicago, IL. If London wins, then the NASFiC provision kicks in. Bidders for NASFiC will have one year to bid, then the vote for their event will be held at Worldcon 2013 (LoneStarCon 3) in San Antonio, TX. Should Phoenix win, then they'll have one year to plan their event.

The Phoenix In 2014 NASFiC Bid is being sponsored by Leprecon Inc, an Arizona volunteer non-profit corporation. Besides their annual event, LepreCon, they also have run special events such as World Horror Con 2004, World Fantasy Con 2004, Nebula Awards 2006 for SFWA, Westercon 62 (FiestaCon) in 2009 and the first North American Discworld Convention in 2009. Mike Willmoth, Bid Chair, also chaired WHC2004, WFC2004 and W62. He's also been Hotel Liaison, Program Director, Guest Liaison, Treasurer, etc. for many Phoenix events. Most recently he was the Program



No. 123 - Art by Delphyne Woods

& Events Division Head for Raleigh (NC) NASFiC, ReConstruction, in 2010 when Worldcon was in Melbourne, Australia (AussieCon 4).

Others involved with the bid are Lee Whiteside (Chair, NADWcon and Nebulas 2006), Warren Buff (Chair, NASFiC 2010), Dina Krause (Facilities, NASFiC 2010), Chris Hensley (Operations, NASFiC 2010), Ron Oakes (Fan, Chicago and San Diego), Bobbie DuFault (Chair, Westercon 65), and many others including the Board of Directors of Leprecon Inc.

Phoenix is offering five pre-support levels: \$20 (Pre-Support); \$40 (Pre-Oppose); \$60 (Friend); \$80 (Cousin); \$100 (Sibling). All levels carry credit through to the convention should they win the bid. \$40 and \$60 levels include a 50% discount in the bid t-shirt which will be a full color version of their bid graphic, Magnus & Loki in western wear, courtesy of Sarah Clemens, a popular artist now living in Mesa, AZ. \$80 and \$100 levels include the t-shirt. \$60, \$80 and \$100 include the proposed voting fee of \$40 which won't be determined officially until 2013. \$80 includes a 50% discount on the Guest-of-Honor dinner; \$100 includes the dinner. So for \$60 or higher you get an Attending membership should Phoenix win (and should the voting fee be \$40 as proposed). Fans wishing to make payments may do so in \$5 increments until the vote occurs in 2013.

They are actually bidding a suburb right next to the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The site (currently under contract negotiations with an opt-out clause) is Tempe Mission Palms Hotel. This was the site for WFC2004, Nebulas 2006, Westercon 62 and NADWcon. They have 303 rooms (peak block 280) and 25,000+ square feet of function space. It is a free shuttle ride from the airport. For those driving it includes free parking (valet or self). Since London is bidding mid-August (third weekend) Phoenix is bidding early August (second weekend) for those who wish to attend both conventions. Rate are expected to be less than \$100 including the hospitality fee. This fee includes valet parking, fitness center, wireless high speed internet, etc. Being located in downtown Tempe, home of Arizona State University, there are an estimated 75 restaurants within walking distance of the hotel. There is also a light rail station located just outside the hotel property for those wishing to travel to downtown

Phoenix for a baseball game (Arizona Diamondbacks) or visit the world famous Heard Museum of Southwestern Art. Unlike Raleigh 2010 NASFiC

which was very spread out (convention center and two hotels), Phoenix 2014 NASFiC would be very compact. Raleigh had about 700 warm bodies; Phoenix 2014 could handle 1000+ (see NADWcon 2009).

For more information about the bid, the hotel or the conventions mentioned, please visit: [www.phoenixin2014.org](http://www.phoenixin2014.org), [www.leprecon.org](http://www.leprecon.org), [www.missionpalms.com](http://www.missionpalms.com), [www.worldcon.org](http://www.worldcon.org), [www.nasfic.org](http://www.nasfic.org), [www.wsfs.org](http://www.wsfs.org)



## No. 125 - Rudy Rucker and the Fourth Dimension (a selective biography) by Micah Joel

As far as mathematical fiction goes, it's hard to beat Flatland. In that satirical story the narrator, A Square, describes the implications of life in the two-dimensional world of Flatland. He imagines a lesser world of Lineland, whose inhabitants have trouble grasping the concept of a higher dimension, and then himself ends up meeting a higher dimensional creature and exploring the strange world of the third dimension. Sci-fi stories still use this framework to extrapolate about the fourth physical dimension of space. Flatland has been as an inspiration for San Francisco writer Rudy Rucker, who has written both fiction and non-fiction books building on the Flatland mythos.

Rucker has been a professor of both mathematics and computer science, and it shows. *Geometry, Relativity, and the Fourth Dimension*, written in 1977, is a highly approachable non-fictional introduction to Relativity and concepts closely (ahem) related. Much like Flatland, it progresses from simple everyday concepts to the abstract.

The fictional follow-up to this book came in 2002, with the novel *Spaceland*, where a befuddled engineer encounters a visitor from the fourth dimension. For a while, at least, this visitor provides great

feats of assistance, including technology to project cell phone signals a short distance into the fourth dimension, where they can easily bypass all the obstructions such as buildings in our everyday world. Unfortunately for humanity, the visitor turns out to have not been completely above board with her motives, leading to a dramatic confrontation.

Speaking of mathematical fiction, Rucker also edited the 1987 anthology *Mathenauts* which includes stories by Isaac Asimov, Larry Niven, Martin Gardner, and of course his own story *Message Found in a Copy of Flatland*.

Rucker's often autobiographically-tinged writing often explores the topic of mind and altered consciousness, and he likes to spin a reader's mind off in a new direction. You're never quite the same person after reading Rucker as you were before.

Many new fans became acquainted with Rucker's work in June 2010 when he released the *Ware Tetralogy*, four complete novels, for free on his web site under a Creative Commons license. The stories follow technology and culture through exponential progression, each story topping the last in terms of the evolution and interaction of machines, man, and mind. And yes, the series winds up with a peek at a godlike being from the fourth dimension.

Presently, Rucker edits the online magazine *FLURB*, which includes his own stories and others that appeal to a similar audience.

Check out some of Rucker's work--you won't be the same afterwards.

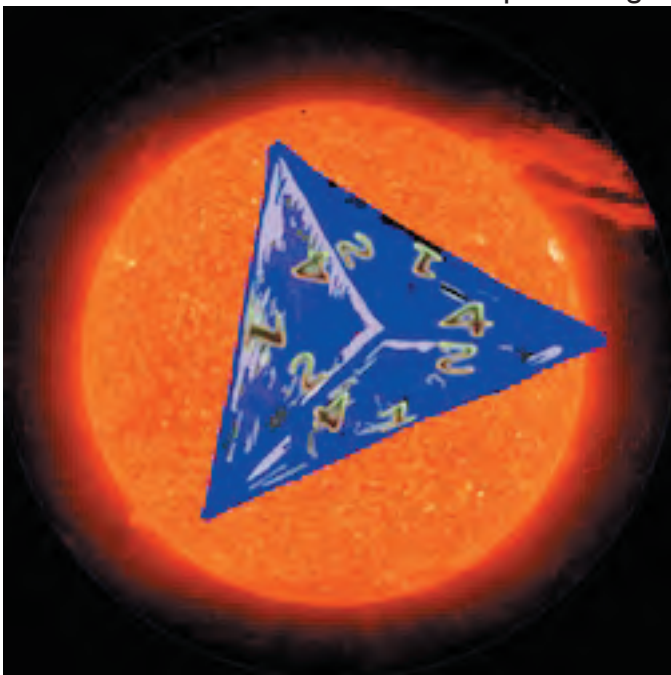
### Links:

Original 1884 Flatland:

<<http://www.archive.org/details/flatlandromanceo00abouoft>>

The Ware Tetralogy download: <<http://www.rudyrucker.com/wares/>>

FLURB: <<http://www.flurb.net/>>





# DRINK TANK

# No. 127 - My Golden Age by Jerry Kaufman

Renovation invited me to be on several panels. Two were the usual fanzine oriented discussions, but I was more excited about the third, "The 1960s, Fifty Years On." My main qualifications were that I can read, and that I was twelve years old ("the Golden Age of Science Fiction") when the 1960s started. My excitement was in part because I would get to share the microphone with Bob Silverberg, as well as Jim Frenkel, Parris McBride and moderator Alvaro Zinos-Amaro.

I knew I would need to do some reading, and perhaps some thinking, before the panel took place on Thursday of the convention. Three or four weeks before Suzle and I left Seattle, I began pulling books from our shelves to re-read. I started with *Dangerous Visions*, edited by Harlan Ellison. Published in 1967, it had a reasonable cross section of writers, all trying to be daring and different.

I followed this with novels and short story collections from some of my favorite writers. I managed to read *Babel-17* by Samuel R. Delany, *The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of His Mouth* by Roger Zelazny, *The Final Programme* by Michael Moorcock, *Downward to the Earth* by Robert Silverberg, and *Little Fuzzy* by H. Beam Piper before we left. *Little Fuzzy* was the oldest, dating from 1962; published in 1969, *Downward to the Earth* was the newest.

Alvaro, a dark intense young man, got the panel started. Our main focus was the New Wave and the changes its mentor and mastermind, Michael Moorcock, wanted to bring to science fiction. Bob Silverberg spoke the most – not only was he writing at the time, and responding in his own way to the zeitgeist, but he also had the best memory of the details of the publishing business of the time and how it gave, briefly, a place for the New Wave writers to see their creations in print.

Bob spoke in elegant paragraphs, Jim Frenkel talked in excited bursts, and Parris McBride barely said anything. I spoke when there was a suitable gap in the conversation or when Alvaro asked me to respond to his questions. Audiences also spoke, and this was one of the largest I've seen at a panel I was part of. They had some good things to say, too.

In the end, we came away with the usual notions



about the New Wave. It was a movement in Britain, a scattering of writers in the US taking advantage of a sense of freedom but without a manifesto – *Dangerous Visions* didn't fill that role. New Wave lasted for only a handful of years but its influence went beyond those years.

My own reading didn't play a very large part in the conversation, but if there had been an extra half hour, perhaps I would have talked about *Little Fuzzy* and *Downward to the Earth*. I thought they were good examples of Before and After New Wave. Although I enjoyed them both, I found the Silverberg more colorful, richer in character, with deeper characterization, a wider range of emotions, and more mystery. I'd explain this as the result of Silverberg's boredom with the old style of sf he once wrote, and the examples of mainstream fiction and the New Wave writers to inspire him.

Not every writer was so inclined, of course, and much sf continued in the same path it was been following. But I found that my favorite writers were New Wave writers or sympathizers, and that they contributed greatly to what was, in retrospect my personal Golden Age.

## No. 129 - Why the Hugo Award Logo Matters by Kevin Standlee

I was happy to see Chris win a Hugo Award for The Drink Tank, and surprised when he actually made it to Match Game SF carrying his trophy. I was also pleased when Chris apparently chose to take my advice and use the actual official Hugo Award® logo that WSFS adopted a few years ago. This was particularly important to me because of my involvement in the process that adopted that logo.

I'm one of a handful of people who saw all of the hundreds of logos that were submitted to the contest. Some of the other designs were nice. Some of them were terrible. Some of them were fairly austere and simple (like the one the judges eventually selected), and others were insanely busy. The Hugo Awards Marketing Committee (which I chaired at that time) ran the contest for designing a logo, and as part of the terms, we released the design rights for all of the other logos back to the artists. Of course, they can't call something a "Hugo Award" that wasn't, but they're welcome to re-use any other part of the design that doesn't include the words "Hugo Award," which is a registered service mark.

Some artists posted their designs. There's nothing prohibited about that, but it has led to some people, including Chris, using those other designs "because I like them better." This is Not a Good Thing. One of the main reasons we adopted an official logo was to help promote the Hugo Award, and you do that by having a consistent image. Using other logos dilutes that message. It's not illegal or prohibited (as long as you're not applying it to things that didn't win a Hugo since that violates the service mark), but it's annoying, and ultimately helps undermine the Hugo Awards themselves.

We rolled out the logo at the 2009 Worldcon, and the response was fairly positive. I know I'm sure glad that we delegated the actual decision to a panel of experts rather than trying to have it decided by, say, the WSFS Business Meeting. Ghod only knows what would have happened had the Business Meeting tried to evaluate several

hundred logo designs. Now the WSFS Mark Protection Committee could have overridden the Hugo Awards Marketing Committee's recommendation (passed on from the judges), but they didn't, and I'm glad of it.

The initial logo has proven to be not totally up to what it appears most of the users wanted, as we've learned in the initial two years of usage and feedback. The people we want to use the logo wanted the design to also include when and to what category the win applied. So René Walling, current chair of the Hugo Awards Marketing Committee, after consulting with editors, publishers, and other interested parties, created versions of the logo that include that material. Now the official logo itself is only the rocket and the words "Hugo Award," but below it in the same typeface is the year and category. In practice, people were doing this anyway, but sloppily, and in ways that distorted the logo, so René made it easier for everyone. Winners can get the winner logo by contacting the Hugo Awards Marketing Committee through the Hugo Awards web site ([www.TheHugoAwards.org](http://www.TheHugoAwards.org)).

Effective as of this year, the Hugo Award logo is now part of the list of service marks that Worldcons must acknowledge in their official publications. Also, the Mark Protection Committee has started the process of registering a service mark on the logo. It's already turned up on some books. Now that it's even easier to use, I hope we'll start seeing that logo and no other version in even more places where winners are found. Accept no substitutes!



**Editor's Note - While the Official Logo looks great as a thing on a book spine, it stinks as a zine graphic. Also, everyone I've asked was psyched that their work was finally getting seen. That's the key thing to me. There probably should have been some Finalist thing on the web showing ones that didn't win to avoid that sort of thing, but what you gonna do?**

**I do still like a lot of the other ones better, though.**

## No. 131 - The Drinking Costumer by Debbie Bretschneider

I consider myself a costumer. I know the new term is Cosplayer, but I prefer the old fashioned term of Costumer. I make clothes to wear at Science Fiction conventions and to wear at Historical events put on by the Greater Bay Area Costumer's Guild (GBACG). I am particularly having fun with the newest rage in costuming –Steampunk.

But, I can hear you say, “What does that have to with drinking?”

Oh, rather a lot. You see, it is a very patient person who can sew without having to drink. And I am not a patient person. After sewing for the better part of a Sunday, and then realizing you have sewn a yoke to a skirt –but upside down—and you have to painstakingly take out all the tiny stitches you put in ---well, I tell you, what can you do, but have a drink! How much you drink is dependent on whether you plan on trying to keep sewing, but a nice glass of wine while taking out all those stitches makes it a much easier pill to swallow.

Fellow costumer's Trystan Laura Bass, Kendra Van Cleeve, and Sarah Lorraine Goodman created a group called The Pink Drink Commandos, inspired by Kevin and Andy's Tactical Alcohol Consumption Squad. The mission of the Pink Drink Commandos is to drink Cosmopolitans while wearing a comfortable costume! (although I have expanded that to include pink cham-

pagne!) Any gal who enjoys a pink drink can join –just use the Decades of Style 1944 house dress as your pattern and use pink camo fabric. It is an extremely comfortable way to be in costume and to drink. Linda and I made dresses out of the same pink camo fabric and wore them to the RenoWorldcon –2 nights before Chris and James won their Hugo's! We had pink champagne and then found the Christmas in 2020 party, where they had a pink drink! Score!

And that reminds me of another place a costumer can drink. At the Science Fiction conventions I go to; Baycon, Westercon, Worldcons close to San Francisco, Silicon, Convolution 2012; there is what is called a “Party Floor”. People can request a room and a night and have a party that promotes something – another convention, a new book, BASFA, Klingons –you get the idea. It is extremely fun to get dressed in your new (or old) costume and walk through the different parties, having a drink and talking to your friends—both old and new.

Disclaimer – I do not recommend getting drunk and then attempting to use a sewing machine. As with any piece of equipment, this could be dangerous. But I do recommend being in costume and having a drink with friends!



No. 132 - Photo by Ric Bretschneider



## No. 133 - Setting Yourself or Somebody Else on Fire by Tonya Adolfson

There are three rules to setting yourself or somebody else on fire, as established by a small but succinct research team known as the Order of the Flaming Blue Man.

### Rule One: Dip, Don't Pour.

If one is going to set a part of one's body on fire, say, for example, a delicate and favorite part of their male anatomy, it is a significant find that one place said body part IN a vessel of the alcohol, not pour it across one's member from a flask. This is especially important if one plans to light said member from below.

### Rule Two: Whiskey is NOT Brandy.

Despite the high alcohol content of Whiskey, it does not, upon experimentation, burn the same way as Brandy. Brandy seems to be designed to actually be set on fire, while Whiskey's main purpose seems to be convincing one to set one's self on fire. This is a very important distinction.

### Rule Three: Blue flame good. Yellow flame bad.

Once one discovers the validity of the first two rules, it is usually because they have simultaneously learned this third rule. Blue flame means the alcohol is burning off of the aforementioned body part, cast-

ing a pretty glow that is non-destructive. Yellow flame, especially with an evident heat factor and burning hair smell, is a good indicator you may have made an error in your life choices up to that moment. Luckily, in the case of the final researcher, their children will not be a potential factor in future experiments.

### Conclusion:

Though some of these rules may seem confusing to many female members of the scientific community, and even two or three males, these rules did need to be researched for the purpose of reenacting the original experiments which resulted in a lovely blue flame, uninjured body parts and a thoroughly entertained balcony of smokers who witnessed the final stage of the experiment: Putting the aflame member out by throwing oneself face down in a snow bank, then rolling over onto one's back in victory. The first researcher reported the balcony's response was to hold their cigarettes in their mouths during the applause while commenting, "Ooh! Dinner AND a show!"

The second researcher, who was not informed about the balcony of smokers by the first researcher, cited different results: "Oh, there's two of them."

The Researchers are not allowed to use that particular church any longer for experiments.

# No. 135 - The Journey of 3,500 Miles Begins with a Single Step

## By Richard Lynch

It all began with an off-hand comment to me by the boss way back in January: “You really need to get out from behind your desk more often.”

With all the cold winter weather, I’d been teleconferencing interagency meetings of interest down in D.C. instead of going to them. It’s much more efficient for time use to do a teleconference instead of doing the 30 mile commute into downtown Washington. But it’s also a lot more difficult, at least for me, to learn anything useful from a very large audio-only meeting than actually being there in person. And by not attending, it decreases the visibility (and thereby the importance) of the organization I work for, which is one of those intangibles that comes into play come annual budget time. It was good advice.

But I have to admit that for a few seconds I interpreted the comment as “Maybe you should think about getting more exercise.” I had been getting way too sedentary, and it was starting to show. Not only that, I still have the notion, someday, of resuming karate (after a mere 30 years), and unless I get a bit more in shape there’s no way I’d be able to.

So I decided to do some walking. It’s one of the lowest impact forms of exercise there is, which makes it ideal to do while I’m at work. My workplace is the old Atomic Energy Commission building, built back in the 1950s at the start of the Cold War. They located it way north of Washington so it could be a safe haven in case of World War III, and the design was intended to provide protection from atomic bomb blast waves from the south. There are several long intersecting corridors and it was fairly easy to measure off a walking loop that passed through both the first floor and basement. Three times around is a mile, and since the route takes me up and down stairs it is even somewhat aerobic in places.

But I didn’t want this to be a short-term fad that I’d give up after a month or so. I knew that sooner or later inertia would set in and it would become all too easy to find some reason to forgo walking for a day, two days, a week... For me at least, I know that to stick with any open-ended repetitive activity, it helps

to make a game of it. So I decided to keep track of the total miles I’ve walked and I even set what I hope are achievable mileage goals. Only the miles walked in my building will count toward these mileage goals, and once the walk has started there’s no going back into my office until after a full mile is complete.

It took a bit of thought to come up with some interesting mileage goals, and in the end I relied on the help of Google Maps. One of the options is “Get Directions” and it will plot out in great detail a walking route between any two points. The virtual destination I chose was the Embassy Suites Hotel and Spa in Huntsville, Alabama – the site of the 50th anniversary Deep-SouthCon next June. The walking distance is very close to 700 miles from where I live in Maryland so the first goal is to complete 700 miles before the start of the convention.



No. 136 - Route Map by Richard Lynch

It's probably not going to be that much of a goal. I've found that I'm good for three and often four miles a day – one before the work day begins, one after it ends, one at the beginning of lunch break, and on days when there's a manageable amount of work to do, one at the end of lunch break. As of mid September, I've been at it for just about eight months and I've just passed 500 miles walked, which "places" me on route US-11 just west of Knoxville, Tennessee. At this rate I should "arrive" in Huntsville about a year after this long walk

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## **No. 137 - Traveling by Paul Clayton © 2011**

**Motor hums; raindrops drum,**

**wipers mesmerize me  
till I'm numb**

**Tunnel of light,  
burrow into night.**

**Amber blinker beckons  
Down the mirrored road**

**I'm drawn...  
like water through a pipe**

---

started and well in advance of the convention.

But that's not going to be the end of this virtual cross-country excursion. The next mileage goal is the distance from Huntsville to New Orleans, and after that to San Antonio ("arriving" before the 2013 Worldcon). And from there it would be on westward to Los Angeles and then up the coast ending in San Francisco

at the Sentinel Building.

This is no doubt the most over-the-top thing I've tried in a very long time, but it may actually be doable. The total distance to be covered is right at about 3,500 miles. At my current rate, if I can maintain it (and no guarantee on that), I would "arrive" in San Francisco sometime in 2015. If I can persist that long I'm going to fly out to San Francisco to share a bottle of wine with my virtual self at Café Zoetrope.

Meanwhile, it's one mile at a time, around and around. It's actually not as boring as it sounds and there was even some history to discover, like the commemorative plaque outside room F-202 that describes the genesis of a visionary science program.

And there's more. Several weeks in I decided the walk wasn't challenging enough, so now each mile includes a lot more stairs, including two tough 79-step "stairway to heaven" climbs from the basement level to the fourth floor. The end result is an elevation change of more than 100 feet (both up and down) per mile. g total for the entire walk so far is more than 40,000 feet, and if I "reach" San Francisco, I will have both climbed and descended a virtual altitude of about 65 miles, which is higher than what is defined as the "edge of space".

Years ago, someone at a meeting half-jokingly accused me of wanting to be a space cadet. Maybe he was right!





## No. 139 - The City of LA: A Love Story by Christopher J Garcia

I have loved LA and been loved in LA and there is no better city in the world to be loved in than Los Angeles. None. Not New York, London, Paris, Munich, nowhere. There is no better city for lovers than Los Angeles. And why, you may ask, is the smoggy, angry, smoldering, shallow, pretentious cackling center of the world a better place for lovers than, say, Paris?

Because only LA understands moments.

Every other romantic city in the world trades on history, on continuance. Think about Paris. Why is it romantic? There are reasons like the Seine, the way the Eifel Towers looms erect over the city, the Louvre. It's all there, and has been there seemingly forever. But LA is all about the moment. You might be a hit one minute, but a second later you're a nobody, a may-as-well-have-never-been. There is no continuity, nothing placing a single thing in time beyond the moment, and it's not just in the Hollywood way, but in the way of all living in the California Sun.

And that is what makes for a great romantic moment: when nothing else, not future, not history, means anything. Just what's going on between two (or, since it's LA, more...) people.

I will point to one of my own. The names are new...

Her name was Casia and she was known as a top-popper. She had a lot of top to pop, to put it gently, and producers would hire her to show the goods as an accent to any R-rated roarer. When I met her, she was only known for budgets from the North End of town, while nowadays she's popping in John Cusack vehicles. I met her one night at the Roosevelt in the lobby. She wore an army jacket and shorts that did not poke out from beneath it. A dozen heads moved towards, three or four men stood and started to approach. She walked over to my couch, the closest to the door (which the waiters would complain about as I was their greatest customer) and sat down next to me.

"You wanna get out of here?" She said.

"Well..."

"Come on."

She took my hand. The gentlemen returned to their seats as she pulled me out the door towards Hollywood Blvd.

"I just wanted out of there." Casia said, still pulling me by the hand.

**No. 140 - Photo by Evan Jacobs**

“I’m Chris.”

“Good.”

We ended up at the Pig & Whistle. I had a Coke. She had a sandwich.

“I’ve done some modeling and I was in a few New York films, but the people there were so mean I had to leave, and I went home to Vancouver and then off to Toronto, and you can work there, but really, for what I do, it’s gotta be LA. and work on everything! There’s no other city for actors. Are you gonna finish those fries?”

She took a fry and a breath.

“You wanna come back to my place and watch an old LA Law episode?”

How could I refuse.

And, oddly enough, we watched the whole thing.

We went out a few times, but I was running out of money and she was working working working, and I knew it wasn’t going to work out, and she knew and told me but followed it with a ‘Let it end when it has to, but let’s have fun!’ Which seemed to be her answer to everything.

On our last date, a Friday, we went to her house, a friend’s place really, with a deck over-looking the golf course across the street, the LA River and Jerry’s Famous Deli beyond it. She was sleeping on the couch on the deck, enjoying the fine LA evenings.

“You wanna get a pizza?” she asked. “I’ve got enough for a pizza.”

“Sure, you know I can –“

“You’re more broke than I am, baby.”

For all the dumb and slutty blondes she’s played, she was as sweet and smart as they come.

She ordered us Pizza Hut and pulled in a couple of boxes from inside to serve as a table and an Ottoman. There was a late-night rush at the driving range, the middle-aged men smacking balls into the net across the way, the ripples flying with a brilliant ‘tuup’ sound every few second. The outer light went out at 9, leaving us in mostly darkness, the pizza almost entirely finished. The lights of Studio City were on, we could see the cars coming and going from Jerry’s, from Moorpark, from our street. We could hear the sounds of a city that doesn’t care about what most cities obsess over. We were alone in the moment and she scooted over, put her head on my shoulder and I wrapped an arm around her.

“You’re leaving, right?” She asked. “You’re going back home?”

“I can’t stay any longer.”

She snuggled into me.

“It’s OK. I’ll do all my crying later.” She responded.

I kissed the almost still golden top of her head and she wiggled into my chest a little. It was a moment that could only happen in Los Angeles. We knew what was going on, we were aware, but it didn’t touch us. We were heading down a highway like a couple in some French filmmakers terrible sophomore effort, but we were happy because at that moment, we were seeing the ripples, our bellies full of terrible pizza, our heads full of dreams and our hearts completely detached. I will never forget it, but it’s still why I love LA.





## No. 142 - Los Angeles: The Land of Make Believe By Jean Martin

It was quite apropos that Chris Garcia asked for articles for the Drink Tank regarding the city of Los Angeles (L.A.) around the time that I saw the musical City of Angels at the Hillbarn Theatre in Foster City. The musical is a comedy based on the film noir genre. I'm not much of a fan of that genre but I've grown to appreciate it a bit more as my fiancé is a big fan. So while I wouldn't have gone out of my way to go see the musical for my own sake, I did enjoy it. The numerous costume and scene changes were amazing and the singing was incredible.

Going to see the show made me realize that L.A. means different things to different people. I suppose there's a whole L.A. film noir and hard-boiled detective fiction genre that includes L.A. Confidential, The Big Sleep and Dragnet. But I've always associated L.A. with fantasy, scifi and heavy metal.

When I was growing up in the Philippines, one of my fondest wishes was to visit L.A. L.A. to me, and most Filipinos, represents the U.S. Where else can you find Disneyland and Hollywood? Fed with a constant diet of American TV and movies, our vision of the U.S. was colored by shows such as Charlie's Angels and Three's Company. And my favorite movie at the time, Star Wars, came out of L.A. So, of course, when I first

toured the U.S. in 1978, L.A. was the one of the main highlights of the trip.

It was quite a thrill to finally see Disneyland and it was as magical as I envisioned. My favorites were, unsurprisingly, Fantasyland and Tomorrowland. I loved Sleeping Beauty's castle (Sleeping Beauty is my all-time favorite Disney animated movie) and the PeopleMover. Disneyland in the 70s still had that quaint, nostalgic feel that I don't quite get as much when I go there nowadays. Back then, you could still feel the presence and influence of Walt Disney in the rides and other attractions. You are also enveloped with this palpable enthusiasm for the past and optimism about the future of mankind from the themes and exhibits. It didn't seem as commercialized either. However, I do still enjoy going to Disneyland (and Disneyworld) and do so every now and again. It is indeed the happiest place on Earth where you can be an innocent child and dream dreams untainted by the outside world.

Hollywood, which seemed to be more glamorous and mysterious in the 20th century, was also a dream come true to see and experience. I was surprised to find out that it isn't an actual community or a specific physical location. Although there is an official Hollywood district, it seems more like a state of mind and includes adjacent neighborhoods and pretty much

**No. 143 - Art by Alexander Iglesias**

the entire L.A. area. There was the Hollywood sign, of course, which I was so excited to see as well as other landmarks such as Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the Hollywood Walk of Fame. There were also famous street names such as Sunset Boulevard and Beverly Boulevard. I didn't get to see any of the TV stations but I did get to visit Universal Studios. Their tour was a lot of fun but the most memorable part of my first time at Universal Studios was meeting a Cylon. Well, someone officially costumed as an original Battlestar Galactica Cylon. I loved the original series and still do. I went to Universal Studios again 25 years later and it is now more of a theme park about movies than about moviemaking. Same goes for Universal Orlando, which I visited last year. While both are still fun, they just don't give you a sense of being behind the scenes anymore.

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## **No. 144 - Jay Crasdan**

**What has always worried me about your infatuation with Los Angeles Chris is the fact that your journeys there have always led to nothing but poor choices, negative returns and utter failures. It can't be healthy to love something that you're that bad at...**

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When I moved to the U.S. in 1987, L.A. had a completely different meaning for me. To me, at that time, it was the Mecca of the recording industry where a lot of my favorite heavy metal bands came from or at least had their record labels based in L.A. Heavy metal during the late 80s and early 90s was mostly hair metal. But one has to remember these bands were considered heavy and rebellious at the time. Nowadays music from that time period is not taken seriously but it was the sound of (most of) my generation. It was quite popular and had a strong sense of community that spanned not only the U.S. but the whole world as well. There were some amazing bands with very talented musicians and singers as well as catchy, memorable and even meaningful songs. And gosh dang it, the music and the music scene was just a lot of fun! And I enjoyed the theatrical and operatic aspect of the music and the aesthetic. It was great that guys took as much time and effort with making themselves look good as us girls did.

I quickly became a part of the San Francisco Bay Area music scene. I managed a local band for a little bit and that eventually brought me down to L.A. when they did a showcase at the famous Roxy theatre. It was so incredible to be backstage and feel like I was a part of the industry and even history! We also caught a show at the even more famous Whisky A Go-Go (where the recently departed Jani Lane of Warrant fell off the stage and landed on me) and partied at the Rainbow Bar and Grill (where Lemmy of Motörhead flirted with me) were all the rock starts hung out.

I also published a local heavy metal magazine (in print before the Internet!) called Nocturne in the early 90s. That afforded me the opportunity to attend the Foundations Forum convention three years in a row. This was an industry convention where you could interview musicians, meet rock stars, get demo CDs and giveaways at booths, watch band showcases, attend an awards ceremony, etc. I got to meet a lot of rock stars such as Ozzy Osbourne and members of Kiss, Aerosmith and Scorpions and made friends with the guys from (the then split-up) Dokken. And, of course, there were the record label-sponsored parties (such as the one by Vince Neil of Mötley Crüe at a nearby strip club) and the private after-hours parties (some of which involved hot tubs). And yes, we did party like rock stars. So much so that this convention had to transfer hotels every year because the hotels (which were completely trashed afterwards) didn't want us back the next year. The first year I went was at the L.A. Airport Marriott, the second year was at the Westin across the street and the third one was at the Burbank Hilton. The first year I went was when there was a big buzz about Pearl Jam. They were there but I didn't get to see them and I wasn't much interested in them anyway. Little did I know that the Grunge movement was going to eventually mean the demise of the heavy metal scene that I so loved. I'm so glad I got to experience it, though, even for a short time. I was able to be a part of it and meet a lot of people I admired whom I never thought I'd ever get the chance to see while I was living in the Philippines.

Coincidentally, I had the opportunity to go back to the L.A. Airport Marriott 19 years later for a completely different kind of convention. It was really weird and nostalgic to revisit that same hotel, this time for Gallifrey One, a Doctor Who convention. There were some similarities in what was available and what happened at this fan-run scifi convention versus the industry-run music conventions I went to in the early

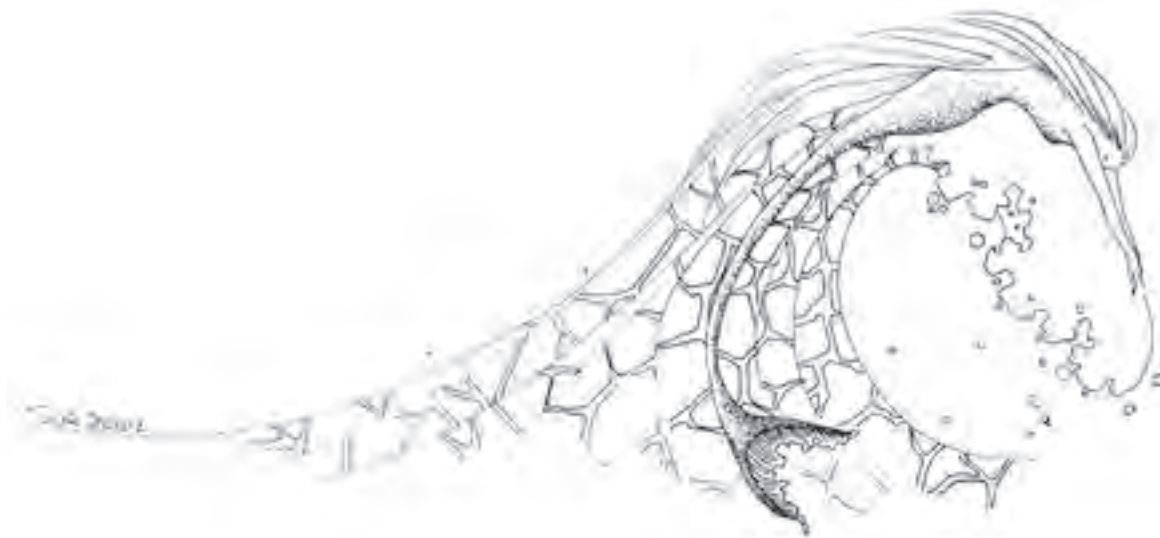
90s. There were booths, panels, autograph sessions and parties. One surprising difference is that there was more heavy-drinking at the Doctor Who convention. In either case, while I find it fun to meet and hobnob with celebrities (I got to meet Colin Baker at this one and Peter Davison when I came back in 2011), I derive more fulfillment about being a part of the creative aspect of things. Then, as now, I was involved in writing and photography. I also “costumed” as a rocker chick (albeit a more professional one) while now I costume as scifi (or fantasy or historical) characters. Only the topic of interest has changed.

Another aspect of L.A. that is somewhat important to me is that I have some relatives who live in either L.A. or Orange County. So, there have been times when I’ve traveled south to see family. These have been few and far between, but when I do see family there, I feel this sense of home and I miss it sometimes. Perhaps it’s because the weather in L.A. is a lot warmer than in the Bay Area, and warmer weather reminds me of the Philippines. And some of the neighborhoods in L.A. look like Manila to me. It also just seems like most people in L.A. are “sunnier.” I haven’t really noticed the mean attitude that some Northern California residents associate with Southern California folk. They seem friendly enough to me. There was one time a few years ago when my sister was staying in Calabasas with a Filipino family. I stayed with her for a weekend for her birthday and it was nice to be in a home and living in

a nice suburb for even that short period of time. I was very sad to leave.

However, as much as I love L.A. for various reasons past and present, I don’t think I could ever live there. With all the scifi, fantasy, TV and movie connections I have with the area, it seems like a fairy tale land of make believe to me. If I lived there, it would somehow break the magic spell. So I like to visit on occasion, like it’s a vast theme park in and of itself. But hey, I may yet write a screenplay or become an actress or singer, and move south and become part of the whole L.A. scene. I did say more than three decades ago that the U.S. was great and all but I’d never live there. As of October this year, I have been living in this country for 24 years (more years that I lived in the Philippines) and have been a citizen for 13 years.

And as Shakespeare wrote: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” L.A. is not a bad place for one to stage one’s life on, that’s for sure. I know one can make a living in the entertainment field in the Bay Area as well but not to the degree that is done in L.A. I’m sure there are a lot of people who want to break into the entertainment business in L.A. but I bet there are way more opportunities as well. In the meantime, however, I am content to treat L.A. as an accessible land of make believe for whenever I need to get away and live in a fantasy land for a while.



# No. 146 - City of Lights by Bob Sabella

My only visit to Los Angeles was to attend a convention; but not a worldcon. When I was a worldcon-goer in the late 1960s-early 1980s, cost restricted me to east coast and midwest worldcons: Nycon 3 in 1967; St. Louiscon in 1969; Noreascon I in 1971; Torcon II in 1973; Discon II in 1974; MidAmericon in 1976; Noreascon II in 1980.

I was teaching in a private school at that time, and earning too little money to afford plane flights either out of North America (thus no Heicon in 1970, Aussiecon in 1975 or Seacon in 1979) or to the west coast (the infamous Baycon in 1968, LA Con in 1972 or Iguanacon in 1978). And yet, I still hoped to visit California eventually. Although I did spend 8 weeks at Fort Ord, near Pasadena, for National Guard training in 1970, that gave me absolutely no chance to see the sights, since we were totally restricted to staying on the base the entire time.

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## No. 149- by Alex Mendoza

**"I'm not sure about this."  
"It's LA, 2am. You're as sure as you need to be."  
SFX - A zipper running slowly down  
The lights of Los Angeles glow from up there  
The sound of cars blaring rockabilly and banda  
only reach so far into the hills  
Not high enough to disturb the scene  
so many new ones star in**

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After I got married, my wife and I switched to public school teaching, which gave us somewhat better salaries, but soon afterwards she took a maternity leave to stay home raising Andy and Mark. We decided it was better for the boys if she returned to teaching part-time while they were in school. Also, Jean had no interest in science fiction, so she was

mostly bored when I took her to Noreascon in 1980 before the boys entered our lives. Those two reasons combined to make worldcons on any coast too much of an extravagance.

But in the 1990s, the National Education Association offered a way for us to take free vacations. Delegates to their annual convention were paid for attending. The stipend was not huge, but after some number-crunching we decided the amount of money they provided for plane flights and hotel reservations was sufficient that if we drove to the convention in our camper and stayed in a campground, the entire family could have a vacation almost cost-free. So one summer we drove to New Orleans (after having an air-conditioner installed in our camper, thank heavens), then the next summer to Orlando, where I hardly saw my family at all. The five days I spent at that NEA convention began at 6:00 am with a shuttle bus ride to the convention center (while the rest of the family were all sleeping), and usually ended about 7:00 pm when I returned to the campground (and they were in still Disney until well after I fell asleep).

A year later the NEA Convention was held in Los Angeles. That was too far for us to take our camper without spending close to a month on the road (and far exceeding my stipend), but if I went alone via plane, and shared a room with another delegate, I could still break even on my expenses. And since my closest friend Fei Fei was at Cal Tech at the time, it was too good an opportunity to pass by.

Those conventions were contentious ones, since it was the midst of the NEA leadership's attempt to merge with the American Federation of Teachers. That would have enabled them to keep their leadership positions for life, while NEA rules restricts its leaders to two terms per office. Ironically, the New Jersey delegation had taken the lead in opposing the proposed merger, so we spent one entire convention politicking, and ultimately winning. But the following

year, the leadership made a last ditch attempt to keep the proposal alive, so our work was not quite finished.

Quite frankly, I enjoyed the politicking and was glad to be part of it. But it made for two very busy conventions, without a lot of time for socializing. One night in Los Angeles, we left the convention session close to midnight, and the shuttle buses returning us to our hotels were very late in coming.

A small group of us from the New Jersey delegation grew impatient, and decided we would walk to our hotel. It was about 10 blocks away, so my roommate Paul, four women from Newark and I started walking through the darkened streets of Los Angeles without a concern for our safety. We were about half-way back when one of the women, familiar with the mean streets of Newark, suddenly commented, "How safe are these streets?"

Obviously we had no idea, and immediately our pace doubled as we kept glancing around anxiously lest we see anybody who might be a threat to us. By the time we reached the hotel, unmolested, suffice it to see our pulse rates were a lot higher than they had been when we left the convention center. And

although we were safe, we realized what a foolish thing that had been to do in a totally strange city in the middle of the night.

My other memory of Los Angeles was the night the NEA threw its annual party for the delegates. That year they reserved Universal Studios for the exclusive use of the convention delegates and their families and friends. Fei Fei met me at the New Jersey delegation hotel and drove us to Universal Studios. There were numerous restaurants outside its gates, so we selected a promising Italian restaurant, whose name escapes me. When we were ready to order, the waiter asked us if we

had ever eaten there before.

I've been asked that question by numerous waiters, and generally it is a totally irrelevant question. But still I glanced at Fei Fei who said, "No."

"Then I should advise you to only order a single entree to share between you," he said.

That seemed strange advice coming from a waiter. I am a good eater, and Fei Fei, although petite, could pack away more food than most people twice her size. But we did as he suggested and ordered a single salad and a bowl of ziti. Imagine our surprise when the food arrived: both of them were immense! Together we ate half the salad and less than half the ziti—and were both stuffed by the end. Since we were going directly to Universal Studios afterwards, we could not even take "doggie bags" with us.

Universal Studios was disappointing; not the attractions themselves, but the fact that the number of NEA delegates, families and friends was so huge that we spent the entire night waiting on lines, and only got to partake of 2 attractions all night. But at least Fei Fei and I got to chat a lot, which we do not get to do too often in person since she is still living in

California, although now in Palo Alto.

That's my total memory of the City of Lights. Ironically, since I was trapped indoors at the convention center each day, most of what I saw of Los Angeles was indeed under lights. Someday I would like to return and actually see it in sunlight.



# No. 149 - Ghostlore from the Happiest Place on Earth

## by Adrienne Foster

The Park after Dark; by Richard Carradine. Illustrated by Lisa Mouse. GHOULA Press, 2009. Trade paperback, \$13.

Pros: Formally documents some of Disneyland's ghost folklore, which has had little published

Cons: No primary resources cited, not much depth with few specific details



For years there have been whispers that some of the ghosts at Disneyland were not created by its imagineers. When the park in Anaheim, California, closes and its guests have left, some employees swear there is real paranormal activity. Author Richard Carradine, who is the child of two former employees of Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom and has worked for the corporation himself, collected the stories he has heard there and compiled them in the book, *The Park after Dark: an Unauthorized Guide to the Happiest (Haunted) Place on Earth*. As entertainment, this is one kewl book; however, it does little to further parapsychological research.

To tell its paranormal anecdotes, this slim 2009 trade paperback divides its main body into 12 sections: Main Street, Adventureland, New Orleans Square, The Haunted Mansion, Critter Country, Frontierland, Fantasyland, Mickey's Toon Town, Tomorrowland, Disney's California, Disneyland Hotel, and Downtown Disney. The featured content of the book is supplemented by an introduction and afterward, a variety of tips for stealthily investigating hauntings, and some notes providing a little background on the Disney organization.

**No. 150 - Art by Dave Singleton**

Text is accompanied by some black & white art by Lisa Mouse (no relation).

Carradine covers some stories that have been circulating for years and gives them a formal outlet for distribution. One of Disneyland's best known ghost stories takes place on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride. One mother had a little boy who had been diagnosed with a terminal disease. He loved Disneyland so much that, when he died, she asked if she could spread his ashes at the park. When her request was denied, she did it regardless, spreading the ashes in the dark of the ride's caverns. When the park was quiet and without paying visitors, security supposedly saw the image of a little boy riding the otherwise empty cabs of the ride on closed-circuit TV. When they've looked for him afterward, he was never seen again.

For years Disneyland took pride that no deaths had taken place within its fences. It has been rumored when a fatality occurred, management would fudge protocol by moving the body and have the person declared dead outside its property. Their idyll was tarnished on Splash Mountain, where photos of exhilarated riders are taken on its final drop. Once this camera happened to catch the face of a woman at the exact moment she had a fatal aneurism. Guests were horrified to see the woman's face when the photos were displayed and now employees monitor the shots taken before exhibiting them. Since then, the camera on this location, which is fixed and kept under the same, constant conditions, has been catching more orbs than any other cameras in the park.

It comes as no surprise that the single attraction with the most real ghost stories is the Haunted Mansion. When this ride was under construction, Walt Disney allegedly invited real ghosts to spend time there as well. Even without his invitation, most ghosts would probably be attracted to the attraction devoted to them. Wouldn't most people eavesdrop if they overhear other people talking about them? As guests exit the ride, there is a figure of a miniature bride who urges them to hurry back. Cast members swear that there are times when she breaks her programming and addresses them by name.

After reading this book, it's hard to see Disneyland the same again. Granted, ghosts are all over the place, but it's rarely the first thing on a visitor's

mind. Most people are looking to have fun and some even appreciate the superior craftsmanship of Disney's product. Face it, most amusement parks don't have the budget or talent Disney acquires. When paranormal buffs read these stories, they have to fight the urge to examine these sites again with a different eye.

Carradine refers to Disneyland as the most haunted amusement park in the world. Perhaps the folks at Coney Island or the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk might dispute that declaration, but consider the logistics. Most parks around the country open seasonally. Disneyland opened in 1955. Unless extenuating circumstances occur, it only closes on Christmas Day. Vacations are usually either times of great joy or occasionally times of trauma. When traveling companions have had some tension brewing between them, the problem can climax during their trip. Sometimes foul play can arise from a source outside the traveling party.

The frustrating part is that all of Carradine's stories are just hearsay. None of them provide the names of the people involved or the dates they occurred. Neither does this book include a primary resource's own words. The telling of legends and folklore has a nasty way of making readers believe this activity recurs, but in actuality, stories like seeing the little boy on CC TV are frequently just one-time occurrences. If something like that happens on a routine basis, it's much more likely to be a residual haunting. In other words, that is not a spirit on the premises, but psychic recording on that spot. For whatever reason, the atmosphere there is acting like a video or tape recorder. Not having the complete facts to study does nothing to further the ultimate goal of parapsychology: figuring out how and why paranormal activity happens. Coming up with answers requires knowing as much of the related back-

ground of a case as possible, which means solid historical facts. It's hard to believe a lot of historical research was done for this book, because the one reference to Marie Laveau spells her name wrong. Regardless that Carradine says the intent of his book is entertainment, it becomes more compelling when true stories use factual details.

The formatting of the book is a bit crude. It supplies an index, but no table of contents. Block paragraphs are standard for web pages, meant to make easier reading on computer screen. However, when publishers use this style for a printed book, it feels like the editor is dumbing down for its audience. All of the "see alsos" in the text are rather irritating when a reader considers how short the book is. Mouse's art may not measure up to the standards of the Disney Corporation, but its point comes across when it isn't censored.

This book was originally published as Disneyland after Dark in 2009, but the corporation is very protective of its copyrights. After being on sale for month, Carradine was told he did not have permission to copy the trademark logo on the cover. Given the options, he chose to rename the book, cover the "offensive" interpretations of the familiar Disney characters, and otherwise keep the content of the book intact. Seeing all of those "censored" strips can be amusing, though.

Although The Park after Dark repeats many ghost stories that fairly well known to people who keep their ears to ground on this subject, there are plenty of new ones. The book's lack of specific details make it disappointing, but those who are new to the subject should find it a good introduction. This is a lukewarm recommendation for anyone who has an interest in either ghosts or wants a look at the darker side of Disneyland.





## No. 152 - Boulevard of Organ Meats by Vanessa Van Wagner

There's never been a shortage of L.A. haters. People bag on it for what it is, and for what it's not. Kind of like certain kinds of popular fiction. I should know: I'm a New York transplant to L.A. who reads romance and science fiction. Here, let me lay down some paper while you get out that bag of spit.

L.A. lives in the public imagination as a place where naïve unfortunates arrive every day, dreaming of something or other. Not only does this badly misrepresent the new arrivals - few fit the image of the starry-eyed hopeful - it completely misses the energy of our town.

Lots of people arrive, as I did, because of work or family or school, look around and say, "Whoa, this is an expensive place to live! Better get on it." L.A. celebrities dominate media coverage, but in fact we're a city full of people working, even in these tough times.

There is, I suppose, a boulevard of broken dreams, though nowadays I wonder if it isn't found in the long stretches of the formerly prosperous suburbs that boomed in the mid-20th century. Certainly that's where a lot of the angry metalheads in town come from. They aren't pursuing any kind of dream. They're sublimating into their music an urge to kick the snot out of something, hard and repeatedly.

So never mind the dreaming. The best L.A. boulevards run through the grittier parts of town, where people unapologetically eat garlic and organ meats. Journey down Wilshire or Crenshaw or Whittier, past the strip malls with signs in four or five languages. You'll pass little shops where people make

custom dresses and guitars and shoes, tucked in with jumble shops and guys selling bean pies in the supermarket parking lot. Yes, the chain stores are here, but Mom and Pop are definitely hanging on.

Cruising is not the scene it was back when gas was cheap, but a trip down Central or Crenshaw or Wilshire is still a kind of automotive wonderland, where you're likely to see your favorite classic muscle car, an old Rolls, tricked out outlaw bikes, and an AMC Hornet with the passenger door held on with duct tape.

One of the local ritual conversations is about how we Angelenos love to tear down the old and elegant to put up the new and superficially shiny. I won't pretend it doesn't happen, but despite earthquakes, riots, and real estate bubbles, we've still got plenty of old buildings, neon signs, opulent movie palaces converted into houses of worship. It's adaptive reuse, but hardly anybody calls it that. More like, "We inherited this building from my grandparents. What the heck can we do with it?"

So many of the older parts of town still show "the future that never was," as found in buildings from long-gone optimistic post-war decades. We've got the streamlined 1920s and swooping 1950s and '60s. The googie architecture and the tiki influences are definitely still around, more appealing to some of us now that they're singed and decaying. If you love old black-and-white movies with monsters made out of latex, you'll understand why I love traveling down the great old beat-up boulevards of L.A.

No. 153 - Art by Mike Pafton



DRINK  
TANK

START

# No. 155 - The liminal space between dreaming and art An interview with Michael Whelan By The Duchess of Drink Tank - Sarah Lorraine Goodman

Sometimes, my greatest ideas are the direct result of being awake at 2 AM with a blinding migraine, waiting for medication to kick in. I had one of those ideas in the wee hours of this morning, an idea that I had sort of kicking around in the back of my brain for a few weeks but just kept shoving it further back because, really, what would be the chances that I could pull it off? Well, at two in the morning and a system full of powerful meds, I guess my inhibitions were sufficiently lowered and I figured, what the hell, there's no harm in asking...

But let me back up... A few weeks ago, I was approached by Chris to write an article for the 300th issue of The Drink Tank (now with 100% more Hugo Award Winningness!) because he's a man of discriminating taste and knows quality authorship when he sees it. Obviously. Probably had nothing to do with my repeated drunk dial messages left via his girlfriend's cell phone where I professed my unrequited crush on him. I accepted, because DUH, and then immediately went "Holy crap, what am I going to write about for a science fiction fanzine?" I have always wanted to write for a sf fanzine, but my days of actively participating in the genre are decades behind me. I don't keep up with the literature, I barely keep up with the movies, and my only nominal participation in the con circuit these days is the once a year that I sneak into Bay Con and drink cocktails at the bar with my friends while doing championship people watching (Bay Con is FABULOUS for people watching. I highly recommend it).

Chris suggested I write something about costuming, which I could admittedly bang out in no time whatsoever, but I wanted something a little different, a little more challenging for me, something that no one was going to expect. And because I'm getting this expensive degree in art history, I wanted to show off my art historian chops. A couple of artist types flew to mind, but there was one who I thought I'd have no chance in hell of scoring an interview with, and that was Michael Whelan.

Well, it was my lucky day. He got in contact with



**Any Excuse to run a photo of  
Our Duchess Sarah!**

me almost immediately and I promptly sent on a list of questions, trying to sound all educated about such matters as pertains to art, particularly HIS art. I'm not sure I succeeded, but I found Mr. Whelan exceedingly patient with me, nonetheless. And so, for you Chris, and all of your readers, I present the following interview:

**Sarah:** Let me start with my personal connection with your work:

I first came into contact with your work when I was 14 years old (I'll remember the exact moment, forever), and was given a set of Michael Moorcock's Elric Saga featuring your cover art. I also gradually re-

alized that I had a number of other works of yours sitting on my bookshelves and in the form of various greeting cards I picked up for the pretty artwork from a local New Age shop. The thing that always struck me about your work is that it is so varied in technique and content, but it always has this indisputable “Michael Whelan” feel to it. That’s really not an easy thing for an artist, so did it take you a long time to figure out how to accomplish it?

**MW:** Hmm. I’m somewhat mystified by your question – and especially the comment, “that’s not an easy thing for an artist”. If one’s work is an outgrowth from one’s influences, observations, and predilections, then it should come naturally, without thinking or effort, really. It’s not something I’ve thought a lot about, to be honest. I mean, I’ve been aware in times past when my work has taken on a look that seems a bit derivative of one or another of my influences, but aside from that, I just try as hard as I can to recreate the picture in my head; considerations of style don’t come into it. It seems to me that the quality you mention – “style” or whatever it may be – is an essential personal element, not something one chooses, or attempts to craft. My work looks the way it does because it’s a reflection of what I want to see in a finished work, modified by whatever skills and knowledge I can bring to bear on my subject.

One last word regarding style. Kelly Freas, the incomparable SF artist, used to say that an artist’s style was merely the sum total of the flaws consistently shown throughout the body of one’s work.

**Sarah:** Touche! I’m going to have to keep that quote in mind from now on. (laughs) So, how do you describe your work, stylistically? What artists and/or artistic movements do you identify with?

**MW:** In describing my work

Julian Baird came up with the term “Imaginative Realism”, and I’ve come to adopt it as the most succinct and accurate description.

I’ve always been especially drawn to surrealist and western visionary art, though the latter term has been corrupted in the past decade in articles about Outsider art, which is regrettable.

Of course, when I was young, all the major illustrators were primary influences, whether you are talking about Norman Rockwell, Jack Kirby, Arthur Rackham, or Frank Frazetta. But at the same time, I was going to the library for folio editions of Michelangelo’s drawings and the works of Heinrich Kley and doing copies of them, so it’s a difficult question to give an answer to. At different times during my upbringing I’ve felt influenced by one artist or another, and I went through phases of influence like most other artists. But I’d have to say that for the past few decades my greatest influence has been whatever my last painting was.



No. 155 - Drawing After Whelan by Toni - [Tonite.deviantart.com](http://Tonite.deviantart.com)

But getting back to influences: I hate to give such a pat answer because it sounds like I'm dodging the question, but the most direct reply I can give you is to state that any image which strikes a chord of feeling in me, or which I find particularly effective, is an influence on me – and becomes part of the synthesis that forms my work.

**Sarah:** What motivates you to work in so many different areas of literature and music?

**MW:** The world is an interesting and marvelously varied place! Also, it must be said that many of the applications found for my work were not chosen by me, but were initiated by someone else who knew of my work, saw possibilities, and then contacted me for an image.

Also, remember that for the first 30 years of my career I was illustrating, and the commissions I received would often lead me to subjects I would normally not have thought to choose on my own.

**Sarah:** What keeps you motivated and where do you draw your inspiration from in both your personal work and your commercial work after so many years?

**MW:** In my early years my artwork was simply an expression of enthusiasm for the subject matter, usually SF and Fantasy themes of one sort or another. But occasionally I'd try a landscape or some other subjects, though my focus then as well as now usually centers on the human figure.

It just seemed to me like a natural outgrowth of my interests and reading. I always had this connection wired into me that channeled whatever I was reading or thinking into visual terms.

I've found commercial success to be a trap at times. If I did an image that proved to be extraordinarily successful for a project then I'd often get nothing but requests for more of the same, which can be stifling. So I've been careful to cultivate enough clients so that if one was asking for too many works of the same type I could switch to another for a while and do something different.

Over the years, I've seen a transition from deriving concepts from outside or acquired subjects [illustration] to things experienced directly or thought about in my own personal life [my gallery work]. As I get older it seems more important to me to paint the latter while I still can.

**Sarah:** Has your approach to art changed any over the years, whether in terms of technique, medium, or just a general philosophy towards your work?

**MW:** Some aspects are evolving, as I am. At the same time the core of my work is about the sense of wonder, and that remains consistent. I've often said that if, for some reason, I could only paint the human figure, I would be content. No subject is as consistently engaging to me as that.

I've never found a medium I can say I feel totally comfortable with, so I'm always trying new things... though acrylics have been my mainstay for most of my career. Since I allow my approach to be molded by how I feel about my subject, it has varied a lot from painting to painting. I've done album covers using collage and xerox copiers as a medium, when I felt it was appropriate. Whatever works! But most of the time I prefer to paint it out.

**Sarah:** What artistic techniques do you enjoy for the sheer joy of it? Is it any different in your approach to your commercial art?

**MW:** Free form sketching with oils or charcoal is the most enjoyable for me.. These exercises bear little resemblance to the clean and detailed look of most of my work; they are usually monochromatic and loosely handled, and have a more energetic feel to them. Since the media used are so malleable, allowing for changes "on the fly", they are a useful way for me to explore ideas involving big shapes, working out compositions, that sort of thing.

**Sarah:** Do you feel that you have to identify with the subject of a book, or with a band, in order to create a successful cover?

**MW:** Well, I have to identify with something, find a way to get a handle on the substance of what I'm supposed to be dealing with. It can be a theme, point of view, a narrative scene that creates a picture in my eye, or a particular character...or none of the above. It all depends. From the other end of the perspective, if I have a definite antipathy to my subject, I'll refuse the work if it's not too late to do so.

**Sarah:** (donning the "art is srs bznz" hat) Looking through your personal work on your website, I'm

struck by the divergent subjects. Particularly the contrast between “Highgate Mist”, and “Ellie’s Dream”. The former is so lush, organic and rooted in the here and now, whereas the latter creates a sense of the weightlessness of imagination. Is there a common thread between these two works, rather than simply a contrasting of mortality of the body and the immortality of the mind?

**MW:** Well, they are both painted by the same guy, both in acrylics, and both painted on panels. But there are many subject threads running through my works that tend to unite them in theme, and these two paintings come from different theme sets, so naturally they are going to be different because they are attempt to communicate different ideas. While they both arose from intellectual ideas and are expressions thereof, the “Broken Angels” paintings are metaphors for the decay of faith whereas “Ellie’s Dream” is a meditation on the decline of our space program.

I have a lot of ideas, and I’m getting new ones all the time, so there are many themes, metaphors and symbols running through my work. Since i tend to leapfrog from one to another, there’s a lot of variation in my subject matter I suppose. Plus, I get bored easily by too much of the same thing.



**No. 156 - Art by Sue Mason**

**Sarah:** I’m also intrigued by the play of negative and positive space in your two paintings, “EBB” and “FLOOD”. In the descriptions, you mention first not really knowing what the paintings were about until your friend brought up her interpretation of them as your reaction to a cancer diagnosis and treatment. I think, speaking with my art historian hat on, that the positive and negative spaces in the canvases go beyond the artistic constructs of space and what is and isn’t present, but implicitly refer to an emotional and psychological head-space.

**MW:** “EBB” and “FLOOD” are compositionally yin/yang in nature, because they were meant to convey polar opposition, which my life seemed full of at that time: Life/death, optimism/pessimism, sun/shadow, etc. I had these images in my head and it felt important to paint them even though [at the time] I didn’t understand their meaning. I’m proud I had the will to put down whatever other work I was doing and do these paintings, which are quite different from what my fans usually see from me, and paint them totally on faith. They were meant from the onset to be sold together and be hung together in the same room, on opposing walls. Alas, the gallery sold them to different buyers. But I’m over that now.

**Sarah:** You also mention that you stopped dreaming while being treated for cancer, perhaps because of the medications you were given, which lead to a creative dry spell during your treatment. Do you draw inspiration for your art from your dreams?

**MW:** Oh yes. Dreams are a rich source of inspiration for me. But even more important are the times when i am either near to sleeping or waking up. In these twilight states i find fertile ground for ideas, and metaphors arise unbidden for whatever ideas have been occupying my attention recently. Of course, there are other things which come to me totally out of left field as well. Sometimes an image will come to me which carries with it a sense of urgency, a feeling of needing to be made or realized. In such cases I try to make careful notes and try to get to painting it as soon as i can... though often it will take years before I get to it. That’s why it’s important to make notes about the ideas or do a brief sketch before the concept is lost. I always carry a notebook in my back pocket, and have a notepad on my bedside table,

June '08

August '11



300 lbs

Words and Layout by Jason Schachat

1

In the last two years, I went from weighing 300lbs down to 150lbs. Most people want to know what my 'secret' is. Others ask what pushed me to lose the weight. I usually say it was the knees.

I've been heavy all my life, and that does things to you. There's certainly

permanent psychological damage, but most of us forget the physical toll. As far back as middle school, the cartilage in my knees would click when I crouched. It was quiet enough to keep me from bouncing around like the idiot high school kid I was and just infrequent enough for me to ignore, but it didn't go away.

The years passed. I

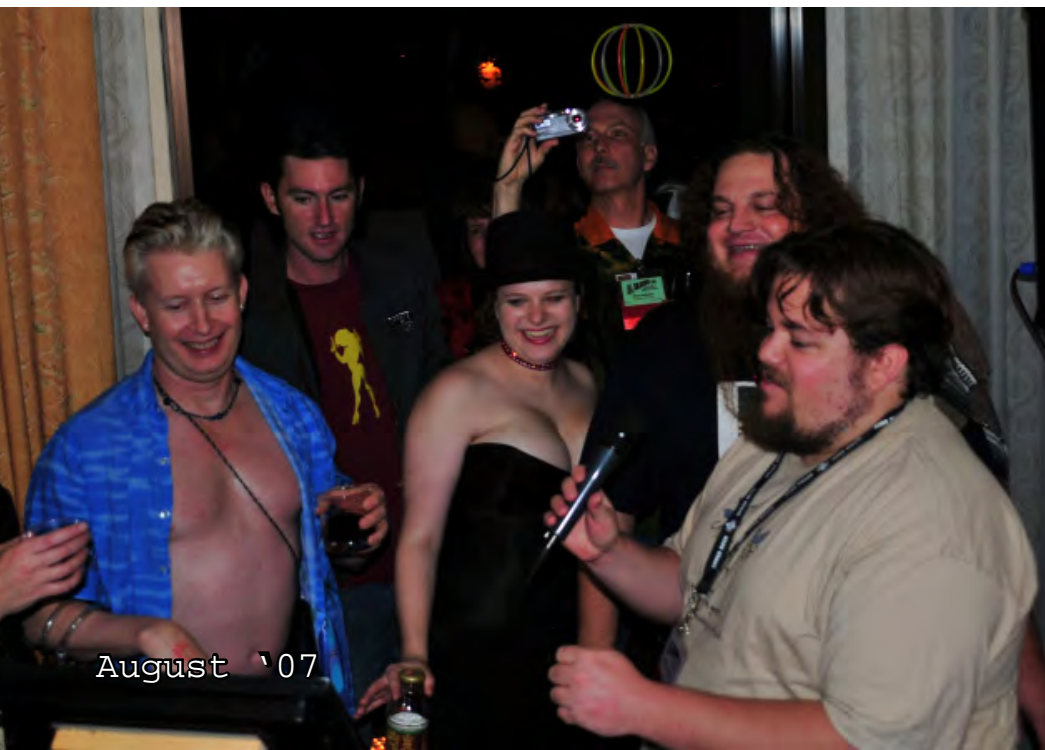
would gain and lose pounds as I repeatedly embraced or rejected healthier lifestyles. The knees clicked more or less as this went by with little connection to what amount of weight I was carrying. No, the sound was more a reflection on my physical activity. The more sedentary I was, the less noise they made. If I tried becoming physically

active, it was like a troupe of flamenco dancers had taken up residence in my joints. The real shocker was when I starting hearing it as I climbed stairs.

We don't think about it much in our youth, but carrying those extra pounds does a hell of a number on your body. Factoring in physical activity, you're far more prone to injury than a



October '08



August '07

lighter person. Just look at the short careers of those 500-600lb sumo wrestlers. Any remedial student of physics can tell you mass times velocity over the frailty of the human skeleton = OW, FUCK!

In the summer of 2006, some friends and I did a short film where I performed a minor stunt. This wasn't the sort of thing anyone thought dangerous; just a quick leap and run past the camera. Of course, we made this film at a time when I was rather sedentary and failed to consider how much weight my ankle would be absorbing as I hopped from a dumpster onto the pavement and took off at full run.

The joint turned to jelly underneath me, and it was all I could do to keep moving and not collapse. That also meant I continued to build speed with uneven support beneath me and,

well, you see where this is going. One knee absorbed the full force of the fall. I shook it off and played like it didn't hurt so much, but it took about two years to start walking straight again. And the clicking got worse.

During this time, I got a new job that was much more physically active but did fuck all to reduce my weight. My legs hurt every day. I was feeling my age catch up to me with a vengeance. The strain wasn't anything new, but I was now actively avoiding even simple outdoor activities for fear of injuring myself to a point where I couldn't work.

Anyone who's been in fandom can relate to the nightmares that started in on me: there I'd be, thirty-something years old, big as a house, and rolling through conventions in a scooter. When we see fans rely on motor-



March '09



June '09

ized aid, it's rare to see them come back. Modern convenience just encourages us to place less value on the capabilities of our own bodies and more on the machines and drugs all around us.

It was that image of myself, physically degenerating and embarrassed at the sight of myself, that kicked off what would be the last in a lifelong series of attempts to normalize

my weight. As with all of them, it began with a simple gimmick: a solid breakfast, a small lunch, and a medium dinner. No more fatty foods, desserts, or snacks. As the weight came off and my body was less stressed by running around, I would add more exercise to my daily routine. I would not be the fat guy in the electric wheelchair.



July '09

## 2

Things went well for about three weeks. Then, when joining my father for a sausage dinner he made specially as a treat, everything went to hell. I went to bed that night with a sharp pain just under my ribs. As is my natural inclination, I tried to tough it out. I didn't sleep that night.

Three days went by like this.

The pain only seemed to get worse. It didn't matter if I moved or sat still, ate or starved; the constant stab in my side would not go away. I couldn't sleep and my boss harassed me for being sullen and withdrawn at work. While walking, I kept one fist jabbed into my abdomen to dull the ache. Every hunger pang was cause for anxiety. The very thought of lying down was enough to make me cry. Still, the pain

did not go away.

I didn't have medical insurance, thanks to economic hardship, so visiting a doctor was a final, bank-draining option I did not want to explore. Every website diagnosis I could find, however, was pointing in one direction: gallstones. How does one get gallstones? Well, after leading a sedentary lifestyle and eating fatty foods, if one attempts to change said lifestyle too suddenly, it is possible to develop gallstones by returning to said lifestyle. Let's say one did this by infusing their newly healthy lifestyle with a sudden dose of organ meat.

I wasn't so much scared about the stones themselves. The damage they could do seemed minimal. The pain wasn't too terrifying, either. I had, believe it or not, experienced worse. What scared me was the uncontrollable, animal fear the pain would never stop. That knife just kept twisting and only the

December '09



barest scrap of logic could keep me from thinking it'd be there the rest of my life.

When it got too bad and the combined lack of sleep/food/fear/self-diagnosis got me thinking it might be pancreatitis or even cancer, I finally went to a walk-in clinic. The doctor was more than happy to take my money, had them run my blood-work/urinalysis, and even got me an ultrasound. As any mother who's ever had one can attest, those techs do not have a light touch when they scan. My white-knuckled grip on the exam table and grinding teeth didn't get them to go any lighter.

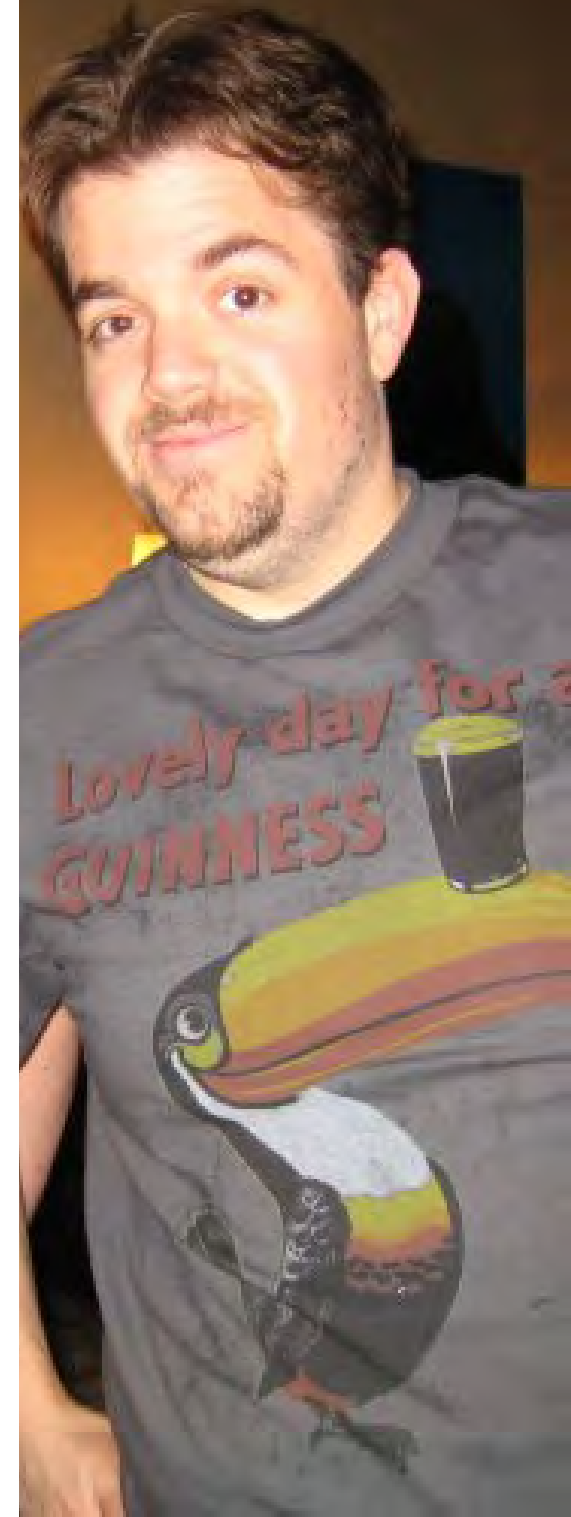
The results that came back: inconclusive. They didn't see anything like cancer or pancreatitis, but they weren't quite sure about the stones. If I could come back after the doctor took his two week vacation, they could run

some more tests and set me up for surgery. At this point, I'd already spent \$900 out of pocket. For nothing.

I saw the fork in the road ahead of me. I could keep throwing money into the pile and get the surgery done. Still lacking medical insurance, this would put me deep in the hole. Estimates I'd seen put it at around \$5,000. That meant borrowing from friends and family and maybe needing to take out a loan. On the other hand, I could give up on the medical industry right there and tough it out.

It was like some sort of existential question: What is this pain worth to you? Will you trade short term suffering for long term inconvenience? Do you want to have surgery so you can eat sausage again? Somehow, it was the last question that stood out most in my mind. That

May '10





June '09



July '09



August '09



September '09



October '09



November '09



January '10



February '10



July '10



October '10



November '10



April '11

fat man in the scooter was taunting me with it. He didn't care about my pain; he wanted an excuse for me to go back to my old ways. And I hated him.

I did not sleep for the better part of a month.

The doctor's last call had been for me to come in, which would have cost money, so I simply asked him where we stood on the issue of tests. When it again came around to spending money, I thanked him and never called back. The fork in the road was behind me. I was going to fight the pain.

### 3

The method of my diet tightened. Cholesterol became my enemy; protein and dietary fiber were the good guys. No more of that pseudo-science about

banning carbs, fueling my body, or 'natural fats' and 'good sugars'. Eating was a task, now. Every calorie had to be worthwhile, or it didn't belong anywhere near my body. I was limited to a 1200-1500 calorie diet. That would be 1600-1900 less than what I burned in an average day.

I didn't weigh myself for a long time. My visits to the doctor had shown the early stage of my diet to be effective, but it was counterproductive to measure myself every day. What if I didn't see any noticeable difference from one day to the next? Was that any reason to consider the whole effort a failure? It was better to gradually feel my clothes getting looser on my frame. There was something far more satisfying about tightening my belt a little more, punching new holes in the leather, and then buying a new belt altogether.



In the first year, I took 18 inches off my waistline. It was probably around 80-90 pounds of weight loss that started as something very unhealthy before I molded it into a new

lifestyle. I was going to conventions where people were literally forcing food into my mouth because I just wasn't hungry.

See, it's not about coming up with a gimmick or

nifty cheat. You might be able to lose some weight in the short term, but that never lasts. I've seen all the stories: bacon diets, ice cream diets, even the recent wholly-unendorsed

Twinkie diet. People see definite weight loss right away. Then, the instant they stop, the weight comes back. The problem is they stopped. Diets don't work. Lifestyle changes do.

The first thing you need is a reason: The jacket that doesn't fit any more. The way you grunt whenever you stand up. That clicking in your knee. That's where it starts.

But, from that point on, you're running on pure willpower. You have to commit to what you're doing and avoid all the distractions, excuses, and habits that pull you off track. Weight loss programs like to say "You're not alone." Bullshit. Even people who desperately want you healthy and thin will shove a cookie in your face. Fellow dieters, like recovering drug addicts, are desperate for someone to fall off the wagon with



them.

Once you've stuck to your guns long enough, the other cornerstone of healthy living will come along naturally: good habits replace the bad. You won't even think about eating something when you're not hungry. That social faux pas of not ordering something in a restaurant when relaxing with friends will fly quietly under your radar; you're not hungry, you don't eat. Once you separate yourself from the habits that put weight on, it's easy to move past them.

## 4

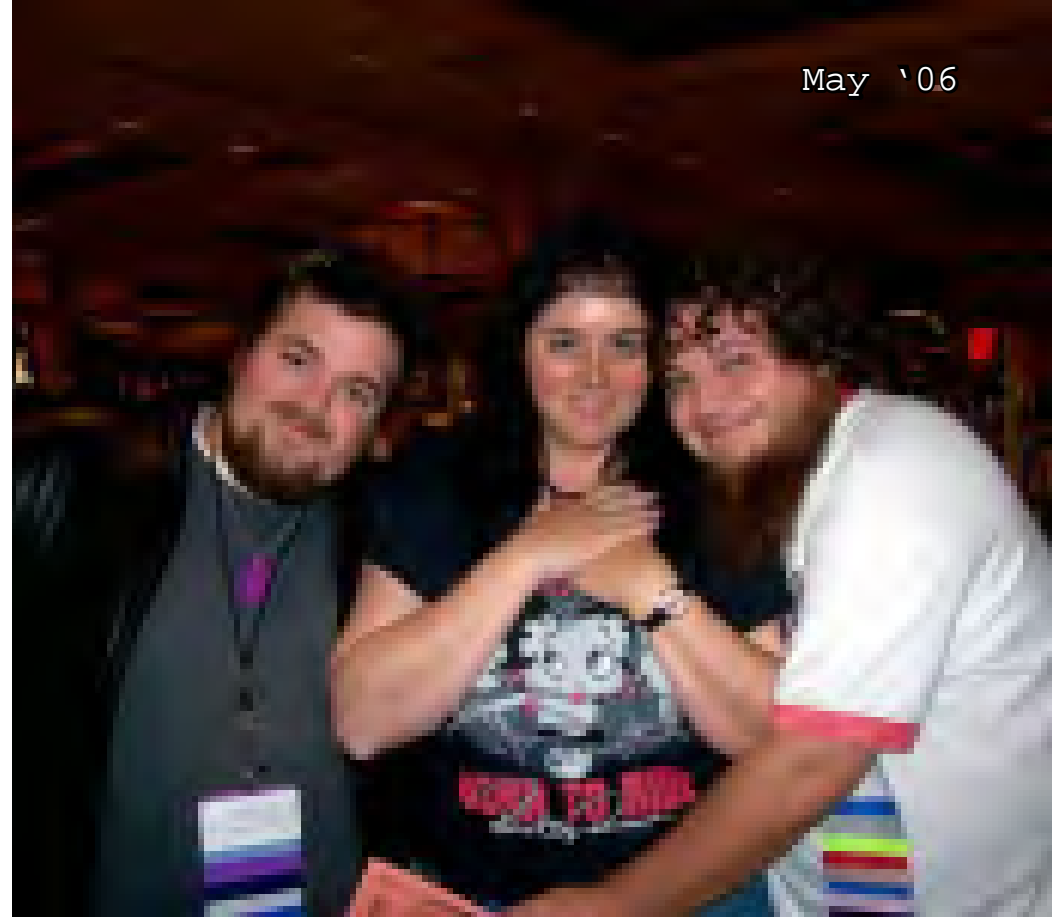
Two years after my gallbladder went nuts on me, I have medical insurance, no sign of gallstones, and weigh 150 pounds less. "I'm half the man I used

to be," I joke. My last check-up had me at extremely high levels of good cholesterol, extremely low levels of bad cholesterol, and blood pressure of 98/63. That last number actually had the tech a little concerned, since no one he'd seen recently was anywhere near that, and I'd just come from a busy day at work.

I've reached the roughly the proper weight for my height, and any time I add or lose 5 pounds, people notice. The cruel irony is how unremarkable that first 50lbs was. Just a drop in the bucket.

My body moves differently; I found my shoulders aching because I naturally drew my arms in too tight against my sides-- sides which no longer naturally brushed against my arms.

People me differently, too. Human beings generally assume healthy look-



ing people are, somehow, better. It opened my eyes to how shallow some people were when they suddenly treated me better.

My social life has shifted dramatically, and I find myself desperately clinging to my geekish roots. Just because I don't look the stereotype any more doesn't mean I don't want to sit at home reading the

Hugo nominees or editing *Yipe*.

Like the costumers I write about, I guess you could say I retired an old outfit so I could show off a better one. It may not win at the Masquerade, but it was a bitch to put together. It's also a helluva lot easier to move around in, now that it doesn't weigh 300 pounds.

## No. 158 - Walking a Mile in an Ood's Shoes by Mette Hedin

Recent marketing research has found that if you pick up an item in a store, you are far more likely to buy the item than if you only looked at it but never touched it. The sheer act of touching the merchandise causes a feeling of ownership and an emotional connection with the object.

I realized lately that the same holds true for costumes. Being a costumer that is more interested in the process and technique involved in the making of the costume than the specific character it depicts, I sometimes find myself making some pretty strange stuff. Sometimes the costume idea trumps the need for dignity, and the idea we had for the Gallifrey 2010 convention was a pretty good one.

I had realized that the Ood from the new Doctor Who series bore an interesting similarity to the Blue Man Group in the way the characters moved and approached the world, and the instant the phrase "Ood Man Group" was uttered in conversation it had to be

realized, despite the fact that the Ood were far from my favorite creatures. What many people are surprised to find out is that I never really liked the Ood, neither stylistically or as characters. They were ugly, useless and slightly obscene looking.

But the costumer in me had signed up for a job, so I went to work, researching mold making, sculpting techniques and silicone materials. Once the materials had been purchased and the head sculpting had started it was too late to turn back, even after our third Ood became unavailable and the three Ood became two, causing the original masquerade idea to be scrapped in favor for one that could be accomplished with a two-some of Ood.

I spent countless hours carefully calling forth the Ood features from a hard and uncooperative clay, a solitary and laborious late-night silent conversation with an alien creature. It is an experience so immersive that it can easily cause loathing but ultimately may be so cathartic that it rarely fails to produce a different level of understanding and even affection. I had touched the costuming merchandise in the most worst way possible and whether I had asked for it or not, a strange bond with the creature being conceived before me was starting to form.

It was not an easy birth by any means, rarely has a costume given me so many issues so late in the process. Only the truly brave should attempt to mix chemistry and costuming on a tight deadline, and it really came down to the wire whether the costume would get done in time. The last tentacles were glued to the face in the hotel room and the costumes were not tried on in their completed state until the day of the masquerade.

The two Ood did make it onto the stage, and I subsequently proceeded to walk (at least) a mile in an Ood's shoes, literally. From start to finish I went through a gradual personal development from being aggressively disinterested in the species to forevermore being one of the Ood. You may be what you eat, but even more so you are what you costume, so be careful what you touch.



Previous No. 157- 300 lbs. by Jason Schachat

No. 159 - Photo from Mette Hedin

# No. 160 - When I Am Queen of the Worldcon: A Manifesto by Helen Montgomery

When it was announced that one of the themes of this issue is “Your Worst Idea Ever”, naturally bidding for and then chairing a Worldcon came to mind. Because really now, what can possibly top that as Worst Idea Ever? Okay, maybe getting into a land war in Asia, but let’s be honest, they’re neck and neck for the lead...

I had no time to write that article, though, since Renovation was fast approaching. So I promptly forgot

about it.

I got my programming schedule for Reno. I was on a panel called “If I Were Queen of the Worldcon” and one of the moderators suggested that we come up with our manifesto.

What is a manifesto? According to dictionary.com –

“A public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives, as one issued by a government, sovereign, or organization.”

While we didn’t actually present our manifestos at the panel, we did talk a lot about the cool ideas we would want to implement if we had the Ultimate Power. In addition, I was given cookies. And a sparkly tiara with the word “Bitch” as part of it, which I proudly wore around for the rest of the convention. (The double takes by other attendees were priceless!)

I went home. I had con crud. I was reminded about writing something for this issue. Ack!

I went back to my original thought, but then - An Idea occurred to me: Yeah, bidding and chairing a Worldcon would be an amusing take on the Worst Idea Ever. BUT...If I am QUEEN of the Worldcon, and I can get everyone to follow my manifesto, that could make bidding and chairing a Worldcon the BEST idea ever! There might be more cookies! Let’s write about that!

Here, then, gentle reader, is my manifesto. I want you to be prepared. Because some day -- Chicon 8 is coming...

When I Am Queen of the Worldcon:

1) Everyone on the Queen’s concomm shall communicate regularly and clearly with one another. Deadlines will be met without fail. Cooperation between divisions and departments is expected.

2) The Queen shall borrow Mr. John Scalzi’s Mallet of Loving Correction™ for use when anyone gets out of line on any email list or at



No. 161 - Photo from Helen Montgomery

concom meetings. Everyone will immediately obey when the Mallet™ is used. They will also grovel for the Queen's forgiveness. Which she might grant if she is in a benevolent mood. And appropriately bribed.

3) The Queen shall have her own American Airlines AAirpass™, paid for by the convention so that she can go meet with her concom and staff in person whenever needed. Hopefully the Mallet™ will not need to come along on any of these flights.

4) Concom meetings will be held on the beach, with a barbeque, whenever the weather is cooperative. This will be always, because the Queen says it shall be so.

5) There will also be beer. Good beer.

6) And chocolate. Preferably milk chocolate, Cadbury Mini Eggs would be the ideal choice. The Queen is gracious, though, and shall allow dark chocolate to be present for her minions.

7) The Queen shall have her own personal pool boys to gently wave peacock feather fans, creating a light breeze as the Queen reclines on her chair while at the beach during the meetings. The pool boys will feed

the Queen bonbons. See item #6. And strawberries. Strawberries are nice too.

8) The Queen shall have weekly massages, paid for out of the convention budget. These may increase to daily in the month just prior to the convention.

9) All program and event participants at the Worldcon will be scintillating, intelligent, and amusing. They will inspire those attending the program item to give them a standing ovation.

10) Parties at the Worldcon must be full of awesome. The Queen will personally travel through the party floors to make sure it is so.

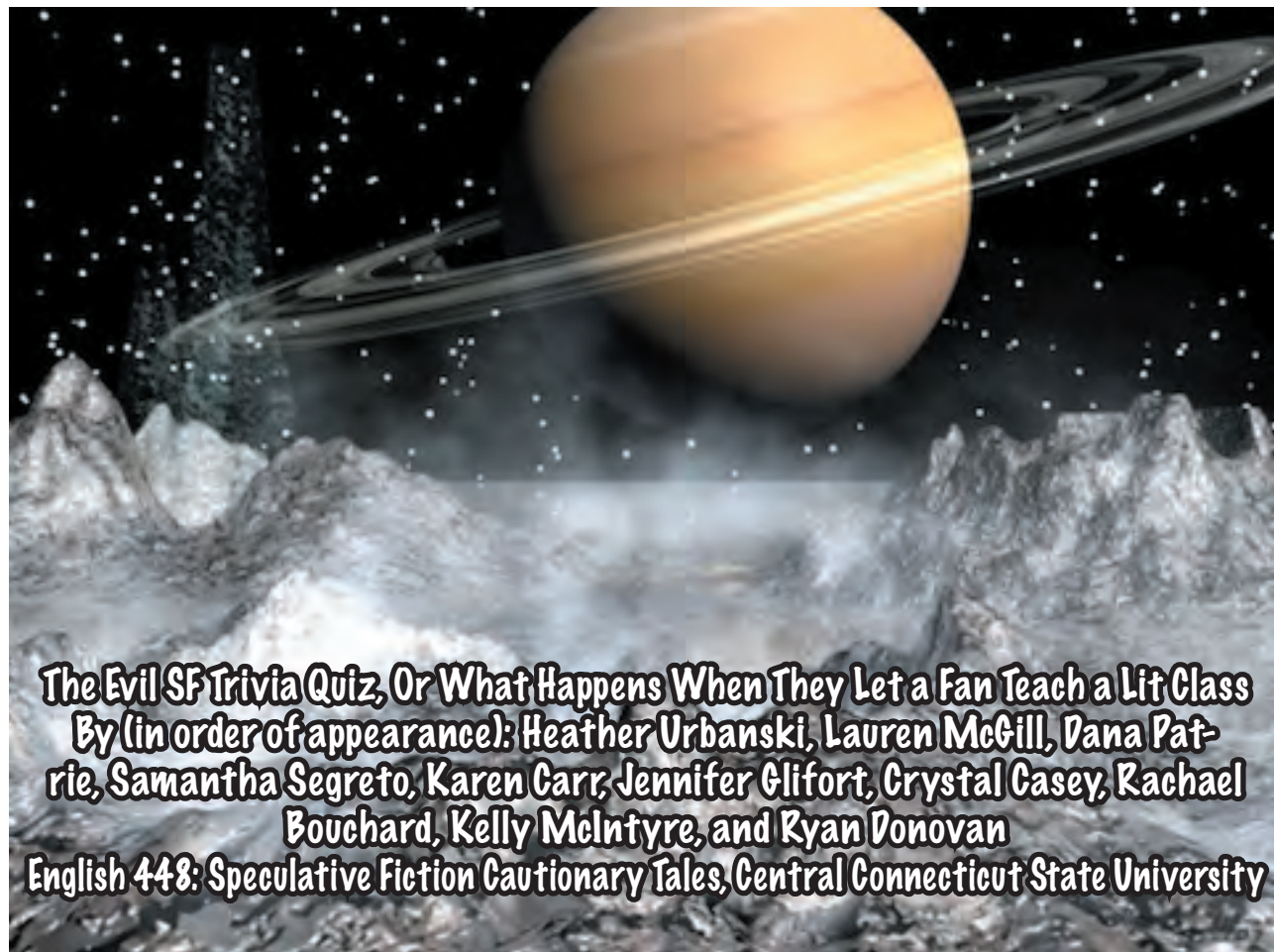
11) All Worldcon attendees will have fun and follow Wil Wheaton's manifesto: "Don't Be A Dick". Any attendees that are not having fun may petition the Queen to Mallet™ whoever is being a Dick™.

12) The Queen gets to wear her "Bitch" tiara at all times. Everyone will complement her on it.

13) After the Worldcon is over, the Queen shall have an issue of The Drink Tank devoted entirely to her brilliant reign.



No. 162 -The Lovely & Talented Linda Photo by Chris Garcia



**The Evil SF Trivia Quiz, Or What Happens When They Let a Fan Teach a Lit Class**  
**By (in order of appearance): Heather Urbanski, Lauren McGill, Dana Patrie, Samantha Segreto, Karen Carr, Jennifer Glifort, Crystal Casey, Rachael Bouchard, Kelly McIntyre, and Ryan Donovan**  
**English 448: Speculative Fiction Cautionary Tales, Central Connecticut State University**

**No. 164 - Heather Urbanski**

Just before the fall 2010 semester, when I was preparing to teach my very first literature course after many semesters of teaching college writing, I asked around for some advice. To a one, my friends who taught lit classes on a regular basis told me not to change who I was as a teacher. Which, of course, made me ask, who am I as a teacher? I quickly realized that I am, at the core, two things: a writer and a fan.

And what better way to capture that identity than with a little fandom test? I created what at the time I thought was a fairly evil genre trivia quiz, just to see how many other fans were in the room on the first class meeting.

The fall 2010 group did fairly well. No one could define “fen” but then I hadn’t really expected anyone to. I just happen to like that term and, hey, it’s not like I asked them to define “filk.” But I did get the telltale fan questions, such as which Enterprise I was referring to in question 12.

So, while the fall 2010 class was certainly not full of hard-core fen, there was enough of a shared basis in the genre to make things very interesting, from a fannish perspective.

Fast forward to August 2011: I’m updating the

quiz for the new semester, fresh off of WorldCon in Reno (where The Drink Tank won a Hugo. Did you hear?). I substitute Blackout/All Clear for The Doomsday Book as the correct match for Connie Willis and change out China Miéville’s Kraken for our latest John W. Campbell-award winner Lev Grossman’s The Magicians because one of my main goals for the course is to highlight SF as a living genre, one that is constantly producing new material. But, other than that, I think the quiz is still evil enough with its mix of classic, slightly obscure, and currently well-known references.

Then I arrive at the first class meeting on August 30. Many of us in the room, me included, are still without power after a visit from lovely Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene but it seems like the eight students (a smaller group than in 2010) are ready to get started, if a little nervous about what to expect.

And when I send the evil quiz around, I start to understand the nerves: laughter and versions of “I have no idea” fill the room very quickly. I even hear the phrase “I’m tapping out” after not even five minutes. No one flags me down and asks about multiple versions of any franchise. Most wear an expression of mild shock.

I end the activity much earlier than last year and

**No. 165 - Art from Michele Wilson**

as we go through the list, I discover, to my great excitement actually, that most of the class is entirely new to the genre. Most of the media-centered questions are answered correctly (if memory serves, 1, 2i, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, and 14 were all identified more or less accurately by at least someone in the room) but not all of them.

Clearly, this would be a different semester than fall 2010...and it has been. I personally am having a great time bringing fandom, and the genre texts themselves, to this group of neo-fans (which now includes one more student than on that first evening). But don't take my word for it. Here's what they have to say...



### No. 166 - Lauren McGill

“How many Star Wars movies include Yoda?”

Was Yoda the hairy man-beast or the evil guy with the helmet head?

“What is the significance of the year 1977?”

Disco was alive and well and everywhere!

“What is a TARDIS?”

Um, someone who is perpetually late?

Ok, so clearly I didn't do so well on the “evil quiz.” Before entering this next dimensional classroom, my closest exposure to speculative fiction was reading Frankenstein in my British Modernism class. And in retrospect we really didn't spend much time on the science fiction-ish characteristics of the novel, more on the modern-day Prometheus action. To be quite honest I always considered speculative fiction to be a rather silly genre. As a self-described literary elitist, I judged (yes judged!) the fact that most sci-fi novels are approximately the same size and shape as those in the “Romance” section of the bookstore, and quite honestly their covers in some cases were humorously simi-

lar as well. So I went ahead and placed them both into the same category: “The Undesirables”. So, imagine my surprise when I sat down to read our first two novels, and tore through them both with the prowess of hungry lioness with six cubs to feed. I could not put either of them down! Now I feel rather silly about my preconceived notions, and will ask (with honest surprise) others the question when they ridicule it, “Why don't you like Science Fiction?”

### No. 167 - Dana Patrie

With angst and eagerness, I sit to register for my last semester of graduate classes. Plan of study in hand, I click on ENG 500, fill out my forms for my independent study, then go to click on Shakespeare: Comedies, the last of the Shakespeare classes I have yet to take. Horror and panic spreads from the tips of my fingers to the neurons of my brain. They have changed the time from 4:30 to a 1:40 class. Leaving my position as a middle school educator once a week to go to class wasn't really going to go over well with the administration, so I quickly scan the literature courses that are still open. Topics in American Literature – gag. I'm a British gal. Romanticism – retch. I sigh. I peruse. I scour. I find Speculative Fiction on the list. Speculative Fiction? I don't even know what the hell that is. I google the term and sigh heavily. Science Fiction? I'm done for, but it's still better than Romanticism.

I sit with my advisor, the Shakespeare guru at the university. He looks at my change of course and asks me if I'm interested in Science Fiction with a raised eyebrow, weight back in his chair, stroking his beard. No. I'm not. But I need to graduate. Don't get me started on the fact that you changed the time of the one class I wanted - needed - to graduate. Now it's his turn to sigh. Reluctantly, he signs off on it, knowing I don't want to do this. I get the book list, read the six books over the summer, one a night because I just can't put them down. I have never been blown away like this! Excited and trepidacious, I hike the sixty-four steps to my first class. My professor, with a sinister smile, hands us all a quiz. I can do this. I just finished the reading list. I quickly skim the questions. Oh crap. Hugo? What's that? Star Wars questions? Are you kidding me? I'm tapping out. I'm the girl who couldn't finish The Golden Compass and doesn't teach The Giver because of its genre. Deep breaths. Breathe. You can do this. And I do. We start talking about the fiction. And I'm glad they changed the time of that class ... what was I going to take again? I forget.

### No. 168 - Art from Delphyne Woods

### **No. 169 - Samantha Segreto**

It is 4:27pm by the time I have successfully located room 311 and maneuvered myself into a desk that is much too small for any deserving college student. In just three minutes, my speculative fiction class is beginning, and I have no idea what to expect. Dr. Urbanski, well-dressed and smiling, strolls into class, pulls out a stack of printer paper, and announces, "We're having a pop quiz!" I'm not nervous, but I am a little embarrassed. The only piece of science fiction literature I can remember reading, in third grade mind you, is *Into the Dream* by William Sleator. As expected, I have absolutely zero correct answers, although my partner successfully guesses a couple. "Well, Sam," I think to myself, "this will be fun, a challenge – something to finally push you, so here goes nothing."

It is now the end of September, a palette of golden browns and warm crimson colors paint the trees, and the first quarter of school is officially over. Having dabbled a little further into the speculative fiction genre, with works like *Beggars in Spain* and "The Machine Stops" under my belt, I am satisfied, intrigued, and eager for what the future of this class holds. We have covered topics including nuclear warfare, information technology, and biological engineering, but what I am itching to unearth are those on monsters, aliens, and other beings. Although just a month ago I had little interest in the world of science fiction, my thirst for this stuff is only getting stronger.

### **No. 170 - Karen Carr**

Ok, so we all know those people who can retain and regurgitate loads of useful information on command. Well I am one of those people but only when it comes to useless things like what is the next hot up and coming movie, TV, book, or actor, of course, nothing of great use unless I was planning on pursuing a career as a gossip columnist. According to my friends, I'm a bit of a know-it-all when it comes to pop culture trivia. Personally I prefer the title trivia connoisseur. I regularly get asked about who starred in what, when, who are they related to, or who are they dating, etc. and the majority of the time I know the answer. I have literally been fought over like the last crescent roll at Thanksgiving dinner when breaking into teams to play such games as *Scene-It*. So when Dr. Urbanski walked in and announced that we were going to have a pop sci-fi trivia quiz, I was not concerned. Pop Culture and I are best friends. I had this.

First question, what is the significance of 1977...

well I can tell you my mom was a freshman in high school, that is about it. Moving on second question match novels and authors, I was screwed. I had no clue. Science fiction was not something I regularly sought out to read. The last true science fiction book I read was probably *The Giver* in middle school. Moving on, question three, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, finally a title I recognize! Then number four, a Hugo, I have no clue what that is except is he the guy with the severe back problem in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*? Nope, that is *Quasimodo*. Question five, What is Voldemort's real name? Another one I know, Tom Marvolo Riddle. Ok, so not so bad, I knew two answers and was now only intrigued by the rest. Well then I flipped the paper over...ten more questions...seriously?!? This is going to be a long semester.

### **No. 171 - Jennifer Glifort**

When my Speculative Fiction professor came by and handed out sheets of paper, I figured it was one of those "Get to know the person next to you and be best friends forever" monstrosities that teachers are so fond of. But when I looked down I saw that this was an actual quiz. A pop quiz. A pop quiz on the first day. Nice.

The professor said it wouldn't be graded, which was a big relief, especially once I saw the questions. I thought I had at least a little sci-fi knowledge, but for the most part I was stumped. I got the question about Spaceballs (who doesn't know and love Mel Brooks?) and guessed the rest.

I was pretty disappointed in my inner Trekkie (recently discovered due to the 2009 reboot movie. Hello, bandwagon!) for not knowing the designation of the Enterprise. NCC-1710? 1017? 1071... The number-shuffling just got worse as I went along.

Ah, well. I have a couple months ahead of me to get the gist of it.

### **172 - Crystal Casey**

Have you ever been given a test on your first day of school? Talk about an immediate buzz-kill and a bit of self questioning, "Why did I take this class?" It was the first night of my 2.5 hour English class and floating around the room with a smile on her face our professor hands out this science fiction trivia quiz.

I once considered myself a novice in the subject but recall has never been my strong suit; thank the heavens this was not going to be graded. Perhaps cultivating a robot-like memory for ourselves is something

future generations should begin looking into.

Out of fifteen questions and one author/title match I was only able to legitimately answer two. The other seven students in the class managed to tackle this test with both humor and a team effort. Yet I kept my head down and racked my brain for answers that would never come.

Perhaps I can thank Harry Potter mania for preparing me for question number five: what is Voldemort's real name? At least with this question many of us had a chance, whether we read the books or saw the films.

In the number six spot we were asked to identify the title of Mel Brook's amazingly funny spoof Spaceballs. Who can forget Captain Lone Star, his mawg Barf and my favorite scene in which Alien actor John Hurt recreates the famous exploding abdomen scene with an alien bursting out after having the special at a space diner. Only this time the alien sings and dances on the countertop adorned with a cane and top hat rather than going on a killing spree.

Although this test challenged me and fired more synapses than necessary I did learn one thing: brush up on your science fiction, because the next time someone asks you what a fen is or what the designation of the starship Enterprise is, your very life or the life of your GPA can be on the line.

### **No. 173 - Rachael Bouchard**

I have always felt a bit special, even perhaps unique because, as a woman, I understood jokes and puns that came from a very male-based world - the world of science fiction. When our town had a mayor run with the name Jean Picard and signs filled our town, my group of friends started up a collection and we prayed that he would be bald and talk with an accent. So I was excited when I saw Speculative Fiction being offered. Our Blackboard Vista page donned pictures of Cylons from Battlestar Galactica both the original and most recent version. Oh yeah, I thought, this class is definitely for me.

Imagine my shock when the first day in class, not a single man graced our classroom - not even the teacher. I didn't feel less special or less unique, I was so thrilled I couldn't help but to sit there in awe. Then we got a quiz on our first day. It consisted of terminology that most folks might not be acquainted with. Browncoats? Yup. Knew that one. Spaceballs? A crime of nature if you haven't at least watched it. How many movies is Yoda in? My question to the question - computer generated Yoda or puppet Yoda? But then some

stumped me. Harry Potter - that wasn't science fiction to me - so when the question asked about Voldemort's real name, I just let my pen skip right past the blank space. Must be a trick question, I thought. Overall, I learned that I knew as much as I didn't know, and that only whet my palate. Now that we're about a third of the way through the semester, my excitement has only grown and I can't wait to tackle a new part of my world.

Maybe I'll even stump my male counterparts.

### **No. 174 - Kelly McIntyre**

I will openly admit that I am a nerd. I go to anime conventions, I cosplay, I participate in fandom communities on LiveJournal, and at one point in my life I could recite about half of the first chapter of Harry Potter from memory (not because I tried to memorize it, but because I had just reread it so many times that it stuck). I broke my work's internet use policy to get into the early registration for the Pottermore beta. Once we finally got our admittance e-mails, two of my friends and I actually held our own miniature Sorting Ceremony, hat and all, to see where we'd be more or less "officially" placed by JK Rowling. I've managed to get both my boyfriend and my "not into the whole magic and spaceships kind of stuff" mother (her words, not mine) totally obsessed with the British sci-fi show Primeval.

So, naturally, I was pretty pumped to be taking a class focused on science fiction and fantasy works. And though I definitely prefer fantasy, I'll never say no to a good sci-fi work.

The professor passes out the allegedly "evil" pop quiz, and I see a lot of things I don't recognize. Matching the novels and authors together is a total failure--I recognize some titles and some authors, but can't connect one to the other, and some I've just never heard of. But that's okay, because look--a Harry Potter question! I don't even have to stop and think about that one. I have a total mind blank on the Mel Brooks question, and when I come to the fen one, all I can picture is the JournalFen website, home to the well-known "Fandom Wank" community... but I can't remember what "fen" actually means. Oh well, moving on. The TARDIS? I've really never been able to get into Doctor Who, but I still know that it's bigger on the inside. Browncoats? They aim to misbehave. When the class goes over these questions as a group, I answer those two while everyone else remains fairly quiet. Then we get to the Enterprise question, and I'm stumped. The professor looks like she thinks I might know the answer to this

question since I just answered the last two, but no such luck. The truth is, I don't think I've ever even seen a full episode of Star Trek, so... maybe I'm not quite as big of a nerd as I'd thought. At least, not for science fiction. But hey, it's never too late to start.

### No. 175 - Ryan Donovan

"Well, let's look at some courses and see what's still available." I don't know how much longer I have left. Racing against the clock is very different when you can't see the little and big hand. My advisor gets her password wrong about three times before she's logged in and scouring English courses. "Have you taken any of the Brit or American lits?"

I say I've taken British lit one and two and have plans to take some of the American lit courses, but what are they like and do they meet in the morning versus late at night? The last add drop day and naturally, inevitably, I find myself needing to drop a course and supplant another in its place. How much time do I have left?

"What's this," I lean closer to the computer screen. "When does it meet?"

"Speculative Fiction? Meets Tuesday, 4:30 to 7:10." The perfect time on the perfect day.

"Isn't that that science fiction one?" The man who shares my advisor's office asks, leaning over his newspaper. Indeed it is.

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The book isn't so long but it's dense, 60's science fiction; hard to penetrate. The title is stupid, in my personal opinion. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?. Seriously, the title of the book shouldn't be a damn mouthful, should it? I'm 30 pages and about fifteen bucks into this book already and it has to be read for tomorrow. Tomorrow. I should have had a full week to read, everyone else in the class does. But I signed up Thursday, then went home before going to the bookstore. Now it's Monday, and I'm 30 pages in.

It's not that it's bad – others in the class will protest this, tomorrow – I really like it, just a lot to read and absorb and take notes on, all in one day. It's not like reading for pleasure, even when you take pleasure in the reading, because it's work. Coffee, cigarettes, and the wee hours of the evening are all I need though. My tools.

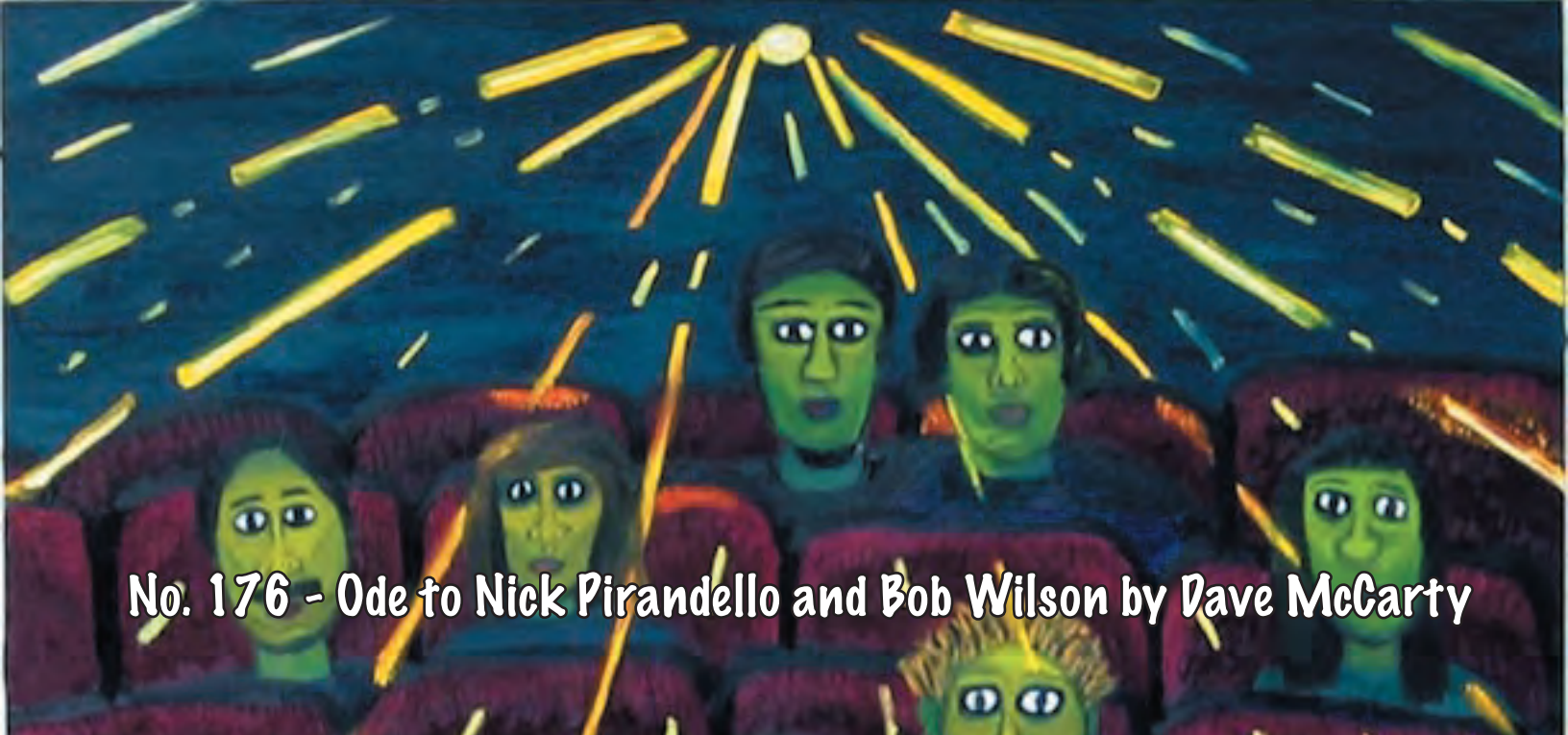
Working in pairs, answer the following questions regarding science fiction and fantasy as a genre. Don't forget that there are two sides!

Group Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the significance of the year 1977?
2. Match these novels with their authors.

Connie Willis	a.	Dune
Octavia Butler	b.	The Magicians
Robert Heinlein	c.	Left Hand of Darkness
Isaac Asimov	d.	Blackout/All Clear
Mary Shelley	e.	I, Robot
Ursula LeGuin	f.	Kindred
Greg Bear	g.	The Last Man
Anne McCaffrey	h.	Stranger in a Strange Land
Lev Grossman	i.	Martian Chronicles
Ray Bradbury	j.	Dragonriders of Pern
Frank Herbert	k.	Darwin's Radio

3. How do the humans attempt to communicate with the aliens in Close Encounters of the Third Kind?
4. What is a Hugo?
5. What is Voldemort's real name?
6. What's the name of the Mel Brooks spoof of science fiction?
7. What is the big reveal at the end of the original Planet of the Apes?
8. What is fen?
9. Who was John W. Campbell?
10. What is the TARDIS?
11. What is a browncoat?
12. What is the designation of the starship Enterprise?
13. How many Star Wars movies include Yoda?
14. Who or what are Cylons?
15. Bonus: How are Cylons different between the two series?



## No. 176 - Ode to Nick Pirandello and Bob Wilson by Dave McCarty

So, I love bad film. I mean, \*really\* love it. Not film that's poorly made or executed...but film that sized itself up against the jocks and popular folks in high school and said "yeah, that's never going to be me" and just picked a direction and went for it. There are all kinds of bad films and since I love them, I collect a lot of them. You got your bad teen comedies, your bad science fiction, your bad action films, the lesbian vampire films (you don't \*need\* to use the adjective "bad" for that one, it's totally implied) and a whole host of films following (in)famous characters like Superfly, Ilsa, Foxy Brown and Shaft. All kinds of bad films, and I love them.

But it \*started\* for with the film *Real Men* in 1987, which I discovered on cable a couple years after its release. It starred (to use that term loosely) Jim Belushi and John Ritter. These are the names you immediately turn to when you think "epic greatness", are they not? Jim Belushi was right between stints in *The Principal* and *Red Heat*. John Ritter was between any number of TV movies, this was his first foray back to the big screen in something like 1980 or 1981 and a couple years before his Blake Edwards masterpiece *Skin Deep* (a fit subject for a whole fanzine, if you ask me).

The film starts off looking like your standard 80s CIA action movie, with Jim Belushi as Nick Pirandello, the super agent and John Ritter as the guy who gets executed in the first scene...but his role then expands to include Bob Wilson, a look-alike less-than-average guy picked by a computer to be plucked up and trained by Nick to make a valuable pass off that is scheduled for the end of the week and **MUST** be done by the

person the other side is expecting. Suddenly, we're in a MacGyver clone as Nick is making a fully functional sub-machine gun to fight off the Russian agents trying to kill Bob out of what appears to be a vacuum cleaner, a power drill, a metal band aid container and about a pound of six penny nails. Now we're whisked off across the country as Nick and Bob bond, meeting a crack CIA clown squad (also sent to kill Bob), a librarian turned dominatrix (the love interest for Nick), a Russian hit squad that breaks for lunch ("They're not motivated like we are, Bob!"), and Nick's dad (which connects the bad film dots back to Ilsa, but you'll see for yourself).

Finally we find ourselves in Washington DC to make the hand off with the UFOs (pronounced 'you-fohs') to trade them a glass of water for the recipe that will save all life on earth, which would otherwise be destroyed in five years. Oh, did I mention the UFOs? Yeah, it's a science fiction film, too! Anyway, now Bob and Nick have both been transformed, Bob is now the hardened agent and Nick is falling prey to focusing on his feelings and is failing at his job.

This film feels like a fruit smoothie of about 12 crazy plot suggestions that would never work all shoved into a BlendTec. And do you know what? It blends! It's over the top, not rational, not believable, and about 700 kinds of fun. There, there you have my gateway drug to the world of bad film...what's yours?

--

Dave McCarty - Chairman

Chicon 7, the 70th annual world science fiction convention

No. 177 - Art from Jessica Norris

# No. 178 - HEARING A NEW WORLD: The Astral Projections of Joe Meek by Michael Layne Heath

Robert George 'Joe' Meek (1929-1967) was the first independent record producer of the Rock and Roll era, an ingenious electronics wizard, and a supremely eccentric, fatally driven lunatic/genius working at the edge of his limitations.

As a result, he has been compared to everyone from Thomas Edison and Ed Wood to Les Paul and, most infamously, Phil Spector. In the case of the latter, both had a singular vision of creating ultimate Pop hits.

Where they diverge is that, for starters, Spector maintained a stable of top-quality songwriters: Greenwich and Barry, Gene Pitney, Goffin and King. Joe Meek neither played nor wrote music, and was reportedly tone deaf. Meek instead relied on more accomplished musicians to perform the unenviable task of translating tapes of his tunelessly hummed ideas into proper songs. (Meek's demos, to hear them today, make for uneasy listening only rivaled by the latest Justin Bieber chart-topper.)

Another difference was that Spector had the cream of L.A. studio players and state-of-Pop-art recording studios at his disposal. His U.K. counterpart Meek produced the bulk of his recorded legacy at 304 Holloway Road in north London, a three-story walk-up that was both home studio and audio laboratory.

It was not uncommon, on any given Meek production, for the singer to be doing his bit inside a closet as the rhythm section occupied the main area of one floor. Strings and horn players were stationed on another. When needed, assorted folk would be on the stairs between floors, stomping their feet in time for added percussive effect. Meanwhile, Meek would oversee from behind his self-built recording desk on the top floor, filtering sounds through an arsenal of tape-delay, echo and reverb effects, also of his creation.

Lastly, Spector's recording approach would become legendary as the Wall Of Sound. Joe Meek seemed more concerned with fashioning a Galaxy of Sound, one that reflected and externalized a lifelong interest in outer space, the possibilities of space travel and life on other planets.

Meek was also fascinated by the occult: on one occasion in February 1958 after attending a séance, Meek believed he had information about the imminent

death of one of his American rock idols, Buddy Holly. Since he was touring the UK at the time, Meek felt compelled to warn Holly personally. As it turned out, he was wrong, but only just: Holly's fated plane ride took place a year later, to the day, of Meek's premonition.

Joe Meek is best known to the average music fan for producing two massive and classic hits of the Sixties. One remains a high point of the early British Invasion, the Honeycombs' 1964 smash 'Have I The Right' (which features the aforementioned stair stompers underlining the capable time-keeping of Honey Lantree, one of Rock's first female drummers). The other was the Tornados' deathless instrumental 'Telstar' from 1962: reportedly Margaret Thatcher's all-time favorite song, it still gloriously captures the optimism and hope in that first blush of the Space Age.

'Telstar' was not the first time, however, that Meek had given vent to his solar-system obsessions. In 1959, assisted by a local skiffle rock combo he dubbed the Blue Men, Meek created a twelve-song album entitled *I Hear A New World*.

Only four out of the twelve tracks Meek and the Blue Men recorded were eventually released, as an Extended Play 45, on the Triumph label in 1960. Ostensibly a device for demonstrating the new possibilities of stereophonic sound, the average record buyer might be forgiven for slotting its contents within the genre of Exotica records popular at the time: records by Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman, attempting to sonically create an atmosphere of South Pacific or Hawaiian paradise for a martini-and-tiki-besotted American upper-middle class. There was even the woozy sway of a Hawaiian guitar on the opening title track.

And yet...what were those sped-up Chipmunk voices doing inhabiting this ersatz Bali Hai?

Meek being Meek, you see, he was aiming at a soundscape to represent the Great Beyond. Specifically, the indigenous music that might be found on the Moon, one populated by such creatures from Meek's alien-fixed brainpan as the Dribcots, Globbots and Saroos.

'This is a strange record. I meant it to be', Meek wrote in the EP's liner notes.

To accomplish this, he augmented the rudi-

mentary tunes Blue Men leader Rod Freeman aided in shaping with favored sound effects. These included such things from Joe's trick bag as (quoting one of the several Meek fan sites online) "corrugated fiberboards, metal ashtrays, a comb moved over a table edge, pebbles on a baking tray, feedback, artificially made short-circuits (and) intentionally detuned instruments." In this context, the frequent appearance of the Hawaiian guitar helps reinforce a sometimes doleful, other times giddy atmosphere; the more upbeat tracks ('Valley Of The Saroos', 'Orbit Around The Moon') even convey what might be perceived as an outer space hoedown.

Then there's Meek's own liner notes that accompany and fancifully describe each track. Here's his description of 'Globb Waterfall': "Gravity has done a strange thing, [forming] a type of overflowing well. The water rises to form a huge globule at the top of a plateau, and when it's reached its maximum size, it falls with a terrific splash to the ground below and flows away into the cracks of the moon. Then the whole cycle repeats itself again and again."

And damned if that's not exactly what the track sounds like!

Meek's imaginative concept and its results are all the more remarkable when one considers the time frame in which they were formulated. Manned space travel was two years in the future. Computers were used only by the military and certain privileged corporations, and customarily the size of a medium to largish room. Music synthesizers were barely a transistorized gleam in Robert Moog's eye. Green moon cheese, green alien armies and the possibility of a flying car were as far as most average earthbound futuristas could project.

Meek's, on the other hand, was a construct of which was only otherwise proposed or fantasized about in stories found in your popular SF/F magazines of the day. (In fact, it's quite the delightful notion to think that, had they and Meek possessed the foresight and means, that a magazine like *Amazing Stories* could have offered *I Hear A New World* as a bonus to subscribers, like contemporary music mags like *MOJO* and *Uncut* include complimentary CD's with each new issue.)

In any event, the first EP sank with barely a trace; a second EP of excerpts was scheduled, but ultimately shelved. *I Hear A New World* (the album) was reportedly pressed in a run of only 99 copies, becoming an instant obscurity that only saw a proper release in 1991, via British label RPM.

And though hugely prolific as a producer, turning out tons of product on his RGM label, hits like 'Telstar' and 'Have I The Right' were far and few between for Joe Meek. He even had royalties for the worldwide success of 'Telstar' denied him during years in litigation, the result of a trumped-up plagiarism suit.

The case was ultimately settled in Meek's favor, though tragically not in his lifetime. After years of career frustration, compounded by mental instability due to both drug abuse and harassment by police and blackmailers for being gay (a punishable offense in the U.K. at the time), Joe Meek shot his landlady to death, then turned the gun on himself, at the Holloway Road home studio in February

1967. Eight years to the day of Buddy Holly's death.

Synthesizers are now an integral part of making music. Handheld computers inform, alert and annoy, and we still don't have that flying car. Yet *I Hear A New World* remains, as one man's perception - bewildering, enchanting and thrilling in its naivete - of what might very well be *Out There*.

#### SELECT DISCOGRAPHY:

*I HEAR A NEW WORLD* is available on the RPM Label out of the UK; look for the deluxe edition which has bonus features, including an audio interview with Joe Meek and a brief CD-Rom newsreel clip of him at 304 Holloway Road.

The best entry into Meeksville UK for the curious is the *IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT* compilation done by Razor and Tie in 1995. A nice overview with hits, representative misses, and two cuts from *I HEAR A NEW WORLD*.

Meek also produced his share of post-Brit Invasion rock groups: players found in their ranks included Ritchie Blackmore and Mitch Mitchell (Meek also took a pass on producing David Bowie, Rod Stewart and the Beatles).

**JOE MEEK'S GROUPS:** *CRAWDADDY SIMONE* (on the RPM label) skims the cream, with place of privilege given to the rip-roaring garage rock title track, by the Syndicates.

A 2009 British biopic of Meek, *TELSTAR*, is apparently decent viewing as well.-----

*I HEAR A NEW WORLD* LP cover:

[http://static.rateyourmusic.com/album\\_images/c6bcf73eaf14d4ff4ef6bb71454eef1/28442.jpg](http://static.rateyourmusic.com/album_images/c6bcf73eaf14d4ff4ef6bb71454eef1/28442.jpg)

# No. 179 - Wussy Wookiee by Helena Nash

Chewbacca. What is he good for? Let us discuss the pros and cons.

In the dock stands one C. Bacca, late of Kashyyyk, Tatooine and various points along the Kessel Run. The charge: being pretty bloody useless when you think about it actually.

Let's examine the defendant: seven foot hairy bastard evidently, and I stress that word, evidently strong enough to rip off young Skywalker's arm if he gets pissed off losing at 3-D galacto-chess or whatever the hell that game is. Armed with some sort of freaky laser crossbow and wearing nowt but some sort of 'utility bandolier'. I theorise that the contents of said bandolier's pouches are as follows: throat soothing blackcurrant lozenges, grooming mitts, nit comb, travel hairdryer, dummy's guide to 3-D galacto-chess, a pocket Wookiee-Human/Human-Wookiee phrase book (the Wookiee section is very short), and a soiled photograph of the defendant and Han Solo crammed drunkenly into the photo booth of the Mos Eisley cantina.

So far so whatever. But here's the thing: what, I

say what, does he actually do in the course of three original Star Wars films and one cameo in the later/earlier trilogy? Admittedly I don't have an encyclopaedic recall of every scene, but to my mind his role in every scene consists of one of the following: doing a whiny growl, trotting along at Han's heel, hefting bits of dismantled C-3PO, flicking switches in the co-pilot seat of the Millennium Falcon, and getting captured. Oh yes, there's a lot of getting captured. If he's not putting his hands up for Vader and Boba Fett, he's rolling around Jabba's dungeon like a miserable orang-utan without a tyre to swing in. I blame it on that bit in the first film where Han and Luke pretend to have captured

him - I think that gave him a taste for the bondage. It happens.

I mean, for the love of the Force, he's a bigfoot with a gun; how come he's not the baddest badass in the Empire? Instead we get a walking carpet who sucks at board games and has a fetish for restraints. And is naked, let's not forget. I daren't think what's going on down there when the Gamorrean guards have got him chained up good 'n' tight. I rate him alongside that chickenshit bear in Wacky Races, but without the cool flying helmet. No wonder Leia never gave him a medal - she sussed he was all mouth.

If it's a co-pilot you want, you might as well go for Lando's little pal - whatsisname with the face like a prawn - Numb Nuts, I think. At least he'd be cheaper to feed.

So, Chewbacca, you stand accused of being a bit crap really. Though in your defence, I've seen your family in the infamous Star Wars Holiday Special and frankly they're a mess. Especially that old pervy one - Itchy? Scratchy? I watched the smelly old bugger getting off



on a tiny holographic Diahann Carroll. Or possibly it was the Jefferson Starship number. Either way, it's clear you've come from a dysfunctional family unit, despite living in a cool tree-house like the Swiss Family Robinson. No wonder you sought the heterosexual life-partnership of a hairless smuggler who shoots (Greedo) first.

The only cool thing about Chewbacca is his name, which I firmly believe was first used in *The Jungle Book*. Listen to *I Wanna Be Like You* - the bit when King Louie does that freaky skippy thing with his hooped arms and he starts scat singing. I swear he goes 'Chewbaccachewbaccachewbacca'...

A futuristic cityscape at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, with the sun low on the horizon. In the foreground, there are various structures and platforms. A person is flying through the air in the upper left corner. The overall scene is a blend of science fiction and urban architecture.

## No. 181 - The Worlds of 'What If?'

### Copyright 2011 by Paula S. Jordan

Created by: †Gothic† (2009)

Ever wonder how serious science fiction writers come up with all those fascinating other-worldly settings and critters and mind-bending sentient beings? And how the heck they make them reasonable enough to satisfy all those serious science fiction readers? The ones who ask such questions as 'how does that moon set, and then rise again in the same place?' Or 'how did that alien just disappear right in front of my eyes?'

The raw ideas for such things can come from anywhere, of course. For the finished stories, though, or at least the stories that qualify as science fiction, that raw ore is put through a rigorous mental smelting and casting process whose standards of quality are based in the physical realities of the universe itself—as far as they are known or reasonably theorized at the time the story is written.

What kind of physical realities? To take an example close to home: our solar system is the product of uncountable cause-and-effect linkages and interdependencies stretching all the way back to the big bang. Our living space (our 'biosphere') within the solar system consists of a mineral-rich planet of particular mass (the Earth) orbiting at a particular distance from a star

of particular age, composition and size (the sun.)

Much simplified, those 'particulars' define an interconnected system in which 1) the sun radiates enough energy to provide enough light and warmth both to 2) melt ice for liquid water to dissolve minerals from the Earth and distribute them through the environment, and to 3) stimulate the growth of living things, thereby 4) supporting amazing life forms whose bodily needs and processes are fine-tuned to the conditions and nutrients available on our planet. Oh, and the Earth is massive enough to provide sufficient gravity to hold gaseous minerals at its surface providing an atmosphere for those life forms to breathe.

Other influences (climate, topography, tectonics, animal behavior, altruism, technology, warfare) also contribute, over time, to the shapes and faculties of the life forms that arise and develop here.

End result: us, and the food chain, indeed the entire interwoven living environment, that sustains our lives. But tweak one or more of those 'particulars' very much and you've got a whole different biosphere. It wouldn't work for us any more, most likely. But to a different set of beings, with requirements aligned to the

**No. 182 - Art from Olajos Tibor (<http://gothichun.deviantart.com/>)**

conditions it offers, it would look just like home.

So here's the creative part. A writer visualizes an alien being with the characteristics needed to support the story at hand, then deduces/estimates/calculates the characteristics that alien's native planet must have to first shape it and then support its particular needs. The writer then extrapolates from that planet's characteristics to the distance and nature of the star needed to shape and support it.

Coming from another direction, the writer might visualize a particular star first, then reason out the likely characteristics of a nearby planet and the nature of life forms indigenous to it. Or start with the planet, and work both ways, deducing the stellar requirements needed for such a planet, and the types of life forms likely to arise there. The logical processes are the same.

Could there be a real planet out there like one a writer would make up? Maybe a one-in-a-million chance. But when you think about it, even at those odds, with the vast numbers of stars in the universe there could be millions of planets out there much like it.

About those questions in the first paragraph:

That moon that sets and seems to rise again in the same location? Perhaps it collided long ago with something almost as large as itself. As the moon rotated, that object could have gouged away the outer layers of the moon's equatorial region, leaving a rough oval or barbell shape that might now rotate rapidly in a flat spin about an axis pointing directly to the planet below it. There would then be two points in each of the moon's rotational periods when its longer dimension would lie parallel to the horizon as seen from the planet's surface. A person viewing moonset could then see an oblong shape sinking fully below the horizon. Then, as the moon's rotation brings one end higher again, above the horizon, that observer could see what looks like the rise and quick second setting of a smaller moon.

The alien's invisibility trick could be purely technological; for instance, equipment to record the view behind itself and then project that photographed image in front of itself, toward the observer, who would see the projected background view as if the creature weren't there. Or it could camouflage itself by some method we don't now understand. One example, inexplicable by current science but clearly observable in nature, is the octopus. Color alteration is fairly well understood, but this beastie somehow alters the tex-

ture and rigidity of its skin as well as its color to blend perfectly into a branch of coral, for instance, then skitter away on two recognizable tentacle 'legs.'

So all those cool science fictional worlds come from the creative and analytical workings of human minds, stimulated by and filtered through observable nature, both in the stars and the myriad wonders of our own fragile biosphere.

And why do they go to all that trouble? Same reason you read the results: for the satisfaction—and the pure fun!—of discovery.



# Again, Worst Ideas

## No. 184 - My Worst Idea by Yvonne Rowse

My worst idea is very prosaic. It's a chronic condition, and it's not mine alone; 'My life is over'. I don't mean that I'm dead, obviously, but that the best of my life has gone and I should settle for whatever I can get.

The acute episode that most changed my life happened at the end of 1987. Pursued relentlessly by a terrifically charming, recently divorced man I fell hard. Perhaps inevitably, once he'd caught me he lost interest. I looked after his kids whilst he headed out for the pub and his newest target. Duh!

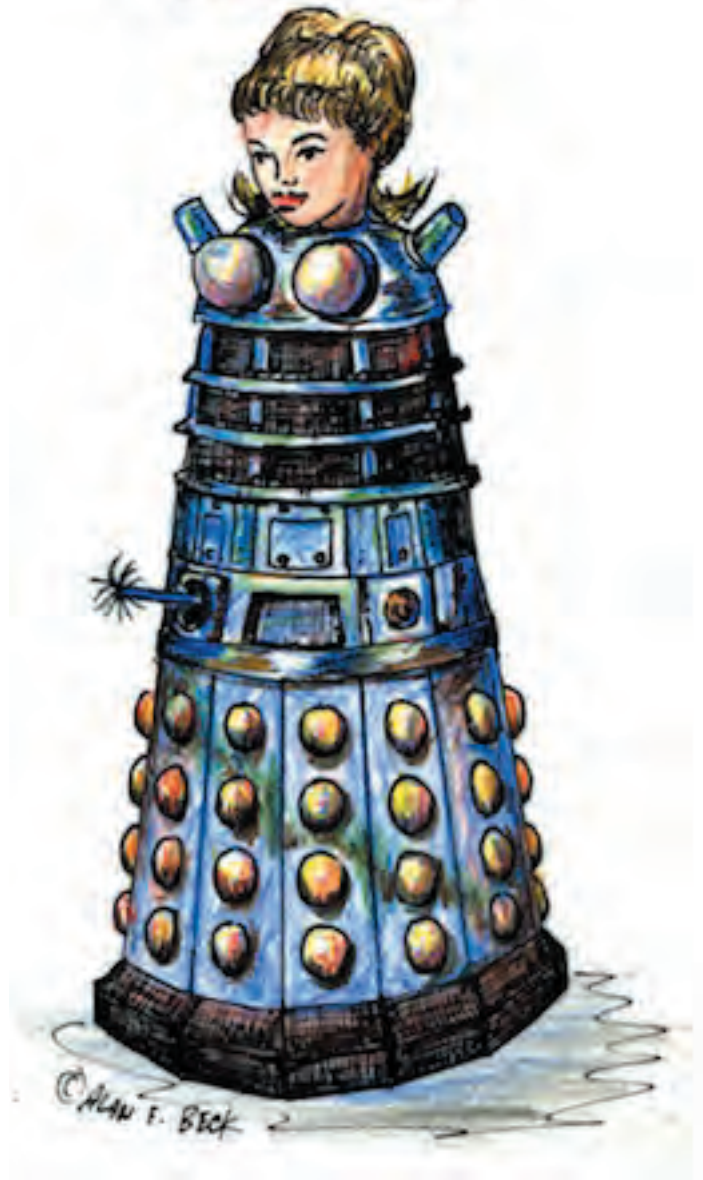
I'd fatally wounded a number of friendships to be with this man. Lonely, I fell into a series of disastrous short term relationships. I knew things were not going to get any better. David seemed different. Within three months we were engaged. I was 28.

We were married for twenty years and had two children who I love unreservedly and am astonishingly proud of. It was a comfortable but empty life. I don't regret those years. There were moments of great happiness, times of contentedness but my condition was only worsened. Faithfulness was achieved by default because I couldn't imagine anyone being attracted to me.

Somewhere in the hopeless years I plunged into fandom and then inadvertently landed a job that revived some of my atrophied career ambitions. I pulled myself up to be environment manager via a masters and I recovered a huge amount of confidence through that and from my fannish friends. Then I was offered a job as a consultant in Sheffield and left my husband to take it, at his insistence ('If you take that job our marriage is over!' 'OK.'). Newly independent I look at life as an adventure again.

But my worst idea keeps sneaking into my head.

Barbie Dollek



No. 185 - Art from Alan F. Beck

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## No. 186 - Art Lineri

Bad ideas? I've had hundreds, but my worst was easy: I found a touring band of Jesus freaks and rode with 'em for a year. I saw 49 states, five countries, and met hundreds of dirty hippies who praised Jesus up until the moment they lit up and floated away. Lost years. Lost years.

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# No. 187 - Suford's Worst Idea by Suford Lewis

I think my worst idea was for the Masquerade: to substitute performance areas for each costume or costume group, put them distributed around a large walk-through space, and have the audience walk through these areas instead of having the contestants parade across the stage. It dates from the lead-up to the 1989 Worldcon, Noreascon 3, and my brainstorming for how to make the Masquerade (which I was in charge of) shorter! -- this was a time when 100 costumes were still expected, though we got fewer than 60 come the event.) As a performer myself, I thought that it would be great to do a presentation over and over, performing up close for each new set of people, allowing them to get a good close look at the participants' costumes and acting.

I had not considered that mine was not a common attitude: most costumers are not actors, they are costume makers and designers. This would be an unpleasant experience for many of them. It would be particularly burdensome with heavy and elaborate costumes, ones that often do not survive (at least in their proper position) much past one iteration of their presentation. There is also the problem of how to "reset to the start" for some presentations that involve transformations, objects that have to be retrieved, or elaborate choreography of many participants. I also ignored the difficulty audience members might have with walking around so much and standing essentially for a period equal to the length of the masquerade. How to videotape it, photograph it, judge and give out the awards, I could figure out. How to break for rest and repair had no very good solutions.

My idea was heavily shot down at the time by many costumers. The most vocal of these was Animal X with whom I had several email exchanges on the subject. I think I totally blew her mind and those of many others when, after arguing determinedly in favor of the idea, I finally said that they were right and it would be a mistake to do it that way. We did try several ways to make the intervals between costumes shorter (which

I know from editing the videotapes took almost as long as the costumes). However, this whole "the Masquerade is too long!" thing is now a dead issue.

I made a friend of Animal X with this unexpected bow to reason and perhaps of many other costumers. I certainly worked hard to make the N3 Masquerade as good as possible for both the costumers and the audience and I understand they gave me a standing ovation for it (I was delivering the rolls of film shot by our 2 official photographers to our overnight developing service.)



# No. 189 - Pepper Pot by Elloise Hopkins

At the end of my time I reached for the nearest object and my withered hands clasped an old pepper pot. The world broke around me turning my body to dust, but my hands held hope for the future and so I persisted.

I prised open the pepper pot with the death clutches of my fingers and poured into it a thousand fragments of life. I gave it the textures of my world and the memory of a scent. I put myself and all I knew into the pepper pot, and with the last of my strength buried it beside my crumbling body.

The pepper pot took the last of my breath and waited.

But the time after mine was not kind on the pepper pot. Grounds shifted, seas roiled, the earth turned inside out and back again taking the pepper pot with it. My echoes of life poured through the cracks and buried themselves in the new world, useless and wasted, until all that remained in the pepper pot was a thousand fragments of pepper.

In the time after mine strange creatures inherited the land. One of the creatures found the pepper pot and called itself king. For a third of its reign, the creature studied the pepper and craved its purpose.

But the pepper gave no answers.

The creature became angry. It set aside the pepper and explored the baser aspects of its kingdom. It took wives and made children. It made its subjects do the same and for a time took pleasure in sex.

After half of its reign, the inertia of the pepper tormented the king so much that it no longer took pleasure in sex. It stroked the pepper pot night and day pleading and begging.

But still the pepper gave no answers.

The creature's head, weighed down by madness, fell onto the pepper pot. Wracked with pain and pity at its own existence, the creature inhaled what it thought was its last breath and instead inhaled the pepper. It ignited in the creature a sense of pain, clarity and relief.

The creature's eyes stung, its nose burned and its head swelled.

It sneezed.

The sensation was better than anything the creature had experienced. It ran before its subjects calling out its triumph: the pepper had a purpose, and its purpose was better than an orgasm.

For the rest of its time the creature lived in a state of pepper-fuelled bliss. A thousand noses inhaled a thousand fragments of pepper, and when the pepper was gone they plundered the land for more until there was nothing left. Sex no longer gave them pleasure and they forgot to mate.

At the end of its time the creature lay amongst the wreckage of its world, nose bleeding and trembling hands clutching an old pepper pot that contained a thousand fragments of nothing.

The worst idea I ever had was to use a pepper pot as a time capsule.





## No. 191 - My Worst Idea by Trevor Clark

I am a comic collector. Within that wide brush more specifically Phantom comics. You know purple guy (well blue in Norway and Sweden), mask, Ghost who cannot die, 400 hundred years ago on a deserted Bangalla beach.... In Australia we have the tradition of Royal Agricultural Shows in the capital cities. City meets country, they gave out sample bags in the past and now they sell them. The overrun on the printing of the Phantom were put in these bags. As a child it was not hard to accumulate a small pile of comics this way. This was my beginnings, the worst idea? No not yet.

In my teens I started parting with my pocket money to buy the current issues. The comics published in Australia then were 32 pages on newsprint paper. They reprinted the newspaper stories and some Swedish stories. So the 32 issues a year relied on reprinting page for page older stories. It wasn't hard to get tired of them. By the time I thought I had grown out of the comic I had around 180 issues. 5 years later after school, girls, sport, cars and uni. I had a new job as a training Air Traffic Controller. Over beers a colleague mentioned he also loved the Phantom. I agreed to give him mine as they would at least go to a good home. In 1983 I went from Melbourne to Sydney he returned to Perth. If you are not familiar with Australian geography, the ends of the earth. Was this the worst idea? No.

Time passes, 6 years to be exact, I move state and end up in Perth. I rediscover Doctor Who with the release of videos, find other cultural media in the genre field and spot a Phantom comic in the newsagents. It seems different. Indeed it is. An enthusiast named Jim Shepherd bought the company in Australia and gave the imprint a new lease of life. Nicer covers, better paper,

complete stories. I am excited. I buy it. That is the worst decision Idea I have had.

Of course I now have to rebuy all the old Australian issues I had and more. I discover the overseas issues. The reprint collections. The old collectables, the new collectables. This leads to discovering Judge Dredd. Other Australian comics. Modesty Blaise, Sam Keith, Neil Gaiman etc. My friend in Perth gives me back his/ my collection, he now was married with children and a wife who didn't understand. The circle is completed. The dam burst and I am still surfing the waves it created. No single decision completely changes your life but this influenced me a lot. Allowing me to proudly be passionate to the point of obsession about a single thing within a field.

It has led to Worldcons, Comiccons, winning Fan Funds (GUFF 2009). It gave James B the excuse to take me around comic shops in London on a magical day in 2008. Cementing a friendship partly based on the shared love of comics. Different comics admittedly but with a respect for diversity.

It is the rock on which my collecting branches. Even on a trip to England and Denmark this year giving me an excuse to rummage in charity shops. Yes I did find two albums combining 6 issues each from the 80's.

Ok they are in Danish but how cool is that. I can add them to my 3000 current issues. I haven't found my UK Miller Phantoms yet but maybe next trip. So really it wasn't the worst idea I ever had, and I don't regret it. It is what I am. It is what my partner loves (I hope) in me.

**No. 192 - Photo by Christopher J Garcia**

## No. 193 - A Porch Post by Thelma Roslyn Lubkin

I was sitting on the porch swing yesterday morning, and I started to look at the wooden pillar closest to me: like everything else in and of this house, it needs maintenance. Its covering of white paint has cracked.

Near its top on the north side, the paint now has a grid of small rectangular cracks; further down the rectangles become so large horizontally that it's almost not a grid at all, just stripes across the pillar surface; the west side of the post has cracked into curved patterns - wavy ovals that remind me of stucco, but if I were to stare long enough I could resolve them in the way that we resolve clouds. The south side shows the process in action; small strips of paint are standing away from the pillar, exposing the bare wood below.

I expect that the wind will soon take them off completely and that it and the rain will open new cracks.

I'm fascinated by how much information there is in one porch post: a chemist could tell us the composition and quality of the white paint; a biologist could tell us what wood was used to build the post; a physicist/engineer could pinpoint the processes that cause the gridding, the stripes, the wavy patterns; climatologists and meteorologists could explain the weather history that generates such processes, and put it in context with already known data about the area.

Historian, anthropologist, sociologist, archaeologist, psychologist: these could tease out the economic standing, the social status, the era these people lived in, even some individual quirks of the householders, if someday all that remains is that single porch post.

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I am sorry neighbors, but I find my porch pillar much more aesthetically pleasing than a fresh, unblemished flat white covering

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## No. 195 - Kristina Kopnisky

**Saturday of con.  
Filk and party till too late.  
Morning panel? Ouch.**

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## No. 194 - 300 issues? That's not too many... by John Purcell

Well, it was bound to happen. Fandom's Ever-Ready Bunny<sub>TM</sub> of Fanac, Christopher John Garcia, has achieved a milestone not many of us would dare aspire to: publish 300 issues of a fanzine. Now, there are indeed many other high-numbered zines, but not for general consumption; these tend to be apa-zines (like Fred Lerner's Lofgeornost, John Hertz's Vanamonde, to name two that I get in the mail) that have existed for a long time (in FAPA and APA-L, respectively). A long-running apa (Amateur Press Association, for those who may not know the term) can do this if the membership is active and enjoys the give and take of apa commentary. I have been there before (Minneapa, Lasfapa, and Azapa in the past, now in SNAPS) and know where-of I speak. It is definitely the energy level that allows an apa-zine to reach stratospheric numbers.

It also helps to stick to a regular publishing schedule. APAs do that, as well as club publications. I have no idea how many De Profundis issues there have been (the LASFS clubzine), but I do get MT Void postings (Mark and Evelyn Leeper's e-zine started off as a clubzine waaayyy back when), and that one is fast approaching the 1700 issue mark: it is posted every Friday without fail. And again, if the club is active and energetic, its clubzine will last for many a moon. WC-SFAzine and BCSFAzine (from Canada) are two other club publications well up in the hundreds, and one look at the calendar of events in those zines reveals a high level of activity.

And so it is with Chris Garcia. He is highly energetic and regular. (Alright, the word "irregularity" applies to Chris, too, but I'm not going there.) Those adjectives amply describe him. In fact, I believe it was Ian Millstead who described Chris at Eastercon (in Ian's zine Griff) as a "blur of smiles and hair." Yep. That's Chris, alright.

So it is with great admiration, and a little bit of fear, that I congratulate Chris Garcia not only on his recent Best Fanzine Hugo Award win - with recently added co-editor James Bacon - but also on reaching this, the 300th issue of Drink Tank. Kudos to you, and at the rate you're going, Chris, you should hit issue #400 in two years since you're averaging 50 issues a year. Yow! How do you do it? I'd go crazy if I pubbed at a rate like that.

Oh, guess I just answered my question.

# No. 196 - 36 Facts about Root Beer by John C. Pershing II

OSFest 2, July 17-19, 2009, in Omaha, Nebraska is planning to serve home made Root Beer in the ConSuite. But such things involve a bit of work . . .The following was submitted by John, one of the brewers:

As part of a well rounded philosophy of life, I believe that it is important to never close out a day without learning a lesson. Today I was fortunate enough to have learned several, which I share with you now, in no particular order. For those who were unaware, Troy, April and I made some homemade Root Beer on Saturday.

1. Root Beer is sticky.
2. Before attempting to serve homemade Root Beer, it is important to have well constructed tapping gear.
3. 30 feet of hose connected to the tapper still produces pure foam at 40 PSI (Pounds per Square Inch of pressure).
4. If you think the connection is tight enough, it isn't.
5. 40 PSI is a lot.
6. The spectacle of a beer volcano (a good story in its own right) pales before the sheer awesome power of a Root Beer detonation.
7. My kitchen has many nooks and crannies where sticky stuff can drip.
8. My kitchen will forevermore smell of Root Beer.
9. The CSI shows are right. If a person's body is in front of an explosion, you really can find a "blast shadow" where the body absorbed the impact, thus protecting things in the "shadow."
10. Root Beer is cold.
11. 40 PSI, applied to a 5 gallon keg, is sufficient pressure to accelerate Root Beer to transonic speeds.
12. My butt will block a Root Beer detonation quite well.
13. A Root Beer enema is never a good idea.
14. Root Beer hurts.
15. Root Beer is sticky.
16. Root Beer is not recommended as a body wash.
17. Electronic items and Root Beer Bombs do not mix.
18. When cleaning Root Beer, do not stand in one place too long.
19. Root Beer dries FAST.
20. Root Beer, when dried, can be used as a virtually indestructible cement.
21. Aerospace firms should investigate the sticky power of Root Beer for purposes of bonding composite parts of high-performance aircraft.
22. Root Beer adheres to socks just as well as to shoes.
23. Do not plan on getting anything else done on a day when you have a Root Beer Bomb.
24. Spending perhaps \$0.75 on hose clamps is a pretty good investment when balanced against an entire wasted day.
25. My refrigerator needed new art work anyway.
26. If you are going to have a Root Beer explosion you will be very lucky if, by pure chance, you are standing next to the keg when it happens.
27. If, by chance, you are not standing next to it, the Root Beer will KEEP exploding until the CO2 runs out.
28. The CO2 will NOT run out if the pressure canister is still attached to the keg.
29. 40 PSI is a lot.
30. Once you have done the dishes and they are dry, put them away immediately. That way you won't have to wash them again should a Root Beer Bomb detonate in your kitchen.
31. Burning Root Beer does not smell as good as you might think or hope.
32. It is impossible to get ALL the Root Beer off of electric burners.
33. Burning Root Beer generates smoke.
34. Root Beer smoke is a mild hallucinogenic.
35. What pretty colors!
36. I'm not even sure I like Root Beer.

# No. 197- Cover Art: What Am I Missing Out On? by nrlymrtl



It's getting to be just a touch nippy at night and I truly do enjoy snuggling down under two quilts and a few cats with a good book at the end of the day. Wrapped in that fuzzy warmth, I have enjoyed many an adventure. However, as I casted my eye over the cover of this particular science fiction escapade, I had my doubts.

A friend from knitting circle had recommended this author; we had been discussing, quite intellectually even, the science fiction genre. Primarily we had been hashing over how nearly every genre was rife with minimalist and primarily sexual roles for female characters. I have always loved scifi, and so I learned at a young age that a developed sense of denial and the ability to overlook slights and condescension really allowed me to continue to revel in this genre.

But for some years now I have found myself seeking out and longing for fiction that treats all the characters as multifaceted entities. So here we were discussing this long-standing grievance of half the species and my personal desire for some seriously good escapism. A few recommendations came out of it and a subsequent trip to my library ensued. Now here I was staring at the cover to Dawn by Octavia Butler, published in 1987.

Let's see:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| I naked chick                             | Check |
| 2nd chick, suggestion of cleavage         | Check |
| Both chicks placed in "interesting" poses | Check |
| 1980s hairdo                              | Check |

This did not look promising. I don't mind a bit of female nudity here and there: Renaissance oil paintings, lady justice in the county court, Angelina Jolie movie flick. But

when I think "righteously good scifi story", I don't think "naked chick".

So, let's fast forward two nights. I am now over a 100 pages into Dawn and I DON'T WANT TO PUT IT DOWN! It's a well-written story, with developed characters and an intriguing plot. If I had not had the recommendation from a trusted book-lover, I would have passed this awesome story up based on the cover art. Snob, that I am.

The cover shows two white females, one nude and the other tantalizingly hinting at some cleavage. So far in the story, we have met two humans, both dark-skinned. Nudity was a brief factor, in that we all have to shower sometime. The rest of the characters in the book are aliens. Why did the publisher choose not to feature the lead female black character and some of these funky ETs on the cover?

Now that I have Dawn on my shelf, calling to me as I take the time to type this out to you all, I have to wonder. I wonder how many other sluttily-dressed awesome scifi stories are out there? How many have I passed on by because of the cover art? If I want nudity, sex, little to no plot, zero character development, well there is a certain genre I head over to for that. And the cover art example we have been discussing is a good illustration of what I would expect on the majority of this unnamed genre. Not on my scifi. Should I assume that once upon a time only adolescent males read science fiction, and so the publishers were forced to ignore the basic storylines and character features of the book and to simply put at least one bare lady on the cover? But we have moved on, right? We are a higher society now, right? Is there still a need to tart up my reading? I say no, but based on this experience I will be more likely in the future to give a seemingly risqué book a second look.

No. 198 - Art from nrlymrtl

## No. 199 - Games as Story-telling Medium, Interview with Barbara Friend-Ish by darkcargo.com

Literature and gaming are often viewed as being on opposite sides of the same spectrum in a mutually debilitating way: readers of literature are cast into a snobbish role, dismissive of games and game-players; and gamers are seen as short-attention span wastrels, or culturally challenged corpse-humpers, unable to comprehend or appreciate literature.

In this interview with Darkcargo.com, Barbara Friend-Ish, publisher and editor at Mercury Retrograde Press, merges these views and shows us how Game and Story are not so dissimilar. Here, she shares her experiences in developing a game for her Compton Crook Award-nominated novel *Shadow of the Sun*.

### Game? What game?

I've worked with James Kempf and Anthony Thomas of Cliché Studio to develop two games for my story world: one for each book so far. The game we developed for *The Shadow of the Sun* (I say "we", but in this case really all I did was toss out the idea, and the guys from Cliché ran with it) is Sweeps, an old-fashioned dice game. For the sequel, *War-Lord of the Gods*, we've been developing Fortunes, a card game that can be played with a Tarot deck, which includes both a play/gambling phase and a divination phase.

### How does this game relate to *Shadow of the Sun*?

Characters in *The Shadow of the Sun* play both games, though my PoV, Ellion, doesn't play either game during that volume. His Tanaan companions play the dice game quite a lot when they're on the road, and at one point several of them also play the card game. Ellion himself will play the card game in *War-Lord of the Gods*, and the things that happen at that game matter to the story.

### Who are the game makers and how did you meet them?

James Kempf and Anthony Thomas are the principals of Cliché Studio, an Atlanta-based game development company. I met James when I visited a writing group of which he was a member here in Atlanta. James later became my assistant, and we quickly became the

sort of friends who spend a great deal of time teaching and learning from one another. He and Anthony founded Cliché after we had begun working together. They are two of the best teachers I've ever had.

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## No. 200 - Kristina Kopnisky

cream in my coffee  
artificial or real stuff  
tame bite of brown joy

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**Many gamers have long enjoyed games because of the story that develops during the game. How did you come to this conclusion and where do you see Gaming taking Story?**

I have James to thank for that. Because I come from a hardcore literary background I took a long time to see the power of game: for many years I put all my energy into developing my craft as a writer and a publishing professional. I won't say that I held gaming in contempt, which is a mistake I see a lot of literary people making; I just didn't see what was going on in gaming for a pretty long time, didn't understand what a powerful storytelling medium it is. But James also comes from a literary background, and so he had the toolkit and vocabulary to communicate with me about gaming in a very theoretical way. And that was what I needed, to be able to understand. He's really been a guiding light to me in this area, taking me through the process of developing two games and beginning to brainstorm with me about the next.

As with writing, I'm learning the most about gaming by developing my own ideas into creations other people can enjoy. So much of what we need to know to perform well in any art form we can only learn by doing. And that in turn has given me the context I need to see what other people are doing when they use game to tell stories.

In recent months I've been learning from other experts as well, notably Andrew Greenberg, Blake Sorensen, and Sean Patrick Fannon. All of them have been incredibly generous. There are so many different ways

game can enrich our experience of story. The games we've created so far give readers the ability to taste some of the experiences of the story world in ways that can be enjoyed on their own merits, even while the underpinnings of those games flesh out the world. The sorts of games that don't involve role-playing, primarily social games like dice games, card games, board games etc. are reflections of the cultures from which they come.

In particular, Fortunes (the card game we developed) is a window into some mysteries of the story world that will become hugely important in later volumes. If the reader never digs into this game, his experience of the novel will be undiminished, but the reader who wants to pursue the clues the game and its underpinnings bring to the story will have a richer experience. And it's fun to do things that characters we enjoy or identify with do as well; it can be a way of identifying with them, of tasting their experience in ways that the passive absorption of a reader or movie audience can't access.

Roleplaying games, of course, take those truths into completely different territory. Rather than simply tasting the experiences of people in a story world, roleplayers get to play the parts of people in that world. Depending on their particular mindsets and personal wiring, they may temporarily become them. I had the privilege of sitting in with Sean while he ran an RPG session recently, got to see what a wonderful border-crossing experience it is to participate in a game with a really talented GM: Sean came in with a story prepared for the people in that room, and he began telling it—in second person.

In written fiction second person almost always feels false; as a reader, I know I did not in fact do or experience the things the writer claims I did. But in a role-playing game, it is valid, and powerful: the game master tells the participants what they see, what is happening around them, even what the rolls of the dice they cast mean to them and the story as a whole. (Which can make the GM seem a bit like an oracle, sometimes.) But the real magic of these sessions, to my mind, is not the validity of the second-person expression, the sense that the story is actually happening to the participant—but the fact that the participants themselves help to make the story. They make choices that influence how the tale unfolds, become true parts and co-authors of the tale. And Live-Action Role Play pushes the creation and experience of the story even further into the participant audience's control.

Gaming is becoming increasingly mainstream. All the games on Facebook and on phones make this easy to see. The fastest growth in gaming today, believe it or not, is among middle-aged women. And if most of them are playing Farmville, a substantial portion are also playing games that much more closely resemble the sorts of RPGs that used to be the exclusive purview of us geeks, playing in mafia or vampire tales. A recent Supreme Court decision about violence in games specifically rendered games protected speech under the First Amendment. Gaming is becoming an accepted storytelling medium; it will become more and more commonplace for us as a society to see games as a perfectly valid way of telling and experiencing story.

**There's a theory that reading and literature is losing an audience to gaming. What's your scutbutt on this and how do you think that relationship will develop?**

I think that notion comes from putting two unrelated facts together and inferring a connection between them. It is true that there have been a number of disturbing statistics on the prevalence of reading in our culture put forth in recent years. It is also true that the game market is undergoing unprecedented growth. I think it's a mistake to think people are fleeing books for games; there seems to be very high crossover between gamers and readers, particularly in SF/F. It's very popular, in publishing circles, to talk about transmedia, even though most people seem uncertain exactly what transmedia is. It's an exciting idea, this spreading of stories across different media—and it's painful to watch people who don't understand or respect certain media try to expand their reach into them. I see so many games being put forth as adjuncts to movies or TV series, for example, that completely miss the point of gaming. No person not trapped in a dentist's waiting room who has not already exhausted every back issue of Highlights in the place would want to play these games, but the media companies in question seem to feel they've "checked the box". I don't think gaming is a threat to literature. They are different and complementary storytelling media. Literature excels at delivering meaning and coherent tales; gaming excels at delivering experiences.

I think the best storytellers will—and are already beginning to—develop ways to use these media to enrich one another, and spread their concepts across them. In my opinion the threat here lies, as it usually does these days, with publishers and developers

who want to simply kick things out quickly, according to formulae that have always worked in the past.

To do this right will take every ounce of creativity developers can muster—not individually, but in truly collaborative teams. No single person can do all the work required to do justice to all the different storytelling media available to us; the ways of doing the work that have served for the past few decades are obsolete. If the games we're seeing multiply around us this year are mostly the storytelling equivalent of popcorn, already I'm hearing the beginnings of a demand for games that tell true, deep, immersive stories. That's art, and it won't be developed or distributed with popcorn-level resources or timelines. And as usual, I think the really great stuff is going to come from the independent side of the industry.

### **Where can we get a copy of this game?**

Instructions for playing Fortunes with a standard Tarot deck are already available on the Mercury Retrograde Press website, at <http://www.mercuryretrograde.com/Worlds/WayoftheGods/games.asp>. When War-Lord of the Gods is released, the instructions will also be included in the book. We're beginning to develop a proper Fortunes deck, which will be published by Mercury Retrograde Press; it will probably come out in conjunction with War-Lord of the Gods. And we've begun development on an electronic version as well.

### **One reason I love games is for the awesome artwork. I spend more time browsing the images in the D&D manuals than playing the game. Will be seeing artworks with the publication of this game?**

We will be publishing a deck, of course. There will be several different artists involved—doing all the images required for a deck this large is a huge undertaking. We're also looking into offering prints of some of the cards, particularly the cards of the Major Arcana or "Suit of Stars", if there's sufficient interest. And as the series progresses, we'll be offering different versions of the Fortunes deck, geared to different cultures in the stories.

### **How did the gaming experience at Play-On Con change the story you're currently writing?**

We did our first major playtesting of Fortunes at PlayOn Con this year. PlayOn is a terrific little con in Birmingham, Alabama, with a great environment for

gamers but interests that extend well beyond gaming. We had the fantastic good fortune of having game enthusiasts and game developers sit in with us and really put the game through its paces.

I learned a great deal at that session, not least because—while James and I had done the early game planning together—he'd been doing a lot of informal play-testing in my absence. And in the course of using that play-testing to work out the bugs, he wound up making minor adjustments to the rules of the game: nothing huge, just a bunch of little changes that improved gameplay. And I found out about all the little ways the game had evolved since our last session together, during play-testing—after I'd already written the chapter in which the PoV character, Ellion, finally plays the game in War-Lord. Likewise, it had been my responsibility to develop the divinatory half of the game, and I'd developed methodologies for gameplay that supported the divinatory phase—and then, during playtesting, learned the flaws in assumptions I'd made. Which in turn required me to modify the half of the game I was developing. Also, watching different styles of play made me understand more about the ways individual gaming styles influence the unfolding of a particular game, strategies different sorts of players will adopt, etc.

By the time we'd finished our playtesting sessions at PlayOn, most of the gameplay mechanics I'd written into that chapter had to be taken out and reworked. But those were all rather low-level changes: I had to take that chapter apart and put it back together, but the important things that arose from having that game in that novel remained just as I'd planned. The things the game itself reveals about the culture that developed it, both to Ellion and to the reader, stood—as did the way the divination unfolds in that chapter and how it affects the characters.

I had a fantastic time developing this game and using it in the novel: it gave me avenues into revealing truths I hadn't expected to be able to show the reader until the third or fourth novel in the series, and it increases the power of what happens in the story—in part because the reader will get to make most of those connections for herself, without me having to spell it out. And it gave me a fantastic avenue in to a culture that's very important in the overall scheme of the series but I won't have much time to explore on the page. That, of course, is exactly why games and literature are such a powerful combination.



No. 201 - Art from Mo Starkey

# Reviews!

## No. 202 - The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Century: 1969, by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill (or, The League of One Bossy Woman) by Helena Nash

First off, I should say that I have a great love for the concept of The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen comics, and am rather fond of the first two series, especially series two, pitting the likes of Captain Nemo, Mr Hyde, Allan Quatermain and Mina Murray (formerly Harker) against the Martian war machines of The War of the Worlds. Really, what's not to love about Hyde taking on the tripods on London Bridge, doing a little song and dance number as he goes down in flames?

The greatest heroes, heroines and villains of 19th century fantasy, united in one Victorian super-team. Genius. They should make it into a film some day...

Ahem. The latest entry in the series is Century: 1969 – book two of a trilogy taking the League from 1910 to the present day. The setting for this episode offers plenty of fab sixties themes (flower power, faux Rolling Stones, Jack Carter and psychedelic freak-outs),

but the same less interesting plot elements from book one are still there. Mina is a bossy cow recognisable only by her scarf; Allan is a whiny puss recognisable only by standing next to Mina; Orlando is an arse, wallowing in his/her anecdotage and polyamorous romps; and the ersatz Aleister Crowley villain is a bit naughty. But his life-prolonging scheme is hardly on a par with all-out war between Moriarty and Fu Manchu, or a Martian Invasion (series one and two respectively).

By the end my overall impression was that there had been an awful lot of chat again, and not enough action, at least not by the supposed heroes. They tended to walk around a lot and react rather feebly when it all kicked off.

I think the problem lies primarily in Alan Moore's choice of characters for his later League stories. The group in the first two series was comprised of a militaristic Sikh warlord (Nemo), a sociopathic Invisible Man, an ageing opium-fiend (Allan Quatermain) and Mr freaking Hyde, all kept in line by the little woman out of Dracula, played like a tough rape survivor. In a way, Mr Moore shot his bolt early by taking Hyde, Nemo and the Invisible Man out of the picture back in 1899 (series 2), leaving us with the bossy woman but no monsters to boss around. And once she and Quatermain take a dip (off-camera) in the fountain of youth, we are doomed to a visually unchanging couple at the centre of the later stories. Quatermain in particular is rendered rather bland as a generic brown-haired young bloke – I miss the grizzled old bugger of the 1890s, white goatee and all.

Don't get me wrong, I have no problem with the concept of a Strong Woman at the centre of events, but Mina's earlier role in the League was balanced by the absolutely psychotic monstrosities she had to continually stare down with sheer chutzpah. Take the Extraordinary freaks out of the League and all you're left with is a group of all-too human Gentlemen (and -women).

With one book of the Century story to go, I am rather hoping Messrs Moore and O'Neill take a leaf out of their own earlier works and inject a little more action-packed monsteraceousness into the League, and a little less of "Mina's Great, All The Blokes Are Rubbish". We shall see.



# No. 203 - Magazine Review: Locus No. 207, December 1977

## By Randy Smith

Please enter the WayBack Machine for a look back at 34-year-old zine that has something to say about where we were, where we've been and where we are in sfnal community.

First, the artifact itself. Issue 207 bears only a passing relationship to the slick, stapled, and rather thick issues of today. There are only sixteen pages that are not stapled together, and the space for the address label is on the lower half of the last page so that it can be folded over and mailed all by itself without any fancy plastic covering. The typeface throughout the issue, except for the advertisements and the headlines is in tiny unjustified courier. It is printed on standard office paper and is entirely in black-and-white. The cost is \$1.00 for a single copy, \$9.00 for a one-year subscription, and \$17.00 for a two-year subscription.

Illustrations consist of black-and-white photos that are uncredited except for several Star Wars publicity stills that bear a 20th Century Fox Corporation copyright notice. There are also line-drawn illos typical of those found in fanzines of all eras, most of which seem to be by Arthur Thomson (ATom). Ads include full pages for Pocket Books and Ace, and a double-page spread for Del Rey. There are smaller ads for AggieCon and LunaCon, as well as some classifieds.

The Office of Publication and the ISSN are both the same as they are today. The mailing address is given as a post office box in San Francisco. It was promoting itself as "The Newspaper of the Science Fiction Field," as opposed to the "Magazine" as on today's issues. Charles N. Brown is the only staff-person

listed.

The lead article is about Star Wars breaking box office records and George Lucas' announcement that there will be a sequel. Other stories include an announcement that Del Rey will begin publishing hardcover books, Fawcett's purchase of the rights to Andre Norton's older titles, and an article on Science Fiction movie awards. There are also listings for upcoming Science Fiction Book Club selections, an announcement of the DUFF candidates for 1978, book and magazine listings, two book reviews, one movie review, one conven-

Issue 207 Vol.10 No.10 **LOCUS** Dec., 1977 \$1.00  
 THE NEWSPAPER OF THE SCIENCE FICTION FIELD

**HARLAN ELLISON STATEMENT**  
 See Page 3

**DEL REY HARDCOVER LINE**  
 Del Rey Books, the science fiction arm of Ballantine, will enter the hardcover field this spring. John-Lynn Del Rey will be the editor. A hardcover program had been discussed before, and in fact, Ballantine had a 10 maintenance hardcover program when it started in 1955 which proved unworkable but the original idea came around was a single book, STAR WARS by Bob Fingeroth and Marc Tibble, a 20th Century Fox Corporation production.

**STAR WARS Breaks All Records - Sequel Announced**  
 On December 19, 1977, the movie broke all records when it opened. STAR WARS passed \$100 million in the first 10 days. The total box office sales to date is approximately \$100,000,000 and the movie will continue to break records. The film opened in England on December 19th. The office of John Fingeroth is writing the script for the sequel which will start production in January 1978. The office of John Fingeroth will begin work on the sequel in the next few weeks. The sequel will be a sequel to the original STAR WARS. The sequel will be a sequel to the original STAR WARS. The sequel will be a sequel to the original STAR WARS.

**Fawcett Buys Norton Package**  
 In a special bidding contest, Fawcett Books, a division of CBS, bought the rights to the older Andre Norton titles originally published by Dutton. The list includes many of her best known books such as STAR WARS, THE WINDS OF PARADISE, THE WINDS OF PARADISE, THE WINDS OF PARADISE, THE WINDS OF PARADISE.

**Edited and Published by Charles N. Brown** **ISSN-0047-4959**

tion report, a lively letter column, some miscellaneous news reports and Algis Budrys' "On Writing" column.

By far the most interesting and historically significant piece in this issue is Harlan Ellison's "Re: The 1978 World Science Fiction Convention, Iguanacon: A Statement of Ethical Politics By the Worldcon Guest of Honor."

The 1978 worldcon was to be held in Phoenix and Arizona was one of the states that had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, designed to place sexual equality in the U.S. Constitution. Harlan sought to boycott the State of Arizona by participating in the worldcon in such a way that he would not spend any money that would flow into the coffers of local businesses or the state government. In this essay, he gives his rationale for doing so, his thoughts about the plan for accomplishing this, and his suggestions for how others can join him in the boycott. He also addresses the reasons why he did not simply withdraw from the GOHship. It's a classic statement on personal principals and how they can be lived out within the Science Fiction community.

Harlan's statement and his actions during Iguanacon would become the stuff of fannish legend. The entire event became controversial with fans and pros taking many different positions of what Harlan did at the convention. The statement itself would be quoted often. This was the first time it appeared in print. Prior to the convention it would be reprinted in Science Fiction Review, Unearth, and Galaxy.

In Locus 207 we can see a snapshot of the process of movement from pure fanzine to what we would later call a semiprozine. It has something of the look and feel of a fanzine, including the use of illos that are typical of fanzines. There is also a significant amount of news about fandom, as opposed to reports from the publishing world. The letters of comment are longer and more chatty and are not focused on pointing out errors or making open requests. It appears to be a one-person operation.

On the other hand, it has an ISSN so that it can be mailed at 2nd Class rates. It is available by subscription, rather than "the usual." The ads from the publishers are very professionally done and contrast with the look and feel of the rest of the zine.

Content-wise, the most striking thing to me is the amount of media news. A picture of Darth Vader takes up a significant amount of space on the first page. Granted, Star Wars was a Really Big Deal at the time, but I have a hard time imagining any media property

making that much of a splash in today's Locus. There are other magazines for that.

What we tend to forget is that in 1977 there was not the significant division between "media fans" and "print fans" that there is today. Science Fiction news was still Science Fiction news, irrespective of the medium of presentation. We were a far smaller community back then and there were fewer and slower means of information distribution. It was more natural for a publication like Locus to be more of a generalist than a specialist. There were significant amounts of media news in Locus, at least through the mid-'80s, and for a while there was even a column for media commentary. There were even years when Locus listed all SF/Fantasy motion pictures that were released in a given year, including what each one grossed at the box office.

Looking at this issue from 1977 is a reminder of how much has changed, not only for Locus, but for the Science Fiction community. Given it's more than forty years of publication, it might be fun to look at a cross-section of issues from different periods of time to see how they compare. That will be an article for a future time.

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## No. 204 -Marvin's Lament

by Mark Bessey

**At the bottom of the ocean, 6000 fathoms down**

**In boiling hot acid, deep underground,  
In the middle of a desert, with no water around,**

**And perhaps other strange places, waiting to be found,**

**Life surrounds us everywhere, all around,**

**And I hate it all, with malice profound.**

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# No. 205 - The Detective & The Unicorn

## Reviewed by Sandra Childress

When I got a Kindle for my birthday earlier this year, I was excited because I could catch up on all the reading I wanted to do, buy all those books that I didn't have room for. What ended up happening was even more fabulous...I discovered a new author!

Michael Angel has set out to entertain us in a way that Christopher Stasheff did with Rod and Fess did but crossing into a modern day Los Angeles with his first novel, *The Detective and The Unicorn*. I have always enjoyed the human-animal companion story where it takes both characters to bring closure (or leave us hanging for more). The ability to transport a reader from the known (Los Angeles, New York City) to the unknown (Morning Land) and give you a full-sensory experience is one that I'm jealous of.

Angel sets you up for a crime-murder-mystery then turns it on its head when a unicorn from the Morning Land comes to help him solve the crime. I got caught up in his way with words -- painting a full-color picture of LA and of the Morning Land. I could feel the aches and pains as well as surprise at success by Derek when he is learning the ways of the Morning Land. And I could feel his passion for those he cares about most

deeply.

And the story is not without its humorous moments. I giggled at the antics of Thunderbolt, the Wonder Colt. I smiled when Rachel met Tavia and then Thunderbolt for the first time. As a little girl, I always wished my stuffed ponies would come to life -- and here she is getting to play with a pegasus!!

I didn't want the story to end...I sure hope that there is a sequel!! I want to see more of Derek, Tavia, and the others. And because I was hungering for more, I grabbed his next novel, *The Centaur of the Crime*, another modern Los Angeles citizen who gets transported to another world to help solve a

murder.

If Abby Scuito and Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs (CBS's NCIS) were merged into one character - you'd get Dayna Chrissie: a strong, independent crime scene investigator for the LAPD who has a thing for 'stompy gothic boots of doom' and Chunky Chocolate Coma ice cream. (Man, I wish Ben & Jerry's would try and make this flavor!)

But when Dayna is transported to another world to help solve a murder of the king of the human realm, she is introduced to a collection of creatures and characters who will test her senses and her knowledge of how things work on Earth as well as Andeluvia. She will build a team of rejects: Galen who has been rejected by his father; Shaw who has been rejected by his rider; and Liam who has been rejected by his people -- and take them back to Los Angeles to research and investigate how the murder happened and reduce the suspect list.

Angel does it again, creating two worlds rich with sensory details. His word-play injects a little sense of humor and can cause the reader to smirk, smile and even chuckle out loud as well as shorten your breath then

cause you to pause and reflect about your own relationships with others.

While these are only out as eBooks (Kindle, Nook, Smashwords.com), there's buzz that the paperbacks are coming later this fall. Angel has filled in the gap of accessible fantasy storytelling that was created with the passing of Robert Asprin. I strongly encourage you to grab either of these novels, or even his short story anthologies (I really liked *Strangelets*, *Strange Powers* and *a Side of Spam*). I expect with a grassroots following, he will garner attention from the right publishers



# No. 206 - REVIEW OF VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS (1970)

## Reviewed by Rich Dengrove

This DVD from Customfix is supposed to be an adaptation of the 1920 novel by David Lindsay, *Voyage to Arcturus*. Which is an artsy science fiction novel. Bill Holloway, who has made numerous documentaries since then, scripted and produced this movie on the most shoestring of budgets in 1970. How I came by it was from a friend. While I didn't think he cared too much for it, he cared enough to send it to me for my opinion.

I think Bill did well enough. He seems to have been able to use common sense and artsy techniques to cover up the fact that his actors couldn't act and his sets were made for 25 cents. The acting and cinematography are serviceable. Therefore, I think we should go on to the meat of the matter: how good an adaptation it is.

To do that, we first need to analyze Lindsay's original 1920 novel. Of it, people complain it is a Chinese puzzle in a conundrum. I don't find it so. That is because I always try to remember what was going on at the time. When I did, it was obvious Lindsay was answering the Bohemians of his era. There is a meditation on vegetarianism and nonviolence. There is a meditation on the Will to Power. While that was the idea that most obsessed the Nazis – who, in their way, were bohemians – it raised its head in America. There is a meditation on puritanism, which Bohemians have always violently opposed. In that meditation, Lindsay seems to include something on Crowleyism. Furthermore, there is a meditation on modern music. Lindsay identifies its dissonance with pain. There is a meditation on the sexes and romantic love. Always of interest

to Bohemians. There is a meditation on asceticism. This, I am sure, comes from the Eastern religion which Bohemians are always interested in.

What it all comes down to is a conclusion reviewers have associated with Gnosticism: flesh is evil but it makes possible the spirit, which is the only good possible.

Here is what makes this science fiction. First of all, the action takes place on the planet of Arcturus Torrance. That alone would make it science fiction even if all people did was sell insurance. However, it is more science fictiony than that. Not only does the plot bring home his ideas but the setting does too. Sometimes Lindsay tailors the very laws of nature to bring home his ideas. It goes beyond the size and shape of the organs on the forehead and stomach of everyone on Torrance. In a certain locale, male stones fall up to spite

female stones that are more conventionally falling down.

So how did Holloway adapt this novel to the screen. In all honesty, he edited the plot with a sledgehammer. While only the last scene radically actually differs from the book, his plot verges on being unrecognizable as Lindsay's. As for Lindsay's setting, it vanished from Holloway's movie. There are no appendages on the stomach and forehead, and no locale that violates natural law anymore than any other. The effect of all these changes is to obliterate all of Lindsay's ideas and the devices he uses to explain them. Holloway acts like the literary counterpart of an Aztec priest, because he has taken heart out of Lindsay's novel.

Not even the era Lindsay's novel is set in remains the same.



Except for the castle and seance at the beginning; there is no proof the movie isn't set among the hippies of 1970 America. This is as opposed to Lindsay, whose characters reek of 1920 England.

Thus, the movie is universes apart from the novel it pretends to adapt. Nonetheless, I still insist Holloway's film remains an underground classic of its sort. To many people, it too seems like a MacBeth's lament: all sound and fury symbolizing nothing. However, once again, I did a take on the society and culture of the time. A society and culture I remember well personally. It is, in its strange sort of way, an adaptation of Lindsay's novel to 1970. That it obliterates Lindsay's ideas is in keeping with this. The '60s were not typified by ideas but feelings and experience, even when opposing the Vietnam War.

This allows Holloway to show us the dark side of the Hippy world. In at least one respect, he delves far deeper than R. Crumb who branded the Hippy world as grifters and misfits. Holloway's film also contends that the paragons of Hippyism were rotten to the core. The reason for this is not the unstated Hippy ideal of a world of couples. Nor is it, behind the grubbiness of 'natural' attire and ungroomed faces, the unstated ideal of beautiful people that makes this rottenness. Nor living "naturally," without the modern technology or commercialization the Hippies railed against. That is not the source of the rottenness either. While Holloway portrays all these ideals, to insure he is dealing with paragons, none of them is the source of the rottenness.

What is the source of the rottenness is the Hippy ideal of 'doing your own thing.' In short, acting on impulse. Far from bringing the much ballyhooed utopia of peace and love, 'doing your own thing' did in Holloway's film what it often did in real life, i.e., hurt people. That seems the crux of the film. In regard to 'doing your thing,' it is a nice touch when Holloway puts a quirk of Lindsay's to other purposes. When Lindsay finishes with an idea popular among the Bohemians, he kills the characters exemplifying it. In the bloodless, bloody fashion of the superintellectual, he is through with the idea; why not kill its messenger? Unlike Lindsay, Holloway is interested in real people; and the deaths in the film represent real deaths. People get hurt from others 'doing their own thing.'

Holloway isn't into excoriating Hippies totally. The end shows that. Ultimately, in the film as well as the novel, the character Nightspore looks out the windows of a mystical house on different floors. Instead of the

spiritual world that the Nightspore of the novel finds – which, albeit, feeds off our pain – the Nightspore of the film finds that life is purposeless. This wasn't as grim a conclusion as it would have been for an earlier generation. The Hippies could accept such things much better than they. Among the previous generation and the generation before that, people feared committing suicide if they found their world was purposeless. However, Nightspore, in line with the Hippy-dom I remember, is only slightly sad.

Thus, in two blockbuster aspects, the real consequences of 'doing your thing' and the purposelessness of life, Holloway's view of the Hippies rings true.

It was 50 years from Lindsay's novel to Holloway's movie. Since then, it has been 50 years. I am wondering whether the *Voyage to Arcturus* couldn't be adapted to the present generation. Maybe the highbrow and the low- might might come together as has been happening in the media and academia. However, I would hate to think of *Voyage* as a mindless action adventure where the two heroes Nightspore and Maskull accomplish impossible heroics. Slaying the dragons of Tormance rather than riding them. Maybe there could be more ideas. Maybe there could be more ideas than in Holloway's work with a complement of emotion and feeling. The unformed homunculi of the Hippies' ideas have since solidified. Among them are Green, Wiccan and American Buddhist. Of course, this is not a task for an old geezer like me. Only someone much younger would know how to adapt the *Voyage to Arcturus* to the generation of the aunts and the '10s. .

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# No. 207 - Summer Wars Reviewed By Juan Sanmiguel

Parts of this review originally published in the July 2011 issue of the Event Horizon, the clubzine of Orlando Area Science Fiction Society.

Many anime feature films do not get a wide theatrical release in the United States. Summer Wars, the winner of the 2010 Seiun (Japanese equivalent of the

Hugo) for Best Media, suffered this fate in 2010. Thanks to the efforts of Petrea Mitchell at the Worldcon Business meeting, Summer Wars is eligible for Hugo consideration next year. The film was directed by Mamoru Hosoda, who also directed the 2007 Seiun-winning anime feature, The Girl Who Leapt Through Time. Hosoda

co-wrote the story with Satoko Okudera. The film is available in the United States in both traditional DVD and Blu-Ray formats.

OZ, a computer network, is a combination of Facebook and World of Warcraft. People can shop, do business, and play games in OZ. Most businesses and governments have a presence in OZ. High school student, Kenji Koiso is a mathematical genius and is a system administrator for OZ. Natsuki Shinohara, a classmate of Kenji, asks him to come with her to her great-grandmother's home in Ueda for her 90th birthday. Natsuki wants Kenji to pose as her fiancé, in order to please her great-grandmother, Sakae Jinnouchi. Kenji meets Natsuki's extended family, which consists of several uncles, aunts and cousins. Then Kenji receives an anonymous message on his email. The email contains a complex code which he cracks, and returns the answer to the sender. The next morning, the news reports that OZ security has been hacked and it is traced back to Kenji's email. Something is causing worldwide disruption through OZ. Kenji and Kazuma, Natsuki's 13-year-old second cousin, discover that an artificial intelligence called Love Machine is behind all the disturbances in OZ. Love Machine is becoming more powerful by absorbing OZ accounts. Kenji, with the



help of Natsuki's family, tries to stop Love Machine.

Natsuki's family, the Jinnouchi clan, drives the film. They come from all walks of life, and have a celebrated history in their prefecture. They may sometimes bicker and fight amongst themselves, but when an external threat comes at them, they close ranks and face it together. They are able to get the resources to help Kenji and Kazuma fight Love Machine. The whole family will rally against Love Machine.

Sakae Jinnouchi is the glue which holds the family together. When OZ is hacked, she calls all her family members and friends and gets them to help with the crisis. During this time, Sakae reminds her family what is important. Her presence is always felt in the movie.

Kenji is smart, but unsure of himself despite his mathematical genius, and envies the closeness of the Jinnouchi clan, since he barely sees his overworked parents. Some of the Jinnouchis at first meet Kenji with suspicion, since he is an outsider and want to be sure he is worthy of Natsuki. When he shows his respect to Sakae and the rest of family, and shows his determination to fix OZ, he earns the Jinnouchi's trust. They help Kenji find the confidence he needs to stop Love Machine.

Natsuki is a clever, fun-loving girl, and devoted to her family. She helps heal an old wound in her family, and unites her family and the world to fight against Love Machine.

The character designs are not heavily caricatured, even though when the characters get emotional, there is over-the-top blushing and other reactions. There are some great landscapes scenes at the Jinnouchi estate. These scenes have the feel of a Miyazaki film. The traditional anime attention to technical details can be seen in depiction of the computers, smart phones, car dashboards and other high tech equipment. The scenes in OZ are rendered with CGI, which gives OZ a very a surreal feel. Most of the avatars are caricature of animals. Kazuma's avatar, King Kazama, is a

tall street fighting rabbit. One of the interesting art details is when Love Machine starts absorbing the OZ accounts. His body gets bigger, and is formed by the avatars of the accounts he has taken. One can see the individual avatars in Love Machine's expanded form.

This is a smart film about people facing a cyber-threat. The threat seems daunting, but when they pool their talents, they can face the menace.

Hosoda shows that he is a director to watch for solid anime science fiction features.



# No. 208 - The Magician Kings by Lev Grossman

## Reviewed by Beth Zuckerman

It's time to start reading potential Hugo nominees for 2011! OK, I'm sure some of you have already started, but I had a backlog of older books I picked up at cons. I'm now onto my list of, so far, 16 potential nominees.

Lev Grossman's *The Magician King* is a sequel to *The Magicians*. Do not read this book before reading *The Magicians*. Both are delightful and well worth your while, but they must be read in order.

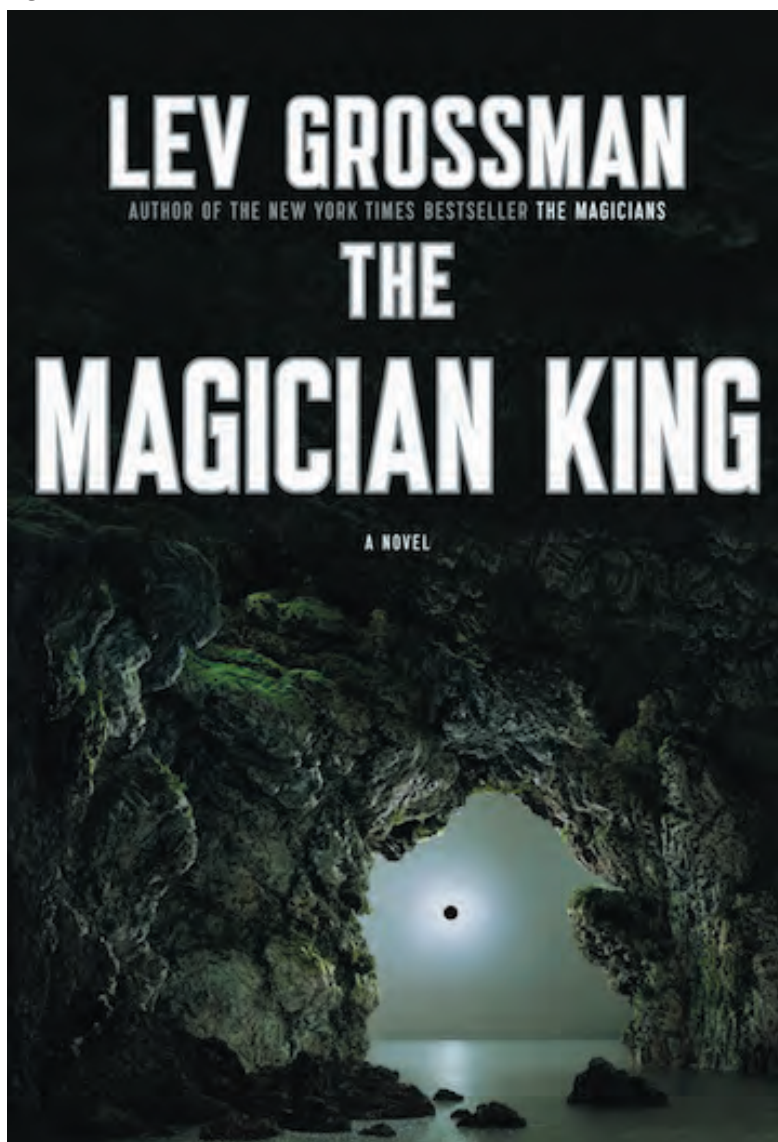
It took me awhile to figure out why I enjoy Grossman's work so much, when generally I despise fantasy, magic and the like. Grossman makes fun of all of the pretensions of fantasy. It's fantasy that doesn't take itself so seriously, ironically detached fantasy. If you loved *Buffy*, you'll love Grossman's novels. While sometimes Grossman's language is satirical, I would not say that these are satirical novels. Like *Buffy*, while the work sometimes makes fun of itself, the story line is in the tradition of classical hero mythology.

Grossman's novels are based on both C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The lead character, Quentin, is a longtime fan of a series of children's books where children from the Chatwin family go into a magical land called Fillory. Fillory turns out to be real. Quentin and some of his friends attend a school called Brakebills where they learn magic. Sound familiar? One could say that Grossman's works are derivative, but it's more fun to think of them as a sort of fanfic, as someone suggested at his reading at Renovation.

It's difficult to say much about *The Magician King* without giving away spoilers for *The Magicians*. Much of the action takes place in Fillory, much of it also takes place on earth. The story takes place partly in Quentin's present and partly in Julia's past. We learn how Julia learned magic without attending Brakebills, and it's not at all a pretty tale. The point of view and the the setting change from chapter to chapter, which can be somewhat disorienting. But the whole thing falls together into a grand adventure in the classical storytelling tradition. It doesn't fall together as incredibly neatly as *The Magicians*, but the end is quite satisfying, if disturbing. We can

definitely see that Grossman has carefully studied his Campbell.

This latest book is deeply engrossing, both because of the excellent storytelling and the ironically detached language. Despite all of the ironic detachment, Grossman portrays the angst and the frustration of the characters in ways that make you feel deeply, and wish desperately for the obstacles to be overcome. The book is replete with lots of inside references to please the geek crowd. It's lots of fun, and extremely engaging. I'm not quite ready to make declarations about Hugo nominations after having read only one book, but we are definitely off to a good start!





No. 209 - Art from Bryan Little

## No. 210 - Richard Brandt

It's funny how a different variety of formerly geek becomes chic everyday. People who used to mock me for clipping coupons now come up to me and shake my hand. It's all because of this television show, evidently.

"Have you seen Extreme Couponing?" they ask.

I haven't, but I always give the same answer: "AMATEURS!"

'Twas not always so. I went to a meet-and-greet with some folks from a dating site, and one woman started telling a real horror story:

"I went to a restaurant with this one guy, and when the waitress came over with the check, he... PULLED OUT A COUPON!"

All the other women gasped.

"I would never date a guy like that again!" one declared.

I just whistled and looked around nonchalantly.

## No. 211 - Horror Television by Kelly Green

Excuse me, I'm a little ill. I'm not sure what I've got, but believe me. On my recent day off, instead of travelling somewhere unique and exotic (like, say, the grocery store or the Amazon river) I stayed home and watched a horror marathon. Or rather, a medical suspense show called "Mystery Diagnosis" on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN.) One after another, regular folks like me (gray haired, chubby, bad shoes) came down with average but debilitating symptoms. How many people worry when they get the sniffles and a headache? Only when they crash to the bathroom floor in an unresponsive faint and even 911 ambulance drivers can't find a pulse and then the doctors at the hospital dither around and go, "Um, tests are negative, nothing wrong here, he's just GOING TO DIE!"

Oh sure, they ultimately figure out what's wrong and save him. But can they save me? I have sniffles and a headache too!

That kid with the sore throat? \*!\* have a sore throat! Will I survive like he did? Jeez these cough drops sure cost a lot. But less than years of emergency room visits and doctor shrugs.

I haven't had an operation to repair my poor knee but this lump in my back hurts. I dunno, feels kinda bony to me. I think I'm growing an extra skeleton! Despite all the comic book possibilities, turns out extra skeletons are kinda bad for ya. Hope it doesn't get bigger. I'm feeling sleepy now, which is another alarming symptom. I sure hope I don't have maple sugar urine (a condition where proteins aren't digested properly and build up in the organs) but there's only one way to be sure.... No, I won't smell my urine. I won't smell my urine! I won't sme....

I don't have maple sugar urine.



## No. 212 - Art by Delphyne Woods

# No. 213 - An Interview with Hieronymus Bosch, 1999 Westercon Guest of Honor by Allison Hershey

This interview was conducted July 7th, 1999, shortly before Conucopia, the North American Science Fiction Convention in Anaheim in late August of that year. Prior to the convention, the interviewer had noticed there was no artist Guest of Honor (GOH) listed in the Progress Reports. Upon questioning, the convention committee said that their target artist had bowed out, and they thought that no living artist would be politically safe enough to approach at that late date, especially since stipends and perks had dried up. The interviewer asked if a deceased artist would do, as there would be no travel or housing requirements and very little inter-community politics to deal with. Committee members said they would be delighted to invite one of these disembodied artists; but how would they be able to get in touch with one? The interviewer said she had connections to several dead artists, and obtained permission to talk with them and decide which would be a suitable GOH.

Hieronymus Bosch was available and willing to participate, and the convention committee agreed to take him on. He was immediately interviewed for the program book. All went well until Mark Twain, Dead Writer GOH at Con Francisco in 1993 raised objections. Apparently, Twain's contract had stipulated that no other GOH's of the deceased persuasion be invited to a national convention until after the millennium. Bosch's contract was canceled immediately. He and the interviewer were notified by a third party five weeks later.

The interview appears as published in the program book. All references to Bosch's position as Artist Guest of Honor were omitted. This caused some confusion among convention-goers, who had no idea where the heck this piece was coming from. Bosch himself did not appear publically at the convention, though he did attend some panels incognito. He said there were no hard feelings. In fact, he painted a portrait of

Twain which he presented at the Famous Dead People conference in Toledo, Spain in 2003. The author's fish-like head and frog legs were wonderfully rendered, and Twain looked quite handy pulling a riverboat with his teeth...

Conucopia: For all those folks out there who aren't acquainted with your life and works, tell us a little about who you are. For instance, Bosch is a pen name, is it not? What's your real name?

Bosch: My given name was Jeroen Anthoniszoon van Aken. I was born and spent my entire life in the Duchy of Brabant—I think that's in The Netherlands now—in a town called 's Hertogenbosch. Your "Hieronymus" is some form of my first name, and I took "Bosch" from my home town as was fitting for an artist of my station.

Conucopia: Ser--Sertoganosh?

Bosch: That's apostrophe "S" dash capital "H"; 's Hertogenbosch.

Conucopia: What else? When were you born? When did you die? What more can you tell us about your personal life?

Bosch: I'm not sure of my date of birth. 1450 or thereabouts. Maybe 1456. I died in 1516. I saw the end of the Middle Age [and] made my exit just before Martin Luther... caused trouble. About my personal life, that is none of your business.

Conucopia: Just tell us the general facts. You don't have to reveal your life story in detail.

Bosch: I lived my whole life in 's-Hertogenbosch. Well, except for a side trip to Utrecht and to Northern Italy for some artistic commissions. I had two brothers and a sister, and five uncles on my father's side. I married quite well in my late 20's...her name was Aleyt

Goyaerts van den Meervenne; a lovely woman, and well off.

Conucopia: Any hobbies?

Bosch: All art related. I did belong to the Confraternity de Notre Dame, as my father's family did before me.... and I did special work for our beautiful Church of St John. A pity none of it survived the reformation.

Conucopia: Is that all? What about the secret cults that claim you used their symbols in your painting?

Bosch: I did not belong to any of those clubs or secret societies you historians try to link me to. I was a respectable man.

Conucopia: Why did you become an artist?

Bosch: My father was an artist, my grandfather was an artist, my uncles were artists, and so were my brothers. It just seemed the right thing to do.

Conucopia: So art was not a special calling, but just a job?

Bosch: I didn't say that. The Lord saw fit to give me skill to create the works done in His blessed name. I took that charge very seriously.

Conucopia: And you executed it so well. You had a deeply complex grasp of the duality of flesh and spirit in mankind. It permeates all of your painting, and is more pronounced in your later work. Was that the main message in your paintings?

Bosch: No. Not the message, but the medium. My work was a warning. If you couldn't see that, then I am afraid I have failed.

Conucopia: Pardon me. The subject matter in your paintings is painfully obvious. I was just reaching for the subtleties, or perhaps the subconscious metapsychology of your overall work.

Bosch: Meta-whoosits? Drivel! The ever-presence of evil is the foundation of my work. The subjects are merely the fruits of man's folly.

Conucopia: True. You marinate your pictures with little battles between good and evil. Even in your most serene pictures there are disturbing situations, symbolic of the ubiquitous presence of evil in the world. Every corner has a struggle. And everywhere there are so many toads, owls, and demons!

Bosch: (laughing) Toads and demons are fun to

draw!

Conucopia: Where did you come up with all those demons?

Bosch: I was originally inspired by the margins of illuminated manuscripts. I found them interesting. They were easy to construct, really. I built them out of spare parts. As they have been so popular, I continued to make them.

Conucopia: Why are your pieces so full of foolishness and horror?

Bosch: Man's folly has always been a great interest of mine.

Conucopia: But why so many twisted vignettes? Why such terrible punishments?

Bosch: The sins of man are more numerous than can be counted by your computers. Each sinner has his unique counterpart in the world of Hell. I wanted to convey that variety. These works are specifically designed as tools for contemplation. A person should view a picture many times, and meditate on the fates of individual sinners as the occasion dictates. They are like Bible verses. Each one is a lesson to think deeply upon.

Conucopia: Some of your little picture stories are so funny, though. And some are just plain weird.

Bosch: I have sometimes tried to use humor to educate the public, as well as puns and symbols to illustrate many common themes. For instance, the cracking glass ball around the lovers in Garden of Earthly Delights indicates the fragility of carnal love. Or the presence of fruit rinds and peels, which are traditional Dutch puns for strife and worthlessness. Most of my obvious puns are misunderstood nowadays. You seem to have lost their meanings, which is really a shame!

Conucopia: Speaking of losing things, it seems we have lost most of your works over the years. Though many paintings are described in documents, or were copied by inferior artists, we only have a handful of them that can be accounted for. Even some of those that we have were heavily altered or partial fakes. Can you tell us a little about that?

Bosch: Only about two or three dozen pieces are still around, to the best of my knowledge. Much of my work is gone, including some I thought would stand forever as crown jewels to the Glory of God. The Last Judgment altarpiece, commissioned by Philip

the Handsome, was 9 feet by 11 feet wide. Hell and damnation never looked so interesting! Only a few fragments remain.

Conucopia: You must have felt helpless losing your creations to the world.

Bosch: The Dutch takeover of Brabant in 1629 was disastrous. My work in St. Johns Church simply disappeared. Fortunately, some of my pieces still survive in Spain.

Conucopia: What about the work that you know isn't yours, but people say is yours?

Bosch: So many pictures attributed to me are obviously fakes, but I appreciate the tributes. About the alteration; people can't seem to leave things alone. Some have tried to fix what's left, only to destroy the subtleties in my style. Many think my work is crude because of that.

Conucopia: Give me an example.

Bosch: My Marriage Feast at Cana has been altered; dogs were painted where donors once stood. It destroyed the balance of the composition. Other works have been touched up with flat colors and awkward strokes.

Conucopia: We are running out of time here, so we had better wrap things up. Do you have any regrets nowadays?

Bosch: Regrets? I regret my sins.

Conucopia: I mean, having been dead so long....well, is there anything in modern life you wish you could have used? Like, maybe computers or cameras to record your work?

Bosch: Your electronic gadgets are all hay; worthless.

Conucopia: What do you mean? They make our lives better.

Bosch: Look at my paintings for the answer to that. Pay particular attention to the Haywain.

Conucopia: So, there is no change

in your views in the last 500 years?

Bosch: Not much. I just see more.

Conucopia: So, from your vantage point then, what message do you have for the living?

Bosch: Just an observation from a Roman friend : I was as you are. You will be as I am.

Conucopia: Oh....well, that is deep. It has been a pleasure talking with you. On behalf of my audience, I'd like to thank you.

Bosch: You're quite welcome.



# No. 215 - The Garcialyzer by Liz Batty

Here is a submission for your 300th issue. It may not be suitable, as it follows none of your themes, and in fact is not even prose. Instead, I have written a computer program for you, which takes ordinary text and adds a sprinkling of Garcia flavour.

For instance, this paragraph, randomly chosen from wikipedia:

“She was created Countess of Dorchester for life in 1686, an elevation which aroused much indignation and compelled Catherine to reside for a time in Ireland. In 1696 she married Sir David Colyear, Bt., who was created Earl of Portmore in 1703, and she was thus the mother of Charles Colyear, 2nd Earl of Portmore. She died at Bath on 26 October 1717, when her life peerage became extinct. Catherine was not noted for beauty but was witty and sharp-tongued; after the Revolution of 1688 when Queen Mary refused to receive her at Court, Catherine inquired how Mary, who had broken the commandment to honour her father was in any way better than Catherine who had broken the commandment against adultery.”

becomes:

“She was **CREATED** Countess of Dorchester for life in 1686, an elevation which aroused **psyched** much **Indignation** and compelled Catherine to reside for a time in Ireland! In **funny** 1696 she married Sir David Colyear, Bt. **WIN!** , who was created Earl of Portmore in 1703, **And Interesting She Was** thus the mother of Charles **COLYEAR**, 2nd Earl of Portmore. **WIN!** She died at **funny** Bath on 26 October 1717, **When Her** life peerage became extinct! Catherine was not noted for beauty but was witty and sharp-tongued; after **THE** Revolution of 1688 **WHEN** Queen Mary refused to receive **Her** at Court, **Psyched** Catherine inquired **How** Mary, who had broken **THE** commandment to honour **Her** father was in any way **Better** than Catherine who **Had** broken the commandment against adultery!!! “

Which I think you'll agree is a vast improvement over the original.

Anyway, here's the code for the Garcialyzer. I hope you enjoy it.  
(I can provide further documentation and instructions if required.)

Liz



```

#!/usr/env/python
import random
from random import choice
import sys

if len(sys.argv)<2:
    print ("Usage: garcialyzer.py <infile.txt> <outfile.txt>")
    sys.exit()

superlative = ["awesome", "amazing", "psyched", "interesting", "funny", "epic"]
interjections = ["WIN! ", "YAY! ", "YES! ", "FTW! ", "WOW! ", "AWRSUM! ",]

infile = open(sys.argv[1].strip()).read().strip().split(".")

outfile = open(sys.argv[2].strip(), "w")

for sentence in infile:
    if not sentence:
        continue
    words = sentence.split(" ")
    position = random.randint(1, len(words))
    words = words[0:position]+[choice(superlative)]+words[position:]
    newwords = []
    for word in words:
        if random.random() < 0.05 and len(word)>2:
            newwords.append(word.upper())
        elif random.random()< 0.15 and len(word)>2:
            newwords.append("".join([word[0].upper(), word[1:])))
        else:
            newwords.append(word)
    outfile.write(" ".join(newwords))
    if random.random() < 0.01:
        outfile.write("!!!! ")
    elif random.random() < 0.4:
        outfile.write("! ")
    elif random.random() < 0.2:
        outfile.write("!! ")
    elif random.random() < 0.1:
        outfile.write("!!! ")
    else:
        outfile.write(" ")
    if random.random() < 0.4:
        outfile.write(choice(interjections))

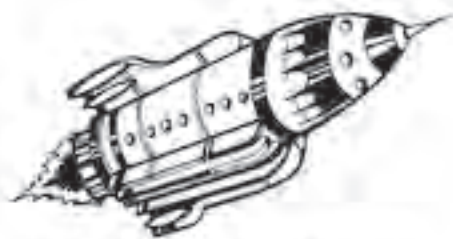
outfile.close()

```

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David Weber

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Janny Wurts

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Programs,  
Art Show,  
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Artist Demos, Books,  
Cool Stuff for Sale,  
Fun and Games  
Charity Auction

# Stand Back! I'm Going to Try Science!!!!

## No. 216 - Intro: The Admiration of a Non-Sciencer by Christopher J Garcia

I love the sciences. I wish I could understand them, but I am science incompatible. It's a sad fact. I think it starts with my inability at math. I'm both awesome and terrible at math. I can run long tabs in my head, can estimate like a champ, can figure out fractions without problem, all in my head. When it comes to doing actual math, I'm not good at all. I can't figure out anything using pen and paper and even if I'm given a formula and can have it in front of me, I won't be able to make the numbers work. It's a sad fact, but it's not surprising.

I really am rather dim.

But I love science. I read science news, I read science non-fiction at times, and I especially love biology. I did poorly in Bio in school. VERY poorly, but I always enjoyed the hell out of it. I just didn't have the chops. Still don't, but I love taxonomies and weird bio facts and the like. I'm just no good at science.

Every time I tell this to people who are good at science (or math, or whathaveyou), they'll say that I just didn't have good teachers, which I really don't believe.

It was about 10 years ago that my all-time favorite science moment happened. There was the Recent Unpleasantness in New York where the Twin Towers fell. About a year or so later, there was a long article about the science of the collapses. It looked at each building and exactly what stresses were placed, how the fires and the crashes compromised the integrity of the buildings. It was amazing and I must have read that thing a half-dozen times. There was so much cool science-y stuff, a lot of it going over my head, especially since it was in a materials engineering magazine and not something for the popular science crowd. It was heavy, but it was fascinating!

And I love it when scientists have a sense of humor, and even better when they don't and they end up doing funny stuff (see Strippers Make More When They Ovulate research!)

So, one of the things I wanted to have in this issue was some fun science stuff, and several folks came through in a big way, especially a couple of folks whose blogs I am a fan of!



# No. 218 - Science Fiction and the Scientifically Inclined Hero by Mike Brotherton

When I was about six or so, I realized that what separated humans from other animals was our intelligence rather than our physical capabilities. Sure, there are other differences, such as the degree of tool use, or the social aspects of our species and how we employ culture and altruism to lead to ever increasing success, but ultimately we're smart critters. We figure out how to do really complicated things both as individuals and as groups working together.

So, I logically decided to focus on intellectual achievement. Silly me, as it took until later in life to pay off.

Little did I know that being tall leads to advantages in society, or that athletic scholarships are much larger than academic scholarships. Being able to throw a ball well does get attention from the girls in high school. In some meta context, it really does seem crazy to reward freaks of physical achievement when it isn't our forte. There are animals faster, stronger, and much more physically capable than humans. A guy I knew once put it this way: you can measure someone's athleticism by how many seconds they last before a tiger could kill them.

Despite this, our popular stories often feature heroes who are stronger, faster, and braver than other people. Even though they would last only a few seconds longer than a tiger, or less for the bravely stupid ones. The tiger doesn't care how determined you are.

As a 1980s-era supercomputer might learn, the only way to win is not to play. The smart person doesn't get into the arena with the tiger. The smart person changes the rules to play to their strengths.

So where are the smart heroes? The ones who think first, fight second, or not at all?

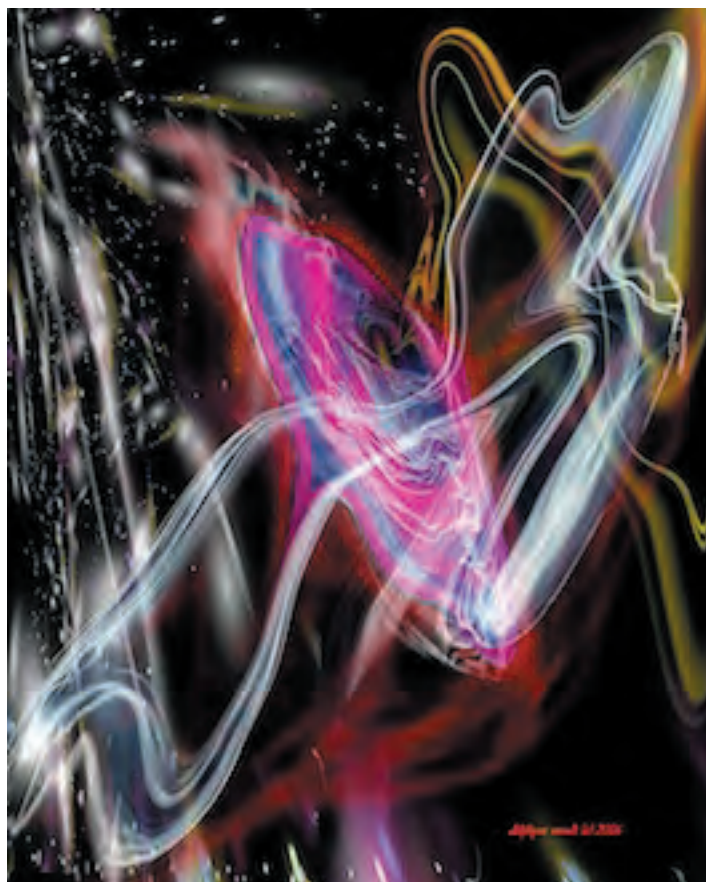
Science fiction has them. At least more frequently than other genres.

I remember being impressed with Star Trek's Captain Kirk as a kid. Not because he could karate chop unsuspecting alien guards into unconsciousness with one blow, but because he could think his way to victory as often as not. To wit, the Kirk vs. the Gorn fight. The Gorn was much stronger and nigh invulnerable. It wasn't a very good fight scene, I grant. And if the Gorn had a tenth the speed of a tiger, Kirk would have been toast. What I loved, however, was that physi-

cal prowess could not defeat the alien, but intelligence could. Kirk recognized the components of a weapon in his environment and used his smarts to triumph. That was a message that made sense to me then, and still does. Change the rules to play to your strengths.

When dealing with other humans in contemporary settings, sometimes being stronger or faster is plenty to carry the day. When your rivals are enhanced humans, robots, aliens, or other beings with physical capabilities beyond those of normal people, only superior scientific knowledge, technology, or cleverness can prevail.

So let's celebrate our smart heroes, from science fiction and any other field. Let's hear it for Kirk, Spock, Daniel Jackson and Samantha Carter, the Doctor, Walter Bishop, Sherlock Holmes, Dana Scully, House, McGuyver, the Antonio Banderas character in the 13th Warrior, Reed Richards, Jadzia Dax, Tony Stark, Willow, and others who show that scientists are not only mad villains, but heroes and role models to anyone who wants to avoid fighting the tiger, or to kill it if you have to.



# No. 220 - The Shmoos of the Tevatron by Bill Higgins

Now that the Tevatron has shut down, I'm going to miss the Shmoos.

America first learned of the Shmoos in the funny papers. In 1948 Al Capp's comic strip Lil' Abner featured a sequence where Abner stumbles upon the Valley of the Shmoon. There he encountered cute white creatures whose only goal in life was to please people--the Shmoos. They were lovable, they were edible, all their parts were useful, and they bred so fast that there was always a plentiful supply. To quote Lil' Abner himself, "Shmoos does EVERYTHING! They gives milk, aigs, meat, an' th' eyes makes fine suspender buttons!!"

Introducing Shmoos to the town of Dogpatch, and then to the entire U.S.A., seemed a great boon at first-- but rapidly turned into a disaster. "Nobody whut's got Shmoos HAS t'work any more-- an' ANYBODY kin have 'em--fo' FREE!!"

With all their needs provided, Americans did indeed cease to work, and the national economy ground

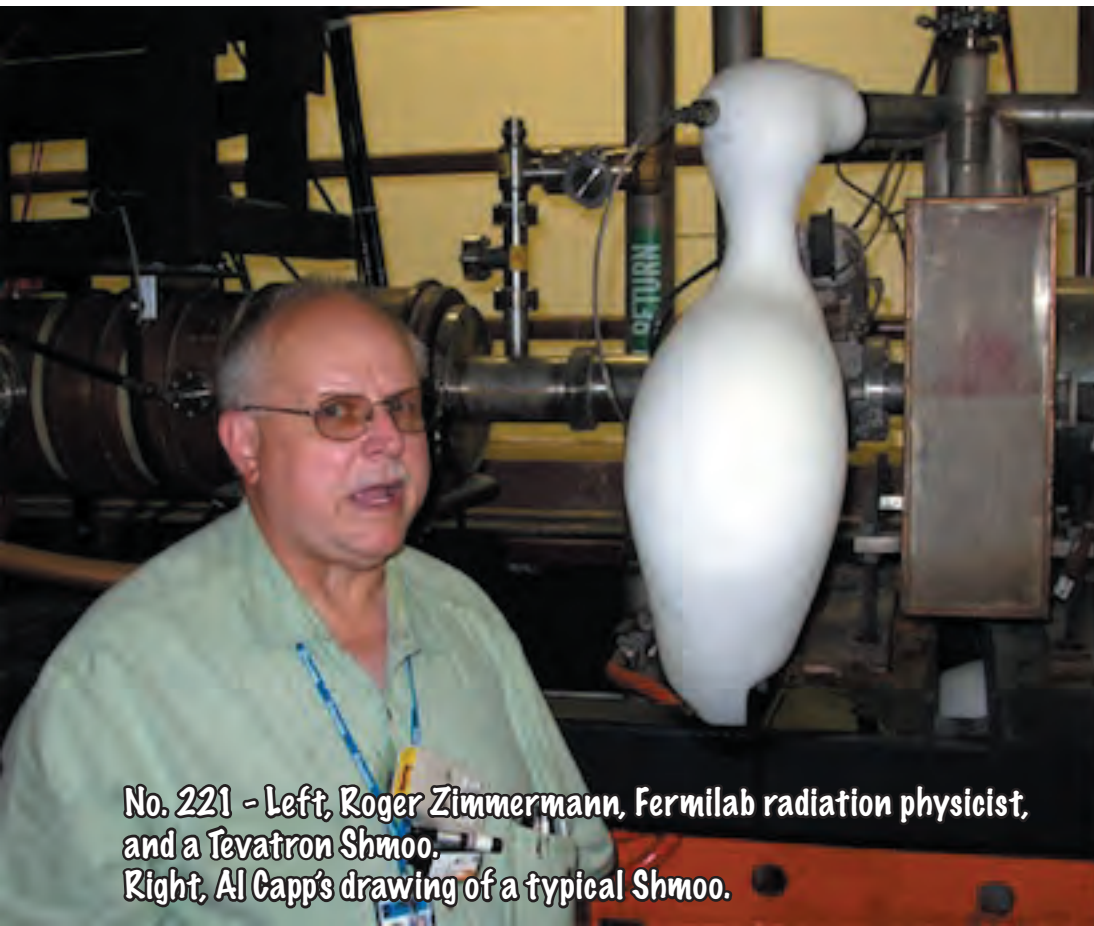
to a halt. Only when the Shmoos were eliminated did life go back to normal.

Readers of the comics may or may not have appreciated Mr. Capp's parable of economics. But they certainly loved the Shmoos. There was a craze for Shmoo books, Shmoo toys, and Shmoo saltshakers.

Nothing in the comics is ever really gone; Capp brought the Shmoos back for encores. So once I got old enough to puzzle out the text in the funnies for myself, more than a decade after their debut, I had a chance to read about Shmoos. I loved them as much as everyone else did.

Lil' Abner ended when Al Capp passed away. Newspapers replaced it with other comic strips. I grew up. I got a job working on a very big particle acclerator. And one day, I found the Shmoos again.

I work at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. The Tevatron is a superconducting synchrotron designed to accelerate protons and antiprotons to en-



No. 221 - Left, Roger Zimmermann, Fermilab radiation physicist, and a Tevatron Shmoo. Right, Al Capp's drawing of a typical Shmoo.

ergies of 1000 GeV. It operated faithfully from 1983 until it was shut down a few weeks ago.

In order to produce powerful fields, its magnets must be kept at cryogenic temperatures, around 4 Kelvin. This takes liquid helium, and liquid nitrogen. Necessarily, within the six-kilometer-long tunnel, there are a few places where cold equipment meets warm equipment.

Now and then, when the beams were off, my work with Radiation Safety would take me into the Tevatron tunnel, often with my buddy Roger Zimmermann. Roger and I would walk through the F-Zero region, where during operation beam pipes would inject particles into the Tevatron. There we would find a pair of nitrogen shield vents that were very cold.

Cold enough to condense moisture from the surrounding air. Cold enough for the moisture to freeze. Cold enough, for long enough, that layers of smooth white ice would build up into a gently curved shape.

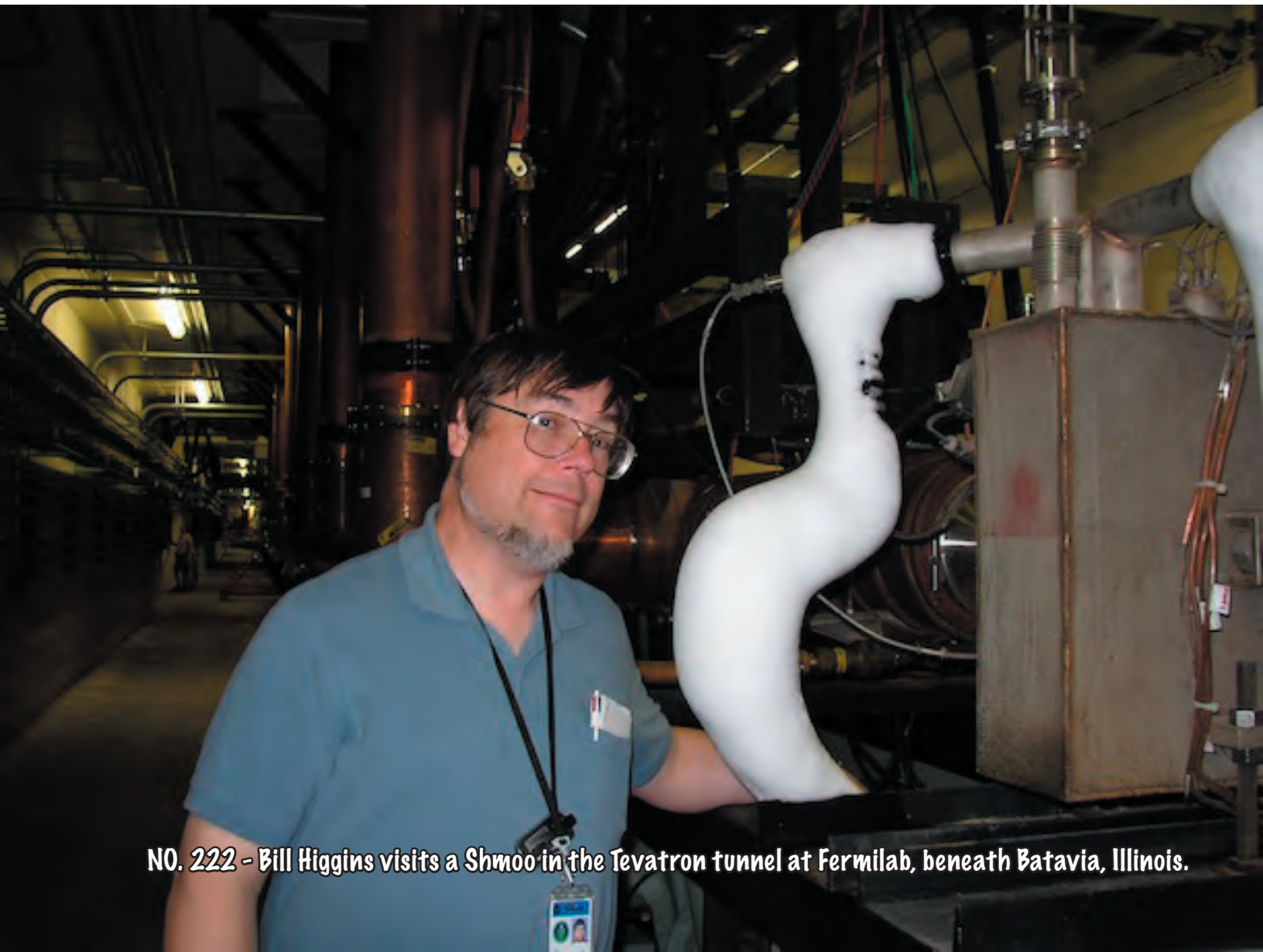
A Shmoo.

Younger scientists might see this buildup and call it an “iceball.” Roger and I were old enough to remember Lil’ Abner. So we knew the truth: Driven out of Dogpatch, Al Capp’s cuddly creatures had found a home beneath the Illinois prairie. It was like greeting an old friend.

Whenever we walked through F-Zero, we would visit the Shmoos, and remark upon them to each other. Sometimes we took photos.

Now that the Tevatron has been turned off, it will be warmed up. Gradually, it will warm to room temperature. The icy white Shmoos will sublime, or melt, or evaporate, and literally vanish into the air. They will return to the realm of imagination, which is, after all, where Shmoos began.

It was nice to have them as neighbors for a few years. Maybe the Shmoos will appear again, perhaps at some other cryogenic accelerator.



**NO. 222 - Bill Higgins visits a Shmoo in the Tevatron tunnel at Fermilab, beneath Batavia, Illinois.**

## No. 223 - In Which I Wonder How My Brothers Have Lived So Long by Diana La Femina

Experimenting is fun when you're a kid. I remember the time my brothers and I decided to make a concoction we could drink so we wouldn't have to brush our teeth. Some toothpaste, water, and a little mouthwash later and we were quite proud of ourselves. Our mother, not so much (you should have seen the bathroom). But experimenting's all well and good when you're mixing toothpaste. What happens when people without any sense have access to dangerous chemicals? Allow me to tell you.

My brothers are very intelligent and great guys, but sometimes they seem denser than a ton of bricks. My older brother worked as a lifeguard at a gated community, which meant he spent his days lounging mostly alone at a pool. One of his jobs was to mix the chemicals for the pool and add them at the correct times. Whoever thought my 18-year old brother should be dealing with large amounts of dangerous chemicals should get his head examined.

It was a beautiful day, as I recall, and my younger brother (then 12-years old) went to the pool with my older brother to spend the day. When it came time for my older brother to add the chemicals to the pool, the two of them got the bright idea to try science. They placed a bucket on the lawn as far away from anything

as they could get (this is where their common sense ends). They then added industrial-strength chlorine to the bucket, followed carefully (and quickly) by a large quantity of ammonia. They then ran away to watch from a distance.

What my brothers failed to realize is that mixing ammonia and chlorine is very similar to mixing ammonia and bleach (possibly worse). There's a reason you're not supposed to do it; you create chlorine gas, once used as a weapon in WWII (I believe, don't quote me on that).

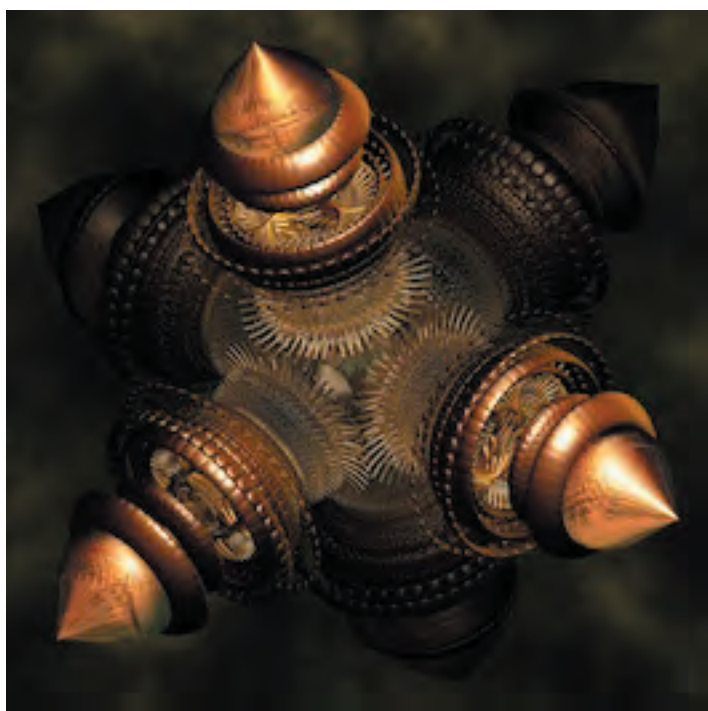
My brothers stared on in wonder as a heavy green cloud rose from the bucket, dribbled down the side, and spread over the grass as dry ice would do. It's never good when something creates a cloud of gas with both weight and color.

Then the fumes hit them.

Both my brothers, in a fit of self-preservation (I refuse to believe they had common sense at this point) dove into the pool and submerged themselves for as long as possible whilst swimming to the farthest corner away from the bucket. By the time they came up for air, most of the fumes had dissipated and only a noxious smell lingered in the air.

My brothers began to realize just how lucky and stupid they were when they cautiously approached the bucket. Surrounding the bucket was a perfect circle of dead grass, wherever the cloud had touched. The gas killed the grass on contact. Apparently it would have done the same thing to their lungs and various air passages. Thus my brothers entered the ranks of a fine family tradition: have crap happen to you that should kill you but somehow doesn't. I swear, everyone in my family has some story of dangling over the Swiss Alps holding onto nothing but their brother's hand (my mother), slipping on a wet road and being run over by a car twice (my father), or some other strange story that seems farcical.

I believe the moral of the story is: never leave two teenaged boys unattended with dangerous chemicals. I amend that: never leave two teenaged boys unattended regardless of the circumstances. Nothing good has ever come of it.



No. 224 - Art by Mark Brady

## No. 225 -How to Make a Zombie Plague By Amanda Barrett Originally published over at SiMF. (Also picked up by io9.com!)

Ah, the zombie plague! A Mad Scientist couldn't ask for a better means for world domination. Not only would discrete application of your infectious agent eliminate your opposition, the rest of humanity will be far too busy fending of their recently deceased loved ones to notice when you swoop in and take control. The population is reduced to a more manageable size, and the ever-present zombie threat will keep any potential rebellions from forming. Everybody wins! Well, mostly I win but you get my point.

But how to make it happen? There's a good reason no one has ever pulled off the 'Take Over the World by Zombie Plague' scheme before...it's an awful lot to ask of a single infectious agent. It must be transmitted from person to person, or even across species, quickly and with a low infectious dose. It has to fend off the immune system and penetrate the blood-brain barrier to get at your delicious brain meats. It has to basically turn your body into a walking incubation chamber, dedicated solely to feeding and spreading the infection. Still, these obstacles are not insurmountable when one has the power of Mad Science.

To put things into perspective, it is important to understand that the things that make us sick – viruses, bacteria, parasites, what-have-you – have been around a lot longer than we have, and they've gotten very good at what they do. And what they do isn't very nice...we certainly don't think so, anyway. The pathogens causing the infection are just doing what they have to do to survive and replicate in a hostile environment: You. In many cases, the characteristics that make this possible are a lucky coincidence for the pathogen and an unfortunate side-effect for the host. For example, a surface protein that makes a bacteria more resilient in the soil may also protect it from your immune system. If that bacteria spends enough time in a human host, it's going to get better and better at exploiting that characteristic so that it can survive longer and reproduce more. The longer this process goes on, the more specifically attuned the pathogen has the potential to become. Humans haven't really been around very long, evolutionarily speaking. Bacteria however are some of the oldest forms of life, and the viruses that infect them, known as bacteriophages, have been fine-tuning the process for an exceptionally long time. So much so that many

bacteriophages only infect one species of bacteria. They have become so specialized in exploiting the characteristics of their favorite bacteria that they have lost the ability to infect others.

Pox viruses are some of the oldest viruses that infect mammalian cells, and they have developed a similar level of species-specificity. A human could drink a vial of rabbit pox and be completely unaffected. That level of control would be useful...but that isn't really what we want, is it? No, we want something new and flashy and explosively infectious. The Ebola virus only broke onto the 'human infectious agent' scene in 1976 and it has already made quite the impact. The virus itself destroys blood vessels and prevents blood from coagulating, producing lots of infectious fluids and causing death through hypovolemic shock. Bats are the most likely animal reservoir for the virus as well, which is



pretty badass. Can you imagine zombie bats? I can. It's awesome.

Unfortunately, viruses that are capable of infecting multiple species don't generally affect them in the same way. The bats infected with Ebola aren't leaking blood everywhere and birds infected with influenza haven't come down with the flu. That's because these species are carriers. While the virus is still present, it isn't causing disease. Like the bacteria living in the soil that happen to have an adaptation that causes disease in humans, these viruses have a stable existence within their animal reservoirs. They only cause disease when they jump to humans, a less familiar environment. This is actually what makes Bird Flu so potentially dangerous. Multiple strains of influenza can infect the same animal, allowing for exceptionally rapid genetic recombination and the development of new strains our immune system has never seen. Many different animal species are reservoirs for human disease including pigs, armadillos and deer...but while they may be useful in delivering your zombie plague to the masses, your undead horde won't be accompanied by zombie armadillos. I'll give you a moment to recover from the crushing disappointment.

So how will our zombie plague be spread? There's a lot to consider here. Not only does the infection have to reach a lot of people, it also has to reach their delicious brains. The human brain is a fairly important organ. The blood-brain barrier carefully restricts access to the cerebrospinal fluid, protecting your tender brain from most bacterial infections as well as inflammation. Inflammation is your immune system's first response to a potential invader, but in the brain this can cause swelling and tissue damage. To prevent this, the blood-brain barrier keeps out the cells and antibodies

of your immune system as well as the bacteria. There is certainly precedent for overcoming this obstacle, however. Rabies virus is spread through infected saliva and can travel from a bite wound to the brain, bypassing this barrier. Sound familiar?

But once our virus gets to the brain, how would it go about turning your average person into a shambling virus factory? Well honestly, you don't really need most of that big brain you have. Sure, that cerebellum

helps you coordinate your movements but shambling is totally in this year. As a proud soldier in the undead horde, you don't really need to make any complex decisions so screw that frontal lobe. And all that memory processing and spatial navigation provided by your hippocampus? Bah. All you really need is your amygdala... the primitive reptile brain, that generates the 'fight or flight' response. Just get rid of the rest and you're good to go. Well, figuratively speaking.

So we're looking for an infectious agent that can be introduced to the population in a relatively innocuous way – such as through an animal reservoir – that can penetrate the blood-brain barrier, destroy all that unnecessary brain tissue, and leave the host a shambling plague factory....preferably oozing with infectious particles. Now I'm sure most of you are thinking viruses are the way to go here, but I've got one word for you: Prions.

Prions are basically infectious proteins. We don't know a lot about them yet, but they are the causative agent behind spongiform encephalopathies such as Mad Cow disease and Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease. Mad Cow disease can be transmitted to humans who eat infected tissue, and there is some evidence that prions can become airborne and cause disease at a surprisingly low infectious dose (in mice, anyway). Since all they are is a single protein, they have no trouble slipping past the blood-brain barrier and wreaking havoc with your neurons. When the misfolded prion protein encounters other proteins in the brain, it acts as a template that causes the misfolding of these healthy proteins, thereby propagating itself. Prion diseases are currently untreatable, even. The only real downside is the long incubation time, but I'm still pretty confident that prions are the way to go in terms of zombie plague development.

Even if you aren't trying to take over the world (and why wouldn't you be!?!), the zombie plague is ex-

ceptionally useful as a modeling tool for the spread of highly infectious diseases. It's also a powerful motivator for getting people interested in how diseases spread. You can try your hand at destroying the world with the zombie plague or building your own custom pathogen to see how fast you can infect the world. Preparing for the Zombie Apocalypse is also a fun way to be prepared for more routine disasters that people do face daily.



No. 227 - Art by Kate Kelton



No. 228 - Art by Selina Phanara

# No. 229 - SF Wiki Gardening: Got a Digital Thumb?

## by Anne Gray

Most people have read articles on Wikipedia, but much fewer have actually tried editing pages. It's easier than it sounds, and I encourage people to try it. Also, since the WikiMedia wiki technology is freely available, it is used for other wikis, making it easy to get involved in those as well if you know a little bit about editing Wikipedia. Related to SF in particular, I wanted to mention the Carl Brandon Society Wiki (<http://www.carlbrandon.org/wiki/>), the Feminist SF Wiki (<http://wiki.feministsf.net/>), and the SF Editors Wiki (<http://sfeditorwatch.com/>). – There's also an SF Artists Wiki (<http://sfartistwatch.com/>), but it's suffering technical difficulties at this time.

What all of these wikis are suffering from is attacks by spammers and vandals. On Wikipedia, there are vast hordes of editors (and bots) watching over Recent Changes (a link in the side bar on any WikiMedia page) and newly created pages in order to roll back or otherwise undo vandalism. The smaller wikis do not currently enjoy such communities of watchdogs and advanced bots. If you are interested in trying a hand at helping out, it would be greatly appreciated. Because all of these wikis use the same technology, you can learn how to edit them using the many tutorials, help pages, cheat sheets, and introductory primers on Wikipedia. But unlike Wikipedia, the other SF wikis tend to have more inclusive policies about content and notability.

If you are interested in an sf writer of color or an sf book that has protagonists of color, you are welcome, nay, encouraged to post about it in the Carl Brandon Society Wiki. And nobody's going to jump down your back about putting lengthy biographical details about publishers, editors or fan editors on the SF Editors wiki, or for describing conventions or events based on first-hand knowledge on the Feminist SF wiki. So if you want to dip your fingers into wiki gardening without facing the critical community of editors on Wikipedia, give one of those other wikis a try.

On the other hand, there are a number of us still hoping that Wikipedia will improve, and working

on it when we can. It's such a universally used reference, it's important that the sections of it related to SF be as good as possible – And there are a \*lot\* of sections of Wikipedia related to SF. This morning I went looking around in the Directory of WikiProjects – topics about which a group of people have joined together to coordinate Wikipedia coverage and improve articles. The top level Science Fiction WikiProject is somewhat inactive right now, though I'm hoping to revive it. But I think part of the reason why is that so many people are working on more specific projects. Here's a sample of WikiProjects that sf fans might find it fun to get involved with (click through to check them out; some of them are very active. Some are currently inactive and needing help.):

Horror \* Furry Fandom \* Anime and Manga \* WikiProject Animation/Animated films work group  
Comics \* Television \* Video Games \* Board and Table Games \* RPGs \* ARGs \* Alternate History

WikiProject Novels: Science Fiction task force, Fantasy task force

WikiProject Film: Comic Books that have been made into films task force

Media Franchises:

Star Trek \* Babylon 5 \* Star Wars \* Battlestar Galactica \* Doctor Who \* Stargate \* Buffy \* Firefly \* Futurama \* Harry Potter \* A Song of Ice and Fire \* Discworld \* Middle-Earth \* Dungeons & Dragons

Other topics fans like that have projects include: Astronomy, Spaceflight, Mythology, the Paranormal

If you want to help these projects somehow, but can't make a big time commitment, consider helping to identify articles that are within the scope of a project. If you see a science fiction-related article, for instance, click on the discussion tab and see if it has a banner notice that it is included in the project. It looks



This article is within the scope of **WikiProject Science Fiction**, a collaborative effort to improve the coverage of science fiction on Wikipedia. If you would like to participate, please visit the project page, where you can join the discussion and see a list of open tasks.



Speculative fiction portal

**Start** This article has been rated as **Start-Class** on the project's quality scale.

**Mid** This article has been rated as **Mid-importance** on the project's importance scale.

like the above

If not, add one! It's done with a little tag called a template. Edit the discussion page, and at the top paste in this:

```
{{WikiProject Science Fiction|class= |importance= }}
```

If you want to get fancy, take a look at the importance and class scales for the project and give your assessment of the article's class and importance after the equals signs, e.g.:

```
{{WikiProject Science Fiction|class=Start |importance=Mid}}
```

If you want to do this for a different project, just substitute that project's name in place of Science Fiction. It's a small way you can help a lot.

And if you notice that some of a page's content on any wiki has been replaced with advertising or nonsense, please step in and undo that vandalism. If it's only one change, you can click on the article's History tab and hit "undo" next to the bad change. If there's more than one destructive change in the article's history, however, you can click on the date of the last full content version of the article in that same history listing, then click "Edit", and save to replace the current article with that old version.

Joining a WikiProject has a number of advantages, including that you can easily meet a group of other users who are interested in the same subjects you are (just look for the members list on the main project page), and are more than likely willing to help you out if you have a problem. The projects also provide suggestions as to articles that need improvement, or articles that don't exist but that have been requested by someone.

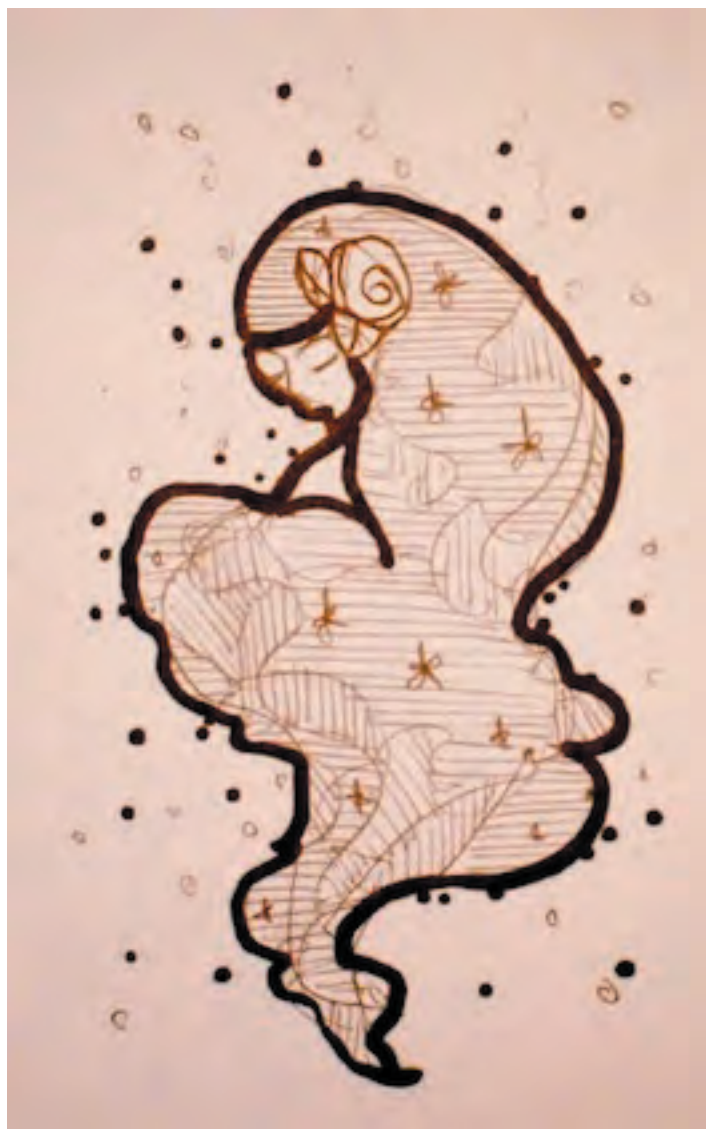
I am also happy to help field questions – just drop me a line at [akg.netmouse@gmail.com](mailto:akg.netmouse@gmail.com) or post something to my talk/discussion page on the relevant wiki. In the meantime, happy gardening!

--Anne

## No. 230 - I Hope It's Not Sirius By Barbara Haddad-Johnson

**When a distant blue star goes supernova,  
it engenders eager study and debate.  
Radiation is measured, as gas sleets out  
for hundreds of light years into space.**

**But a supernova in our stellar 'neighborhood'  
would be greeted with far less enthusiasm.  
It could possibly destroy all life on Earth,  
and at best, would certainly be a novel way to tan.**




No. 231 - Art by Kate Kelton

# NO. 232 - DUFF Report: How much wood ... by Alan Stewart

After ConAdian, I flew to Toronto with Jan Howard finder, and we picked up his car which was parked at the airport. We then drove to his home in Watertown, New York state. The following day, 7 September, Jan went to work, and one of the things I did was stack a load of wood he'd had delivered into his garage. Just one example of how DUFF winners may repay their hosts. The following photographs were taken over the course of the job and can be arranged to tell a time-lapse history of the job. Can you place them in the correct order?



(The correct order is b, h, a, g, d, f, e, c)



## No. 233 - 52 Weeks To Science Fiction Film Literacy Annex: Logan's Run By Christopher J Garcia

One of the hardest things about 52 Weeks was formulating the list. How do you boil thousands of SF films down to a list of 52 that makes some sort of sense.

Short answer: you don't.

There are obvious short-comings of the list as I composed it, the lack of any of the real B-pictures from the 50s or 60s, no works from guys like Paul Anderson (of Mortal Kombat fame) and a lack of real experimental SF films (Canary comes to mind).

Then there were also films that could have displaced others that did make the list. Where I had Rollerball, easily a half-dozen other films could have been placed in that gap and talked about many of the same topics. One of the movies that was a part of that debate was Logan's Run, one that I only cut when I took the list from 60 (It started at more than 150) down to the final 52 (which included cutting Dune, Disney's 20,000 Leagues and Attack of the 50 Foot Woman). It's one of my faves, one that I reference nearly constantly, and one where you have a great many things that you can talk about, but compared to something like Rollerball, you have to put it just a step or two behind. Is it a good film? I'm not 100% convinced (and I can think of two or three others on this list that would fail that check) but it's significant because it looks beyond the simple and into a world that we are all a part of.

So, why not Logan's Run?

Well, the short answer is it's got the whole Cave thing (see the next article for more), but it lacks a look at our society. The Renew concept is a good one, but something like the Messiah concept in Rollerball, the fear of and reliance on idea computers idea from De-

mon Seed, and the sheer spectacle of Close Encounters all trump it. It's not the best SF film of the 1970s, but it does have a lot going for it, especially in the costume department.

There is more. One thing that I think can be certainly inferred is that Logan's Run is the ultimate expression of the smoldering remnants of the Hippy movement. The 1960s were over (for the most part) and it was time to start creating works that were taking their concepts and making them into art works of a referential type. No phrase more rang true in the 1960s than "Don't trust anyone over thirty!"

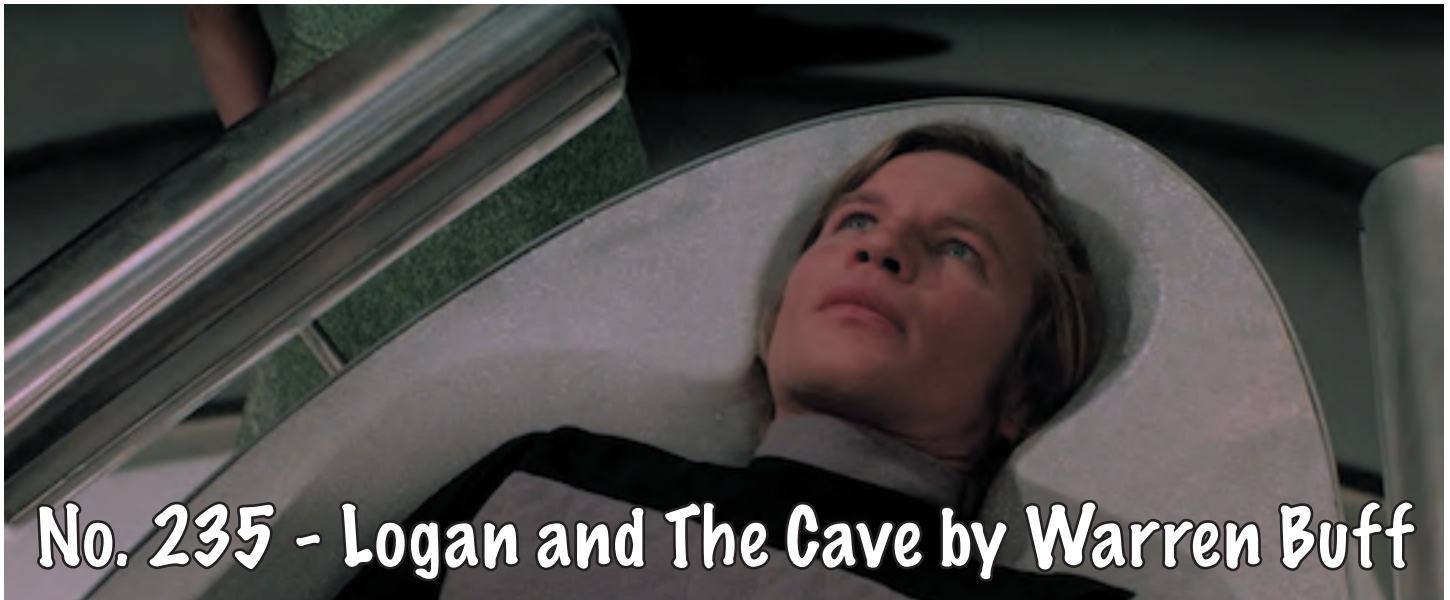
And isn't it funny that that's the age people have to Renew?

In the book, the age is 21, but in the film, it's 30. That is a symbolic place to put the cut-off, 30 is the dividing line between young and old (at least in the 1970s) and Michael York was obviously older than 21. By clearing everyone out at the age of 30, symbolically, it is a world run by the young, and in this case by the generation that had to deal with the Draft, the War, the generation that had protested. It was the generation that had grown up with TV, so it was very different from the staunch old folks who had set up the rules, the rules to keep the youth down.

The type of rules that had led to so many of their generation going off and getting killed in Vietnam.

They say that anything that took place after Vietnam in some way references it... or can be made to reference it!

So, why'd I include it here? Because I felt bad about not including it and because Warren Buff (you are voting him for TAFF right?) wrote the following!



## No. 235 - Logan and The Cave by Warren Buff

Logan's Run may well be the best use of Plato's allegory of the cave in a science fiction film ever. Part of this is its willingness to not take itself seriously, and part the completeness of the allegory in the story. Another major point in its favor is that it approaches the allegory as social commentary rather than as metaphysics, and it really works a lot better that way.

For those not familiar with it, the allegory of the cave goes as follows (and I paraphrase): Imagine a cave in which people (I think Plato refers to them as "men", but I'm working from memory here) are chained to a wall with their heads fixed forward, such that all they can see is the opposite wall of the cave. At some point above them, the wall recesses, such that objects may be moved about above their heads. Behind these objects, a fire is kept burning, such that it projects light onto the opposite wall, as well as the shadows of the objects. We're never given any details of the pathology of whoever built this cave and imprisoned these people, but then, Plato wasn't writing science fiction, so never you mind that. Plato's premise is that the people chained to the wall of the cave, if these shadows were all they ever saw, would take them to be the whole of reality. Now, through the sounds they make, the people of the cave are aware that there are other people in the same circumstances as them, but have no idea what these people look like (unless some representation is projected onto the wall). That's the set-up.

Now imagine that one of these people is released from his chains (and yes, in Plato, the focal figure of the allegory is male, but hey, Socrates was really far before feminism became a prominent influence in philosophy). He is confused by the sudden lack of chains,

and frightened by the new shapes he is able to see by turning his head and looking at himself and the other prisoners. He really just wants to stay where he is and keep watching the shadows. But for some reason, whoever let him free decides that he won't have a choice in whether he remains in the cave, and he is forced outside into the Sun (yeah, it's capitalized). The passage outside is hard, terrifying, and rapid. The Sun, of course, is Truth (hey, we haven't ditched that one yet). The allegorical man is nearly blinded by the Sun, and turns his face away from it. But eventually, he grows accustomed to it, and learns to love the Sun and its light, and all the new truths it has revealed.

But that's not enough. For you see, the allegorical man becomes a Philosopher. And as the Philosopher, he is unable to bear the thought of his fellow men still chained inside, away from the light of the Sun's truth. So he can't just enjoy his time in the Sun, but must reenter the cave, which is nearly as hard as exiting it, and go to tell his former fellows of what he has seen. They don't believe him, of course, no matter how he tells them. But the Philosopher must make them understand. He breaks their chains to set them free. This just makes them angry, and they attack him. But hey, he's a Philosopher, so he can't leave well enough alone. He drags his compatriots kicking and screaming up into the Sun's light to make them live there. Never mind that they were happy in the cave! It wasn't real. It wasn't true. He has given them the bum deal of value for their happiness (which sounds like a great deal if you're also a Philosopher, but is kinda shitty for most people).

So let's take a look at Logan's Run, now that I've

burned almost a page talking about Ancient Greek philosophy. Logan is a Sandman (and yes, they're all men, from what I can tell) living in a great shopping mall of an enclosed city where everyone is young and beautiful. You dress according to your color, which corresponds to your age (reds are the oldest, followed by greens, and I think little kids are yellow). You also only get thirty years of life, at the end of which a little crystal in your palm starts blinking and you go to Carrousel to "renew". This really means that you dress up in a funny robe, float up in the air, and explode as a crowd of your peers cheers you on, believing all the while that a new version of yourself will be born. Some folks think this is a bad deal, and try to escape the shopping mall. Sandmen like Logan hunt them down. Logan does this with particular glee in one sequence, shouting, "Run, runner!" as he tries to shoot the poor sap with a laser. A central computer controls all of this, including handing the Sandmen their assignments. The most telling sign of the hedonism in Logan's society is that there's a machine in his room he can use to dial up a random companion for the evening, and after a couple of minutes conversation with Jessica, he hits her with his line: "So, let's have sex." He says this with a confidence that tells us it's worked many, many times before. It's not clear whether this confidence comes from the authority of being a Sandman or a generally casual approach to sex in his society, but either way, he's clearly accustomed to getting what he wants, and legitimately surprised when Jessica says no. How's that for a cave that our allegorical man has very little incentive to question, let alone leave?

But Logan's smarter than the average bear, and picks up on an ankh symbol he sees Jessica wearing. He connects it with a similar one he found in the possessions of a runner, and presents that one to the computer, along with a question of what it means. He hears that it's the symbol of a group of runners looking

for Sanctuary (whatever that's supposed to be) and the computer manipulates the gem in his hand to make it blink, and instructs him to become a runner and find Sanctuary. Logan is really reluctant, but left with no choice – he certainly can't stick around at work! Chains broken, allegorical man given a hard push.

So Logan asks Jessica for help, and in spite of her better judgment, she leads him to her compatriots. They're rightly suspicious, and after being convinced to help him, it turns out he's been tracked, and the other Sandmen attack. Logan escapes out the back door, through a maintenance corridor which floods behind him, and then has no choice but to complete his escape. He defeats a malfunctioning food storage robot, whose ice cave collapses a bit to force him out further, and finds himself, literally, staring into the rising sun. We are being beaten over the head with the allegory, here.

Logan and Jessica wander about the ruined world outside, which has largely been overgrown in its neglect. They find an old man living in the Library of Congress (though it is only implied to be such) with a whole slew of cats. The old man has gone kinda bonkers in his solitude, and quotes extensively from Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats. The old man, even more than the sun itself, is the Sun. Logan figures out



a lot about the way the world used to be from really sparse clues in an unbelievably short period, but hey, it's cinema, and we're trying to get back to the action. After deciding how awesome becoming a parent and growing old must be (and I must note that no one ever fills in Jessica on just what she can expect from the process of childbearing), Logan has become the Philosopher, and really has to go back and tell everyone just how awesome it is out here.

So, making his way back into the mall by diving in through the fountains, Logan runs into the crowd outside of Carrousel and starts screaming about what it's like outside. No one really pays him much mind. He is understandably captured by other Sandmen, at which point, the crowd goes back to its regularly scheduled evening of watching their friends explode. Logan has a showdown with the computer, which explodes when his superior willpower overturns its predetermined

notions of Sanctuary. This is the 70s, after all – folks didn't really have a good picture of how this AI thing would work, and exploding when its Weltanschauung got a swift kick in the ribs seemed reasonable enough. The exploding computer, of course, means that the mall is collapsing and catching fire. Logan leads an exodus of mallrats out to meet the old man, who giggles as they all crowd around to feel his beard. I suppose going from hermit to surrounded by nubile young girls who've never seen anything like me before and all want to feel up my facial hair would make me giggle, too. Here, of course, Logan has completed the allegory by forcing all of the denizens of the cave out into the Sun, though thankfully for them, it's kinda dark out when they get there, so they just have to deal with the figurative and not the literal Sun for now.

So there you have it. Logan's run is spot-on the allegory of the cave (which can also be found at the

root of other, lesser movies like *The Matrix* (and some not-so-lesser ones like *Brazil* or *The Truman Show*). Its status as the last of the high-budget pre-*Star Wars* science fiction films endears it to me, and it feels like a fitting book-end to the much smarter (but less fun) 2001. That will always be my favorite era of science fiction film, even though my favorite individual films came later. A certain seriousness to the ideas had managed to creep in which would be harder to accomplish in later high-budget productions, when the seriousness of the bottom line got harder and harder to ignore.



# CARROUSEL

BE STRONG, AND YOU SHALL BE RENEWED

No. 236 - Art by Kavin Veldar

# My Favorite Movie Theatre



## No. 237 - My Top Five by Christopher J Garcia

I love movie theaters. I always have. When I was a kid, we went to the movies at least once a week, and sometimes three times. My first job ever was working for a promotions company taking counts at movie premieres. I saw a great many flicks (and got to wear the ACTUAL Robocop helmet!) and fell in love with several movie theaters.

My High School girlfriend and I used to regularly go to a theatre that offered a ten-pack of movie tickets that allowed us to see a pair of movies every week. It was an art house where we largely let films like Vincent & Theo, Dial M For Murder and Reservoir Dogs pass on the screen while we made out. Along with one or two movies a week for the promotions company, we were almost constantly at the theaters. It was awesome. After I headed off to college, I would do movies all the time, at least three a week since I

was less than 5 minutes walk away from a multiplex that showed nothing but art house and foreign films. It was AWESOME!!!!!! After I graduated, I used to have Fridays off, so I'd go to see a flick at whatever theatre I was close to. After I started working with Cinequest, I found more theaters that I loved.

I try to go to theatres when I am traveling. I feel bad that I didn't get to any when I was in Dallas, New Jersey or New York. I almost went, but alas, I was stuck. I've seen films in theatres in Chicago, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, Las Vegas, Montreal, Philly, and various other places, but yet, my faves seem to be in two places. The two places where I really loved.

So, while asking folks to choose one theatre as their favorite, I chose five, each with a set of stories and movie memories that I can never forget.

**No. 238 - Photo by Christopher J Garcia**



### ***The Cinema 150***

I grew up in Santa Clara, California. We had several theaters that were nearby, almost all of them in San Jose, but on El Camino, the major road through the middle of town, was the Cinema 150. It was a giant theatre, all alone, not a multiplex. It showed 70mm flicks almost all the time. There was a time when 70mm meant something, and you always wanted to see the big ones in 70mm. The choice for me was always Cinema 150.

When Return of the Jedi was released, Pops and I waited almost a full-day to get seats for Jedi. We were fourth in line. It was an amazing film to see in 70mm, that HUGE curved screen and with nine hundred other fans, more than a dozen of them in costumes, including the greatest Slave-Girl Leia in history. I had the Jedi storybook with me and it was amazing!

And there were EWOKS! I freaking' love the Ewoks.

I saw tons of movies there. I could walk there when I was in Junior high, so I could walk there after-school on a Wednesday when we got out at 2:30 and Mom didn't get home until after 9. SO many movies, big blockbusters, and flicks like The Accused.

It was a nie theatre, built in the mid-1960s, and

it had long aisles and widely-spaced seats. As a little kid, it sucked because I could never see over an adult sitting in front of me because the grade down that ski-run-like aisle wasn't enough, but when I got older, and taller, I could see that the way they built it would allow those in the front rows to be surrounded by visuals. I remember watching the re-release of Lawrence of Arabia and sitting in the front row (the Jason Wiener seats, I call them) and feelign like I was in the middle of a sea of sand. There was real theory put into building the 150 and it was apparent in every screenign that I saw there.

My High School Girlfriend and I saw Dances with Wolves there, the film which we watched would move on to the Oaks a few months later, which would then go on to be held by the projectionist, who would almost twenty years later would give it to me!

The last film I saw there was Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey, which was a terrible flick, even to fifteen year old Chris. The next week, it was closed. Two years later, right after I graduated Santa Clara High, they tore it down. Now it's a medical center, like we need another one of those...



### **The Towne Theatre**

The late 1980s saw a few of the legendary theaters around San Jose re-vamped and re-opened. One was the Towne, an old theatre that had been left as a single-screen, right on The Alameda. This was the theatre that Jenn and I used to go to half-watch art house flicks and I could almost certainly say that it was the one that made me into an Art House fan, which certainly led to me to the world of Documentaries (Sophomore year of High School) and that, eventually, to the world of film festivals.

What did The Towne have that made it awesome? So much! There was the huge auditorium, the wonderful front lobby, which while narrow, was always staffed by bored-looking college students who may well forget to charge you for that popcorn. The place didn't have the traditional Movie Palace feel, it had been a secondary screen back in the day, but it still felt like a REAL old-time movie theatre, and it was a Rep screen, so they'd do one and two week stands of old films, of foreign films, of Hitchcock and Altman, and B-Schlock, Animation festivals and more. I saw what I still consider to be the finest documentary made in the 1990s: Crumb, and Leon Tucker, Stubbs, fell asleep while I was

just riveted to the screen. I watched Ghostworld there, also by Terry Zwigoff, and discovered that you could tell two completely different stories in two completely different ways and still have a voice that feels both compelling and consistent.

All that, I learned at the single-screen Towne.

Of course, after a few years, they cut it up, turned it into a threeplex, still with the big screen only about 1/2 as big as it had. The other two showed regular art house fare, stuff like Pulp Fiction and Memento, Hollywood art house films. It was OK, but it wasn't the same as it had been. I was inspired by the Towne to do a challenge to myself: see five movies, one a day after work, and become conversant in the language of Modern Art House Cinema. I watched every movie I could, like Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss and The Opposite of Sex and the Spike & Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation. I loved it.

Eventually, the Camera chain of theaters sold The Towne to an Indian chain, which was OK since it kept the theatre as a theatre, but I've only seen one film there in the last five years. I miss it.



### ***The Cleveland Circle Theatres***

Multiplexes. I grew up with the AMC theaters all around me. There was the Sunnyvale Town Center, the El Paseo, the Saratoga, the legendary Meridian Quad. These multiplexes started off beautiful and quickly fell into disrepair. I loved being able to watch 5 different movies in a day, which was always a plus.

When I moved to Boston, right out at the end of the Green Line branch that stopped right by my apartment was the Cleveland Circle Theatres. When I got there, it was already a broken-down theatre of six screens that looked like hell. I saw a mouse skitter across the aisle one afternoon screening of *Jawbreaker*, the terrible Rose McGowen film. It had the worst popcorn I've ever eaten.

But it was the greatest place to go and just sit down and see the kind of popcorn movies I had favoured back in Santa Clara.

I was off on Mondays, and the girl I was seeing had class into the late evening. I'd just take the T

to Cleveland Circle early in the morning, watch three movies, and then walk to Whole Foods, get groceries and walk home. It was like clockwork. It all worked. From September 1998 to February 1999, I saw more than a dozen movies., *Pleasantville* about 5 times. The projectors weren't the greatest, you could hear the clicking of the gates in two of the auditoriums, but even there the colours and the visuals were amazing, making it into one of my all-time favourite films.

This was where I learned my love for the Teen films of the 90s. I watched *Can't Hardy Wait*, *Varsity Blues*, *Pleasantville*, *Jawbreaker*, *She's All That*, all of them in those crappy screens, in those uncomfortable seats, gnawing at those half-popped kernels. I watched them, and once in a while I was the only one in the theatre. I loved it and once in a while, I'd bring in a notebook and start writing. I wrote an entire screenplay in those theaters, not my first, but the one that felt like it could actually get made. That's why I loved this one.

## **The Hacienda**

Again, by the time I started going to the Hacienda, it was well passed its use-by date. It was another multiplex, built in the early 1970s, I believe the first in the South Bay, but by the time I started riding my bike the two-and-a-half miles to it, it had gone to doing double features for 2 bucks.

And to a broke teenager, that was all I needed.

I went there every other day one summer, spending the other days at Great America, the local amusement park. It was 1989. The number of films I saw there was incredible. Flashback, a terrible Cheech film (since Chong wasn't in it), and the awesome Yahoo Serious film Young Einstein. I saw films like Ghostbusters 2, Batman, and most importantly, How I Got Into College.

When I got a little older, into high school, I would take dates there and we would be... well, let's just say we weren't PG-13.

The thing about the Hacienda, another theatre that is no longer in existence and sadly no one seems to have loved it enough to take or scan a photo of it, was that to me, it represented freedom. It had six showings a day, they never threw anyone out if they had seen both sides of the double feature twice. I could go and then stay there, maybe meet a friend for one screening, their parents would pick them up, I'd stay and maybe Jenn or someone else would come and we'd watch the double feature. When I stopped having my summers free, after my senior year, I always wished I could live life again like I had in those earlier summers. Wrestling on ESPN, Aussie Rules, then off to The Hacienda, a bunch of movies and then home just in time for Cosby, A Different World, Cheers and Night Court.

The Life

## **Century 21**

The Big One. The theatre that had been built as a Cinerama screen, had the biggest screen in all of San Jose (still does) and more than a thousand seats. It was the place where I would go for the big ones. My Dad LOVED the Century 21. We'd go together to the Winchester Mystery House, then to the Bob's Big Boy, then to the Century 21 for whatever was showing. We saw hundreds of movies there. View to a Kill, more than once. Silverado. Jedi. So many movies. After Pops left, I would go there for the big ones. Terminator 2. Total Recall. Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. The Last Action Hero.

The best part? The Dome. Giant Dome. Some-

thing about the ribs running up to the center, where the tiles never seemed to fit perfectly so you could always see a bit of sky poking in. The sound? Ideal. In the old days, the seats were rough. They went comfy early, with the raising arms, perfect for cuddling.

With Linda, we've seen a few films there, the most important being Stardust, early in our dating, where Linda lifted the arm, cuddled into me and somehow, at that moment, I just flat-out knew.

Of course, this is also the only one that remains the way I remember it from my peak of attendance. If I want to relive those days when I was going to the movies all the time, I can hop in the car, grab a breakfast at Flames, which is the same building as used to be the Bob's Big Boy, and go to a matinee, remember how Dad used to sit me down, then march off and come back in arms-full of popcorn and Reece's and Red Vines and Cokes.

And now, that can only happen in that one wonderful, remaining of my favorite theatres.



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## No. 240 - The Landmark Harvard Exit by Tassoula Kokkoris

With the advent of modern technology, going to a theater to see a movie is a considerably less special event. What once was as quiet as a library is now as noisy as an airport terminal; what in the past was dark as night is now illuminated with smaller screens—those of cell phones—for folks who just can't wait to text or talk until the film is over.

So for purists like me, who still think the movie theater should be a sacred place for arts and entertainment to be enjoyed, more work has to be done to achieve that special movie-going experience. Thankfully, I live in a city that offers a bounty of options.

When I'm in the mood for a popcorn blockbuster, I usually go to one of the larger chains, which feature the best sound and screen size. But when I'm seeing the majority of films that I choose to see for enjoyment or review for my show, I always gravitate toward my favorite theater—the Landmark Harvard Exit on Seattle's Capitol Hill.

Originally home to The Woman's Century Club of Seattle, the classic brick building was built in 1925. When it was converted to a movie theater in 1968, the Club negotiated lifetime rights to continue meeting in its elegant parlor, which remains decorated with furnishings dedicated by club members over the years.

Walking in to the Harvard Exit is like stepping back into a long-forgotten pocket of the past. The indoor box office is a modest space with a glass case featuring movies to buy; the automated ticket machine almost feels out of place due to its modern design.

Moving on to the parlor, a small concession stand features popcorn served with real butter in environmentally friendly bags. Progressing further into the lobby sits a grand piano, a fireplace, cozy couches, and tables with a treasure trove of independent film postcards and posters—all free for the taking.

The main theater is regal in appearance. Opulent velvet curtains, dark carpeting and wooden chairs create an ambiance of history you won't find in today's multiplexes.

Up two flights of stairs you'll discover another theater (added in the 1980s), and a sitting room that is always so hollow and creepy I seldom visit it anymore. You see, another thing that makes the Harvard Exit special is the fact that it's haunted. Yes, haunted.

Ghosts said to roam the halls include "Peter," a man who was killed on the property just before the current building was constructed. He is by all accounts a jovial and well-dressed ghost, flirting with female patrons on the first floor and watching films alongside the living. Other spirits that haunt on the ground level include ladies assumed to be early members of The Woman's Century Club. Many staff members have reported these translucent females in period clothing arranging chairs or starting the fire in the fireplace in advance of evening showings. And finally, a woman who was suffocated in the 40s on the premises likes to scare the living daylights out of folks upstairs. Perhaps she's the reason I don't like the 3rd floor lobby?

Whatever the vibe on any given day, the Harvard Exit is rich with character and offers a one-of-a-kind moviegoing experience.



No. 241 - Photo from Tassoula Kokkoris

# HAIRY POTTER



# No. 243 - Interview with Karin Lowachee by Susan Voss

## Originally appeared on [darkcargo.com](http://darkcargo.com)

Karin Lowachee is the Canadian science fiction author of four books, the Warchild Universe trilogy and Gaslight Dogs. This interview focuses on her moving and highly entertaining Warchild Universe trilogy: Warchild, Burndive, and Cagebird. Karin Lowachee, born in Guyana, raised in Canada, worked as a teacher in the Arctic, brings to her books a mix of cultures, morals, and life aspects. The Warchild Universe books present a depth of human understanding set in the backdrop of space and intergalactic war on three sides. Please enjoy the following interview.

**What is your writing atmosphere like? Can you plop down anywhere and write or do you have an inspirational Lowachee-cave for writing? What do you listen to when writing?**

I prefer being at my computer to write, in my office, as that denotes a time to work with not as much distraction. I couldn't work in a café or anywhere public; I'd be too busy people watching and eating. Being at a computer is also preferable because writing cursive takes too long.

Lately I don't listen to anything. If I do turn on music, it's classical or soundtrack music (like, from films), music that doesn't have words. Occasionally I will listen to songs with lyrics from specific artists but that varies wildly with the mood of the book.

**The intensity and depth of your characters is truly what drew me in. No one in your books is left untouched by the ongoing war. From your website, I know you are a bit of a history buff. How much of that knowledge and research played into The Warchild Universe character development?**

It's impossible to write a war novel and not be somehow influenced by history, especially since I've never served. I was interested in war history since early high school, so I read a lot on Vietnam and WWII specifically. In university I read a lot on the first Gulf War, and it's just been ongoing – especially personal

accounts from soldiers. I find those the most fascinating and heart-wrenching, so I'm sure that influenced me directly in how I wrote the voices in the Warchild Universe. I also watched a lot of documentaries and fictional war films, for that sense of storytelling. A friend of mine serves in the military, as well, so he was able to help me in the later drafts, at least to let me know if something was realistic or not. I have the thumbs up approval from him for all three novels and that means a lot to me — since he's certainly not the type to sugar-coat.

**In your first book Warchild, I can tell you took some quality time to create bits and pieces of the alien striviirc-na language. Have you studied many languages yourself? Was this an easy task for you in building this universe?**

I've only scholastically studied French (through high school, no further) and a very little of Ancient Greek and Latin, and that did give me a bit of an idea of language construction, but I'm not a linguist by far and I knew I wasn't going to go Tolkien on the striviirc-na language. I just paid attention to consistencies and the internal sense of it, not just letter-by-letter or syntactically, but also how words/concepts might have formed culturally, because of the way they think. That was just as important as making the language "look good." I didn't consider it especially difficult, but it did take some OCD attention – which I naturally do with my writing anyway.

**The Warchild Universe books, especially Cagebird, show a Japanese culture influence. How did that come about?**

The Japanese influence in Cagebird – and I'm assuming you're referring to the geisha culture – is partly because I'm interested in Japanese culture and partly because I was interested in taking this culturally specific detail (the geisha) and translating it or adapting it to a future in the context of Falcone's world. There are differences between the ancient geisha culture and

what ended up being Yuri's world, and that "bastardization" of it, if you will, was interesting for me to explore.

**In each of the three books, you focus on a different character and how the circumstances of the war have traumatized each of them while yet still moving the overall story forward. I applaud you for taking on the difficult subject of child slavery. What kind of research did you do to capture this issue so poignantly?**

With regard to the child slavery, that wasn't something I set out to do when I first began writing *Warchild*. It just naturally came about as a theme in a story about a child in war, but by the time I got to *Cagebird*, it was more conscious, in that I wanted to take this issue and carve it on the page. I did a lot of research into it and it frankly horrified me. I thought that this was something that could use a close examination in the genre, without pulling punches or taking the easy way out in the end, and to show how it affects kids for years. Falcone and his world became very directly based on my research, even though I didn't intend for that when I first conceived him. But he quickly became a kind of representation of the predators that exist today who are involved in child slavery rings. The line between Jos and Captain Azarcon is very short and I wanted that to resonate. Just because the captain was a capable adult now didn't mean he was unaffected by his past. Showing the spectrum of the ramifications was important to me.

**One of the underlying themes to *Cagebird* is the idea of redemption; it may never happen, it won't be easy, and it may not be complete. When you set out to write Yuri's character, did you play with the idea of redemption early on, or is that something that came about as the story unfolded for you?**

I did play with the idea of redemption early on. Before I'd written a word of *Cagebird*, Yuri's story was inspired by my research into the boy soldiers of Africa. I saw a documentary that talked with the boys who were forced by the warlords to commit atrocities, and they were then recovering in trauma camps. It was heartbreaking. So one of the essential questions of *Cagebird* was...how much do you blame Yuri for the things he did, considering the context? How much do you forgive him? Can he be forgiven? Should he be forgiven? Can he be held responsible for the things he did?

Outside of the geisha context — which in itself was structured in some part by how kids are recruited (if they're not outright kidnapped) into slave/prostitution rings — Falcone's treatment of Yuri was pretty directly informed by real warlords, especially in how he got Yuri to kill.

**Throughout the trilogy, you evince a knowledge of weapons; especially guns. Do you visit a firing range often yourself?**

I have never fired a gun in my life. I've held a rifle and a shotgun, but never fired them. It's know what you write, not always write what you know. That being said, if anyone wanted to offer to take me to a gun range, I'd be game.

**On your website, you have *The Omake Project*, which is like a place holder for short stories from the *Warchild Universe*. There is also a tab for "Deleted Scenes" which is currently, tantalizingly, empty. Any plans to expand these areas on your website anytime soon?**

Yes, the plans are all there. I've written some short stories in the *Warchild Universe* and wanted them to be made available to readers for a nominal amount of dollars, but getting from A to B has been stalled. The Deleted Scenes depends on me digging up my old .doc files of *Warchild* that are somewhere on floppy disk. Yes, I said floppy disk. But those sections will be filled...as soon as I get a moment or 900. Absolutely.

**Would you like to tell us about other on-going projects?**

I don't talk about ongoing projects, novel-wise, that haven't been contracted, I'm sorry! But I have a short story in John Joseph Adams' upcoming *ARMORED* anthology from Baen, which I had a lot of fun writing, and it spurred a novel idea that maybe some day I will explore.

**And, of course, the *Darkcargo* question we ask everyone – What are you reading now?**

Cormac McCarthy, a book on the Secret Service, a lot of graphic novels (like *DAMAGED* from Radical Comics) and a history book about the expansion of the American West. And a lot of other books...I'm making my way through them to cull my shelves.

# No. 244 - The Gift by Jay Hartlove

The doorbell rang for the third time and Stanley Broniwick angrily looked up from his newspaper, scrunching it noisily in his lap as he sat in his worn leather easy chair.

“Could you get that, dear?” his wife Alice called sweetly from the back of the house. “I’ve kinda got my hands full.”

Stanley grudgingly got up and threw the paper down into the chair behind him. “I’ll bet,” he muttered cynically to himself. He took a deep breath to sigh his resignation as he headed for the door, but this triggered a coughing fit that lasted several seconds.

Alice ran into the living room, still wearing an oven mitt and apron. “Are you all right, Stan?”

“Of course I’m all right,” he dismissed her impatiently. He swept the long thinning hair that had fallen forward into his face with the coughing back over his bald spot. “Go back to what you were doing,” he demanded with a wave of his hand. “I’ll get the damn door.”

Ignoring his snub as if it hadn’t happened, she hesitated a second to see if he was done coughing, before returning to the kitchen.

He opened the door to find his son Gregory standing there patiently. With him was his wife Sharon, wearing that ridiculous perky grin she always wore whenever she was trying to cover her impatience, which was almost all the time when they visited. “Hi, Dad,” Gregory said smiling genuinely.

“Hi, Stanley,” Sharon chimed in.

“Come on in,” he greeted warmly, pushing the aluminum screen door open for them. After they had entered, he stuck his head out and glanced up and down the street before closing the door. “So how’s the junior executive?”

Sharon’s smile faltered, she took a short breath, and looked to her husband. Gregory snorted a chuckle and shook his head. “Well, you can finally stop calling me that. I’ve got great news.” He paused and looked around. “Where’s Mom?”

“Out in the kitchen,” he said impatiently. “What’s your news?”

“She should hear it too,” his son insisted as he started to walk into the house.

His mother met him at the dining room door.

“Oh, hi, dear!” She greeted him with a hug. “And hi, Sharon!” she added upon entering. “What’s this about news?”

Sharon couldn’t contain her pride. “Greg’s been promoted!”

“Vice President in charge of sales,” Gregory confirmed.

“Oh, that’s wonderful, dear,” his mother gushed uninhibitedly.

“Well, congratulations, son!” his father said, stepping forward and giving him a bear hug. “This definitely calls for a celebration.” He walked to the free-standing, wooden liquor cabinet and opened the glass paneled doors, but found no glasses within. “Alice, why aren’t there glasses in here?” he demanded with exasperation in his voice.

“I’ll get some,” she said as she left the room.

Stanley muttered something under his breath which only succeeded in setting off another coughing fit.

When it subsided, Gregory asked, “Are you taking anything for that?”

“Yeah, yeah,” he dismissed. “Damn doctors don’t know what they’re doing.”

“It’s gotten worse over the last month or so, hasn’t it?” his son pressed.

“Not really,” he continued in denial. “If it has, it’s because of your mother’s second-hand smoke.”

“I thought you both quit months ago,” Sharon interjected.

“I did,” he said with evident pride. “Cold turkey after thirty-five years. Your mother’s not so strong. She hasn’t quite weaned herself off yet.”

Alice returned with the glasses.

Stanley took them from her, set them on top of the cabinet and turned back to the young people. “So what’ll we have. How ‘bout vodka, like my old man used to drink. A little touch of the old country.”

Gregory looked to Sharon who shrugged. “Sure,” he answered.

Stanley poured four shots of vodka and passed them around. “To my son,” he said with raised glass.

“To Gregory,” his mother chimed in.

“To Greg,” added his wife.

When they all had drunk, Stanley noticed Sha-

ron looking at the couch, with its lace tablecloth coverlet. "Have a seat," Stanley invited.

"Thanks."

As Sharon stepped behind him, Gregory commented, "You know, with this promotion, I can do a lot more than just make you all proud of me."

"What are you saying?" Stanley asked, a little suspiciously.

"Take your cough, for example. You say you're not getting good treatment from your doctors. With my extra income, we can send you to specialists who can get to the bottom of this."

Alice lit up at this possibility, but Stanley refused it out of hand. "Nah, I told you not to worry about me."

"How can I not?" his son rejoined with clear compassion. "When I was a kid you always used to tell me, 'If you've got your health, you've got everything.' Don't you think you should take your own advice?"

Stanley was instantly, inappropriately hostile. "Are you calling me a hypocrite?! Just because you're doing well in your career doesn't mean you can come in here and tell me what to do."

Sharon shrunk back on the couch at Stanley's outburst.

Gregory stood

his ground. "I'm not telling you what to do. I'm offering you the chance to get better care than you've gotten so far."

"I can get whatever care I need without taking any handouts," Stanley continued more quietly, but with undiminished stubbornness. "Everything I've ever had I've gotten with my own two hands." He held them up in emphasis. "I've never had any lucky breaks. Never won anything. Never gotten any gifts or inheritance. And I supported myself, your mother, and you for twenty years with nothing more than these. Nothing's changed since you moved out."

Gregory was visibly saddened by his father's

prideful tirade. "I can see that." He looked to his mother and smiled somewhat sheepishly. "Well, mom, it was good to see you again."

"What, aren't you staying for dinner?" she asked, genuinely surprised.

"Well..." Gregory started, but Sharon intervened.

Having realized and instantly agreed with the decision her husband had made, Sharon got up, stepped over to her mother-in-law and gave her a goodbye hug. "Yeah, we really just stopped by to tell you about Greg's promotion. I'm afraid we've got other plans for dinner," she lied. "Thank you for the offer, though."

Stanley looked suspicious. "Are you sure you can't stay?" he asked his son.

"No, really, we have to get going," Sharon supplied, giving him a hug as well.

"Well, as long as you aren't letting your old man's rantings scare you off," he told both young people.

"Nah," Gregory scoffed. "I know better." He and Sharon walked to the door. "I'll give you a call tomorrow and see how you're doing."

"Bye bye," Sharon added with a big smile, pulling the door closed behind her.

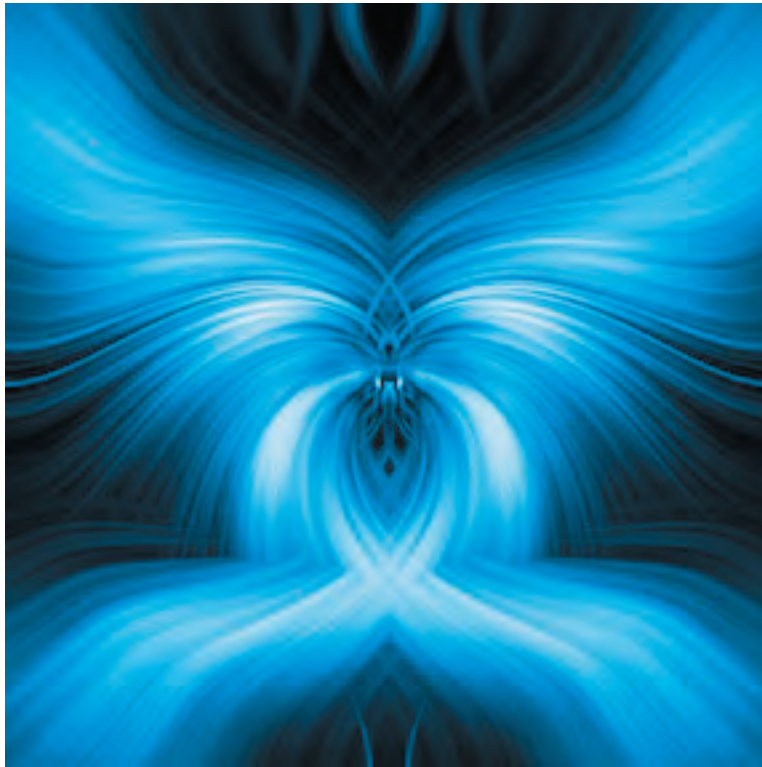
"Bye!" Alice called after them.

Stanley looked at

his wife with a frown of doubt. Alice looked at the door and sighed quietly before heading back to the kitchen.

That evening after dinner, Stanley went to bed early, clearly exhausted from his increasingly violent coughing fits. Alice had dutifully fetched him his cough syrup and seen him to bed, after which she went back to cleaning up after dinner. When she was done she checked at their bedroom door and heard that Stanley had stopped coughing and gone to sleep. Not wanting to disturb him, she stayed up and read for a while, waiting for him to fall asleep deeply enough that she wouldn't wake him by crawling into bed.

She left the bedroom light off and used the hall-



way light to get ready. The narrow slit of light fell onto the glass-domed antique clock that sat on the table near the foot of the bed, and threw glints of light up on the wall behind it. She smiled at it and then at her husband lovingly.

It wasn't until she was in her nightgown and headed for the hallway light switch that she noticed there was something curiously wrong with the shadows in the room.

Stanley was in total darkness, and he shouldn't have been.

She opened the door all the way to allow more light in from the hallway, but it didn't make a difference. As confusion was rapidly replaced by fear, she reached for the wall switch and flipped it on.

A dark shadowlike mass stood at the bedside and leaned over Stanley's body, spreading its winglike arms out over him.

Alice was so shocked she couldn't suck in enough air to scream. But it only took her an instant to see what was happening, and terror exploded into action. She ran across the room, seized the specter by its back, and yanked it up off her husband. Its surface was freezing cold and felt of writhing worms, but this didn't phase her. "No!" she screeched. "You can't have him! He's not that sick!" she insisted.

It stood up and turned toward her, as if staring at her in its facelessness.

"It's not his time!" she insisted, still raging mad.

It just stood there, seemingly waiting for her to state her case.

She looked at Stanley and back at the shadow. She didn't know what else to say. Her anger started to fray around the edges, giving way to desperation. "Please, can't you see? It's just too soon." She stepped past the specter and dropped onto the bed, shielding Stanley's body from his attacker. The angry resolve in her voice was beginning to crack. "He's worked so hard for everything in his life, you can't just take it away like this. I'm telling you, you just can't have him."

What should have been its head shook slowly side to side.

"He's not done with his life. He has so much more to offer."

The shadow took a "step" closer.

"No, wait!" she pleaded. "You don't understand. I've built my whole life around him. If you take him, you might as well take me too." She was grasping at straws and she knew it.

"Yes," she said with new found resolve. "If you take him, you have to take me too. And it's not my time. I know that. I'm still healthy."

The shadow seemed unimpeded by her logic, and moved closer. The cold that poured off of it gave her a disarming chill. It smelled revoltingly of mold and decay.

She looked back at her husband who was still sleeping. The futility of her situation overwhelmed her. She stroked his cheek as tears flooded up in her eyes and down her face. "Oh, Stanley," she managed to say past the rising lump in her throat.

She sniffed back the tears, set her jaw, and turned to the Grim Reaper. "All right, you thief," she spat between angry clenched teeth. She stood up to confront it face to face. "You won't leave without a victim. Then take me instead." And with that she threw her arms around it and fell into its cold embrace.

Stanley felt a chill and awoke to find the light painfully on in his eyes. He squinted and propped him-



self up on an elbow. Alice was sitting in the armchair in the corner.

“What’s going on?” he asked, annoyed. “Why’s the light on? You know I’m trying to sleep.”

She just sat there, smiling sweetly at him.

He sat all the way up and faced her. “Alice, what the hell is going on?”

Her only reply was to smile a little wider and tilt her head slightly to one side.

“Alice!” he demanded. “What’s your problem?” When she gave him no answer his hostility turned to contemptuous resignation. “Fine, have it your way,” he said with an exasperated sigh. “If you want to just sit there like a bump on a log, then suit yourself. Just turn the light off so I can get some sleep.”

Still she didn’t move.

Stanley sighed and shook his head. “Fine, I’ll get it myself!” He flung the covers back and made to stomp his way to the light switch, but only made it as far as the foot of the bed.

Alice was lying sprawled on the floor. He gasped, blinked and looked up at the woman sitting in the chair. She was Alice too, still smiling sweetly. He knelt down and turned over the woman on the floor, and she was definitely Alice. The sensation of touching her cool skin changed his confusion into horror. He grabbed her up in his arms and her head fell limply back. “Alice,” he said patting her on the cheek with a free hand. “Alice, wake up.” His mind was overwhelmed with fear and confusion. He wouldn’t, couldn’t believe what was happening. Groping for some rationale, he felt her neck for a pulse but found none. “No. No. No,” he just kept repeating quietly, unable to say or do anything else.

He looked up at the other Alice, whose unwavering smile just made him mad. “Alice, what is the meaning of this?” Then he noticed her wings. He couldn’t see them from in the bed, but tucked neatly behind her were large white feathered wings. He looked from one woman to the other and back again, realizing at last who he was with.

He took a deep breath of resolve and commanded the angel, “Alice, get back in your body right this minute.”

At last she responded, but only to let her smile slip into melancholy as she shook her head slowly side to side.

The finality of this simple gesture shattered his newfound confidence. It was the first time she had ever said no to him. How could he fight that? “But Alice, this...” he held the limp body closer while addressing

the angel. “This means you’re dead. How could this happen? You’re not sick, I’m the sick one. I should be the one here on the floor.”

The angel nodded.

The chill that ran up his spine shook him so hard it cleared his head. “You didn’t!” he accused.

Again the angel nodded.

He gently set the body down, stood up and grabbed the angel by the shoulders. “Why’d you go and do such a stupid thing! You can’t just trade your life for mine.”

She raised her eyebrows.

“Because this doesn’t solve anything!” He let go her shoulders and started pacing back and forth, gesturing widely. “This is insane. How’d you know I was going to die. I’m not that sick. And if I am, then I’m going to die soon anyway. You’ve bought me what, a few weeks? You’ve thrown your life away!”

The longer he spoke the angrier he became. “How could you do this? What do I tell people? What’s the coroner gonna say? What do I tell the police? ‘Oh, she traded her life for mine.’ That’ll go over real well. I’ll spend my last days in the loony bin.”

By now he was furious and began clutching at the air as he spoke. “I can’t believe this. Couldn’t we have discussed this? One decision, one decision is left for you to make alone, and look what you decide! Was living with me so terrible? Is this a better way out for you? What selfish impulse made this the right choice? I spend my whole life giving and giving, and I ask for nothing in return. And now you’ve thrown it all away! Just thrown it all away!” He grabbed up the glass domed clock from the side table and smashed it to the floor.

He stopped, frozen where he stood by what he saw at his feet. The shattered clock, which his wife had given to him, lay side by side with Alice’s dead body. She hadn’t thrown away anything. He had. His eyes welled up with tears and he began to sob.

He looked up at the angel and recognized the sweet smile. How many times had he been disappointed with her, how many times had he belittled her accomplishments, only to be met with that smile of pure, devoted, complete love? How many times had he scoffed at her shows of affection? How many times had he refused to hold her hand or to kiss her in public? And now it was too late for any of that.

He fell to his knees at the angel’s feet and buried his head in her breast. The angel was cool to the touch, but he didn’t find this disturbing. She smelled faintly of gingerbread, or was it newly mown hay. “Oh, Alice. I’ve

been so horrible for so long. I've taken all my anger at the world out on you, and still, you've given your life to save mine. And now you're going away. I'm not going to have a chance to make it up to you."

She put her arms around him and rocked him gently.

"At least you can go knowing that I really do love you," he said, looking up at her. "I never wanted to hurt you. All those tirades really were just because I wanted better for you."

She held him closer and rested her cheek on top of his head.

"I guess we should be glad for this moment. I mean, it's not everyone who gets to say goodbye." He looked up at her again. "I just wish I had a chance to make it up to you. I guess I'm not going to get that." He put his head back against her and sighed.

Then he frowned. He took a deep breath and sighed again. He leaned back to sit up straight and took another deep, clear, uncongested breath. "Am I cured?"

he asked her.

She didn't respond.

Suspicion formed as a tiny grin at the corner of his mouth. "I'm not cured, am I? And I'm dreaming all of this, aren't I?"

No response.

"You're not dead at all because I'm still sound asleep!" He got up and started pacing and waving his arms again, only this time in joy. "What a fabulous, terrifying dream! Gregory's talking about medical specialists must have touched a nerve, or something. But man, have I seen the light!" He got back on his knees in front of the seated angel and held her hands in his. "I really have had my eyes opened here. I really will make it up to you. I promise." He smiled back into her eyes for a long, tender moment. "Thank you."

She nodded and blinked once slowly.

He got a mischievous

glint in his eye and suggested, "So, I guess I should get back in the bed so this dream can end and I can wake up." As he got up and climbed into bed, the angel stood up and crossed the room to the light switch. He pulled the covers up and smiled at her one last time. "Good-night, my love."

She turned out the light.

Stanley awoke with a nagging, grating tickle in his chest, and found himself roused by a coughing fit. As soon as he realized he was awake, though, he was overcome with a mix of dread and curiosity. Was he awake? Had that been just a dream? Was Alice all right? He was alone in the room and couldn't hear Alice anywhere in the house.

He crawled to the foot of the bed, pushing through his fear with each handful of covers, his heart pounding, until he peeked over the edge of the bed. The floor was empty. He sighed out loud and fell over onto his back.

He lie there for a moment reveling in his deliv-

erance. But he had to share this with his wife. He rolled over and was stopped cold. The clock was gone from the table. "Alice!"

She appeared at the door, that loving, familiar smile gracing her face. He was thrilled to see her, but was chilled to immobility at the coincidence of the missing clock. He glanced at the empty table, and then back at Alice.

She held up the dustpan she still had in her hand.

He was out of the bed and had his arms around her in an instant.

They never discussed the details of his dream, or how the clock got broken. But Stanley did buy Alice another one, and many more gifts as well.

He also called his son and took up the offer of help with the medical bills.



# No. 248 - The Quantum Gunman

## By Lou Antonelli

*Written between 6pm and 8:30pm on Saturday September 24th, 2011 at FenCon VIII/DeepSouth-Con 49 in Addison, Texas on a manual Smith-Corona*

The Detective threw his notebook down heavily as he pulled out a chair. Across the table sat a late middle-aged man, who looked down and stared impassively at his own hands.

The detective sat down, laid his forearms on the tabletop and gazed at the suspect who didn't look up.

After a long minute, the detective spoke.

"You're no Jared Loughner, you're a respectable professional with a good job, college degree, and a clean mental health history," he said. "So you're not crazy. And you and your victim shared the same political beliefs."

The detective leaned forward. "So I'm thinking this was personal. Didn't you and Fortuna's father go to high school together?"

The suspect spoke, but didn't look up. "I knew Jim Fortuna well. In fact, I wrote his obit." The man paused. "Twice."

The detective knitted his brow in consternation. "You mean you printed a correction?"

"No, Jim Fortuna died, then he was alive again, then he was dead again." The suspect looked up. "I couldn't expect you to understand quantum universes."

"Actually, I've read science fiction," said the detective. "Now I DO think you're crazy." He smiled. "You want to tell me about it, before I call the guys with the Butterfly Effect net?"

The suspect looked the detective in the eye. "You'll never believe me."

The detective smiled. "Try me. You have no idea of the crazy shit I hear on the job."

The suspect smiled slightly. "It's a crazy story. But why not? After this, insanity is my only defense, maybe you WILL think I'm crazy."

He paused. "Jim Fortuna weighed over 500 pounds back in 1995, when he died the first time. I'd

been editor of the Cedarburg Chronicle for over ten years. I came back and took the job right out of UT Journalism school. He had a massive heart attack."

He looked up and saw a look of confusion on the face of the detective. "I'm sorry, I really am rambling." He rubbed his knuckles. "Yes, Jim and I were in high school together, but we weren't friends. He was a lineman on the football team..."

The detective interrupted. "You were the editor of the high school newspaper?"

"Yes. I mean, we knew each other to nod in the halls. He played football at Baylor, later went to law school."

"We both came back to Cedarburg. I took the job at the newspaper, he opened a law office and hung out his shingle. He got married and in ten years had three beautiful daughters. But, like so many former athletes, he began to put on weight. A lot of weight."

The suspect shrugged. "I have to say I wasn't that shocked when I got a call from the funeral home that he had died of a massive heart attack. It was really sad, he had such a nice family."

The detective smirked. "And you typed up his obituary?"

"Myself and other members of the Lions Club also organized a fundraiser for his daughters' college fund, he didn't leave very much money. He wasn't a very good attorney."

The detective slapped the table. "I don't get it. You're a normal small-town newspaper editor, Lions Club member, no record of any kind, criminal or mental, so why become a political assassin?"

The suspect sat back in his chair. "I said you wouldn't believe me."

"I also said I would listen to your story, and I should keep my word," said the detective. "I shouldn't interrupt. Please go on."

The suspect looked at him for a moment, then started up again. "Two years later, it was in 1997, I was covering a meeting of the city Recreation Commission. Jim had belonged to that board before he died. I trotted in, sat down at a table, took out my pen and notepad, and looked up to see Jim sitting there in his old seat. I

was startled, to say the least.”

“You must have been shocked.” Said the detective.

“I thought I had had some kind of stroke or mental episode of some kind,” said the suspect. “I thought I had brain damage, that somehow my memory had become screwed up.”

“You later changed your mind, then?”

“I went back to the newspaper office and looked through the morgue – that’s where you keep old newspapers – and his obituary was gone. So were the stories on his daughters’ college fund. But as I looked through the back issues, I remembered even more about the stories I had written. When I left the office, I went around the corner to the office building where he had his law office. The shingle was back on the wall.”

“So, what does this all have to do with you murdering his daughter?”

“Remember I said when he died, he left behind three daughters?”

“Yes, and Congressman Fortuna was his youngest child, his fourth daughter. You walked up and shot her in the face.”

“I’m sorry, for the horrible thing I had to do, I had to be sure she was dead. I expect to be put to death.”

The detective frowned. “You still haven’t told me why she had to die.”

“When I learned that Jim now had a fourth daughter, as I thought about how I had somehow slipped through the cracks of some kind of quantum reality shift, the first thing I thought of was that somewhere down the line she must have something to do with it. I thought to myself, ‘Is she going to do something in the future that will cause fractures in multiple timelines?’”

“So, when she went to law school, like her father, but then—instead of hanging out her shingle and becoming a small town lawyer – she entered politics, that caught your interest.”

The suspect grimaced. “Years ago, someone who had just been a congressman

wouldn’t be taken seriously as a presidential candidate, but Michelle Bachman showed a few years ago, times have changed. I had to stop her.”

“So, murder someone based on the possibility they may do something in the future,” said the detective. “Worse that crazy, you don’t make any sense.”

“I wrote Jim Fortuna’s obituary a second time, when he died, for real – at least in this reality – back in 2007. Now you explain that to me,” said the suspect.

The simple, and true answer, is that you are totally insane,” said the detective. “I’m sorry that happened to you, you had a normal life until today.”

“Until this morning.” Said the suspect. “I guess the world will never know. I did what I felt I had to do, God help me.”

The detective stood up. “There’s not much more to be accomplished here today,” he said. He turned as an officer came into the interrogation room.

As he watched the suspect being escorted down the hallway, a federal agent walked up to the detective. “What did Santangelo tell you?”

“He’s had some kind of breakdown, said he had a vision that Terri Fortuna was going to do something horrible in the future, something so bad that it would cause reality itself to shift around,” said the detective. “he claims he slipped between worlds, one where her father died before she was born, and this, our real world.”



The detective heard the agent suck in his breath. There was a long pause. Finally the agent spoke.

“Don’t ever repeat this, but we had information that Congressman Fortuna had been recruited by an Al-Qaida sleeper cell while in law school.

“Oh my God!” the detective blurted.

“Mister Santangelo may have done the nation a service,” said the agent. “Too bad he will die for it.”

The detective looked down the hallway. “At least he only has to die once.”

# No. 250 - When the Pupil Is Ready by M. David Blake

Old Kohra'la'chee stirred her small pot with a long, ragged fingernail, bound together with spattered threads, themselves spun from hair that formerly graced the head of the late Sura'la'chee. The fingernail had attained too great a length for the task without such reinforcement, and even now it curved upon itself in a long, ungainly arc. When she pulled the digit from the brew, thick, oily droplets adhered to the thread and glistened in the candlelight.

"Ah, old woman," muttered the Kohra, in ritual observance of the pattern laid down by her predecessors, and their predecessors, and surely all those who came after their most remote ancestors removed themselves from the dank hinterland swamps of the eldritch abandonland, "we are not long for this world. As all of our steps carry us closer to death, all of our deaths show the slow flicker and tapestry of life upon which we weave for future generations. As you taught me, and the Vudra taught you, and the Qatli taught her, and someone must have taught her, and skip a few generations where the candle burned too close to the edge of our history book and singed the pages, and the Norgi taught someone whose name I can't read, and the twin Orupi taught her, when they first wrote down how the Bnihe taught them; as all of these, so shall I teach my own--"

The Kohra stopped. She had come to the place wherein ritual required a new name, but she could not recall what the name should be. Hastily, she flipped between pages and studied each as carefully as her cataracts would permit, but there was no evidence that a quill had ever scratched further genealogy upon any line. The last sheet contained no letters but those with which she was intimately familiar, and no hint of the next syllable she should utter.

"Well, that's odd," grumbled the Kohra, "and inconsiderate. She was supposed to be here for the ritual, and if she had been, she would undoubtedly have told me her name rather than putting an old woman through such an inconvenience."

The Kohra dipped her ungainly fingernail back into the pot, then idly licked the heavy droplets that clung to the threads.

"Are you here?" she called.

This was followed a few moments later by "Where are you," and a few minutes later by "Where did you go?" As the minutes stretched into an uncomfortable silence, the Kohra punctuated it with periodic variations designed to draw out the girl who would, and must, in turn be her own successor, until at the point of exasperation she asked, "Were you ever even here?"

There was no answer.

"Insolent child!" exclaimed the Kohra. "She has been shirking her attendance, when she should have tread upon the edge of my shadow so that she could learn the structure of our ways. How many days has she been absent, I wonder? She surely must have known the time was approaching for her own education to begin. The Sura could not be expected to instruct me forever, nor can I remain a student now that the ritual is underway."

The Kohra spat contemptuously upon the floor of her hovel, and immediately chastised herself for haste. In assuming the perfunctory disdain of a teacher, she had inconvenienced herself; the thick sputum would not quickly dry, and the Kohra had spat in an awkwardly centralized location. The floor-rag was a student's utensil, and no teacher could be expected to attend such mundanities.

With a pang of self-conscious guilt, the Kohra scuffed crumbs and dust upon the spot with the sole of her bare foot. Doing so was an old student's trick for postponing the task, because although a thin coating of detritus would not prevent any repetitive tread from rupturing the sticky mass, it would at the very least afford protection from an accidental footfall, for both pupil and instructor.

"You should come out now, child," croaked the Kohra. "You won't be my student until after the ceremony is completed, and I shan't be your teacher until the same."

The Kohra racked her recollection, to locate a memory of her own first day as the Sura's pupil. Had she hidden? She thought that she might have, if only for a last moment of in-between.

Very well then, the girl was reveling in a final moment of undisciplined indulgence. The brew would

not be unduly affected by a slightly longer delay. The Kohra hesitated momentarily, under the weight of affection for the Sura.

#

After that first hesitant day as teacher, the Sura had begun to impart piquant knowledge, and to fill a young Kohra'la'chee with longing. Although there had been no shortage of diversity, from the first morsel she received the Kohra desired wider experience and greater intensity. She had been an eager student, both devoted and addicted to her education.

"Teach me about happiness, Sura," she had said.

"Hmm," said the Sura, "I haven't tasted happiness in a while. Who among the village children is the happiest, do you suppose?"

"It must be Amira, daughter of Una'lo the breadmaker. Her house is always filled with laughter, and smiles, and warm things to eat."

"Well then," answered the Sura, "bring Amira here, and perhaps she can teach us both about happiness."

So young Kohra had done so, and Sura had taken happiness from the breadmaker's daughter, and then together they had tasted laughter and smiles, and warmth.

Or, as she grew more bolder in her experimentation, "Where does creativity come from, Sura?"

And the Sura had answered her, truthfully, "It comes from within," as together they examined the heart of the dreamer who lived down the lane, and the supple tongue of a traveling poet who once sang for his keep at the inn.

Every passion, every talent and every compulsion had been skillfully dissected and savored, so that it might be more fully understood.

As the young Kohra learned, and under the Sura's tutelage added to her understanding, her playmates grew wary and distant.

After a while, they all but disappeared.

#

Kohra sat in a rough corner of her hovel, and swayed from side to side. She was tired, hoarse and hungry. The search had been fruitless.

"You aren't coming after all," she croaked, through parched lips, "and there was so much you could have learned."

The Sura had taught until she could find no more knowledge to impart. She had been thorough.

With a groan, the Kohra rose to her haunches, and then to her feet. She drew a deep sigh, lamenting the waste. Sura'la'chee's final lesson had been for naught.

In tired frustration, Old Kohra'la'chee stirred her small pot. The long, ragged fingernail, still bound together with spattered threads spun from hair, continued to gather oily droplets, and, as was her habit, she continued to lick them away.

The brew continued to simmer. One of the Sura's eyeballs floated briefly to the top, and gazed blankly about the hovel before Brownian motion once again carried it beneath the surface.

The Kohra consoled herself with the knowledge that Sura'la'chee's last bit of instruction would stave off hunger. She could always search for a new pupil in the morning, and after all, the ratty old history book was undoubtedly due for a revision. There were far too many soup stains upon the pages.



# No. 252 - Ozzie's Broom by Dann Lopez ...with apologies to Frank L. Baum

The Wicked Witch of the West turned away from Dorothy, her long flowing black gown caught the air of the room and billowed behind her as she moved towards the big, ornate oak and crystal hourglass. The hourglass was full of red dust. It's finely shaped pedestal holding the two teardrop shaped glass vessels together was intricately carved with bats wings and leaves, and appeared to be made of fine oak. The wicked witch grabbed the timepiece, and wrenched it over, holding it next to her face. Her green pallor and hooked nose reminded Dorothy of it's purely evil intent. "This is how long you've got to live! And it isn't long, my pretty, it isn't long!"

She set the hourglass down on the table, and took three steps towards the frightened little girl. "I haven't the time to wait forever for you to give up those ruby slippers!" she shouted, and turning like an old weather vane on top of a barn, she left the room, shutting the massive wooden doors behind her with a resounding boom!

Dorothy began to weep as she sat next to the witch's giant crystal ball. She sobbed hopelessly, wishing she had never left home and run away, wishing that Toto had never chased that old bitch's cat through the flower bed. She wished that twister had never wrenched her from Kansas, and dumped her into this Technicolor nightmare.

She thought she would never see her friends again, the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion, and the Tin Woodsman. She fell into the chair next to the huge crystal ball, and began to sob uncontrollably, muttering for her Auntie Em. She wished she had never left home. She wished she had never been caught in that damnable cyclone, and most of all, she wished she had never even heard of this Land of Oz. For all it's beauty and splendor, it wasn't worth her life, and certainly not to be given up to the likes of that horrible witch that reminded her so much of that sinister, and heartless Miss Gulch.

Dorothy had nothing. Toto had escaped and was God knows where. Her

friends had been hopelessly overpowered and outnumbered by the flying monkeys. And now she faced actual death at the hands of a witch, over a stinking pair of shoes she couldn't get off her feet anyway.

"Oh, Auntie Em!" she sobbed. "Auntie Em, I need you." Dorothy sobbed.

From some distant place, a voice filtered in. "Dorothy!" it called. "Dorothy, Where are you? I can't find you. Dorothy! Where are you?"

Dorothy glanced. Next to her sat a huge four-foot diameter crystal ball on its black pedestal. Inside,



visions of swirling vapors ran in and out until a voice began to make itself audible. "Dorothy... Where are you? I can't find you..."

Dorothy turned to the ball and saw the image of her Auntie Emily. She leaned against the cold hard glass. "Here I am! Here I am Auntie Em!"

Emily's eyes looked in every direction except hers. "Say something. I can't find you."

"Here I am! The witch has me locked in the castle. I'm frightened Auntie Em! Help Me!" Dorothy watched as the vision of Emily drifted away into a gray haze. She shouted even louder. "Come Back, Auntie Em! Come Back!"

The vision blurred into a dark cloud, and then, cleared up again, forming into the haggled, pointy nosed, sinister vision of the Witch herself. "Auntie Em! Auntie Em!" the vision mocked as it looked at Dorothy, causing her to fall back into the chair away from the ball. "I'll give you Auntie Em! Ah hahahaha!" the witch cackled wickedly, her laugh trailing away into the ether.

Then the room was quiet, except for Dorothy's pitiful sobbing. Everything in the room seemed to be watching, and waiting for Dorothy to do something, anything, except cry, but all that could be heard was the echoing of her sobbing, and the sniffing of her tears. The silence seemed to scream at her. Dorothy calmed down, and her mind began to work.

Death. That was to be her reward for being forced to take possession of something she never asked for, i.e. the ruby slippers. She glanced down at her feet. There they were, shining, and glittering brightly, even in the poor torch light of the chamber. For these cursed shoes, this witch was going to kill her.

Then, at that moment, it got deadly quiet. Her sobbing stopped, and Dorothy stood straight. Her hands dropped to her sides, and she balled up her hands into tightly clenched fists. Her dog was gone, she was lost, she was God only knows how far from Kansas, and through some quirk of fate, her family was now houseless. Now, she was in the clutches of a wicked old witch who was trying to... to...

...to kill her!

Dorothy was without recourse, and she was without help. Her basket didn't have anything she could effectively use to possibly defend herself, and defend herself, she must. The time had come for affirmative action. Help would only come from within, because it certainly wasn't coming from anywhere else. The witch would simply kill her.

Kill her. Yeah, kill her. This was now a different

situation. What should she do? She sat in silence for a moment. What would the Scarecrow say? He would say if he had some brains, he could think his way out of this situation. She would have to use her head or otherwise die.

What would the Tin Woodman say? He would remind her of all the broken hearted people who would miss her terribly if she died, Auntie Em most of all. She would never see her or her dear Uncle Henry ever again.

And the Lion, what would he say? He would march right up to that wicked old witch and spit in her eye!

Of course, spit in her eye! That was it. She was at the end of her rope, and convinced that if she didn't do something, she would simply die.

Dorothy looked down at the red slippers on her feet. She never asked for them, and she sure as hell didn't want to die because that old bag couldn't get them off her feet.

The thought of dying over a pair of gawdy red slippers suddenly seemed so incredibly stupid. It was just about that time that something inside Dorothy's head went "SNAP!" Five generations of Kansas Jayhawk blood, temper, and determination, welled up inside her. The anger took over. Her blood pressure rose, and the bones in her fists popped as she clenched her hands in cold silent rage. Her teeth ground together, and her eyes narrowed in a pure, full blown mad! If this witch, no, this vile BITCH wanted a fight, then a fight she would have.

Downstairs at the entrance to the castle stood four of the Witch's elite guards. They manned their posts with frightened determination. Every move made within one hundred yards was detected, and investigated. They did not fear so much losing their jobs as much as they feared losing their lives should they fail the witch.

From the very far end of the great hall came the angry footsteps of the witch. She was in a foul mood that seemed to put a wicked smile across her lips. Her black flowing dress and cape swirled in the air as she stormed down the stairs towards the front of the castle where she met her sentries standing by the drawbridge. "Keep a sharp eye out for those three nincompoops she was traveling with." The witch snarled at the captain of the guard. "The monkey's didn't kill them, so they will probably show up to rescue the girl. I want no..."

**BOOM!**

A tremendous explosion shattered the stillness of the night. It came from the far end of the drawbridge. The witch and her guards almost jumped out of their skins as they turned and looked at the crimson mushroom cloud as it climbed into the twilight sky. She looked at the place where the explosion happened. There, amid the flames, and smoke was a pile of red dust, broken glass, and wood that used to be her favorite hourglass, now smoldering and spitting sparks as the intricately made timepiece now lay in ruins at the end of the drawbridge. The witch stood gawking in wide-eyed amazement. "What in the name of all that's evil..."

But that was all that the witch could say before her crystal ball suddenly dropped from the heavens, smashing against the center of the drawbridge, and punching a perfect four foot diameter hole in the center of the wooden walkway, sending a cascade of splinters into the air for a moment before drifting gently down through the opening.

The witch stepped out from the doorway and looked up.

There in the opening stood Dorothy, pointing, and laughing at the mishap below.

"You did this, you little monster!" The witch shouted, shaking her fist in rage. Dorothy pointed a finger at her own chest, and without speaking, mouthed the word 'ME?', then looked around as if to see if there was someone else she could have been referring to, returning the witch's hateful gaze with a look of amazement in her eyes. Then, she held up one finger, as if to say, 'Hold that thought.' She turned away from the window as the witch stood below, glaring up at the tower window. A moment passed, then the witch saw the huge ponderous bulk of her cauldron come waddling into view. "NO!" She screamed. "NO! DON'T YOU DARE!" The black pot paused at the window for a moment before dropping out of the opening, replaced by Dorothy standing in the window, her arms extended after having successfully pushed the pot into space.

The witch watched for a fraction of a second, then she ran out of the way, screaming a warning. The guards scattered, and a fraction of a second later, the cauldron hit the drawbridge bottom first. The contents of the pot took the shock of the impact, and directed its energy into the slimy broth within, sending a column of the stuff fifteen feet straight into the air before it came cascading down, drenching the guards and the witch in a smelly green fluid that stuck to their skin, and

began to burn.

The witch coughed and sputtered, wiping the stinging goop from her eyes, and again she looked up at the window. There was Dorothy. In her arms were glass beakers and flasks full of strange colored elixirs and potions which Dorothy began to launch downward. All around the witch's feet, the bottles exploded, some of which began to eat through the wooden structure of the drawbridge.

"Get her! Stop her!" the witch screamed. The captain of the guard shouted orders and the men began to assemble in the main hall.

The witch took three steps towards the doorway when the structural integrity of the drawbridge expired. It groaned for a moment, then it collapsed completely, littering the dry moat with several tons of splintered lumber, a dented cauldron, and one very angry witch.

The witch's guards ran towards the front door, stopped at the edge, and peered down into the moat. There was a cloud of dust, which took a moment to settle. In the meantime, they could hear the screaming of the witch, muffled somewhat. When visibility returned, the guards saw that in the fall of the drawbridge, the kettle had managed to fall over the head of the witch, and she was at this moment, wrestling to get it off. All around her were beams, and supports, broken and shattered, some with huge chemical burns, some stained with a hideous green gel formed from the contents of the kettle. "Don't just stand there you idiots! Get that girl!"

The guardsmen turned and began to run up the stairs towards the study.

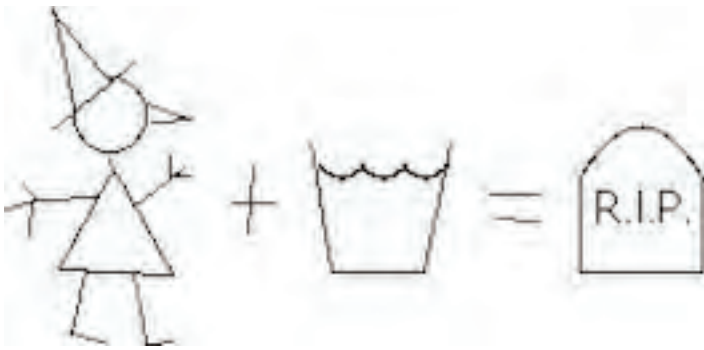
The witch shrieked in anger as she clambered out of the debris of the moat. "Get that girl out of my chamber!" The guards were already reacting to her command. "I don't care how you do it, just get her out of my chamber, you fools!" The guardsmen were gathering forces and began to file up the stairs towards the big wooden doors of the Witch's chamber. They threw their weight against the door, but it did not budge. A pile of bodies formed at the door, and they scrambled over themselves to try the door again.

Inside the study, Dorothy was still giggling at the events that happened in front of the castle. She looked around for more devilry to get into, and before a few seconds had passed, she found it. In the far corner was a five-foot wooden stand with a big book spread open on top of it. She trotted over to it, and

looked at the pages. They were written in this horrible red ink, and in a language she was not familiar with. She closed the book and examined it. The pages were edged in gold, and the book itself was about five inches thick. The binding was made of finely tooled leather, and embroidered in dragon wings, and serpent faces. The corners were reinforced with gold, and inlaid with rubies, and emeralds. Dorothy looked at the cover. There, etched in gold, and clear as day, was a pentagram.

This must be the witch's spell book.

Dorothy suddenly heard the footsteps of the guards as they approached the door. She thought for a moment before she acted. Kicking over the stand, she picked it up and carried it to the door, wedging it in place, and using a crack in the floor to reinforce its strength. She then went back to the book, picked it up from the floor. She then returned to the window. Dorothy opened to the front page, and one by one, she tore them out, and flipped them into space, watching them as they drifted earthward in their crescent shaped flight paths. Then, Dorothy stopped. Here was a page written not in script, but in pictures. The pictures were very simple, and incredibly easy to understand.



So, that was it. Water would kill the witch. Find some water, and the witch was as good as dead.

Dorothy examined the room. Of course, she wouldn't find any water in here. The stuff was deadly to her. Where was there some...?

Found it. There. Of course! What a perfect reason to have water, the only reason to have water. Dorothy dropped to her knee, and began to remove her socks.

Wham! Outside the door, the guards were beginning to chop down the barrier.

Wham! Over the sound of the axes, Dorothy could hear the witch's curses as they couldn't get the door open fast enough. "Oh my," she whispered mischievously, "she must be so very angry with me."

Crash! They were almost through. Dorothy looked around and saw the witch's broom leaning in the corner. So, that was it, the object of all her trouble. As much of a prize as Dorothy was paying for getting this little prize, she was now determined to make the witch pay for being such an evil bitch. Next to the broom, sitting on a table, Dorothy spotted an ornate brass and gold handled dagger, adorned with rubies, and emeralds. Quickly, she grabbed the weapon, and hid it behind her back in the waistband of her apron.

Smash! The battering ram worked on the sixth try, and the big oak doors of the study gave way. The witch, covered in dirt, sawdust, green gelatin, and smelling of rotten eggs, closely followed by her guards, walked into the room. "Now I've got you, my pretty. You'll PAY for..." The witch stopped short, the next word stuck in her throat.

The room and its furnishings and contents were in total disarray. The furniture was broken and where there were cushions were now shredded clouds of cotton, with a spring protruding here and there. The witch's favorite mirror, which gave her hours of pleasure by presenting visions of the future, and out and out lies, was now a pile of glass shards underneath a cracked and broken plaster frame. In the center of the frame was impaled with the leg off of her favorite rocking chair, which by the way, the broken pieces of which were mixed in with the smashed pieces of her spinning wheel. All of her bottles full of potions and elixirs were gone, and the shelves they had been stored in were torn from the wall, and scattered everywhere. Amid all this devastation stood Dorothy, smiling, innocent, standing in the window with one leg tucked against the wall, her hands behind her, and her pigtails flapping in the gentle breeze. But the most noticeable thing about her was that she was in her bare feet. But the witch was too angry to notice anything at the moment.

Dorothy looked lovingly at her. She batted her eyes innocently, and gave her a mouth full of shiny white ivories in a smile so big it hurt to look at it. The witch was taken aback at this expression. Before, she was accustomed to a look of cold fear in the little girl's eyes. This was not expected. "Where are my slippers?" Growled the witch.

"I...don't...have...your...stupid...slippers!" Dorothy sang throwing her arms out after the last word. The witch pulled back a bit, wide eyed. She looked down at Dorothy's feet. There on the cold hard floor were ten of the cutest little toes she had ever seen, where the ruby slippers were supposed to be. The witch glared

angrily into Dorothy's eyes.

"What did you do with those slippers?" she snarled. The witch stepped up to her, her eyes full of revenge, and hatred. "What did you do with my slippers?" She demanded.

Dorothy looked innocently into the eyes of the witch, and spread open her left hand flat against her chest. "Who, ME?" she taunted.

"WHERE ARE MY SLIPPERS?" the witch screamed.

Dorothy lazily pointed her thumb over her shoulder. "Oh, do you mean those slippers?" There, in the corner opposite the window was one shelf left attached to the wall. On that shelf was an aquarium. In the aquarium was a seven inch long miniature fire-breathing Kracken, (a pet given to her by the League of Witches, Warlocks, and General Bad Guys,) and sitting lazily in the gravel at the bottom, amid the finger bones, and bits of uneaten flesh, were the ruby slippers, glint-

ing and gleaming, bubbles dancing happily around them as they floated to the surface in the dimming light of the room.

The witch's eyes grew as big as fists, and she screamed bloody murder as she ran across the room, cutting a swath through the guards, knocking some of them over, and stopping short of dipping her hand into the water. She paused for a moment, annoyed that she could not get the slippers, then she turned to Dorothy. "You KNOW I can't get wet. HOW? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?" she screamed.

Dorothy pointed innocently at the fireplace at the book, which was burning nicely, producing a pleasing tropical green flame. "I read it in that book."

The witch had reached her breaking point. She was standing before the aquarium, silently staring at the fire in the hearth. Slowly she turned towards Dorothy. The hate in her eyes burned like the fall of Atlanta. "Don't think you've destroyed me." she growled. "How did you get the slippers off of your feet?"

Dorothy looked upwards for a moment before she spoke. She put her hands behind her back, and rocked on her heels before she answered, "Oh..." she hesitated. "THAT! Simple." She smiled broadly at the witch. A moment passed which seemed like an eternity to the witch, every second of which Dorothy enjoyed watching her squirm. "I just pulled my socks off, and the slippers came off with them."

The witch's eyes got as big around as a hefty sized apple, and in this moment of amazement, Dorothy acted. In one quick movement that lacked finesse, and grace, but made up for it in aim, Dorothy produced the dagger, held it clumsily the air, and threw it at the aquarium. The heavy metal handle hit the glass dead center, and the entire front panel shattered, cascading water all over the witch's skirt. The witch let out a blood-curdling shriek as she tried with all her power to get out of the drenched dress. Water was burning through her hands wherever she touched it. The fabric sucked up the water, and in no time, the entire garment was soaked through. The witch began to emanate a steamy mist as she screamed bloody murder. "I'M MELTING!!" she shrieked. "I'M MELTING!! HOW COULD YOU? I'M MELTING, MELTING!!"

Dorothy was overcome by a flood of relief, as she watched the form of the witch emanating curses and slowly slumping into a pile of smoldering cloth, only to be topped by the pointed rim tip of her hat. In a moment, it was all over, and the only thing that remained of the witch was her dress, her hat, and the



floundering sea beastie, which used to live in the tank flopping around in the puddle of water on the floor.

The room was dead quiet. Dorothy stood stock still staring at the dress and hat on the floor. The captain of the guard stepped forward, staring at the spot in the floor, which used to be his boss. He then he looked up at Dorothy. "She's dead. You Killed her."

"Good! Give me the goddamn broom so I can get outa here."

Outside the castle, Toto, the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, and the Scarecrow stood at the foot of what used to be the drawbridge. They looked down at the debris, wondering what could have done this when they heard from a window high above them the voices of men singing praise.

"Hail! Hail to Dorothy! The Wicked Witch is dead.!"

"Huh?" said the Lion. "Whad 'E Say? Whad 'E Say?"

"They said the wicked witch is dead." said the Scarecrow.

"I'll believe that when I see it." said the Tin Woodman. "Lets try to get across." They started to climb down into the dry moat.

Five minutes later, Dorothy was walking out the front door of the castle, accompanied by six of the burley guards acting as her escorts. They walked across planks the guards had put over the moat where the drawbridge used to be and were about to step off the property completely when the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion appeared, the Scarecrow holding Toto in his arms.

"Where in the hell have YOU been?" Dorothy asked. The three answered her question with a gaze of amazement.

"You need not worry, my dear. You've always had the power to get back to Kansas." Glenda said sweetly, her teeth gleaming like a toothpaste commercial. "The ruby slippers, they can take you back to Kansas whenever you like." Glenda smiled as if she was giving the best news she had ever had the pleasure to deliver.

Dorothy's eyes narrowed as she looked upon the figure of Glenda. She leaned slightly forward "Come again?" she whispered.

"I said, you've had the power..." Dorothy's hand came up stopping Glenda in mid sentence. She stuck a finger in her ear, and shook it as if to dislodge something.

"Excuse Me?"

Glenda's colgate smile beamed down at the increasingly maddened girl. "Is something the matter with your hearing, my dear?" This only fueled Dorothy's anger (again).

Dorothy's eyes narrowed and her teeth ground together. "Why you lying, deceitful...!" Suddenly Dorothy threw down her basket. All around her, the citizens of OZ were silenced at this outburst. Dorothy reached up and grabbed Glenda by the necklace, and clenched it tight in her fist, pulling down the woman who stood almost a foot taller than her, until she looked directly into her eyes. "WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?" Dorothy's voice sounded like the devil speaking, and her eyes shown whites all around. The gritting of her teeth could be heard clearly fifteen feet away.

"Because you had to learn it all by yourself!" Glenda said through a choked off voice.

"You should have tried me!" Dorothy whispered before releasing the necklace, shoving Glenda backwards as she did.

Dorothy's face went stone cold. In her eyes flared the hatred she had been building up for this entire scenario. She had just been through an incredibly long and unexpected hike, met the weirdest looking people she had ever laid eyes on, slept for several days in a forest, faced death at the hands of a demonic mad-woman, discovered the answer to all her prayers, who not only sent her on a mission of death for a lousy broomstick, but it turned out that he was little more than a sideshow huckster, and now she was being told by the kindest person she had met in this little adventure that she didn't have to go through any of it. "Do you mean to tell me..."

"That's right. You can go home whenever you like." Glenda coughed and rubbed her neck. "Are all the people in Kansas as nasty tempered as you?"

Ping!

Dorothy cocked back her fist and let fly a wicked right cross which connected with Glenda's cheek. The slap could be heard several hundred yards away. In one smooth follow up move, Dorothy's left lashed out, closely followed by her body mass, and all 99 pounds of Kansas farm girl connected with the flawless point of Glenda's nose, the concussion was felt by everyone standing within ten feet. The citizens of Oz witnessed Glenda fall back against the railing, then go asshole over teakettle off the ramp, and landing face down with an ungracious splat on the floor. They gathered around her, and helped her to her feet. As she was lifted off the

ground, her corset snapped, and suddenly, Glenda was at least forty pounds heavier.

A snarl was heard. Such a snarl had only been heard before coming from a werewolf.

Dorothy then launched herself into space, clearing the railing and landed on Glenda, her hands clenched around her throat, and a blind rage in her voice. Kneeling over Glenda's chest, Dorothy began to swing at her stunned expression.

Smack! A right to Glenda's chin!

Bam! A damaging left to Glenda's jaw.

Slap! Right on the tip of Glenda's nose! Dorothy growling angrily, and Glenda screeching helplessly.

SLAPP! Dorothy swung her right hand and met Glenda's left eye.

SLAPP! The backhand movement connected with equal force on the right eye. "You stupid, brainless..." Dorothy screamed. "You mean to tell me that I could have gone home when you gave me those stupid slippers in the first place?"

Strong hands closed around Dorothy's shoulders and tried to pull her off. Dorothy reached out, grabbed a hand full of hair, and yanked with all her might. Much to her surprise, the entire crown of hair came off and Dorothy fell over from throwing herself off balance. She landed on her backside, and suddenly realized she had a full flowing blond wig in her hand. She looked at Glenda, and saw sitting on the crown of her head, was the most magnificent bald she had ever laid eyes on. Other than a few tufts of hair growing randomly on her scalp, her head appeared to be made of polished brass. Dorothy's eyes opened in amazement at the blonde wig in her hand. The sight of this was too much for her, and Dorothy began to laugh hysterically. She sat and pointed at her, screaming in laughter, and gasping for breath. Suddenly, she stopped laughing, remembering she was not finished displaying her anger and she threw it over her shoulder before charging back at her victim, grabbing fabric, and ripping it from Glenda's shoulders. The hands finally lifted Dorothy to her feet. Dorothy let loose with a final kick that met Glenda's shin before being led out of striking distance.

"Calm down Dorothy," the Tin Man said.

"I AM CALM!" Dorothy said. Glenda got to her feet just in time for Dorothy to break free, and throw another right, pasting Glenda, and sending her sprawling, her in one direction, the wig in another. "I WANNA GO HOME, AND RIGHT NOW, GAWDDAMNIT!"

The Scarecrow stepped between them as somebody handed Glenda back her wig. She stretched

it back over her head. "Why, I'll turn that little tramp into a..." Glenda suddenly realized where she was. She had been publicly embarrassed before all of the citizens of Oz. A thoughtless display of destruction now, and the citizens of Oz would fear her forever, and she spent too much time building up her reputation as a force for good.

Dorothy settled down to catch her breath. She looked at Glenda, who was just now beginning to sport a little discoloration around her eyes from Dorothy's blows to her dainty little face. "I think this quarreling should stop immediately!" said the Scarecrow.

"Yeah, Knock it off," said the cowardly Lion, barely able to repress a snicker.

"Glenda, Stop this now!" The scarecrow shouted. "Look at what she's been through. She's away from home, somebody tried to kill her, the wizard took off without keeping his promise, and now you tell her she didn't have to go through any of this. Cut the crap, and grant her wish!"

Glenda looked at Dorothy. She was understandably very angry. She wiped a small trickle of blood from her nose with the back of her thumb. She looked at the red spot. A shudder of fear came over her. It might be broken. Dearie Me! Glenda looked at Dorothy who looked back, meeting her gaze with a cold icy stare. She waved her wand gently, and through clenched teeth, she said "Click your heels together three times and say "There's no place like home!" With that, she lifted the front of her dress, now torn in several places, and soiled where she had met the ground, turned, and walked politely through the crowd, stumbling, but not falling when one of her heels snapped off.

"Bitch, YOU SAID A MOUTHFUL!" Dorothy screamed after her.

Glenda stopped and cocked her head for a second, before thrusting her disfigured nose into the air with a dignified "Humpf!" Dorothy smirked before breaking into another fit of laughter. Glenda huffed, turned on one heel, and went to walk away, but not before tripping on an extra long piece of trim hanging from her dress, and landing spread eagled on the tar-mac.

The laughter was punctuated by the added effects of the Cowardly Lion's guffaws.

Dorothy awoke. She was facing up, looking into the gray Kansas sky. The clouds overhead threatened another shower. She sat up, and was immediately repulsed. Glenda, God bless her, had deposited Dorothy

back in Kansas all right, but she chose one of the most repulsive places to set her down. The front of Dorothy's dress was immaculately clean, while the entire back of the dress, including her legs, arms and shoulders, were seven inches deep in the disgusting quagmire of the pigsty. She looked around and saw one of the farmhands, Hunk, standing at the railing. "Dorothy! Can't you find someplace else to play?"

Dorothy shot him a disgusted look. This poor rube had no idea what she had just been through. She got to her feet, shook off some of the mud, and climbed out of the muck. Walking to the farmhouse, she was

met by her Auntie Em at the door.

"Land sakes Child, did you fall in the pigsty?"

"Yes ma'am." Dorothy answered.

"Well don't track all that mud into the house. Go around back, and wash off at the pump, Dinner's almost ready." Emily walked past her, and disappeared into the barn.

Dorothy looked up into the sky. "Why?" she whispered.

Glenda's voice drifted into her mind. "That's for the wig."



# No. 256 - Goodnight Dune by the FenConistas From the FenCon Dead Dog

Goodnight Dune

Goodnight little maker,  
Goodnight shai-hulud,  
Goodnight ornithopter fluttering beneath the moons.

Goodnight House Atreides,  
Goodnight Sardukar,  
Goodnight Fremen jihad riding from Sietch Tabr.

Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
Goodnight spice melange,  
Goodnight Gurney Halleck in the mood for song.

Goodnight Kwisatz Haderach,  
Goodnight lips with stains,  
Goodnight Reverend Mother with your box of pain.

Goodnight Lady Jessica,  
Goodnight Baron's brat,  
Goodnight David Lynch with your psycho-sexual crap.

Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
Goodnight axlotl tanks,  
Goodnight Emperor Leto with your three-millennium reign.

Goodnight machine empire,  
Goodnight golden path,  
Goodnight Honored Matres turning Arakis into glass.

Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
Goodnight Duncan Idaho,  
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Goodnight Duncan Idaho,



**Following Pages - No. 258 - by Lon Lopez & Derek McCaw**

**No. 257 - Art by Sue Mason**

"When I first found out about how viciously cool a critter the Honey Badger as, I immediately wanted to tell stories about the ball chomping little bastard. I had then brought the idea to writing colleague and sometimes lover\*, Derek McCaw in hopes of a partnership for either a quick comic book idea or a flash animated web series. We toyed around with the idea and came up with some great, albeit campy, ball and dick joke concepts to sustain a one note character like ours. Derek took the first stab at the script and got to about the bank robbery scene. I came in and added the detectives and the rich guy with a butler alter ego (Original!) and finished the rest of the plot/story. We were pretty happy (not proud) of how our story fleshed out (pun intended) and we're going to start looking around for artists to work with/shop around the idea. Then the You Tube video with the effeminate sounding guy saying, "Honey Badger don't give a shit" came out and what once was an unknown little woodland creature we wanted to take to the forefront was now an internet sensation and ultimately out of our hands... So, in order to at least bring our hard work to light and for your reading pleasure we are proud to present our previously unpublished script for our as of yet, un-produced Honey Badger comic book/animated pilot. Enjoy!

\*Derek McCaw has never officially returned my love. "

The Honey Badger  
Written by Lon Lopez and Derek McCaw  
Episode 1: "Enter the Honey Badger"

EXT - CITY STREET

We see a business district, focusing in on SACTROPOLIS NATIONAL BANK

INT - BANK

A group of masked robbers anxiously stand around the inside of the bank.

ROBBER ONE calmly attempts to crack the vault safe as ROBBER 2 nervously stands behind him.

ROBBER 2  
Come on man... Hurry up!

ROBBER 1  
Relax.

ROBBER 2

You know whose town this is don't you?  
DON'T YOU?!?

ROBBER 1  
Relax... I almost got it.

GUNMAN #2  
You don't know man, you don't KNOW!!!

EXT - SACTROPOLIS CITYSCAPE.

The dark night sky suddenly lights up.

A strange symbol illuminates the city.

INT - BANK

The symbol shines through the bank windows and lights up  
the dark bank vault.

ROBBER 2  
Oh man! That's it, we're done!

ROBBER 1  
What are you talking about? I've  
almost got it.

ROBBER 2  
We're screwed! We're screwed!! He'll  
be here any minute!

ROBBER 1  
Who? Who'll be here?

ROBBER 2  
The Honey Bad-

The vault goes dark.

Pained groans are heard throughout the vault.

VISUAL FX: POW!

SOUND FX: High-pitched note

ROBBER 1 frantically searches for his flashlight.

VISUAL FX: BALLS!

SOUND FX: Hee-Yai!

The pained groans slowly start making their way towards ROBBER 1.

VISUAL FX: TESTICLES!

SOUND FX: Humina!

The sounds stop.

ROBBER 1 finally gets his flashlight functioning.

He nervously scans the floor of the vault and sees his whole crew strewn over the floor clutching their crotches.

Suddenly he hears in the darkness.

HONEY BADGER  
What's the capital of Thailand?

ROBBER 1  
(Scared)  
Uh...

VISUAL FX: BANKOK!

SOUND FX: BANGKOK!

ROBBER 1's eyes cross as he keels over in utter pain clutching his junk.

Pan out of the bank vault as all the ROBBERS lay in pain.

EXT - SACTROPOLIS BANK - DAY.

It's a busy scene outside the bank.

Cop cars and police officers work the crime scene.

INT - BANK - DAY

Two Detectives patrol the crime scene inside as other police officers haul away the still crotch clutching robbers in the background.

The first detective is an older, veteran detective,  
COMMISSIONER PETER GIRTH.

The other is a young, enthusiastic detective who's new to  
the force, DET. BLAKE SMALLBERRIES.

GIRTH smokes a cigar and casually walks the scene as if  
he's seen this before.

BLAKE enthusiastically inspects the crime scene.

BLAKE

Amazing. Six career bank robbers, all  
with sheets to brag about, laid out and  
left for us?

GIRTH

Heh, hopefully next time he won't  
forget the bow.

BLAKE

He? Wait a second... you're not talking  
about this...Badger Character again are  
you?

GIRTH

The Honey Badger.

BLAKE

Sounds cute. Seriously Pete, you can't  
honestly tell me six thugs were single  
handedly dealt with by a guy who names  
himself after a care bear?

GIRTH

Look kid, you're new here, you'll get  
it eventually. Like it or not, this is  
the Honey Badger's town.

BLAKE

Seriously? The Honey Badger?

GIRTH

Son, do you even know what a Honey Badger is?

BLAKE

Heh, a harmless woodland creature who gets picked on by Porcupines?

GIRTH

(Dead Serious)

The Honey Badger is the fiercest predator in the wild. When confronted, the animal goes straight for its enemy's crotch.

BLAKE

(Loosening his tie and uncomfortable)

So we've got a ball-punching vigilante who emulates a crotch attacking beaver from the wild?

GIRTH

Welcome to Sactropolis kid.

GIRTH puts out his cigar in one of the bank ashtrays and turns to walk out.

BLAKE stops and surveys the scene one last time and turns to follow GIRTH.

EXT. BALDINGER ESTATES - DAY.

A luxurious mansion sits atop a large hillside.

It's BALDINGER ESTATES, home to wealthy billionaire and playboy, RICHARD "DICK" BALDINGER.

DICK sits comfortably on his patio balcony enjoying a prepared breakfast.

DICK'S trusty and stalwart butler JEWELS approaches and places the morning's newspaper on the table in front of DICK.

JEWELS

The morning edition sir...

The front-page headline reads - Robbery Neutered by Honey Badger.

DICK picks up the paper and skims the article.

JEWELS

I see we found something productive to do with our night last night.

DICK

Unfortunately, not productive enough Jewels.

JEWELS

Oh, you didn't have your hands full last night?

DICK

The crew last night was a bunch of fill ins. The usual goons... but their safe cracker... he's new... didn't recognize him.

JEWELS

(Looking at the paper)

His name is... Buster Nut. Perhaps he's from out of town?

DICK

Maybe... but you do realize what was in that vault don't you Jewels?

JEWELS

At Sactropolis National?

DICK

The Balsac Family Jewels. The most impressive collection of jewels and gems this side of the Seemens River.

JEWELS

Oh my, I had completely forgotten sir.

DICK

And anyone after those magnificent orbs  
wasn't just a simple "out of townner."  
He's connected.

JEWELS

The Mob sir?

DICK

The mob, a cartel, crime league, you  
name it... I need to find out more about  
this "Nut" cracker, Jewels...

JEWELS

What do you propose sir?

INT. SACTROPOLIS JAIL - DAY.

BUSTER NUT (ROBBER 1) sits in his jail cell staring  
solemnly through the bars.

GUARD 1 and GUARD 2 approach the cell and put keys in the  
lock.

GUARD 1

Buster Nut! Get up, come with us.

BUSTER gets up out of his bunk and goes with the guards.  
DICK narrates in voice over.

DICK (V.O.)

We need to make arrangements so that  
our friend Buster sees the light of day  
sooner than later.

BUSTER is getting processed for release.

DICK (V.O.) cont.

Not being from around here, he'll  
surely search out his contacts and when  
he does... The Honey Badger will be  
waiting...

EXT. SACTROPOLIS JAIL - DAY.

It's near dusk and BUSTER NUT leaves the front of the jail  
and walks briskly down the street.

Looking up from the street view, The Honey Badger's silhouette can be seen tracking him from the rooftops above.

After several blocks, BUSTER NUT turns into a back alley and knocks on a doorway.

He's let into the door.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

BUSTER NUT passes by the DOOR GUARD and walks into the center of the room.

In the center of the room there's a large table with loot and weapons strewn across it.

Standing at the Table are GOON 1, GOON 2 and GOON 3.

BUSTER NUT approaches GOON 1.

BUSTER

Bout time you guys got me outta there.  
You guys will not believe what I've  
been through...

GOON 1

Buster! How'd you get out so quick?

BUSTER

(Quizzical)  
You guys bailed me out... Right?

GOON 1

We didn't bail nobody out, Buster...

BUSTER

(Realizing)  
Oh no...

GOON 1

Buster you dumb sonova...

BLAM!

The lights go out in the warehouse.

The GOONS call out frantically wondering what's happening.

BUSTER

Not again...

BUSTER NUTS clutches his junk as he can suddenly hear a large clamor bouncing through the warehouse.

VISUAL FX: NADS!

SOUND FX: DOG SQUEEZE TOY

BUSTER NUTS backs into a corner as he can hear his fellow goons getting their sacks punched in.

VISUAL FX: CROTCH!

SOUND FX: MOMMY!

TWO GOONS keel over in pain as BUSTER hides in the corner.

VISUAL FX: NUTS!

SOUND FX: WALNUTS CRUNCHING.

Silence.

BUSTER NUT peaks around the warehouse.

He slowly backs up in an attempt to escape.

He freezes in his tracks as he hears a whisper from the darkness.

HONEY BADGER

How do you get a "Walk" in baseball?

BUSTER

...Four Balls?

THE HONEY BADGER pops up from the floor and punches BUSTER in the nuts four hard, loud times.

BUSTER keels over from the blows and The HONEY BADGER rises over him joking to himself.

HONEY BADGER

Not like you could walk after that...  
but...

HONEY BADGER picks up the still groggy BUSTER and pulls him close.

HONEY BADGER  
What did you want with the Family  
Jewels! Who sent you? Who you working  
for?

BUSTER  
I can't tell you, he'll kill me...

HONEY BADGER  
I'll do worse if you don't!

HONEY BADGER grabs him down low and an audible cracking sound can be heard.

BUSTER NUT cringes in pain.

BUSTER  
Okay! Okay! It was The Eunuch! The  
Eunuch I tell ya...

BUSTER NUT keels over from the pain as the HONEY BADGER lets him slowly crumple to the floor.

A concerned look washes over the HONEY BADGER'S face.

HONEY BADGER  
(To himself)  
The Eunuch... Why'd it have to be the  
Eunuch?

THE HONEY BADGER turns and looks back at the keeled over GOONS in the Warehouse and turns back towards the door.

He leaves in blur.

TITLE: WHO IS THE EUNUCH?

TITLE: WILL THE HONEY BADGER FIND HIM?

TITLE: FIND OUT NEXT TIME ON...

TITLE: THE HONEY BADGER!

END.





**No. 259 - From Mary Miller:**

**Glug's Been Drinking  
(a filk to the tune of Frere Jacques)**

**Glug's been drinking.  
Glug's been drinking.  
Are you sure?  
Are you sure?  
See the empty bottle.  
Here's the empty bottle.  
He wants more.  
He wants more.**

**No. 260 - Art (c) Ashleigh Payne**

# No. 261 - It Was Like Sorrow by Liam Sharp

It was like sorrow, solid and almost visible – a wall, a feature. Nothing else could explain the apparition. Nothing else fitted.

Greg knew only the sound of his uneven breath hissing, the slight tickle of a stray hair at his temple, moved by god-only-knew-what – and he didn't buy that shit. Under the circumstances it seemed unlikely, too, as he lacked both hair or temple to brush against.

He was in transit.

There were moments in the slow-shift that he had half expected to temporarily reform into someone else entirely – but such was the nature of the generally-slipping, the fad-fade of nuance and science as sold by the Narrowmen. However, this was not how he had foreseen things, back home, or even back in the nectar-spits of the corrosives, their freeform effluent speech patterns battering and blinding whilst still rebuilding and redefining. (Those bastards! They could sell you anything!) Such thoughts as this returned his view to wider thoughts on humanistic habitats more suited to old thinking, unrefined by the bites we took out of our minds in the name of progress.

So. He thought. This is the turning point then. No going back, not now. Unless...

But unless was a form of escape rudely denied the instant it formed in almost-letters, brief half-thought moments before the change inevitably swept past the rising panic of considered escape and rebuilt his possible futures in the shape he had chosen for himself: The blue and magenta flumiform of the Enticulate – floranimal, metasentient and multiple.

Greg was no longer Greg, he was Gregandre-walicemhabbudannette, and a whole bunch of other sentients whose languages or thought-waves, systemic delusion-building artifices or sensory filigree were rapidly becoming familiar to him – becoming his/their own in fact.

We're unexpected/expectedly open/closed ready/warm/wet/pleased/ to greet/absorb – I am/we are/we - he felt, as the group Enticulate drifted slowly out over the rocks it drew minerals from, so far beneath the oceans men called Prahpac on the moon known as Myrddin.

It was just getting to know itself all over again.

\*\*\*

Had it been so bad? Had their life really been worth the risk, the loss – everything? Joan and Greg had struggled to see eye to eye, for sure. Their initial love, a half-decacy earlier, had been real enough. They both walked outside the norms. He with that distracted single mind, the complex meld of fear and bravery, shyness and command. She with her crippling empathy, her cruel love of nature, and again that shyness-and-spirit mixed. Together they had crafted warm hollows to entertain in, and raised bright thinking children who had gone on to craft their own shimmering curves across the blooms of their lives, close and true. Loving each other. So why had Greg and Joan finally grown so distant?

The affair didn't help of course. But Joan had been driven to that. Greg's drinking had grown unacceptable, keeping him far from the hub when he was running the Meredith McCrea in the Albulax Flaw, taking tourists out to the Monde and back. She had raised a gaggle of Billbets in spite (Thieving little bastards!) and Greg had turned a blind eye to it – which had not been her intent at all. So she had an affair. But then Greg had had several. So again – was that reason enough?

Ten more long cycles and the animosity had continued to grow. Joan hated his pet projects that took him away for so many hours at a time while bodily he remained in close proximity. It was like living with a corpse. His mind wandered, crafting nuanced and imaginative flux-hexes in the metasphere, but she just wanted him to sit with her, and – what? – maybe just talk to her! Old-school. Face to face. The way they did when they were young and in love.

But they had continued to drift apart and he had grown angry and bitter while she became frivolous in an attempt to escape her unhappiness. Ultimately she went away and he chose to be temporarily reformed. A new life. An alien life. Far from her, far from the kids and the troubles that had ultimately become the greatest plague of man: The inescapable inevitability of sentience and self-knowledge – the blind dive into delusional faith, or the cold face of clarity and all its apocalyptic subtexts.

Even we gods must die.

It was hard for her to grasp that he had truly gone from her this time. There was no return, unless...

\*\*\*

The explosion at the hub was planted, that was all anybody knew. It had the signatures of a Billbet operation, but the material had been Mode. They were not going to solve it. The husband had been rebirthed as a collective mind in the seas of Myrddin. Extrapolating information from the alien would be impossible

now. If he had done it he was beyond the law. The children gathered at a ceremony and wept.

\*\*\*

Gregandrewalicemhabbudannette felt a ripple through time-space – one of billions, but this one had meaning to it. It was a passing of mind into the meta, and it came with a shock of sadness, causing the creature to curl in on itself and contract, hugging the rocks as it shivered. It was like sorrow.

END.





No. 263 - Art by Todd

# No. 264 -SFPA by Guy Lillian

Moments ago, I put a SFPA mailing into the – well, mail, sliding 20 disties, in taped Tyvek envelopes, across a countertop to a friendly lady postmaster. I felt relief on getting rid of the thing – I'd spent two entire weekends finishing it – but it was a measure of pride: this edition marker the 50th anniversary of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, and I felt as if I'd done the group proud. Though the pagecount wasn't as ungodly as some of other "milestone" mailings (our 100th distribution, 30 years ago, topped out at 1750 PAGES!) I'd managed to lure a number of former members into contributing, adding a depth and a sense of history to the mix – and that felt good. Also, The Southerner, SFPA's Official Organ, was bedecked with caricatures of fifteen SFPAs who had – how to phrase this? – gone on before, an appropriate tribute, meethought. Lastly, lest it be thought that SFPA was, like its ancestral home on the great dilapidated plantations of the South, lost in its past, this mailing noted our first new member in about three years – hairy fella named Garcia. Know him?

I've been in SFPA since January, 1971, and have never missed a bi-monthly mailing. That means I've been writing a fanzine – it's called Spiritus Mundi; after a phrase in Yeats- for over forty years. My adult lifetime has therefore been a shared experience with the SFPA roster, which means that, except for family, SFPAs know me better than anyone else in the world. Some have been friends, some have been foes, some have been friends THEN foes, but they have been constant – at least that majority of the roster which has been around for periods rivaling mine in length. Two of the present members, in fact, exceed me in SFPA longevity. They met They heard my awe of Tom Hayden and Lillian Hellman – both of whom I met – and my surpassing surprise at how it felt to fall in love for the first time. They saw me shrivel when that love collapse (the girl joined a GROUP MARRIAGE, do you believe it?) and come back in the forge of grad school, when I thought I had the talent to write. They read my ambition when I got my first job, at DC Comics – my zine typed from a sagging bed in a freezing Greenwich Village hotel room – and gagged as I described, unthinkingly, my second

job, hauling guts, limbs and bodily fluids around a public hospital in New Orleans. They were with me on my long boring haul towards my first marriage, the unraveling that came after, the fiendish nightmare of law school, the disillusioned REillusionment (sic) of my career as a public defender. They heard my despair of a normal life and they heard my astonishment when Rose-Marie resurfaced, and life began to make sense. SFPA's been a mainstay, a "heartbeat" as Don Markstein, mentor and nemesis, once put it – a hesitation every two months to record the state of my head and the protean world around it.

And it's been a record of my fannishness, too, my submersion in this strange, non-judgmental yet weirdly conformist cadre built-up around the science fiction genre. Though I've belonged to other APAs – FAPA, the Granddaddy of 'em all, SAPS, and most happily LASFAPA, SFPA has been the place where my encounters with fandom have been assiduously recorded, my attitudes vociferously promoted, my perspectives and opinions arrogantly defended. It is a life journal.

Do I tell SFPA all? Of course not. There is only one outlet for my creative urges which I have utilized for longer than I have SFPA and that's my personal diary (well over 15,000 pages along as of 10-2-2011) – and I don't related all that I have done or through THERE either, even though no one reads my diary, but me. Some thoughts, some sins, are between me and the Universe, are destined for no other record other than the radical bubble of psychic effusion which has pulsed out from this planet since the first self-awareness of the first proto-man.

In short, some stuff is secret. SFPAs don't know EVERYTHING.

But they do know much, and they should know the value of the hobby SFPA embodies, that part of the fannish experience that insists on communicating, on expressing, on childishly insisting that "I am here, and I matter" – and that, hopefully acknowledges that others exist, and listens to and reads their stories, too.

So, your first SFPA mailing should be in your hands very shortly, Chris. A million welcomes.

# The Last Worst Ideas

## No. 265 - From Robert Rankin

Well James, you may remember this.

“Sussex Counties Radio once had a rather bad idea, they invited me on to talk about breakthroughs in science. It was a bit of a mistake on their part, as I know nothing about science. I think they invited the wrong man. I had enjoyed being the wrong man once before, when I was invited over, all expenses paid, to New Zealand’s World Book Day. When I got there I marveled at the fact that there were no posters up and indeed some very bewildered people. It turned out to be a clerical mistake, they had really wanted Ian Rankin.

So. Sussex Radio had me on to talk about science. They asked me whether I had any scientific innovations that I would like to share with the listeners. I did some thinking on my feet, as I didn’t want to sit there saying nothing, as that can make for rather poor radio. Then I had a flash of inspiration and told them about my idea for the silence CD.

The idea was to go to the quietest place on Earth, the meditation chamber beneath the Potala in Tibet and record the silence. Then put it on CD and if you had noisy neighbours you could play it really loudly and it would drown out their noise and fill your room with silence.

The interviewer looked at me in a lop-sided

way, I could see that he was actually trying to figure out whether it would really work. Finally he asked if I had any more ideas. I had. I told him that I had this idea about ultraviolet paint. That as you can’t actually see ultraviolet with the naked eye, it therefore followed that if you painted something with an opaque ultraviolet paint you would not be able to see the object any more. It would be to all intents, invisible. He drew a rather deep breath at this and at this and then some genuinely scientific chap who was also on the programme asked what I would like to invisibilise with my ultraviolet paint. I told him, Peacehaven.

I’ve never liked Peacehaven. So I suggested we get a crop-spraying plane and fly over Peacehaven covering it all with ultraviolet paint. And then get a big sound system on a lorry to broadcast the silence recording really loudly. Then we wouldn’t be able to see it or hear Peacehaven, so all would be right with the world.

A little after that the station switchboard received a call from the Mayor of Peacehaven, complaining about me. They put him on the line and I spoke with him.

“Where are you calling from?” I asked.

“Hove,” he replied. “It’s where I work.”

Well, that did it for me, even the mayor got out of there first thing in the morning and stayed away all day. The mayor told me what he thought of me and my ideas and I told the mayor where he could stick Peacehaven.

I was, perhaps a little too explicit.

That turned out to be the worst idea of the day as far as I was concerned, because I was asked to leave the studio and they banned me from Southern Counties Radio.

I still hate Peacehaven.

And it’s still there.

And you can still see it.

And hear it.

“Bad idea.”



# No. 267 - Gary Lloyd

'Worst idea I've ever had?'

'So, what you're telling me is that there's a cut of The Phantom Menace out there with Jar Jar Binks edited out of the picture?'

'No, I mean that Peter Jackson probably cut Tom Bombadil from LOTR fearing a Binksing from the fans.'

I don't think bad ideas get a chance most of the time, they're usually arrested at birth. If only someone had told the \$8 million backers of 'Carrie: The Musical' which, after only a week or so on Broadway, crashed and burned. Mostly burned, I imagine. Couldn't anyone see it was a Bad Idea? With the biographical topic of the Elephant Man, the scene-in-scene musical 'Elephant!', featuring songs like 'He's Packing His Trunk', from the

film 'The Tall Guy' was a bad idea that worked, and a send-up of Lloyd Webber. Bad ideas can be useful, it's just a matter of context. More usually bad ideas quickly fall by the wayside, aborted before anyone else gets a chance to encounter (laugh, snigger, snipe at) them.

But the worst idea I've ever had? Desperate not to reveal I may not appear to know what I'm doing and any progress I've made is a result of luck alone, and obviously, clearly, I don't have bad ideas anyway... but I'd have to mention two works. Not because they were bad ideas as such (as I said, it would never happen on my shift), but I've been trumped by the stark-staringly obvious, twice, during Very Lengthy Preparations when the solutions should have been clear to see.

The first was 'Brought To Light', a narrative/



**No. 268 - Gary Lloyd, Alan Moore and Iain Banks**

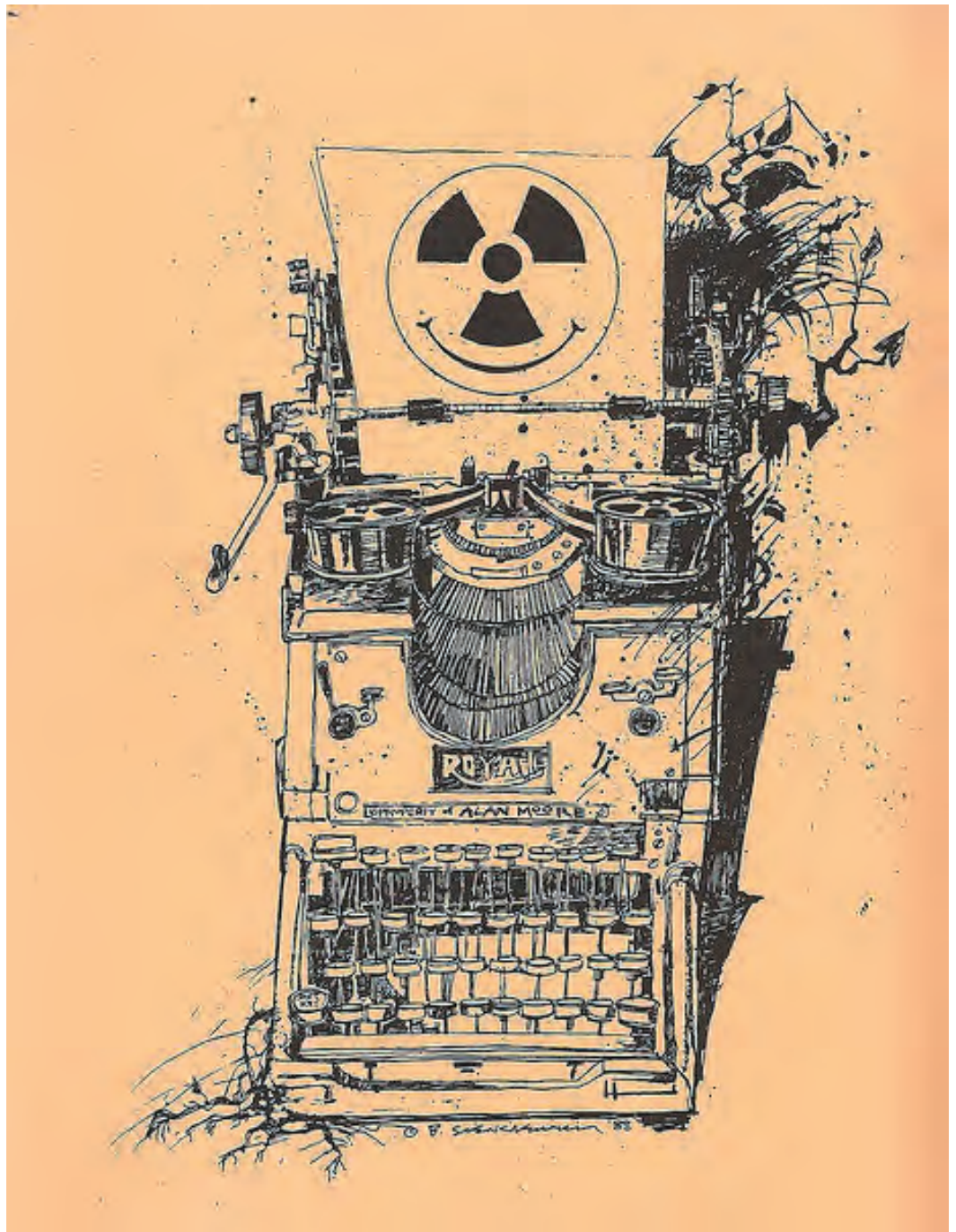
music performance piece created with the venerable beard Alan Moore. I'd approached his dramatised account of the CIA's covert history with the notion of illustrating the global nature of the tale chiefly with indigenous instruments, and international musical tropes that would filter into the score. After a huge effort of cajoling, pleading and plain begging, I'd lined up quite a cast of musicians including a military brass and percussion band, a gamelan orchestra, a latin percussion group, traditional Chinese, Japanese and Middle-Eastern instrument players, a small traditional orchestrasworth of classical musicians, and an Appalachian nose-flute player, only to wake up one morning with the simple realisation that I was Getting It Completely Wrong. All

that the piece really required was a complement of nasty, cheap-sounding, and frankly quite crap, synthesisers. I'd failed to see that what I had been preparing was a show-and-tell, almost to the point of Mickey-Mousing the script - and putting it like that almost makes this seem an appropriately American idea - but no. The music needed to provide propulsion and an icky underbelly, an unsettling starkness, still as international and military-inspired composition, but crap synths were definitely the way forward.

I adapted the original compositions and all I used were my pal Guy's 1973 vintage Korg analogue synth and a shabbily-appointed sampler. A far more limited palette, but Alan's performance was made scarier, more beastly, the tones didn't get in the way of the voice, it gave a wonderfully cheap and seedy veneer to the recordings, sprang the pleasing term 'electro-martial' from a journalist, and the machines only needed instructions punching into them once, unlike some

difficult musicians I could mention. Mainly though, I'd avoided creating an over-egged pudding of a piece.

My second deep-into-development rethink was for a current and unacceptably-long-time-coming project with Iain Banks based on his novel 'Espedair Street'. It's a tribute album to a band that never existed. It'll be an offensively cool record. Alan is making an auspicious guest appearance too amongst its expansive super-stellar cast. It was though a much much much more complicated u-turn and if I had another 500 words space here I'd attempt to explain why. The record though, is on its way.



## No. 270 - My Worst Idea by Michael Marshall Smith

I'm not sure there are any 'worst ideas', at least when it comes to writing fiction. There's always something you can do with a skewed or dodgy notion, a way you can turn it around or upside down and into something new - if not necessarily good; or good, if not necessarily new. So maybe my worst idea was a meta decision, letting my name get split into two (or three, if you count M. M Smith's sole outing so far count... though in the US that book came out as Michael Marshall Smith anyway, so go figure). Or else letting one novel come out under two titles - to settle this once and for all, THE LONELY DEAD and THE UPRIGHT MAN are the same book. Sure, Mr. Banks makes good play with the former arrangement, but he's quite a writer and gets a lot more books written than I do. I'd love everything to come out under the same name not just for convenience, but as a statement of intent and declaration of belief. I think any author needs to go out there and sell themselves on who they are and what they do - and on those in their totality, a wholeness of creative statement that should encompass range and breadth and a willingness to do something unexpected or ill-advised

once in a while. Having neat little niches and separate identities makes it easier to play safe: one guy brings in the bacon, the other takes a sideways look at the pig and wonders what else you might be able to do with it, or if it's actually a pig after all. But writing has a praxis, just like any other grown-up activity, and the two or three guys who work under my names get along okay most of the time, so probably there are worse things to have done. Maybe switching from horror to sf and then to crime and then semi-supernatural thriller has been the dumb idea, though I'm having fun and it's what I want to do, so... maybe not. Perhaps my star stupidity has been in failing to write another book exactly like ONLY FORWARD (not least so people wouldn't ask me all the time when I'm going to do just that), but I know in my heart that said book is what it is and that it would be a mistake to try to go home again, at least until that's what I feel like doing. So maybe, when all's said and done, the worst idea was starting this piece without any kind of plan whatsoever. But that is, I'm afraid, somewhat how one rolls.



No. 269 - Art by Jeanette Chere Wood



# No. 273 - On The Wheel of Time by Jennifer Liang

*From 1990 forward, Robert Jordan produced best-sellers. Jokes were made about forests destroyed for the print runs. He brought innumerable readers to fantasy; for better or worse he consolidated the template of the multi-multi-volume series. He became the New York Times bestseller list face of fantasy. Whatever one thinks of that, every person in this room can rattle off, as easily as I can, the writers who followed and even those who preceded Jordan, who gained a significant boost from the success of his work - and from his personal generosity in offering support to their books. George Martin has said as much in print. I can affirm that response myself: his generosity as a reader towards work very different from his own. And is there anyone here who'd want to deny that J.K. Rowling built upon his entrenching of the ongoing saga in shaping - and selling - her own?*

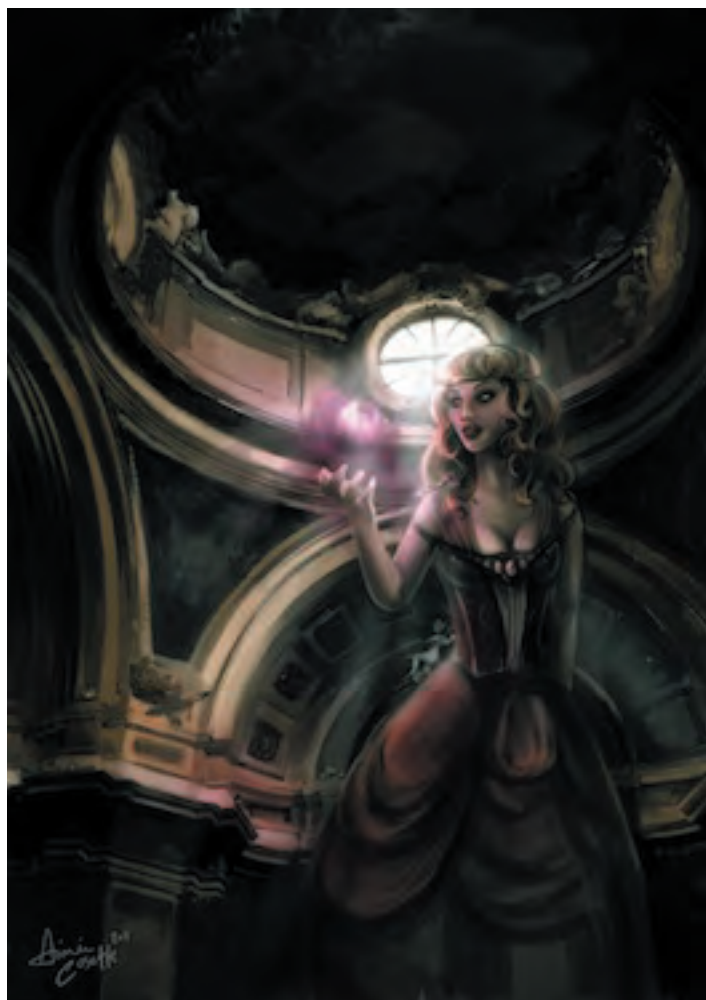
*-Guy Gaveriel Kay, Toastmaster Address,  
World Fantasy Awards 2007*

While Jordan enjoyed incredible commercial success and the adulation of millions of fans worldwide, he never achieved critical success. Only one book in the Wheel of Time series was ever nominated for an award. For those who are fans of the series, we view the coming of the final volume next year with both excitement that a beloved story is finally reaching its conclusion, and wistful regret that it's architect will not be with us for that end. Kay's Toastmaster speech stands as an important testament to the power of Jordan's legacy, even without the recognition a major award would have given him.

I've heard many reasons for the lack of awards, ranging from "this isn't the kind of thing that wins Hugos" to "Jordan didn't do enough to court voters". I don't believe any of those. Instead, I believe that the critical community was waiting for the end of the story before judging. Anyone who has read the Wheel of Time series understands that none of the books really stand on their own. They are each simply chapters of a continuing story. Handing an award to any single book in the series would be like choosing a single chapter of a novel. As it stands now, in its incomplete state, it's impossible to judge whether Jordan's gigantic tale is truly worthy of critical acclaim to match its popularity. However, with the series finally reaching its conclusion under the sure hand of pinch hitter Brandon Sander-

son next year, it's still not too late to look at Jordan's labor of love and consider it appropriately. As the Hugo voting rules now stand, a serialized work can be nominated in its entirety as a single work in the "Best Novel" category as long as no single installment was nominated previously. The Wheel of Time certainly qualifies under these rules.

A Memory of Light is projected for publication in 2012, which makes it eligible for a Hugo in 2013. It is not my intention to tell the potential voters who will be participating in the selection process for Lonestar-Con 3's awards to vote for the Wheel of Time as "Best Novel". Rather, my purpose is to inform the community that it's not too late to recognize Robert Jordan's accomplishments and impact on the field. I invite everyone to not just read the series, but to consider objectively whether its author deserves more recognition for his contribution to the genre.



No. 274 - Art by Aimée Cosette Rixson

# No. 275 - What I Learned from Science Fiction & Fantasy by Heather Urbanski

The other day, I was watching the Blu Ray version of Empire Strikes Back and I remembered something. Now, it's been years since I sat down and just watched Empire rather than having it on in the background while I'm doing something else. But this latest release deserved sustained attention and as I watched the guts of a Tauntaun spill out in all its HD-glory, I had a most vivid memory of asking my parents why Han cut open the Tauntaun and how putting Luke inside would keep him warm.

The aunt I am now can guess what must have gone through my parents' minds as they decided just how much to explain about dead animals to a five-year-old with a tendency to keep asking questions. And that got me thinking, how much about the way the "real" world works did I actually learn from the science fiction and fantasy of my early years?

While I'm sure this isn't a complete list, here are just a few of the things I learned from the genre probably before I "should" have:

- I learned that extreme heat seals open wounds (both from Luke's hand in Empire and a frightfully gruesome scene with a heated sword in Excalibur).
- I knew what a "delusion of grandeur" was and what it meant to be "cocky" before I started first grade.

- I first saw the footage of the Apollo 11 moon landing in the "The Hand of God" episode of the original Battlestar Galactica.

- I learned that you can access the brain through the ear canal in the still nightmare-inducing scene from Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan.

And, of course, I learned that the odds of successfully navigating an asteroid field are approximately 3,720 to 1.

This might explain a lot actually...

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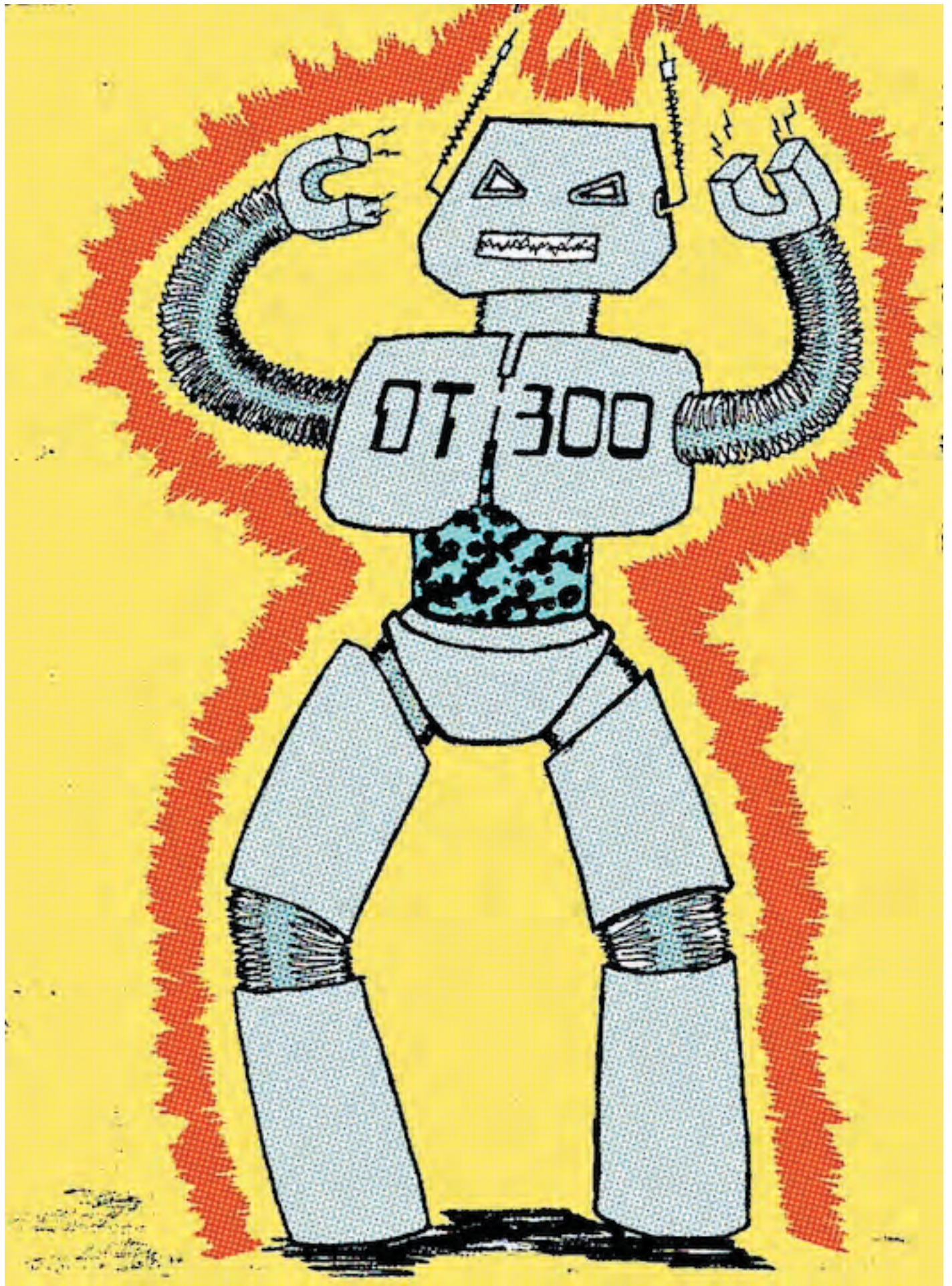
## No. 276 - On Empire by Chris Garcia

**I fail to see the brilliance of Jedi over Star Wars. Star Wars is a complete story (if you accept that Vader simply flies off into space, never to be seen again) while all that Empire has is a lot of snow and swamp, but not much soul. Better filmmaking? Perhaps. Better soul-stirring? Not a chance.**

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No. 277 - Art by Sue Mason



# No. 279 - FATS DOMINO GEOMETRY by Richard Chwedyk

As a universe it isn't much to write  
home about: cantankerous, wild,  
ill-fitting, threatening to shake  
itself to death with its banging  
pistons and off-center gears.

And yet it is all we've got here  
in the outskirts, sitting on our  
concrete porches, confusing stars  
with lightning bugs and awaiting  
the arrival of Happy Henry's Buggy.

All life is attendancy to ice cream,  
braving the snarling Lon Chaney visage  
of Happy Henry, in his smudged vanilla pants  
and his metal change-holder hanging precariously  
under his moon-sized, taciturn gut  
(he was 'Fatty Henry' before his heart attack).

He collects our coins in exchange  
for paper-wrapped blocks  
of melting white gold.

It's all we've got, these lightning bugs,  
this ice cream, these stars  
built with a logic and a system.

But logic and a system aren't  
enough  
to comprehend our gravities  
and levities. A Rube Goldberg uni-  
verse,  
its design recapitulated in a pot  
of mashed potatoes, or in a million  
pinholes  
punched in paper, imitating the  
eclipse overhead.

The architect of cosmic dust that  
spills into the emptiness like smoke  
from the chimneys of the nearby  
chemical plants  
needs more than a system.  
[stanza break]

Elegance is accident.  
Meter is the master in a universe  
built on Fats Domino geometry.  
And to press ourselves to its edges  
we will need the Big Beat.  
The Wheel. The Barrel House.  
The Fat Man.

It takes a left hand to make a universe  
in the overhead cavern of stars.  
And if we are ever to move from these  
concrete porch steps and aluminum lawn chairs  
we will need to move like triplets over the keyboard,  
notes like nails driven down by a left hand.

On such instruments the outbound ride might happen,  
taking us into the next exotic neighborhood  
on the other side of the airfield –  
let's find out what kind of universe  
they dance to there.



# No. 281 - CONTEMPLATING THE ALIEN AT THE WHITE CASTLE ON ARCHER AND KEDZIE, 2 A.M., 1967 by Richard Chwedyk

That guy at the counter –  
he could be one. They look  
like that in the movies sometimes.

They try to look like us  
when they don't look like those rubber things  
with tentacles and big heads

and pointed ears, and three fingers  
and funny skin of one sort or another,  
or they look like big hulking versions  
of ourselves – or very tiny.

Or they look like little bugs  
or disembodied eyeballs  
or brains.

They are very smart  
and they can be bad,  
or desperate, or evil, or lonely.  
They can be messengers  
but mostly they look like us.

That guy at the counter –  
he might be plotting our doom.  
Or he might be selling us siding.  
Or he might be saving the world.

He's probably doing his job.  
He's come a long way to do it.  
We don't understand a lot  
but we understand that.  
A guy at the counter, drinking his coffee  
or eating onion rings – just a guy  
doing his job.

Or maybe – they're, like in the food.  
Maybe they are the food.  
Maybe when we eat the food  
we become them.  
Or maybe they become us.

They might be women, too.  
I've seen that in the movies before.

If the aliens come from outer space  
I hope they look like Diana Rigg.

From here, inside the White Castle,  
at two in the morning,  
so bright in here, so dark outside,  
it could all be outer space.

The streetlights are stars.  
The neon signs are galaxies, and headlights are comets  
or spaceships.

And if that's so  
then we're all from out there  
and the only place that  
isn't there  
is here.



# No. 283 - WHY I'M NOT SO WEIRD ANYMORE

## By YVONNE PENNEY

In my younger days, back when snakes had legs, I had the unfortunate labels of weird, four-eyes, brainy; I think you get the idea. I was the kid in the family who took things apart 'just to see how they worked!' I often got my little behind spanked, and then sent to the room I shared with my other three siblings. My brother and sisters would tease me to the point of tears. There was no sympathy to be had from the other parent not involved in the aforementioned spanking.

In grade school, I was a brown noser, and I was often called Einstein, even by some of the teachers. My grade seven teacher did not like me in the least, and let me know every opportunity she had. My teachers would complain to my Mom about the fact I would correct and even challenge them. Nuns especially didn't like me because I would challenge them during catechism lessons. For those not familiar with catechism, it is the religious classes Catholic children had to take in order to receive their First Communion and even their Confirmations. I was told that I could get excommunicated, then when I died, I would burn in hell and bring shame to my family. I had the attitude, "Ask me if I care!!"

To keep me occupied and out of trouble, my mother taught me to sew. I worked for her sewing hems and buttons, and later on the beading work and appliqués on wedding dresses. Now you know who to blame.

In grade eleven, I got involved with the theatre arts class and club, not because I wanted to act or be on stage, but because I wanted to work backstage. I originally wanted to work in make-up or in backstage direction, but when the theatre arts teacher found out that I could sew, he rubbed his hands and kicked his heels, and then took me by the hand and off to the wardrobe department with me. When I arrived, I found one dim light bulb, dust, spiders, 30 burgundy choir robes hanging on a broken-down coat rack, and a four-week deadline to get costumes ready for Shakespeare's "Scottish" play, and oh yes, the cake topper, ZERO budget. How I managed to pull it off is another story for later. We also did *Antigone*, a Greek tragedy; I had a budget for that because a big-time Toronto theatre critic would

be there to see it. I was a busy little beaver making costumes for *The Death of a Salesman*, and *The Glass Menagerie*. I had no staff and a sewing machine that I will swear was possessed by Cthulhu. (Go Pods!)

When I left high school, the theatre arts department had a wonderful selection of costumes as well as the original thirty burgundy choir robes, and that spider (I named him Herman) that was my only company in the wardrobe room. About 15 years later, I went back to my old high school for its 175th anniversary, only to find that all my hard work was no longer there, just the spider and those damn robes.

About ten years after I graduated from high school, I discovered fandom. *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Battlestar Galactica* (the original series) were all big hits in the theater or on TV. For me, it was the birth of SF media fandom. I wanted costumes like the ones they wore, but where to get them? Why not make them? The patterns were not available; for some, I had to take commercially-made patterns and rework them. Just to make sure I knew what I was doing, I took a beginner's sewing class. When the teacher found out who I was, she talked to me after the class and asked why? I told her I was doing it as a refresher course – that response worked. Phew!! I was busy again at the sewing machine, recreating the costumes I saw on TV, at the movies or in the comics, and I got good at it. I started to win local masquerades, and was busy making costumes for others. At first, my mom thought I was wasting my time and talent, and then one day, I went to her place because she had a huge cutting table, and I needed to cut out a costume. When she saw me manipulate my patterns, and then successfully put that costume together, she was impressed. What really impressed her was the fact that my Darth Vader looked like Darth Vader, and Superman looked like Superman. My Mom thought it was great that I was using my talent, but she wondered why I wasn't making wedding gowns and making good money at it. Then, I took her to the 1984 Worldcon in LA, and took her to the Masquerade, and she changed her mind completely. She was mightily impressed with the whole thing! I need to thank everyone who participated at that masquerade; you saved my butt that night.

And thanks to Ben Bova who charmed my mother like no other could!! So, for her I was no longer weird.

Now, there's the matter of my siblings, my sisters in particular. They believed that I lived in a perpetual world of Hallowe'en dress-up, and I should really get my head checked. This went on for years, and to some extent today. In some cases, my younger sister would start in on me with criticisms and teasing, and I was made me feel like I was six years old again. One day, I got a call from older sister, asking me to make a Superman costume for her husband's seven-year-old nephew who was a huge Superman fan. So, to keep the peace, I did, and the nephew was extremely happy. I also helped on Hallowe'ens with her grade one classes by going in and doing face paintings for the kids. One day, my sisters came over for some reason, and in the dining room, they saw the shelving unit that had trophies and awards on it. When they started to look at them, they realized that both Lloyd and I were recognized for our efforts in many areas, and thought that was wonderful. I brought out my photo album that had pictures of some of the costumes I had made, as well as newspaper articles about me. When I explained what I had to do to make these costumes, my weirdness label started to fade. Now, my sisters brag about my awards and what I am able to do with commercial patterns, and that I am a wizard at the sewing machine! (Oh please!) Please note, my sisters would not know which end of a needle to thread.

Now, I'm into Steampunk, and I love to decorate hats. I showed my sisters some of them, and they love them. They also like the jewelry and pocket watch chains that Lloyd makes, and the fact we are making a little bit of money at it. So now, they give me stuff that they think I could use – which is nice.

With all that we have been through, it took them long enough to understand that not everyone has the same interests that they have, and that their sister – the short one with the glasses – is not as weird as they first believed. Great! Now I don't have to explain myself anymore. What a joy!!



# No. 285 Arisia: BayCon of the East by Eric Zuckerman

This publication's esteemed editor has repeatedly claimed that there is no organized fandom in the greater Boston area. This is refuted by my personal experience, having flown 3,000 miles each way to attend Arisia four years running. I first encountered Arisia at Arisia 2004 1/2, a "mini-Arisia" in the form of a function room party presenting a scaled-down convention over the course of an evening -- this was held at NoreasCon 4 (in Boston [see what I did there?], for that home-field advantage). Arisia was the first con to have me as a GoH, for which I love them forever... so I thought I'd do them a solid here by helping their existence be duly acknowledged in print. I have long been musing on its similarities to Garcia and my local regional convention, BayCon, that I thought I'd list them for posterity.

# Arisia runs over a 4-day holiday weekend. For BayCon, it's Memorial Day; for Arisia, it's Martin Luther King Day weekend (which, admittedly, is not a holiday for everybody; and some people do leave the Con on Sunday, but it's still four days). Why both of Boston's major major cons happen in the winter is beyond my understanding (except for the fact that I kinda understand that the hotels can be gotten cheaply), but that seems to be the way of things.

# Arisia has a thriving party scene, with strongly-themed parties run by consistent groups of fen from year to year. While BayCon may have lost a little bit of momentum with the loss of the Red Double Lion Tree lanai deck, it's still going mostly strong (on the same two of three nights that Arisia tends to go strong). Where BayCon has the Klingons, Hell's Halfway House (in room 333), and others, Arisia has Ziggurat Labs's annual Friday night pajama party plus a fresh theme each year's Saturday night; along with these are the Barfleet party, and a group of younger fans who in consecutive years ran a Neverland party (impressively together, on about 24 hours notice) and a robot party (with more prep).

# Arisia has moved twice in recent years, starting in an iconically-identified hotel (spending a layover in a too-small, semi-temporary home) and has now settled into a much larger facility that doesn't need to pack the fen

in cheek-to-jowl. As BayCon went from the aforementioned San Jose Doubletree to the Santa Clara Hyatt by way of the San Mateo Marriott (both too small for BayCon and arguably too big for WesterCon), Arisia went from the Park Plaza to the Westin Waterfront, spending 2007-2010 at the Cambridge Hyatt (more pretty than spacious... not unlike that San Mateo Marriott). For many attendees, the Park Plaza was as ingrained in Arisia's DNA as the Doubletree was in BayCon's... but things seem to be working out (modulo climate control and other minor quibbles).

# Gaming at Arisia is given sizable staffing, square footage, and time. Although gaming is frequently thought of as the red-headed stepchild of a general-interest Con, Arisia and BayCon share the success attainable by dedicated people given adequate resources.

# There's a small, but noteworthy, overlap in attendees. Gainsay me if you must; but be prepared to answer to: Richard Threadgill, Z-Bang, Kevin and Andy (who popped in for 2010 because they were FGoH'es), or that nicely ren-garbed couple whose names always escape me about 30 seconds after I finish talking to them at Arisia and BayCon every year. Or Frank Wuuuuuuuuuu (Sorry, I never know when I'm done with his name!), who seamlessly transitioned, on his relocation to Boston, from being a fixture of BayCon to being a fixture of Arisia. Arisia exists, and thus it follows that Boston fandom must exist.

Q. E. Mutha-zarkin' \*D\*.

Editor's Note -

***Having met the delightful Crystal Huff at WorldCon, I feel I must ammend my statement that there is no organized fandom in Boston.***

***You see, while doing the study for the Boston Christmas WorldCon Bid, we over-looked a number of factors, one of which was adjoining constituencies. And thus I hereby change my statement-***

***There is no organized fandom in Bostong, but there is plenty in Cambridge...***

# No. 286 - 300: It ain't great history, but it's good fantasy

## by Mike Perschon

A while back I promised I wouldn't do anymore serialized academic papers, but this one just begged a blow-by-blow.

Uri Margolin, my World Literature professor from last semester called Politically Correct speech the Inquisition without Religion, or the Inquisition without torture, or something to that effect. He compared it to the Inquisition, effectively saying that Politically Correct speech was stripping literature of everything that made it fun. All the violence, sex and naughty bits censored for the civilized, cultured academic. No Lysistrata with its proliferation of erect penises, no Illiad with gory battle scene after battle scene. I missed Uri a lot this semester.

This past semester I was enlightened by Said's Orientalism and a host of Donna Haraway's new age feminist manifestos (and for the record, I really enjoyed her Companion Species Manifesto), as well as a barrage of discussions about how the West can't represent the East (which effectively means no writing about any culture that isn't your own...Fennimore Cooper is a bad bad man by the standards of this course), and somewhere during a discussion about "representing the other" I finally snapped. In true Perschon style (I am third generation shit disturber) I decided to find a Politically Incorrect topic for my final paper.

When I presented my abstract, there was a disagreement over what my prof deemed the oversimplification of the material I was dealing with, and made a suggestion for a different approach, to which I replied, "No." Saying "No" became the theme of the paper, for better or for worse. I loved writing it, even though I'm not too sure about the ultimate quality of the work. Judge for yourselves. I'll post it all in serial, but I think each part stands of its own. The text you read here is the Director's Cut of the paper. It's the version with all the witticisms, rants, and musings that had no place in an academic paper. Hope you enjoy it, and if you can't agree with it, you will have by rejecting my thesis taken your own stand, said "No", or as the David Whyte would say, "zero."

### ***Introduction – the controversy and the case for 300 as heroic fiction***

Both the New York Times' A.O. Scott and Donna

Stevens at the online magazine Slate have conflated the highly stylized action film 300 (which is an adaptation of Frank Miller's graphic novel recounting the events of the Battle of Thermopylae) with the current conflict in Iraq. Further, "Javad Shamqadri, art advisor to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, told Fars news agency that the film was an insult to Persian culture and in line with the American "psychological war" against Iran" (jurnalo.com). Dr. Hamed Vahdati Nasab, an archeologist at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, drafted a petition, "seeking an apology from Warner Bros., the studio behind 300" (Iranian.com). Nasab responded to "numerous claims pointing out that this movie is in a science fiction genre" by stating that the film cannot be called fiction when it "shows the actual events, places, and characters with their real names". Vic Thiessen of the Canadian Mennonite stated that he felt the film was both "a work of art...one of the most visually stunning films ever made" and "a very dangerous film indeed" (10).

Yet in its opening weekend 300 reportedly made 70 million dollars (rottentomatoes.com), making it the first official blockbuster of 2007, and the largest opening box-office draw for a March release. Why is a film like 300 so popular given the current political situation in the Middle East? Is it tenable for someone concerned with conflict or racial issues to enjoy or find meaning or value in such a work? And is there anything valuable to be taken from such testosterone laden fantasies? Thiessen states that he "heard from young male Mennonites in North America (aged 18 to 28) that 300 is extremely popular--even in Mennonite academic settings--for this particular demographic" (10). Unlike Thiessen, I want to explore why this film is attractive to people whose religious beliefs are extremely pacifist, not simply to write the film off as dangerous; saying 300 is not good Mennonite fare is a no-brainer. Publishing an article about why it is seems like redundancy. Instead, like David Kahane at the National Review, I'm beginning to wonder "if a movie that has no stars, the look and feel of a video game, and the moral code of the U.S.M.C. might have something to say, even to audiences in New York and L.A.", and perhaps to people who would never choose to actualize their resistance

in the way Leonidas and his 300 do.

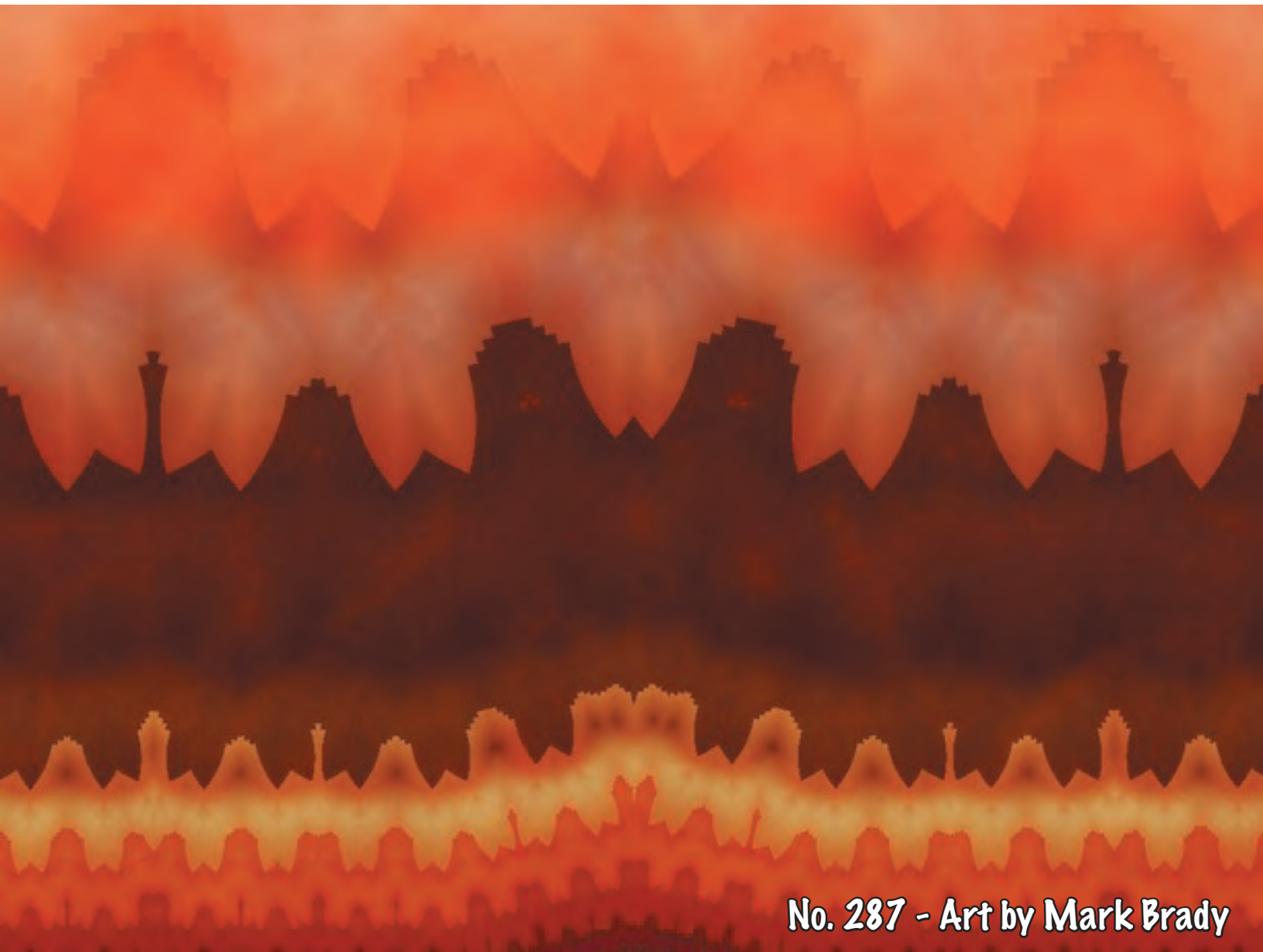
***It isn't good history, but it might be great fantasy***

It's interesting to note the detractors' usage of language to critique the film. Stephen Hunter of the Washington Post states that the film "betrays its comic book origins", and that the use of slow motion is overdone "until it becomes comic" (C01) Hunter also adroitly notices that the action moves along "for reasons not historical but purely dramatic" (C01). Wesley Morris notes that "nothing seems approachably real. Even the blood is digital" (web). Gary Leupp begins his invective by informing his reader that he always takes in "the Hollywood period dramas set in ancient Greece or Rome" (counterpunch.org) and then launches into a lengthy diatribe regarding the current political outrage surrounding the film before returning to comparisons between Herodotus' Histories and 300 the film. He states that Leonides is "cartoonish". As with most of the critic's historical-aesthetic complaints, the source

of Leupp's problem with the film is that he assumed he was going to a historical war film.

The critics have it. And don't have it. The animosity towards the picture (and by extension the graphic novel) may simply stem from a misappropriation of genre. Frank Miller's 300 is not a work of historical fiction, nor is its film adaptation. As Greek critic Panayiotis Timoyiannakis[1] commented that "It's an adaptation of a comic to the big screen, and that's only how it should be judged" (iht.com). Frank Miller has stated in an interview that the film is based as much on Rudolph Mate's 1962 film The 300 Spartans and that as an artist and writer he took "an awful lot of liberty with everything...if you want reality, watch a documentary" (chasingthefrog.com). Like Robert Rodriguez's film adaptation of Miller's Sin City, Zack Snyder's goal was to create dynamic, moving versions of the graphic novel's panels.

It could be assumed that that term 'comic' in reference to comic book, is a genre of its own, but



I would argue that the graphic novel is a medium of many genres in the same way film is. But Miller's graphic novel is not a comic book in the traditional sense; the Spartans are not super or preternaturally strong, as in the case of Superman or Spiderman. They are akin to Homeric heroes, who are "normal human beings cast on a very large scale" (Hainsworth 27). Even when dealing with conventional superheroes such as Batman, the hero is ultimately human. A look through Miller's works reveals that "In Miller's world, only humans can be superheroes, and Leonidas is one of those beings" (Blackmore 327).

While at the very least, 300 is obviously fiction, "a story about stories...about the uses of myth, about the way different narrators in different times interpret the same fable for very different purposes; it is about the way we as readers choose to interpret texts now" (Blackmore 326), it is arguably a work of a very specific form of fantasy fiction, namely heroic fantasy. In an interview by Dan Vergano, Paul Carledge, author of *Thermopylae: The Battle that Changed the World* comments that while the film is rooted in history, "What the movie adds in is a slew of fantasy fiction, including scary monsters". It was likely fantasy, not science fiction Dr. Nasab meant to reference when he made his statement that the film cannot be seen as a form of fiction, confusing (as many who are unfamiliar with the difference between these genres do) science fiction with fantasy. Nasab argues that a work using historical events and personages cannot be construed as a work of fiction; yet this is simply not the case, given the existence of both historical fiction, and its more fictional science fiction counterpart, the alternate history[2].

Heroic fantasy is neither traditional nor alternate history; though someone might wish to include Robert Howard's Conan series as alternate history[3], given that it takes place in a prehistoric Europe. In the case of the Hyborian world, the secondary world of the narrative is "made familiar through the author's use of historical cultures from Earth to lend a degree of reality for the reader, a sense of understanding, and a sense of place" (Stypczynski 453). C.N. Manlove includes this sense of something slightly familiar in his definition of fantasy literature: "A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms..." "the concern of fantasy is not with the minutely faithful record for the sake of fidelity to fact, but with the

strange individuality that comes from making things strange and luminous with independent life in a fantastic setting" (iv).

Heroic fantasy, unlike mythopoetic fantasy or "high fantasy: as it will be referred to for the remainder of this paper, does not involve "a larger supernatural conflict" (Thompson 114) as many assume fantasy must be, based upon the domination of popular understandings of the fantasy genre by works such as *Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*. In Manlove's terms, the supernatural elements are toned down. Heroic fantasy is more concerned with "the extent to which the protagonists are prepared to follow the standards of conduct that they hold dear" (Thompson 114). In this, the genre is thoroughly modern, pitting the strength and ability of the individual against their conflict, with their allegiances to personal standards or loyalties; contrary to accusations which type heroic literature as "fascist" (Alpers in Frederickss 104), sword-and-sorcery "offers highly personal philosophies and individualistic points of view and tries to make its readers more exuberant, more intense about life in our real world of the present" (Fredericks 120).

[1] The lone voice of Greek support amidst a group of critics who were equally unimpressed with the presentation of Greece's ancient battles such as Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* and Oliver Stone's *Alexander*. It is interesting to note that the Iranian government was nonplussed by the depiction of Persian defeat in *Alexander* as well. It would seem neither ancestral side of the Thermopylae event likes the way America portrays their past, however mythic that past might be. One wonders whether the recent cinematic treatment of Xerxes as Fabio-clone in *One Night With the King* has met with Persian/Iranian approval.

[2] Despite the precedent of a general lack of academic interest, the genre of alternate history has garnered a good deal of attention recently as a popular phenomenon. Gavriel Rosenfeld cites the decentralization of political ideology in the West, the emergence of post-modernism, recent scientific trends such as chaos theory and evolutionary biology, the advent of cyberspace and virtual reality, the "speculative sensibility" of pop culture (where narratives do not simply mirror reality, but "explore alternatives to it") and the impact of the entertainment revolution on the popular presentation of history as contributing factors to this popularity (8-10). One might even be tempted to say that since "his-

torical representation is dependent in practice on the representability of events and not on their reality as such" (Ryan 3) then all histories could be considered alternate histories. As Mary Gentle observes, we do not recover the past, but represent it using "a collection of fallible memories, inconvenient documents, disconcerting new facts, and solemn cultural bedtime stories" (Turtledove, Stirling, Gentle and Rigney 233). Herodotus himself engaged in a form of alternate history by speculation concerning the "possible consequences of the Persians defeating the Greeks at Marathon in the year 490 B.C.E., while the Roman historian Livy wondered how the Roman empire would have fared against the armies of Alexander the Great" (Rosenfeld 5).

[3] In regards to writing his Conan novels, Howard said, "There is no literary work, to me, half as zestful as rewriting history in the guise of fiction" (Knight 118).

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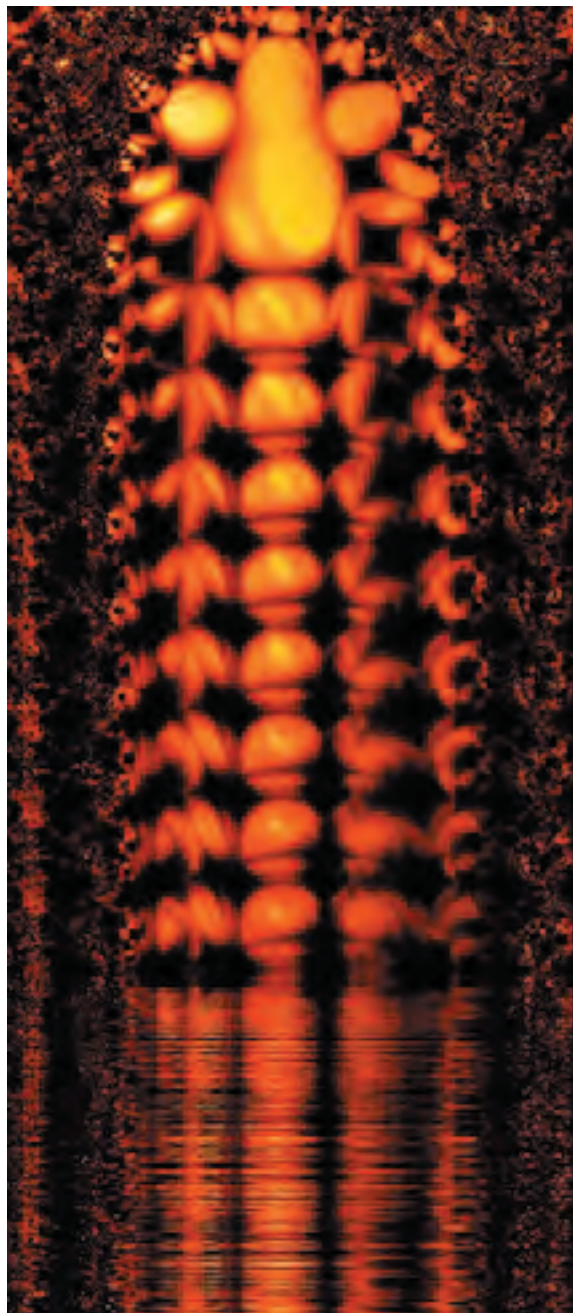
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# No. 289 - The Story of the Golden Salmon - As told to Kevins and Lisas by Kumas Bears

*[Some people may have noticed that my wife, Lisa, always has her small Bear, Kuma, with her. Kuma has his own LiveJournal, TravelsWithKuma.Livejournal.com. Bear often invokes the blessings of the Golden Salmon upon people, and Lisa asked him to explain how the religion of bears worked. We've tried to organize the language a little bit while still preserving this way in which BearSpeak (which seems to have some difficulty in distinguishing between singular and plural) sounds. - Kevin Standlee]*

Long long long agos, all bears lived in a very far away place. This was when they came to be known as Bears, for they were always eating berries. Bears were all small. But one bear was even smaller than most. No one knows what this bear's name was, but we'll call him Littlest Bear. Though he was a very small bear he was always a very good bear. Once when this littlest bear was wandered down near the sea after a storm, he found a strange animal in a pool without much water far from all the other water. This strange animal was all covered in golden scales, rather than fur like bears. It seemed to be trying to get out of the pool. He took a long look at this strange animal. "What are you?" he asked.

The stranger stopped moving and looked back at the bear. They just stared at each other for a long time. Littlest Bear was mesmerized. Looking at the golden iridescent body it was like looking into all the sun shining off all berries Littlest Bear had ever seen. Arching its body, the stranger spoke, "I am the Golden

Salmon. Could you help me get to the sea?" Littlest Bear was surprised not that the stranger spoke but the by the wonder of how it sounded. It was like hearing a stream, or a river speak.

For a long moment Littlest Bear did not know what to say. "Ahhh, I would like to help you but you are so much bigger than me".

Once more the sound of rushing water came. "Please help me. I do not belong on the land. I will cease to be if I do not return to the sea soon."

"Well, all I can do is try". He pulled on the golden one. He stopped almost at once. The Golden Salmon was very heavy, and bears aren't built for pulling on them.

"Please, please try," the sound of water pleaded.

"I am afraid of hurting you," said Littlest Bear.

"Do not fear! I can only be harmed by being away from the sea. Get me to the Sea and I will grant you a wish."

The small bear thought on this. While he did not believe in wishes, he had wished he was not the smallest bear what seemed like forever, and the poor golden thing seemed so unhappy in the small pool of water. "Hmm," he thought, "The water is running out of the pool." The Golden One didn't have much time left.

Once more he grabbed on to the tail of the Golden One and pulled. Little by little he began to drag him across the sand to where the sea and the land met. Each time the bear became tired the call came, "Please, please, get me to the sea....." It took the small bear a

long time to pull the the stranger toward the sea. As he felt some off the water carried by the wind from the sea reach him, it seemed the strange golden animal became lighter. It was actually getting easier to drag the Golden One.

As the strange



animal reached the sea Littlest Bear could barely feel his weight at all. Letting go, the littlest bear saw the Golden One land with a splash in the ocean and heard a rushing sound over the roar of the sea. "Thank you ever ever so much! Please wish for any thing you want. I will make it happen."

The littlest bear thought a moment. Not really believing in wishes, he thought, "Hmmm, to be big... No that's not so great by itself. Hmmm..."

Screwing up his courage, Littlest Bear said, "I know! I want ALL bears to grow big and strong!"

"Is this your Wish?" the sound of sea and water said.

"Yes."

"Very well, look to the rivers: I will send from the sea SALMON FISH, a food that will make you all Big and Strong."

The sound was so powerful and sure Littlest Bear wanted to believe.

The littlest one went back the way he had come wanting to tell the other bears of his small adventure. He told many other bears the tale but none belived him. They made fun of him and teased him for making up Stories. This made Littlest Bear very sad.

Later in the time when it started to get cooler there in the river near were the bears lived were many animals jumping in the water. Littlest Bear went near the river to look.

He opened his mouth in amazement at the sight and one of the animals jumped right into his mouth. Ohhh, it was soooo good, and yummy! Every time he opened his mouth one of the salmon fishes would jump in his mouth. He felt himself getting bigger and stronger with every bite. Soon, he was the biggest of all the bears.

Other bears came to see. A few remembered the Littest Bear's Story. Here it was: Tasty food lots and lots of it. Soon all the bears were by the river eating and eating the fishes. But the Bears who had teased Littlest Bear had to work much harder to eat any of the tasty fishes, sometimes having to dive under the water and get their ears wet (which bears hate) to get fishes.

From then on many bears remembered the story of Littlest Bear and the Golden Salmon and knew it was good bears that got the fish and beacame Stong and Big. And from then on, all bears have always worshiped the Golden Salmon.



# No. 292 - Visit to Spain (and Morocco): A Quirky Travelogue

## Words and Pictures by Eleanor Farrell Quirky Travel Correspondant

I just got back from my first visit to Spain (with a short side trip via ferry to Tangier), and I thoroughly enjoyed the impressive historical, cultural, and scenic highlights of the trip. That being said, I promised Chris something for his 300th Drink Tank issue, and therefore kept an eye out for F/SF and other pop-cultural connections and general weirdness throughout my travels. On our arrival in Barcelona, I was amused by this postcard I found on the city's main pedestrian highway, Las Ramblas:



**Also spotted on Las Ramblas.... Hello Kitty! and Smurf gelato!!**

Barcelona definitely has more than its share of quirky architecture, with the creations of Antoni Gaudi heading the list. For example, here's the rooftop of Casa Battlo, inspired by a dragon's spine:



Maybe he was picking up some of these intriguing herb mixes:

In Madrid, we stayed in a lovely historical establishment right on the main square. Not only the center of Madrid but the geographical center of Spain, the Puerta del Sol is the place to be, both day and night. Even, evidently, for stormtroopers....



Off to La Mancha! Here is one of those giants Don Quixote tilted against



Spain has a great affection for expat Americans with a literary bent, as seen by these plaques in Ronda and Granada honoring Ernest Hemingway, Washington Irving and Orson Welles

... while the Tangier American Legation building in Tangier (which, incidentally, was the first property acquired abroad by the US government, in 1821!) includes a small museum dedicated to author Paul Bowles who lived and worked in Morocco for over fifty years.

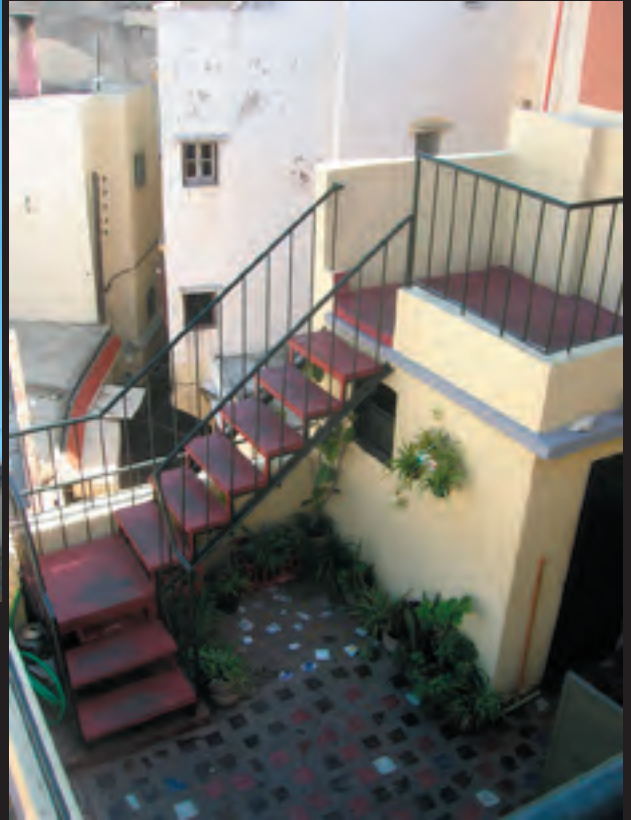
Bowles was also a talented musician, and a fan of The Master Musicians of Jajouka, who recorded a CD in 1989 with the Rolling Stones, behind this very door of the Palais Ben Abbou in the Tangier Kasbah, only a short walk from our hotel:



Moving from music to movies, our guides pointed out several shooting locations — for films both good and bad — that will send me scurrying to LeVideo to check these out:



Jason Bourne chase scene in a Tangiers cafe (from “The Bourne Ultimatum”)



Old town Sevilla site of chase scene from “Knight and Day”

Sevilla’s Alcazar terrace (before the reconquista floor was removed) is featured in “Kingdom of Heaven.” (The city seems to be very popular for location shoots: “Lawrence of Arabia,” “The Wind and the Lion” and even “The Two Doctors” episode of “Doctor Who” all include scenes set in Sevilla!)

## No. 293 - Thoughts on Pluto and Dwarf Planets by Emma King

There are few areas of science which manage to be so completely irrelevant to life here on Earth and yet so able to evoke incredibly strong, polarising opinions in lay people and scientists alike, as the alteration in the status of Pluto from Planet to Dwarf Planet in 2006.

Pluto was always the “poor cousin” of the planets. It was an anomaly, a misfit, a black sheep. There we were, with our nice, ordered solar system – four small, rocky terrestrial planets in the middle, four immense, impressive gas giants around the edge, and then right out in the dark, some 50 times further from the Sun than our own Earth, this small, peculiar lump of rock. It never really seemed to fit in with the grand scheme of things. Its orbit doesn't really fit either – while the orbits of the other planets are very close to circular with the Sun at their centre, Pluto's orbit is highly eccentric, describing an ellipse which takes it from a closest approach of just less than 40AU from the Sun to a furthest distance of nearly 60AU. It was generally considered to be the 9th planet, on account of spending most of its time further out than Neptune, but its orbit is so skewed it actually spends about eight percent of its orbit inside Neptune's, making it the 8th planet for stretches of 20 years at a time. Its orbit isn't just eccentric, it's inclined compared to the other planets, poking up above the ecliptic, the disc all the other planets orbit neatly within, on one side and dipping below it on the other as the image below attempts to illustrate, as best it can given the 2D restrictions of paper:



If you were shown a line-up of the 9 traditional planets, Pluto always stood out like a sore thumb.

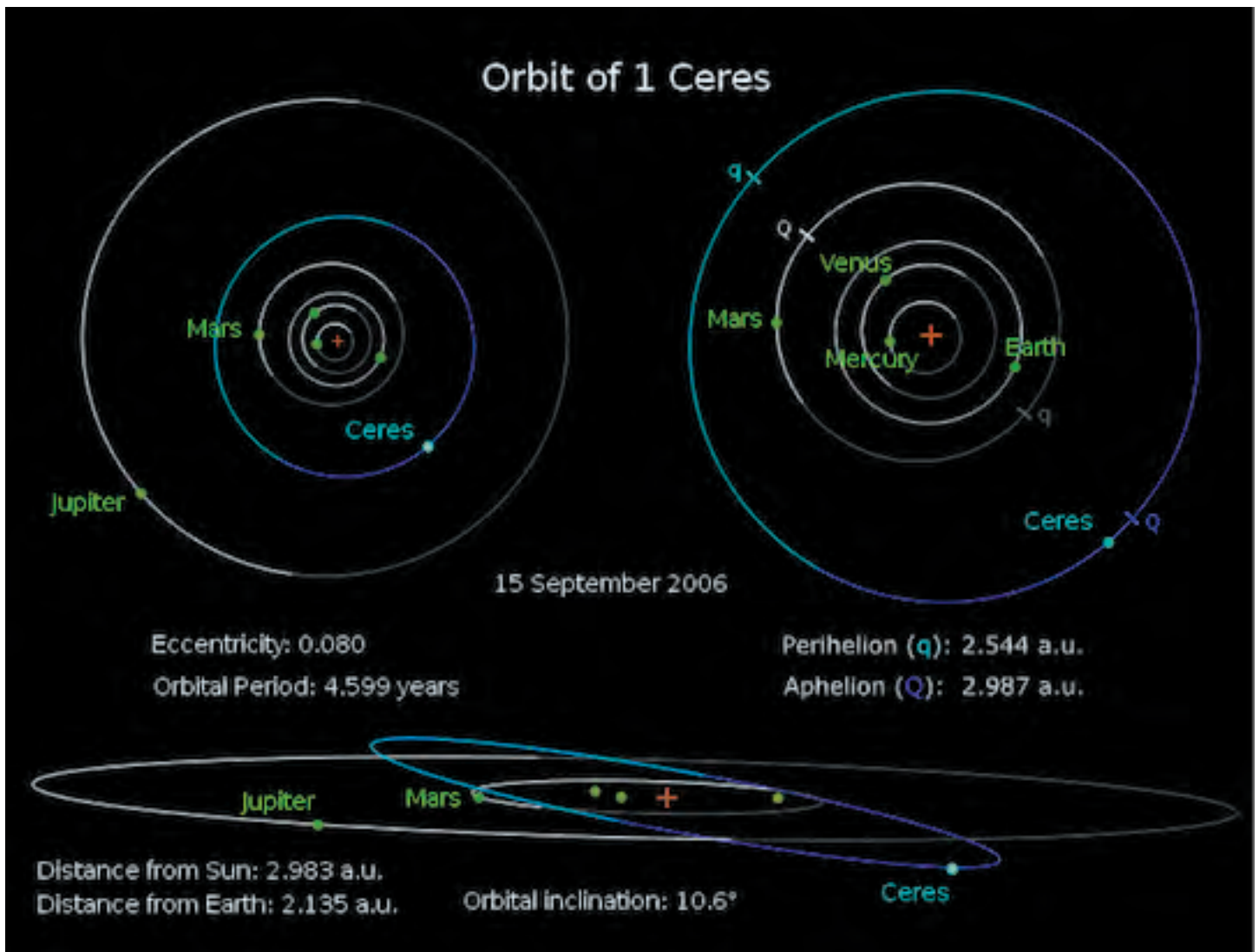
A large part of the confusion stems from the fact that the word “Planet” is a historical term, rather than a scientific one. It comes from the Greek for “wanderer”, because the planets which were known to the ancient Greeks, the ones that can be seen with the

naked eye, seemed to wander the heavens against the fixed back-drop of the stars of the Milky Way. When they were named, no-one knew that they were much closer objects, orbiting our sun & reflecting its light, rather than distant suns shining with their own light, like the other stars – all they knew was that they seemed to move across the sky in very peculiar and random patterns. So Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, the visible wanderers of the heavens, got a name and a category all to themselves.



Of course, then telescopes came along, and suddenly the universe was a lot more complicated than it had initially seemed. These five planets were no longer the only wandering objects we could see – in 1781, Uranus was discovered, and in 1846, Neptune added to the list. Pluto, being that much smaller and harder to spot, didn't join the ranks of the planets until 1930.

It is well worth remembering, when considering Pluto's recent fate, that this is not the first time that a planet has been discovered, then later re-classified as something else. Ceres, a round rocky body about a quarter the size of our moon, was discovered in the inner solar system, between Mars and Jupiter, in 1801 – after Uranus, but before both Neptune and Pluto – and was initially considered a fully fledged planet. It was named after a Roman goddess, given a planetary symbol, and retained its place in the list of planets for nearly half a century. But then, over time, more and more objects very similar to Ceres, if slightly smaller, were discovered in the same region of space, and it was eventually recognised that it was the largest of lots of very similar lumps of rock on very similar orbits – the

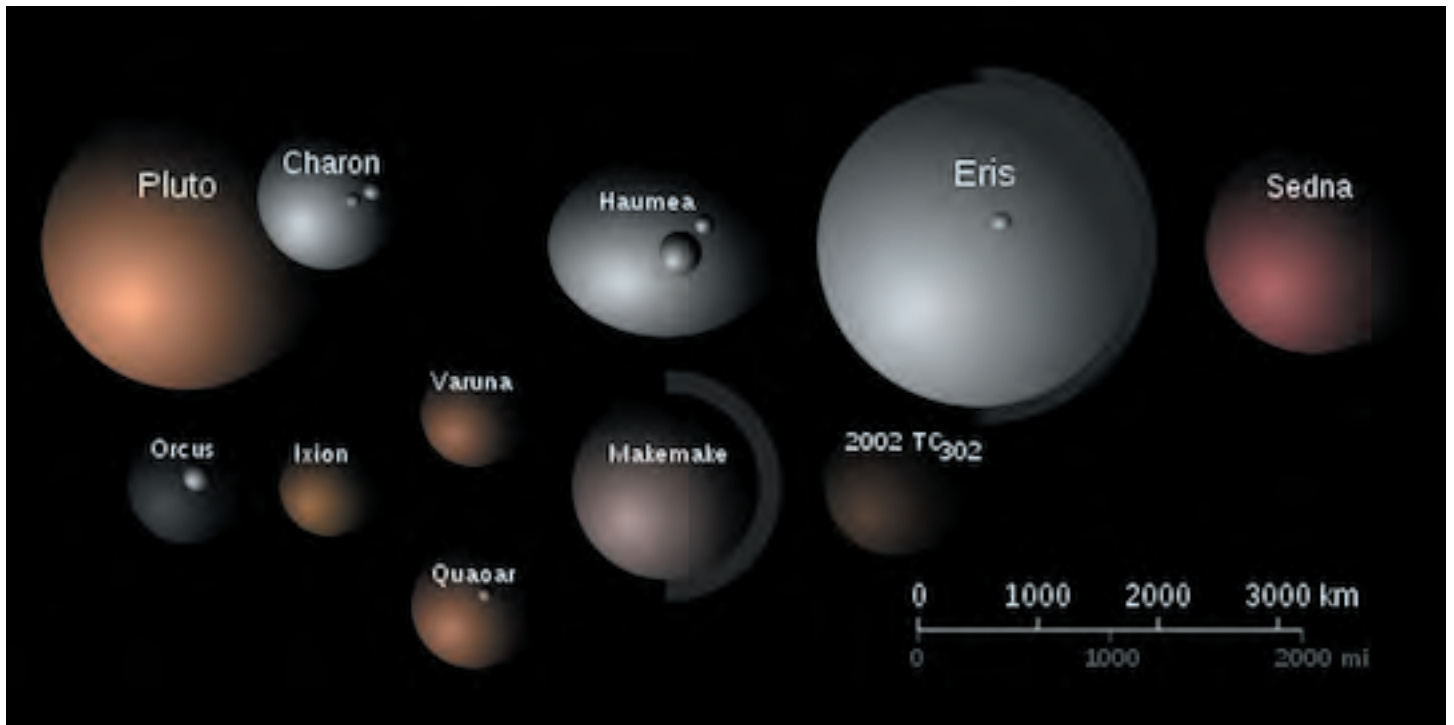


asteroids in what we now call the Asteroid Belt. And if Ceres was a planet, did this mean that all these other lumps of rock were planets too? If so, the list of planets would rapidly grow to astronomical proportions (pardon the pun). Instead, Ceres ceased to be considered a small and rather insignificant planet, and became instead the largest of the asteroids.

Pluto's story is somewhat similar. As with Ceres, it was improvements in telescope technology that initially allowed its discovery, but which eventually led to its change in status. When discovered, Pluto was thought to be a substantial object, larger than Mercury, but in 1978 it became possible to differentiate the planet from its largest moon, Charon, which is itself about half the size of Pluto, and to more accurately measure Pluto's size. On closer inspection it turned out to be rather diminutive on planetary scales, only two thirds the size of our own Moon. Then, in the 1990s, more and more similar objects began to be discovered in the

outer solar system, in what we now call the Kuiper belt. Soon it was realised that several of them were almost as big as, if not bigger than, Pluto, and again it seemed difficult to justify keeping them off the list of planets if Pluto remained. By 2005, Quaoar, Sedna, and Eris had all appeared in our telescopes, distant objects very comparable to Pluto in terms of their size and orbit, with Eris in fact being slightly larger, and it was beginning to look as if the list of "planets" might again be about to rise dramatically, as more and more similar objects were being uncovered.

In order to keep the list of planets manageable and stop it growing unwieldy, it became necessary once again to re-classify the smallest member, to sit it alongside the objects most similar to it. At the same time, an effort was made to turn the word "planet" from a historical label to a scientific term with a more rigorous definition, so that in future it would be more certain where newly discovered objects would fit into the

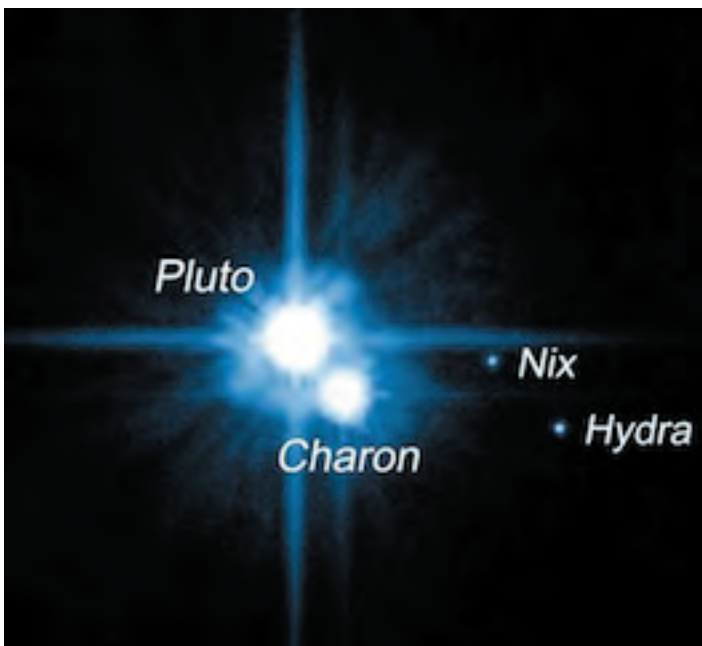


grand scheme of things. Under this new system, Pluto is a Dwarf Planet, although not the first discovered, which is Ceres, or the largest, which is (currently) Eris.

As our view of the distant solar system improves, more objects are joining the Dwarf Planet list. To date there are five officially recognised Dwarf Planets, the other two being Haumea and Makemake.

hundred more objects out beyond Neptune which may ultimately join them. Pluto's moon Charon might make it one day, too, since Pluto and Charon are much more like a binary planet system than a traditional planet-and-moon.

Personally, I think this is all for the best, although I am well aware that many people disagree, some vehemently so. It seems obvious to me that Pluto sits much more comfortably alongside the other large Kuiper belt objects than it ever did the bigger planets, and good old Ceres (for which I have had a soft spot ever since learning about it, not from a Physics lesson or an astronomy text book, but from Robert Rankin's "The Brentford Triangle") is back on the books as something a little more than just another asteroid, which I find pleasing. But above all, and putting personal feelings aside, we are finally starting to categorise things in our solar system based on actual, measurable, physical criteria, rather than by trying to apply historical terms to things which were unknown and undreamed-of when the term was invented. You can argue about what, precisely, the definitions should be and which criteria should be used, and as we discover ever more about the solar system I have no doubt that the whole scheme will need a little more revision before it settles down to something that works not just for our own solar system but for exoplanets (and exo-asteroids and exo-dwarf-planets) too. But this is a step in the right direction.



There are also a further four objects suspected of being Dwarf Planets – Orcus, Quaoar, Sedna and the not terribly imaginatively named 2007 OR10. More data will be needed before it can be certain if these will ultimately make the grade for Dwarf Planet status, and recent estimates are that there are between one and two

# No. 294 - The Math Forest: An Imaginary Tale with no Real Part by Glenn Glazer

You can tell the Math Forest from any other by the factorial trees. For one thing, they have square roots and picking the scaled tangentello is a  $\sinh$ . There is one tree, Ellen, who is a natural log. However, many visitors are non-plussed, so if you will forgive the hyperbola of an exponent, I will try an elimination of your discontents.

As you walk along the convergent path of this subspace, you should first see the  $\cos(y)$  church with its stepped floors and rounded ceilings that span this structure. Inside, the unit conversion is done by a praying mantissa who is on the lookout for any sine of a hex to toss in his bin. The Peano is usually playing an Al Gore rhythm and is accompanied by cardinals and the Cantor set who sing in verses. I personally think they do De Moivre-lously on the harmonics.

Outside, the scatter plot thickened. Two operators grabbed axes to handle their argument (which was constantly a variable), resulting in a cross product who reciprocated by calling the parametrics with a parabolic wave. A rather permuted series of sequences isolated the standard deviants and treated one for a cardioid attack that decayed. Then, the kernel restrained the other's mean values with Markov Chains and gave him a histogram for his sinus, ah, symptotes. Yet it was indeterminate if things were back to the norm, for the Rank Powers were up to their usual array of May tricks that they play with Rose and Colin. After some elliptical remarks, a radical moment occurred when they threw some pi that are squared into an intersection where the group of union boys formed a ring and buried it under a polar rose in a field. It was enough to Gödel your milk. They then saddled up de cart and their horses, brushed the calculus off their teeth and cleaned the residue off of the removable poles. The cosigners were proof positive this was negative, as you could tell from their points of inflection and this made the con vexed. The rest couldn't care one epsilon, as they were arbitrary and

irrational. In fact, they were blasé about Pascal.

Going off on a tangent, you can see that events are limited as you approach infinity (where they can never manage to make ends meet), but this is where you can get your projections done. Or if you are overweight and weigh a new ton, you can get a Taylor Expansion to improve your contour, function and image as you range in this domain. All of the services are properly integrated, so it is hard to differentiate their complex identities from their real theories unless you can Sylow enough, though most don't have a Gauss of a chance.

I think I have covered all the bases, the sum of it is that what you got was greater than what you wanted and less than I desired, so we're equal from whatever angle you chose. Or is it just a simple game at the core?



# No. 296 - Backstage at the Hugos by Grant Kruger

I was ushering at the Hugo Awards, showing presenters and winners back to their seats. More than anything else, the job is about being a calm presence, maybe an arm to cling to, when winners might otherwise do a few back-flips and land upside down in the audience. Those of you saw the Hugo's know that James had already made a tremendous start in that direction and needed no further encouragement.

One on the perks of the job, especially for a writer like myself, is seeing the winners back stage, no longer in the public eye, emotions raw, excitement overwhelming them, though only their eyes can dance. Myself and Serge helped everyone back to their seats... except, you guessed it, Chris and James.

I know and like Chris and I have been escorted around Dublin by James. They are a fine pair, infectious energy and new voices for positive change in Worldcon. Their acceptance of their Hugo's will go down in drama queen history for all time... or more seriously showed just how much this award meant to them.

When they came off stage it was more so. Chris continued to go tearfully crazy and James fell to his knees in a prayer position and said something like, "Oh thank you God, thank you Jesus." If you know James, then this will come as something of a surprise, as he is one of those blokes who gives rise to the false rumour that all Irishmen are crazy, not one of those religious blokes.

There was a big hug for each other, much exclaiming of things like, "We did it!" and, "Can you fucking believe it?" and, "This is a fucking Hugo!" I hugged each of them and offered congratulations and offered calming words. They hugged anyone who came within touch-tackle distance. James was excited and Chris was overwhelmed.

I told them I had to take them back to their seats, and they both said there was no way they could sit down again any time soon... something about going and taking over the nearest bar by force and using the rockets as weapons. Okay, so I made that last part up. They really just needed to calm down and they

took the time they needed, wandering off.

I saw James again later at the party scene... you know, where you always find James. I jokingly said to him that the two of them were the only two we never showed back to their seats, and he replied, "No, man. You helped us, man. You really, really helped us."

As I said, the job of a Hugo usher is to calm people down, and I take great credit for preventing Chris from spontaneously exploding into tear-dampened celebratory confetti and, perhaps more importantly, saving James from a spectacular crowd surfing fiasco.

And more seriously, what an honor to be there with them, how wonderful the hugs, how sweet the joy, how unforgettable a night.



# No. 298 - In the World of Garcia by Diane Osborne

In the world of Garcia,  
life seems endless fun,  
thrill-filled

Armed with a quill,  
poised to pen more puns,  
with parties galore  
and beer to guzzle,  
wine to quaff  
and Linda to nuzzle,  
Who wouldn't want to be Garcia instead?

Do not be misled:  
He is larger than life,  
thousands of heroes  
run loose in his head.  
His laughter fills concert halls  
with wonder and life.  
And yet there is so much more.

He's drinks and hi jinks and Dixit games late at night  
He's "What if?", "What next?" and "WTF?"  
"Why not?" and "No, really?" and "Aren't I right?"  
Razor sharp mind,  
purveyor of all things fannish,  
How to describe him -  
part hobbit, part troll, 100% clownish

Look through his eyes  
Check his rear view mirror  
Glimpse what he sees:  
The world of Garcia -  
limitless wonder, boundless and free  
SF and curiosity, the key

Lucha libre  
Games  
Comicon  
Beyond

The Minister of Re-Education  
with new and improved "R"s, you see:  
Read, rethink, rebel and rejoice -  
Don't dare be quiet or quit.  
Speak up or speak out  
But for God's sake, don't be a shit

Chris Garcia,  
the Modern day Gunga Din  
Bartender to God  
Refill our cup of life  
Quench that thirst for something more tenable  
Sideswipe us with exuberance  
Please, go on, go ahead.

Three cheers for Garcia  
300 D-Tanks this year

Three cheers for Garcia  
Better yet, more beers

Bartender! Keep 'em coming -  
More beers and Drink Tanks.

There's no better cure  
No way to say thanks  
So we'll just keep demanding  
1,000 Drink Tanks.

# NO. 299 -An Introduction to Moeby Palliative by Pádraig Ó Méalóid

*Moeby Palliative* was a strip created and produced by British cartoonist Dick Foreman for Pauper Press's Oxford-based alternative newspaper **Back Street Bugle** ('Oxford's Other Newspaper') in the late 1970s. Occasionally, he'd get his friend and fellow BSB cartoonist Alan Moore - then producing *St Pancras Panda* for BSB - to fill in for him, as with the following page, which is called - to give it its full title - '*Moeby Palliative "The Paraplegic's Pushbike" and his faithless side-kick Ygron in "The Sensuous Beachball!"*' The strip ran in **Back Street Bugle** #15, dated June 20 - July 4 1978, and was written and drawn by Alan Moore, and appears to be the only time that Moore did the entire *Moeby Palliative* strip on his own. To the very best of my knowledge, which is considerable on these matters, it has not been reprinted since it first appeared in 1978, and appears here with the permission of Alan Moore.



No. 300 - Photo of James with Alan Moore from James



# No. 302 - Perfect Score by Claire Brialey

Three hundred issues. That's not too many.

But it does seem like a lot of fanzines; I've personally edited only around half that number, ever, and lots of those were joint efforts.

A couple of months ago, one of the fanzines that's been the most significant to me throughout my time as an active SF fan reached that total. Due to occasional half-issues, the 300th Ansible was in fact issue 290; and due to mostly sticking to a monthly schedule – and even taking a bit of a break for four years following one of those Bloody British Bloody Worldcons in 1987 – it took Dave Langford thirty-two years to get

there.

There are so many reasons to be impressed that I think it's worth pausing for a moment to do that.

How many others have done it, particularly with a single title? Even Bruce Gillespie hasn't published that many fanzines in total – although there must be long-running APAzines which have kept the same title and surpassed that number over the years.

And now there are 300 issues of *The Drink Tank*, in about twenty-five years less than it took a man who's won nearly thirty Hugos. Impressed? I'm stunned. Hands up who's managed to read every one of them. Anyone? Even Chris?

So have you ever wondered about the ones you missed? Which issues might contain the articles on topics you're really interested in, the particularly fine pieces of writing, the artwork that's brilliantly executed in a style you really admire, the photos that prove the point you're trying to make?

Come to that, have you ever tried to find a specific issue of *The Drink Tank* again, where you know you read something interesting you now want to reference? I can assure you it takes a while.

What I think fandom needs right now – well, OK, there's a list, but one of the many things fandom needs right now – is an index to *The Drink Tank*. Not a proper, full-blown, scholarly back-of-the-volume subject index that you need to pay experts to do really well; we have such experts in fandom and could probably get up a fund, but while Chris keeps producing issues it would never be complete. What I have in mind is a catalogue:

- Who provided the cover art and interior art and features in each issue of *The Drink Tank*? (Issue 300 might take a while to list.)
- Which issues of the fanzine feature letter columns, and who's in them?
- Which include the regular or series features?
- Which are special theme issues, and what are they about?
- Which are the issues edited jointly by Chris and James?
- What's the publication date – at least the month?

A little part of the work has already been done. For 2005 and 2006 Chris created listings of his own writing, which includes a brief overview of his own



pieces in each issue. And there was definitely an issue – and the fact that I can't find it now really just proves my point – which looked back over all those that had gone before. There's a holiday or retirement project in this for someone, surely?

Then we could have a checklist, to help people work out which issues they've actually read, to mark off the others as they choose where to catch up – or to indicate the ones they know they really don't want to read. (That's OK. Not everyone's interested in everything. Except maybe Chris.) There could even be a spin-off article: fascinating facts you never knew about The Drink Tank, some of which might be true (were you aware that the first issue contained fewer than ten exclamation marks and no uses of the word 'awesome'?).

There's another set of questions that really interests me: how many of the people featured in issue

300 of The Drink Tank had never contributed to it before? (Chris and James must know the answer to that one; they've possibly mentioned it somewhere in this issue.) How many had ever read it before? How many will read at least half of the next ten issues – and not just to check whether anyone mentioned their article in a letter? How many of them read fanzines at the moment? How many will start reading more as a result of being asked to contribute to this one?

How many other contributions to this issue have used the phrase 'That's not too many'? Is it more or less than have referenced Spartans?

Do the Drink Tank Specials from 2005 (Star Wars and steampunk) mean that issue 300 isn't actually the 300th issue of The Drink Tank?

And, of course, how many more issues will there have been in another twenty-five years?



# No. 305 - Chjris and James Go To Mars by Mark Plummer

There was once a fanzine editor called Christopher J Garcia.

One day he was sitting in his office in the computer history museum, curating computers, plaiting miniature koalas into his beard, and finishing off issue 299 of The Drink Tank. In approximately 47 minutes he would need to start work on issue 300. It needed to be special, he knew that; it needed to be... well, awesome. But what could he do to commemorate this landmark?

<Pop>

Chris knew that sound. It was the sound of James Bacon, popping, as if from nowhere.

'Chris!' said James.

'James!' said Chris.

'Awesome!' they both said.

And suddenly, just as James had appeared out of nowhere, an idea popped into Chris's brain. He realised what they could do for Drink Tank #300.

'James! Let's go to Mars!'

'Mars! That'd be awesome!' said James.

'It would! Mars is awesome! And Martians are awesome too! They use lots of exclamation marks...'

'... and they say "awesome" all the time...'

'... and they put capital letters in the middle of words for no obvious reason!'

How much more awesome could it be? None, they agreed, none more awesome.

'And we've even got rockets, one each! Let's go to Mars right now! We can go in your rocket, or mine, either will do! I don't suppose it matters...'

And so they got into the rocket.

Ten-nine-eight-sev...

'Blast off!' said Chris.

'Umm, weren't you supposed to wait until the countdown reached zero? Oh well, I don't suppose it matters. We're going to Mars!'

'Yeah!' said Chris. 'Umm, which way is Mars?'

'Oh, sure, it's over there somewhere,' said James gesturing vaguely in the direction in which they were

fortuitously already heading.

'Are we there yet?' said Chris.

'Er, no, we've only just left.'

'Oh, well you take over the controls, I'm sure it's just like driving a train, probably. I'm going to write a fanzine!'

Chris wrote a fanzine and dropped it out the porthole.

'Are we there yet?' said Chris.

'It's only five minutes since you last asked.'

'That's no good! I want to be on Mars right now! Look, there, is that Mars? I'm sure it is, probably. Here we go!'

And so Chris and James prepared to land on what was almost definitely probably Mars. Or maybe it was the moon. Or Mercury. Or maybe it was Peterborough. I don't suppose it matters.

And as they came in to land on almost definitely probably Mars, a youthful Martian John Coxon watched their rocket streak through the atmosphere ('Awesome!' he said) before it ground to a halt in the car-park of Martian Tesco, scraping the paintwork on a 1996 Martian Vauxhall Nova on its way in.

They got out of the rocket and surveyed the Martian Peterborough landscape. Martian John Coxon looked back at them.

'It's Mars!' said Chris. 'And a Martian! Let's do The Drink Tank #300 right now!'

'Umm, Chris, don't you remember? You did a fanzine on the way here. That was The Drink Tank #300. This would be The Drink Tank #301...'

'Would it? Oh well, never mind, I don't suppose it matters! Hey, let's go to Venus! Venus is awesome!'

They got back in the rocket, taking Martian John Coxon with them.

Ten-nine-eigh...

'Blast off!' said Chris. 'We're going to Venus!'

'Awesome!' they all said.

<Ping>

# No. 306 - Toys by Niall Harrison

I've wanted an iPad since they were released. Oh yes, of course I have. I've wanted the artifact, and the experience, the sense of possessing something beautiful and wonderful that I have been conditioned to believe accompanies the device. But I haven't ever been able to justify buying one. So far as browsing the internet goes, I have a laptop, and so far as reading ebooks goes, I have a Sony Reader, and so far as writing anything goes, I want a real keyboard.

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## No. 307 - Kevin Roche

Three Hundred Issues:  
Christopher J Garcia's  
Drink Tank has done well.

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I wanted a copy of Games Workshop's latest deluxe box, Dreadfleet, as soon as I saw pictures of its contents. It's a new standalone game -- "Pirate battles on the Warhammer high seas" -- that isn't quite a revamp of one of my favourite lesser-known GW games, Man O' War. For years, though, I haven't been able to convince myself to invest the time and money that GW games require. Time was I couldn't walk past one of their shops without nipping in to see the new releases, maybe playing a game. And I had armies! Eldar, Tyranids, Dark Angels, Sisters of Battle, Wood Elves, Chaos Dwarves, Dwarves, and others. But these days, well: when would I manage to fit in reading?

Last month I fell off the wagon but good, and bought a copy of Dreadfleet on the grounds that it was self-contained, rather than infinitely extensible; even so the box plus all the paints and modelling materials I'll need still set me back the best part of a couple of hundred pounds. But this has, in retrospect, been coming for a while, and I'm not sorry I indulged. The miniatures are beautiful and intricate, and since I haven't started painting them yet I can imagine that they will remain beautiful even after I've had my way with them. I've assembled all the ships now. The game even comes with a silk seascape playing mat!

Last week, my employer gave me an iPad. And I couldn't quite believe my eyes when I saw the stack of boxes next to our IT manager's desk; if I can't jus-

tify one for personal use, what possible grounds could there be for business use? As it turns out, the business use is primarily to be impressive, to convey to clients that we're at the cutting edge. There are some other applications -- a decent reader for PDFs will reduce the amount of printing I need to do, for instance -- but they're marginal. This device is to make us look good. And who am I to complain? Having played with it, I am bewitched. So far as browsing the internet goes, it is superlative, and so far as reading ebooks goes, it's not as bad as it might be (but I prefer eInk, when I can get it), and so far as writing something goes, it turns out I can type surprisingly fast on it, at least when I hold the thing in a landscape orientation.

I've barely put the iPad down since I got it, but I couldn't honestly say I'm not more excited about playing my first full game of Dreadfleet tomorrow evening.



# No. 309 - Tiny Placards of Culture by Kim Kofmel

I blame the Girl Guides!  
Mostly.

I blame Guides for the hat, which is really only one in a long line of hats, descending from the camp-hats of my Guiding days.

I blame them for the conviction that I know how to start a fire, and for having just enough knowledge about canoeing to end up on a river during a thunderstorm after a friend's wedding. I blame them for the fragments of really ridiculous (and in retrospect kind of racy) songs still stuck in my head thirty-five years later.

I blame them for my unashamed and undying love for tiny placards of culture: stickers, buttons, embroidered patches, ribbons, name badges. Girl Guides had me first, but they had me primed for fandom before I ever knew it was out there waiting for me.

Buttons pack artwork or pithy sayings onto a compact canvas. Like embroidered patches, they fit on hats and jackets and backpacks and in repurposed cookie-tins in my closet. I've collected buttons for a long time; I have one of the near-original 1970s happy face buttons. If you are promoting something by selling buttons, I'm your girl, and if you are giving them away... well, I am so there.

Buttons were popular when I got into fandom, lo these many years ago. They are still fairly popular, though the dominant trend from my first years of fandom, the picture button, has been largely displaced by text buttons that offer witty sayings or declare fandom alignments. Flair, a Facebook app, is essentially an electronic button maker allowing users to create digital buttons that exist only online. The collection includes a lot of text buttons, but there are many purely picture buttons. I really like seeing those again.

Still, even without a picture, I got a big kick out of finding a button lying face down in a corridor at Capricorn last year and picking it up to discover it said: "I reject your reality and substitute my own." It suited my mood that night; it seemed almost accurate.

As a button fan, it was probably inevitable that I became part of ribbon fandom, for which I blame Tammy Coxen, Chuck Firment, and Chaz Boston Baden just about equally. The Girl Guides may still bear some responsibility. Ribbons are not quite buttons, but they share the same general purpose and fulfill the same general function: wit, statement, alignment. In some ways they are even more ephemeral than buttons, and they require somewhat more interpersonal contact and connection than buttons generally. There may be an exchange element, or sometimes a puzzle to be solved, or often just the pleasant surprise of discovering a shared interest with a total stranger.

And that's what these tiny placards of culture are about, communicating to those around us, whether to say "once a sister Guide, always a sister Guide" or "I <3 River Song."

Those cookie tins in my closet are awfully quiet, but only until you take off the lids.

I = Girl Guides, for the American Reader, are to Canadians as the Girl Scouts are to Americans. We even have cookies, though only in three flavours.

I = Girl Guides, for the American Reader, are to Canadians as the Girl Scouts are to Americans. We even have cookies, though only in three flavours.

No. 310 - Art by Sue Mason



# No. 311 - Dr Coxon or: How I learned to stop worrying and love the Mac

## By John The Rock Coxon

Apologies for the torturous title, but my father is actually a doctor and as soon as I came up with the title I knew I just had to use it. I've written about my worst idea elsewhere in this venerable fanzine, but Steve Jobs' passing on October 5th, 2011 inspired me to write another article, this time about my father and our shared history with computers, since it's a neat encapsulation of several very bad ideas happening in a row.

Our first computer, way back when I was a little kid (so, the mid-nineties) was a computer that ran Windows 3.11 (for Workstations). Dad had rescued it from work when they no longer wanted it, and it had several nifty features, including the ability to play minesweeper and a cool program called Paint in which one could make things called bitmaps. We had hours of fun in both of these things, whereas my mother and father and my oldest brother tended to gravitate towards using a thing called Works for Windows (I still vividly remember my mother telling my father, with great pride, that she had learned how to cut, copy and paste).

Windows 3.11 for Workstations was released in 1993, which probably means that it was at least 1995 by the time we had it; this makes sense, timeline-wise, because I remember Windows 95 was coming out at the same time I was really getting interested in this strange box of potential and wisdom. I was excited about what the future would hold, and eager to get there.

Fast forward to 2000. We still have that computer that runs Windows 3.11 for Workstations, which is now seven years old. Windows 95 has been and gone, with great success; Windows 98 and 98SE had also been and gone, with similar degrees of success. This is my father's first bad idea. When the computer was new, and shiny, it was great; but seeing my friends with their modern operating systems (it's so weird to think that there was a time in which Windows 95 and Windows 98 were modern) is making me jealous.

Eventually, my father figured it might be a good idea to update our computing solution. He decided that this would happen, as I recall, at the end of the millennium year, and so we got a computer running

the very latest in home Windows computing. It was running an operating system called Windows ME. (And, here we have my father's second bad idea!)

Now, you may or may not have had the displeasure of using Windows ME, but take it from me "it's totally awful. (I once decided to create a Windows ME virtual machine on my iMac, giving it generous quantities of RAM to run in it BSOD'd straight after the installation because I opened Internet Explorer.) But the worst part was that we stayed on Windows ME until mid-2006. I was using Windows ME on a computer that was six years old, in a period of time when Windows XP had been available (not just available, common even!) for four years.

You are probably thinking, at this point, dear reader, that you can imagine how horrible that must have been. You are entirely wrong " you can never even come close to the pain and anguish that I felt every day when using that computer. It didn't help that I was young and foolish and had therefore installed every single piece of P2P software and dodgy porn executable known to man on the poor thing, rendering it even worse than the average ME installation was; but no matter. It was 2006, it had been the requisite period of time (usually over six years in our household) and it was time for an upgrade.

We bought a computer from a company called Evesham, that ran Windows XP. This was fine and dandy, for a time, until it became rather abundantly clear that something was horribly, horribly wrong with the thing. If you played a videogame that required you to use the graphics card for anything even halfway intensive, it would crash after twenty minutes. The monitor would go dead, and nothing more would happen. At the time, I didn't know enough about hardware to diagnose the problem and fix it; eventually, I resorted to just not playing videogames at all.

Eventually, I went to university, and I had enough money to buy a computer. For obvious reasons, I decided that the Mac was the way to go. A decade and a half of using outdated Windows operating systems on hardware that should never have been allowed to stay in the house took its toll, and I was fully ready to take the plunge and switch to the Mac. I decided to wait for a while until the one I wanted had

been released (Apple had announced Leopard by the time I went, so there was a release date, and everything).

As such, when I went to university, I took the family laptop, which was a Toshiba machine with a 4:3 screen. It took ten minutes to boot and wouldn't shut down unless you held down the power button. I actually had batch scripts on my desktop, multiple batch scripts, to attempt to address this problem, each of which would always fail. It couldn't run Firefox and iTunes simultaneously (to be fair, that's a big ask for any computer) and it was incredibly frustrating.

I remember the day when I got my new MacBook so vividly. This was largely, I'm sure, due to the fact that it arrived on my birthday. I unwrapped it (and you can see the video of me doing so on my YouTube channel, just search for JohnCoxon MacBook and I'm sure you'll strike gold) and loaded it up and instantly fell in love with it. In fact, it's now four years after that fateful day and the machine is still working, still happily letting me type this fanzine article for my friend whilst drinking my almond latte in Starbucks.

That twelve year period in which I used computers that frustrated, bewildered and confused me had really made me cynical about the whole business. I can't pretend I wasn't still massively into technology â€“ I bought the first software I got for my MacBook before actually taking ownership of the computer, and I still use it (Roxio's Toast Titanium 8). But it wasn't fun, it was something that I was doing because I found it useful and because I could increase my productivity with it.

The Mac changed all that. It made me want to use my computer just because of how cool it was. That night, on my birthday, I had friends round, ostensibly to do homework but mostly because it was my birthday and I wanted the company. We used my MacBook the entire night â€“ we watched the entire archive of Zero Punctuation (because we were nerds, and because Yahtzee was new enough that the videos were all consistently hilarious) and we took photographs using Photo Booth in which we pretended that we were in a music video or on the Moon (and, if you're my Facebook friend you can see them there). It was amazing, and it totally converted me from begrudging tech-head into someone who wanted to learn more about what he could do.

I could weave you a similar tale of my history with mobile phones (Nokia 3410, followed by Samsung D500, followed by the old Nokia 3410, followed

by a Sony Ericsson K800i) before getting an iPhone, but I'm not going to. I'm just going to say that the iPhone is the one piece of technology I own, above all the others, that continually reinforces my sense of living in the future. The ability to videocall from my bedroom, in the palms of my hands, to anywhere in the world. The ability to call someone on a train and edit the text I'm supposed to send to them whilst talking to them through my earphones. The ability to load a map, tell it where I'm going and then have it guide me there (would've come in handy, the first time I attended a house party at James Bacon's place in Croydon).

Hanging this tribute to Steve Jobs around my father's bad ideas when it comes to computer purchases is an obviously tenuous way to make it stick to the theme of this fanzine. And perhaps I should have just written this tribute without that take on things, although I've recounted the anecdote of my computing history enough times by now that I've run out of excuses not to write it as an article. But without Steve Jobs, my world of computing would just be about how to use computers to be productive, rather than for fun and I wouldn't feel anywhere near as passionate for technology in general.

It's for that reason that, when EspaÃ±a Sheriff offered to take a sticky note to the San Francisco Apple Store for me, I had her write: "The Mac restored my faith in the present; the iPhone, my faith in the future." Both pieces of technology mean a lot to me and have shaped my attitude to the world in which I live in a way that I can't fully explain, justify or rationalise.

For that, I will always remember Steve Jobs.  
RiP.



# No. 313 - The Circle of Suck by Sarah Rees Brennan

There has recently been an online debate that has sprung up between an agency and two authors, discussing the issue of deleting a gay storyline in a book. This issue is a super-contentious one, likely to make anyone involved in the discussion indignant, angry, upset, liable to misread, and feel many other feelings. I do not believe the authors would lie about this, for their own gain or any other reason. I think that there may have been a misunderstanding since it's a fraught issue, and that the agent may well have just been trying to improve the book: lots of points-of-view are fun to write, but trickier to sell to a reader, and it's very easy to clutter up a story.

But I also think that 'let's think of a way to keep the gay storyline, because there are too few of those around' should be a thing to consciously keep in mind.

The important thing is this: that the world often involves a Circle of Suck.

This is a hugely important fact for people to know: Less than 1% of YA novels have LGBT characters.

Characters. Not protagonists--characters. There should also be more protagonists than there are. But really--characters?

You may notice that art is not really holding up a mirror to life here.

This is a glaring example of the Circle of Suck.

The Circle of Suck goes a bit like this. Society is set up so life is often homophobic, sexist and racist. Not to say life is a never-ending round of pain unless you're a white straight guy. Life is often just fine: but things can--not all the time, but very, very often--be that little bit more difficult, in lots of different situations. There are more roadblocks as one tries to go on one's merry way. (And they are REALLY different roadblocks, and combined roadblocks if you're, say, a gay lady of colour.)

It's generally a bit harder to get published with a book that has gay characters or characters of colour. (Ladies are mostly seen to be a necessity... because without them things start looking a little gay... but how ladies are treated in stories can be pretty troubling.) It's a bit harder if you have both, or the characters of colour are gay. It's a bit harder to get published with gay

characters who are ladies than if they were gentlemen. It's a bit harder to get published if you are gay or of colour.

So, overcome roadblocks, get published by one of the big publishers, fantastic! Except now it's harder to sell the book. There are loads of roadblocks after publication, too, many of which publishers cannot control. Book fairs sometimes won't carry the book, which hurts sales. Libraries sometimes won't carry the book, which hurts sales. The marketing department gives the book less money, and fewer people hear of the book, less sales. The art department gets less money for the cover, and the cover's less good and people are less likely to pick it up. Walmart and Target are much less likely to carry the book: fewer sales. Barnes & Noble are less likely to carry the book: much fewer sales. People think 'oh my gosh, I just want entertainment, not issues' or 'But kids shouldn't read books with...' and they don't buy or read the book. And if due to all or any of these roadblocks, the book doesn't sell--it's harder to get publishers to buy or promote another. All of this stuff combines, all of this stuff feeds into each other, and forms the Circle of Suck. There's never any one thing you can point at, and it feels much more difficult to do something about, and business is business/people have a right to choose.

I was talking about art holding up a mirror to life earlier: art should. Not in the sense of 'every book should have way more characters than is easy to keep track of, include lots of boring bits, and have characters say "Ummm" and then think of something funny to say later.' But it shouldn't make the world smaller and less awesome by having fewer ways to live, and ways to love, than the real world does. That makes books suck more, and writers suck more, and the world suck more.

What to do? Give up on traditional publishing? Online publishing is awesome, but there's the fact not everyone has ready access to their own computers, and if everyone facing the roadblocks gave up, there would be even fewer of these books accessible in, say, libraries.

Urge people to buy and libraryify more books with more diversity? Sure, and it's great and it helps if they do, but that doesn't solve the problem of fewer

books with diversity being published, promoted, or in shops. So as well as readers: marketing departments should do more, bookshops should do more, editors should do more, agents should do more, book fairs should do more, bloggers should do more, writers should do more.

How can I make this happen? Er... I can't. No one person, or one agency, or one publisher, can. I can write books with more diversity (and hope they are published), blog about this (like so) and buy and library books with more diversity. Editors can try to buy more, and not edit it out when it's there, and agents take on more, and bookbuyers (the people who get books on shelves at bookshops) buy more, and readers read more. Everyone except readers and bloggers still have to make some money or--you know, find a different job, which is not ideal, but they also need to think about lessening the Circle of Suck.

On finding books that don't mess up: a quick, absolutely not-exhaustive, list of YA (mainly but not all sci-fi and fantasy) LGBTQ authors or authors of colour, and those who are both, who I have read and whose books I highly recommend: Malinda Lo, Cindy Pon, Scott Tracey, Alaya Johnson, David Levithan, Perry Moore, Coe Booth, Kimberly Reid, Sandra Mitchell, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Dia Reeves, Swati Avasthi, Marie Lu and Kendare Blake.

On messing up yourself: It's much easier to criticise the presence of something than its absence. For instance 'One of the gay ladies in Buffy the Vampire Slayer died!' is more remarkable than 'There are no gay people on The Vampire Diaries.' (So I don't get corrected, I know that in The Vampire Diaries Caroline Best Character on Television Queen of My Heart Forbes has a gay dad, but we haven't seen him, and there was a gay guy who was vampire-hypnotised into sexy times with ladies, but... you can all see the problems there. And yes, yes I think I could win a Vampire Diaries trivia quiz.) You can see one of these things and not the other. I'm not sure what the solution is to not seeing absences, because that is one of the major things that helps along the Circle of Suck. I suppose I just try to be aware of it, as I try to be aware of the whole Circle of Suck. Uh--constant vigilance?

So--fewer sales, and more being criticised. Criticism is a good thing: nobody agrees with all their criticisms, but it all makes you think more, and that leads to less messing up, and messing up less in the future is the goal. Also, criticism means readers can avoid books that contain particular areas of suckiness that really get

them down. But at the same time, it does always smart to get criticised, and you always want to get less of it. Trying to break out of the Circle of Suck is difficult. But being a better writer of better books is more important. So to all the people who have ever told me (or just said around) that these elements of my books could use improvement--well, that sucked for me to hear, and thank you. For those who will tell me in the future--please feel free to do so anytime, and thank you in advance.

The Circle of Suck lives inside everybody's heads. I know it lives in mine. Everything I'm saying about books goes about ten times over for movies, and the moving pictures, they are hypnotising.

There's no easy solution to the Circle of Suck.

I'm not much for 'my gracious, think of the children!' but in this case I think it's important to do so. YA is read by many adults, but it's also read by, you know, quite a few teenagers. Books are massively important to me now, but they were even more important back then: the books I love the very best and mean the most to me, the ones I imprinted on like a baby duck, were books I read back then. There should be a consistent effort, by everyone involved, to get books for people to stumble on, on bookshop shelves and library shelves and online, that say 'loads of different people can be heroes/awesome/have adventures'--that show themselves there, whoever they are, because that can mean a lot, and other people too. I do think that through this consistent effort, the Circle of Suck will end somewhere down the line, and I hope that it will suck less soon.



# No. 315 - My Hugo by Craig Glassner

When you are a Park Ranger you discover there are many duties which are never listed in the job description but which you will be called upon to perform. Two of them are photographer and model.

Visitors love having their photo taken with the ranger (I think it's our classic "Smokey Bear" hat), and visitors love taking their photo in front of whatever it is they've come to see, be it a tree, historic building, statue, canyon, or just the sign giving the name of the park.

The problem is that usually means someone isn't in the picture, after all, someone has to take it. So we (the ranger) often are asked and often freely offer to help out ("Would you all like to be in a picture together?").

So it was a natural for me to make that offer in

the fanzine lounge at WorldCon the night of the Hugo awards as first one, then two Hugos appeared. I noticed fan after fan taking photos of the Hugo, so I began to offer to take their photo with the Hugo.

But something odd happened - most everyone hesitated, saying "But it's not MY Hugo".

So I decided to create My Hugo ( <http://www.facebook.com/groups/myhugo/> ). Because it is our Hugo (too). After all, we vote, we help to honor those writers, editors, artists, creators whose works we read, watch, support. When a favorite work wins, we win too. So fans who I convinced that night to believe as I do that they are our Hugo too relented, had their photo taken with the famous icon, and My Hugo became the mechanism to both distribute and share our photos of our Hugo.



## No. 317 - Anything for a Buck

Relating events that took place at the third Ditto, held in Chicago by Dick and Leah Smith in 1990

by Taral Wayne

There wasn't supposed to be an art show, but Dick and Leah said they would give space to anyone who brought art in exchange for something to auction at the Chicago Ditto. Okay, I thought. I brought something. No one cared to bid on it, but that wasn't my problem. My end of the bargain had been held up.

More important to me, I brought pretty damn well everything believed had the slightest chance of selling. Art? Yes – that. Also t-shirts, several different mail order booklets, an expensive limited edition portfolio, a selection of custom nametags, black and white prints (that I also offered to colour), as well as flyers for all of the above. I hoped to sell everything but my virtue, and maybe even that if I didn't have to pay them too much.

I picked a nice, centrally located table in the “fanac” room. There was nothing on it. The “Canadian thing to do” would have been to pick the second best table, but I was in America and would do as the Americans do, and claim my right to the choicest spot. My t-shirts took up one entire end of the table. Laid neatly, side by side, the coloured art made a moderately impressive display. I needed just a little more space, though, for the mail order booklets. They filled the one end of the next table over. There were almost no exhibits in the rest of the room, so I thought, “why not?” The flyers, my portfolio and other merchandise took up the end of the table on the other side. Again, why not?

Leah told me why not. Most of the tables would be needed for computer equipment, ditto mastering, flyers and fanzines, not to mention Delphne-Joan-Hanke-Woods-Mori's artwork, (which hadn't arrived yet).<sup>\*</sup> Reluctantly, I moved my whole kit and kaboodle to a single table that was half the size of the first, and necessarily made do. Leaning the art against the wall did most of the trick...

Delphne-Joan-Hanke-Woods-Etc. arrived

shortly after. Taking an identical table next to mine, she unpacked her matted drawings, one by one. Competition is the American way too... But what about international good-will, eh?

The day went well, in spite of one or two minor setbacks. The major setback was that I sold none of my art. I can't say that I was very surprised. Fans arrive at conventions pre-broke. For the most part, it costs as much as they can afford just to be there, and whatever is left over goes mainly to hysterical bidding during the auctions for copies of one another's fanzines. As well, SF fans are notorious suckers for art that has to be spelled out to them – the longer the caption under the drawing, the bigger the laugh. With or without a caption, my own art is rarely able to raise a chuckle. Still, I lucked out later that Saturday. An unexpected philanthropist by the name of Paul Stinchfield bought nearly everything that wasn't nailed down. I had more than broken even for the con.

\*

It was most likely the same Saturday that I noticed a kid in a white t-shirt hanging around the fanac room. He was no older than 16, I was sure, and stood less than five-foot-five in his stocking feet. He seemed to be literally under my elbow whenever I turned around.

Dick Smith said later, “We think he wandered in from a bar mitzvah also being held in the hotel.” As was common in those days of small SF cons, we were used to sharing facilities with everything from evangelist weddings to football teams on a bender.

There was a grubby looking banknote in his right hand that drew my eye like a magnet draws iron filings.

It wasn't long before the kid came up to me and asked, “Got anything for a dollar?”

“Beg pardon?” I said.

"I only have a buck. Are those a dollar?" he said again, pointing to one of my mail order booklets. A price was plainly printed on the covers.

"No," I answered the kid, "They cost three dollars."

Next, the kid asked if the t-shirts cost a dollar.

"No," I said, "They cost \$15 each. See the sign taped up here, on the wall? \$15."

Next, he asked about the portfolio, the fanzines, the nametags, and I think even my half-finished can of Coca Cola. The refrain, "Is that a dollar?" began to grate on my nerves.

I patiently replied to each and every inquiry, pointing out the obvious. I wasn't prepared for the kid's final query though. The kid wanted to know if I'd draw a picture for him.

"Is that for a dollar?" I asked, turning the tables.

He nodded. For a dollar. For one-hundred little copper pennies he wanted me to draw a dragon for him. Now, dragons are not really my forté. In fact, I haven't even liked them since little girls got it into their heads that dragons were fun to ride... not to mention a fantasy of empowerment and domination – valuable lessons for their later, married lives. On rare occasions, I had tried to draw dragons and produced nothing quite as successful as a scaly manicotti with legs. You either have the knack or you don't.

I cast a glance to the table next to mine. Hanke-Woods was an artist who had the knack. She drew legions of dragons, covered reams of paper with dragons, rendered the cotton-picking things with her drawing hand tied behind her back. She may have been The Competition, but clearly this was a job for her.

"Joan? Delphyne, I mean. This gentleman wants someone to draw a dragon for him, and will pay the artist one entire dollar in negotiable legal tender for it..."

My neighbor artist was a little flustered, as anyone would be when confronted with such a remunerative opportunity. Actually, from what I had seen, Joan seemed a little flustered at all times. But she took the kid aside and began sketching a

dragon on the cover of one of the fanzines from the freebie table. That seemed to be the end of the matter.

Ah, but it wasn't!

Later, Joan told me that she'd been paid the dollar, as agreed. But only by wrenching it of the kid's grasp. He had a grip on it like a literary agency on its percentage. All I knew at the time, however, was that five minutes after I thought I'd washed my hands of the kid, he was back at my table.

"Is that a dollar?" he asked, pointing at one of the exact same booklets I told him cost \$3 only fifteen minutes before.

And, there in his grubby mitt, was his "only" dollar bill once more.

\* Joan Hanke was one of those fans whose names constantly changed and grew. First she married another fan named Woods. Then she added the Delphyne. Later she began to sign her name to art with a Japanese chop that read "Mori." If she follows precedents, she is probably just Joan Hanke-Woods today, or maybe even just Joan Hanke. I think she dropped from fandom's sight not long after winning her Fanartist Hugo... something else for which there is too much precedence.



# No. 319 - A Short Review of Ken MacLeod's novel The Restoration Game by Fred C. Moulton

Occasionally one comes across a really fine work and you want to urge your friends to read it and the obvious question is asked. "What is it about?" One answer is "It does not matter, it is by Ken MacLeod so it is going to be good" but that honestly does not answer the question. So how to describe what the novel is about without giving up the big spoiler.

Well it is about Krassnia; this place in the former USSR but only a few people in the novel have even heard of Krassnia. Actually Krassnia pre-dates the USSR by centuries and after the USSR broke up it was still around but why would anyone have heard of it. But it is suddenly important. As in CIA and other TLAs from all sides are very interested. Things that spy agencies are interested in tend to be important by definition. And of course there is Lucy who works for a computer game company in Edinburgh. And she has a connection to Krassnia. And so does her family. And exactly who are the members of her family? What is their connection to ancient myths and legends of Mount Krasny? And what about the copper mine? The Communists had it for a while, now the USSR is gone and someone else has it and the pre-USSR owners want it back. And what about the cute guy from New Zealand that has captured her heart?

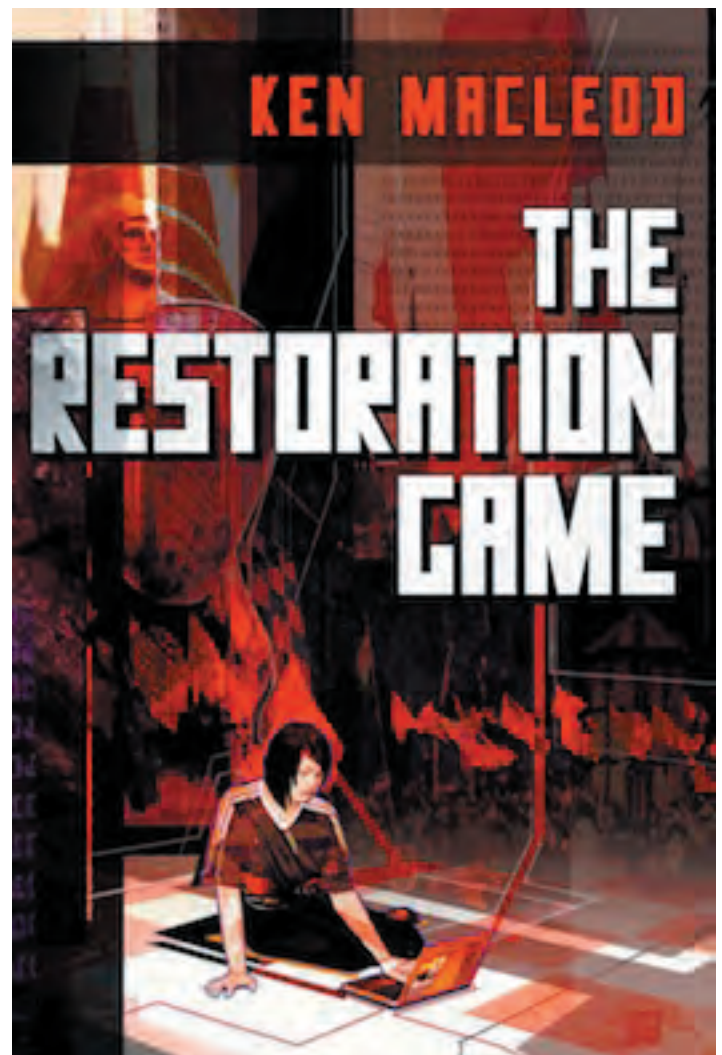
This novel with its contemporary setting and spy agencies seems at first like a spy thriller but it is more. The family intrigue and secrets raise interesting questions about what is family responsibility. And exactly which people really comprise Lucy's family? Yeah Lucy who works in Edinburgh but just happens to have lived in Krassnia as a child. Lucy who is the person that can get close to the mystery.

The mystery. Well Yeah. The mystery that this review can not describe because that would be a spoiler. But do not worry if you figure it out right at the beginning. I knew the spoiler just from reading the first few pages because I have been in discussions where the key idea aka the spoiler; aka the mystery; this big idea has been kicked around by SF fans, techies and the

rest of the usual suspects. Someone would often say this big idea would make a great novel. Well now Ken MacLeod has taken the big idea and created that novel. So yes I recognised the big idea at the beginning and I really enjoyed the book because it is well written and really wanted to see how the author pulled it all together at the end.

And pull it together MacLeod did with the proper touch of suspense and well paced narrative.

Do something good for yourself; get a copy of this book and read it.





## No. 320 - My Favorite LA Wrestling Match Was My Worst Idea Ever By Howard Stateman

I knew him as “Haystack” Calhoun, without the “s”. There was only one of him, and he looked like a single haystack, so that’s how I will always think of him. When I was about 8 years old, I saw him on the Art Linkletter show tossing hay bales like they were weightless. A few years later he was a regular on whatever wrestling program my father used to watch.

I remember during one particularly acrobatic match (Haystack was the “immovable object” to some smaller wrestler’s gymnastics display) my dad said to me “you know this is all fake, don’t you? They’re all actors following a script.” I asked him why he watched, if it was fake. “It’s great acting, and it’s entertaining.”, was his reply.

I suppose he must have had matches in LA, but the one I remember best was in Madison Square Gardens against Dick The Bruiser. Haystack was about 600 lbs at the time, and The Bruiser had been bragging about how he was going to knock him down with a body slam. During the match, Haystack just stood there waiting for it, but The Bruiser hardly budged him. After that it really didn’t matter who was declared the winner, to me Haystack had won the match.

And yeah, I lied about it being my worst idea ever, too, but my journalistic license doesn’t expire until December 21, 2012.



# Contributor Biographies

## By James Bacon & Chris Garcia

James Bacon – Editor . Nos. 2, 128, 300, Photos With Bios

James is from Dublin in that country known as the Republic of Ireland. He's a three-time Hugo nominee, one-time winner, a Nova winner, editor of Journey Planet, The Drink Tank and Exhibition Hall, and a helluva guy!

Christopher J Garcia – Editor, Nos. 4, 13, 21, 45, 48, 76, 113, 139, 162, 192, 216, 233, 237, 238, 255, 276

Three Hundred Issues! This man is a Machine, a modern day Forry Ackerman, welcoming friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable, his Christofian Chateau is built in binary on efanazines, an Awesome Dude.

Tanya Adolfsen – No. 133

Tanya is a writer whose books are awesome! She has another name she goes by that I can not pronounce!

Vuk Adzic – No. 37

Vuk is an awesome Serbian photographer whose work you can find at <http://vulezvrk.deviantart.com/>

Louis Antonelli – No. 248

Science Fiction and Fantasy writer Lou Antonelli is originally from Massachusetts, but has been living in Texas for ages. He wrote his story during Saturday of FenCon. He's a good guy!

Joe Babinsack – No. 90

Joe is a writer and one of the absolute authorities when it comes to Bruno Sanmartino. I believe he's written a book on Bruno!

Bard Baker – No. 91, 92

Bard is an artist and charactiturst whose work you can find at <http://bardsville.deviantart.com><http://bardsville.deviantart.com> .

Amanda Barrett – No. 225

Another amazing blogger, you can find her great blog at <http://capableofcriticalthinking.blogspot.com/> and



she's also one of the regular at <http://scienceinmyfiction.com/>

Liz Batty – No. 215

Liz is pretty much the most awesome writer you'll ever find. Her writing is all over the place, and is one of the most awesome Twitterers I know.

Kuma Bear – No. 289

Kuma Bear is a six-time World's Driving Champion (Bear division) and an exceptional member of bear society.

Alan F. Beck – Nos. 63, 124, 185, 188, 242

Hugo-nominated Fan Artist Alan F. Beck is famous, and I'm pretty sure that the writers of Dinner for Schmucks stole his concept of famous art and people done as mice.



Gregory Benford – No. 70, 71

Writer and Scienceer Greg Benford has written a bunch of amazing novels, including one with Bill Rotzler that I've probably read a dozen times. He's been in fandom for more than 50 years!

Mark Bessey – No. 204

Mark is a great guy who we don't see at BASFA enough these days!

M. David Blake – No. 250

Over the course of his first three and a half decades, M. David Blake has been a ditch digger, a troubleshooter, a gallery artist, a woodturner and a poet. He has run soundboards for live performances, done lost-wax casting, scooped ice-cream while serving as a barista, crash-tested software used by a significant portion of the entertainment industry and reassembled the shattered skull of a murder victim. After being asked to leave one college, he graduated from two others... and in the process utterly flunked a course dedicated to the study of science fiction. Blake currently lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina, with his wife, their daughter, the memory of a geriatric cat, and several thousand books.

Rachel Bloom – No. 14

Rachel Bloom is a comedienne and singer who is freakin' amazing! Her video Fuck Me, Ray Bradbury was up for the Hugo in 2011 and she has made the world a better place by singing Seasons of Love from RENT in Klingon.

Robert Booker – No.

Robert is a wrestling fan and photographer from the UK. You can find his stuff at [rtbooker18.deviantart.com](http://rtbooker18.deviantart.com).

Hieronymus Bosch – No. 213

Hieronymus Bosch has been dead for a long, long time.

Mark Brady – Nos. 217, 224, 245, 287, 288

Mark is an artist who specializes in fractal arts. I met Benoit Mandelbrot once. Just sayin'. You can find

Richard Brandt – No. 210

Founder of the Euro currency, Chris totally forgot to ask Richard for an actual bio...

Debbie Bretschneider – No. 131

Debbie is a costumer and she is also the only person I trust to cut my beard...

Ric Bretschneider – No. 72, 73, 132, COmics in Bio Section

Ric is a great guy, a fine drinker, and is the Moral Compass for the FanboyPlanet.com Podcast! HE also runs Pecha Kucha in San Jose, and is a PowerPoint legend!

Claire Brialey – No. 302

Claire won her first Hugo for Best Fan Writer mere minutes before James and I won ours for Best Fanzine. She's easily the best fan writer in the world and has probably been so since the death of Harry Warner. She does a great zine called Banana Wings with Mark Plummer.

Sarah Rees Brennan - No. 313

Admits to not being very good at speaking Irish, but has some great books! You can find more info at her site <http://sarahreesebrennan.com/>

Mike Brotherton – No. 218

Mike was the Science Guest of Honor at WindyCon in 2011, and is an awesome writer who you can read

about at <http://www.mikebrotherton.com/>

Joni Brown - No. 99

BASFAn and good people, Joni does awrsum art stuff!

Warren Buff – No. 88, 235

Warren for TAFF! Warren is standing for TAFF and is an all-around good guy. He runs cons, does zines, writes LoCs and is an all-around good drinker. He's one of the lynchpins of Southern Fandom!

Randy Byers – No. 49

J. Randrew Byers, the Handsomest Man in Fandom, is a Hugo-winning FanEd and a helluva writer. He does Chuinga with Carl Juarez and Andy Hooper.

Elizabeth Campbell – Nos. 95,

Elizabeth runs Darkcargo.com. Great stuff came from her for this fine publication!

Mike Carey – No. 51

With over 400 comics under his belt, the Felix Castor series of Novels and a real sense of propriety, Mike is friendly and intelligent, and his most current Vertigo series, Unwritten is a must for all bibliophiles.

Michael Carroll – No. 55

Michael Carroll writes stuff, like the aforementioned New Heroes series (published in the USA under the series title Quantum Prophecy) and Judge Dredd for 2000 AD. He is tallish and baldish and Irish. You can find out more about Michael and his great works by visiting his very nice websites: [www.michaelowencarroll.com](http://www.michaelowencarroll.com) and [www.quantumprophecy.com](http://www.quantumprophecy.com)

Richard Chwedyk – Nos. 279, 281

Author and Poet and all-around good guy, Richard happens to have won a Nebula for Best Novella in 2002!

Sandra Childress – No. 205

Sandra is among the most fun people I've ever had the privilege to hang out with! She's a SMOF-type, and she's run Hugo parties several times and they're always good

things!

John The Rock Coxon – Nos. 20, 311

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy defines John Coxon as "A good fellow. Worth getting to know." The current TransAtlantic Fan Fund administrator for the European side, John has a fanzine called Procrastinations and is fairly awesome. He also likes stuff. And things.

Simon Clark – No. 38

Is a master horror writer and Jimi Hendrix fan. His sequel to Day of the Triffids is very dark indeed, while his soft northern humour keeps us smiling.

Trevor Clark – No. 191

Australian Rules football fan, man about the house in Y-Fronts, senior officer in charge of the sausage sizzle, and just all round bloody amazing bloke, a fan of Prog Rock and Comics, our main man in Melbourne.

Paul Clayton – No. 137

A fine poet, I totally forgot to ask for bio notes. So, I'll make something up. Paul invented the concept for the Golf Clap...

Jay Crasdan – No. 93, No. 144

Jay is a writer, editor, publisher and rogue from the outskirts of Chicago living in Santa Barbara. He's a regular 'round these parts.



Rich Dengrove - No. 206

Rich is a great guy, met him at the Raleigh NASFiC and had the pleasure of hanging with him at FenCon in September. He's also in a great little APA called SFPA.

Norah Ding – No. 272

At the ripe old age of 4, Norah makes her Drink Tank debut. She's already stood for GUFF, though she didn't win (I voted for her!), and her Mom, Kylie, is good people too!

Fran Dowd – No. 84

Turned up and chaired an Eastercon and has done that a few times now. A voracious reader of SF and culinary blogger, lives in Sheffield.

Berni Dracoldic – No. 43

Berni is a great artist whose work I've admired for a while now. You can find more at <http://dracoldic.deviantart.com/>

Todd Draoz – No. 246

<http://draoz.deviantart.com/> is the place to see this Canadian's fine work!

Harlan Ellison - No. 74

Shhhhh, nobody tell him his autograph is in here or he'll sue us...

Alex Ekmalian – No. 148

You can find Alex's awesome photos at <http://cianthebard.deviantart.com/>

Eleanor Farrell – No. 292

Eleanor is our quirky travel correspondent and a damn fine person! She's been a mover and a shaker for a while and has done some awesome publications, including for World Fantasy 2009!

Caitlin Fawcett – No. 253

Caitlin is a great artist and her works are pretty damn awesome. <http://kare-san.deviantart.com/>

Haley Foreman – No. 151

Haley Foreman's photos and art can be found at <http://animal-nitrate.deviantart.com/>. She's got some great Suede images from Coachella 2011!

Adrienne Foster – No. 149

Adrienne is a BASFA member in good standing and

really likes ghosts. I mean she's big into it. She tends to stay at Haunted Hotels, which is something I've done, but not with as frequent a frequency as she does! Her former zine Prinessions, was really awesome!

Brad W. Foster – No. 15

Brad Foster is, quite likely, the hardest working fan artist in the world! He's won eight Best Fan Artist Hugos, the Rebel Award at DeepSouthCon, and most importantly, he's done amazing art all over the place.

Kyla Gaige – No. 61

Kyla was one of the first people to come up to me after the Hugos and go "Are you still accepting hugs?" She's a Colorado fan, I think.

Johnny Garcia – No. 98

John was Chris' dad, a wrestling fan and wrestler in his youth, a smart guy who introduced Chris to fandom, and a fellow who knew everyone, even if they didn't know him! He passed away in 2006.

Deb Geisler – No. 53

Deb chaired a WorldCon and a good one. (yeah pretty awesome one. JB) She also might be the funniest dry



humorist I've ever met!

Glenn Glazer – No. 315, 316

Glenn ran a helluva Westercon this July! He's a good guy, works for Linden Labs (aka Second Life Inc.!) and has made most of the most infuriating puns man has ever known!

Sarah Lorraine Goodman – No. 155

The Duchess of Drink Tank, Sarah is one of the most awesome humans on this globe called Earth. She's an helluvacostumer, History-type and that is awesome! She's also active in the SCA and is getting laurelled this year! Well, technically early next year...

Sean Gorman – No. 80

Sean Gorman, like Mr. Garcia, is a graduate of Emerson College and is one of the top managers on the East Coast independent wrestling scene. He is also one of the greatest promos I've ever seen!

Kelly Green – No. 211

Kelly's great folks, she's from SoCal, and she works with Apex & Abyss (or is it Abyss & Apex?) and writes great stuff. She had a wonderful piece in Visual Journeys anthology. She's written for The Drink Tank since 2005!

Anne Grey – No. 229

Current co-TAFF administrator with her husband Bryan (and silent advisor and/or daughter TAFF Baby Rosie!), Anne is a helluva SMoF and was the force behind the Art Program at Renovation.

Barbara Haddad-Johnson -

Barbara is a published poet and a damn fine secretary for BASFA! She's also got a Cabbit backpack!

Niall Harrison - No. 306

Niaal is a damn tall person, but he also happens to be the editor fo Strange Horizons, the kind of writer who gets fandom and science and stuff. He was one of the ten people at our table when I had the greatest meal of my life...

Jay Hartlove – No.244

Jay's novel, The Chosen, is pretty great. His fiction has shown up in

various laces and he's another fantastic costumer! I especially like his hats!

Michael Layne Heath – No. 178

Mike is a fanzine lounge regular, and a poet and a helluva guy! He's one of my go-to guys for anything music-related! He's had all sorts of writing appear in bunches of places, including in the Drink Tank!

Jacques van Heerden – No. 104

You can find some of Jacques great photos and art at <http://anlken.deviantart.com/>

Mette Hedin – No. 158, 159

Mette and her Husband Bryan are two of the best costumers I've ever met! They've won awards at tons of cons, including at the 2011 WorldCon! She's also one of the editor-types for YIPE! and in my opinion is one of the most under-rated fan writers in the world!

Alison Hershey – No. 213

Alison is a lot of fun, and like myself, she's a second generation fan! In fact, I've been told that Forry Ackerman was responsible for introducing her parents!

Hichem – No. 134

Hichem can be found at <http://xyer.deviantart.com/>. I just adored that image!

Bill Higgins – No. 220, 221, 222

Bill is a Chicago fan and a scientist. He's been around



for just about ever and he's a great guy. One of the most generous people I've ever met in Fandom.

Andy Hooper – No. 109

Andy is a multi-time Hugo nominee as both Best Fanzine Writer and for Best Fanzine. Somehow, he's never won one despite doing the exceptional zines Apparatchik and Chunga.

Elloise Hopkins – No. 189

Birmingham Blogger and book reviewer for Fantasy Faction a rock chick with a skleington attitude.

MÉli Hoppe – No. 101

A wonderful artist, Meli Hoppe also models, photographs and creates amazing jewelry! You can find her work at <http://froweminahild.deviantart.com/>.



Howeird – Nos. 10, 30, 50, 52, 58, 60, 320

Howeird is a BArea fannish favorite and one of the prime photographers in these parts. He's also had pieces in The Drink Tank and Journey Planet!

Alexander Iglesias - No. 143

<http://flyingdebris.deviantart.com/> is where you can find his amazing work!

Evan Jacobs - No. 140

A great photographer that you can find at [evanjacons.deviantart.com](http://evanjacons.deviantart.com).

Micah Joel – No. 125

Micah's good people and a Rucker fan! I like Rudy and every time I go to Tandoori Oven in Downtown, I hope to run into him. More often than not, I do!

Paula S. Jordan – No. 181

I'm not sure I know much about Paula Jordan, but I

totally dig the article!

Ralf Kahlert – No. 39

Ralf is a German artist whose work you can find at <http://dunwich7.deviantart.com/>.

Jerry Kaufman – No. 127

Jerry is a good guy, a Fannish fave, and has published some great zines over the years, including The Spanish Inquisition and Littlebrook.

Kate Kelton – Nos. 29, 227, 231, 249, 282

Kate Kelton does great art, but she's also an actress. If you've seen The Chick Magnet or The Last Woman on Earth, you've seen her, but she was also in Harold & Kumar go to White Castle and American Psycho 2: All American Girl, in which she had a scene with William Shatner!

Trinlay Khadro – No. 41

Trinlay is one of the those artists I've always wanted to have a piece. Instantly recognisable, Trinlay's art has been all over the place, and I remember stuff in File 770 and Challenger.

Daniel Kimmel – No. 23

Dan is a great guy and the author of Jar Jar Binx Must Die!, which is a fine book you should go and buy!

Kim Kofmel - No. 309

Kim is a Canadian who currently lives in Texas. She's also one of the folks helping out with the London in 2014 bid and she's also standing for TAFF. She's good people.

Tassoula Kokkoris – No. 240, 241

Seattle-based film writer and all around great blogger and awesomeness. She's on Twitter and is one of the people I love reading. You should take a look at Cinebanter, the blog and podcast site which is great listening/reading.

Kristina Kopnisky – Nos. 195, 200,

Kristina edited one of the finest zines of the last decade: Consonant Enigma (you can still read it on eFanzines) and she's awesome. Her writing has appeared in The Drink Tank and Claims Department and she has the cutest kids you ever did see!

Grant Kruger – No. 296

Kruger is a great guy, a WorldCon regular and is origi-

nally from South Africa. I've always wanted there to be a WorldCon in South Africa. I think he lives in Portland now. Anyhow, he's awesome!

Dr. Emma J King – No. 293

Stunningly beautiful, erudite and also a cosmologist, we turn to The Good Doctor when we need some real science, rather than whatever madness James comes up with. She's building a 175 acre Role Playing site at the moment.

Jeremy Kratz - 130

The Winner of the Hugo Logo design contest, he's a helluva designer!

Kyvie – No. 7

Kyvie is a great artist who can be found at [kyvie.deviantart.com](http://kyvie.deviantart.com)

K.A. Laity – No. 100

Another Doctor, who knows what she is talking about, living in Galway, Ireland, an Alan Moore fan.

Diana La Femina – No. 223

When I read blogs, one of the first ones I head for

is Diana's at <http://dorkavecunespork.wordpress.com/>. Amazing stuff!

Suford Lewis – No. 187

One of the leading lights of fandom for ages, she's also the winner of the 2008 Forry Ackerman Big Heart Award! I finally met her after years and years of hearing stories at Renovation!

Jennifer Liang – No. 273

Jennifer is one of the movers and shakers in Jordania, and she did a great panel with me at Reconstruction.

Art Lineri - No. 186

At the Reno WorldCon, he was one of the guys who asked for my card the minute I got out of the Capri Ballroom.

Guy H.Lillian III – No. 264

Guy Lillian is one of my heroes. Flat out. He does one of the best zines that's ever been, Challenger, and is one of the longest-serving members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. He's been nominated for Hugos a whole bunch.

Bryan Little – Nos. 35, 209

An amazing costumer, a fantastic dude, and a punk rock superstar! He's the guy who brought us Wizardsticks, if I remember correctly. My favorite of the costumes he and Mette have made are the Lego Star Wars guys!

Gary Lloyd – No. 267, 268

Musican extradoniare, Gary has worked with Alan Moore on a number of projects, and is really quite a terribly nice guy, a real hit at SF cons.

M Lloyd –No. 47

M is one of my best friends and a long-time contributor to The Drink Tank

Dann Lopez – No. 251

Dann is a great artist whose work has been shown in art shows at cons and has appeared in various issues of The Drink Tank. I especially like his piece that illustrated the Godzilla issue.

Brad Lyau – No. 116

Brad's the author of a book on the Anticipation novels,





Chief of Science Fiction San Francisco. She's a great writer on everything from fandom and costuming to Heavy Metal! She's also tiny.

Sarah Martin – No. 214

Sarah is an English artist and you can find her art at <http://slmartin.deviantart.com/>

Sue Mason – Nos. 24, 141, 145, 156, 226, 254, 257, 266, 277, 290, 303, 310, 312

Hugo-winning fan artist Sue Mason makes me smile. I mean seriously, she's a great artist and a blast to chat with. She also was the best Masquerade hostess I've ever seen!

and is one of the leading lights in the study of science fiction literary history. He's also got a comic book collection that stretches WAAAAAY back...

Richard Lynch – No. 135, , 136, 138

Richard Lynch won a bunch of Hugos for his amazing zine *Mimosa* (with his lovely wife Nikki!) and has written some amazing stuff. One of the saddest days of my fannish life was hearing that *Mimosa* was going away, much like the day I heard that *el* was ending. There's still hope for an *Energumen*-ish return issue though, right?

Ray Manley – No. 62

Ray is a guy whose details I don't have, but I like his story!

Joe Mayhew – No. 68

Joe was a two-time Hugo Winning Fan Artist and a legend. He passed away in 2000.

Stephen McCarthy – No. 12

Stephen is an awesome artist whose works you can find at <http://mrnox.deviantart.com/>

Ken Marsden – No. 16,

Dubliner, with a wicked sense of humour, a real love of modern history, an expert on Vietnam and also currently a popular blogger.

Jean Martin – No. 142

Jean Martin is a zine editor, currently the Editor-in-

Dave McCarty – No. 176

Save is one of the many Daves I know. He's the chairman of a little convention called Chicon 7, or TASFIC 2: The WorldConing, He's a movie fan and he used the PLATO system back in the old days. He's also very very tall.

Derek McCaw – No. 31

Derek is a teacher at a Catholic Girls school. Oh yeah, he's also the Editor-in-Chief of [FanboyPlanet.com](http://FanboyPlanet.com), has written comics, is an actor and improvisationalist, and is a damn fine guy!

Seanan McGuire - No. 44

Seanan is a favorite of BArea fandom, has won a Pegasus Award, is a Campbell Award Winner, and was nominated and ran second for Best Novel for her novel *FEED* (written under the name Mira Grant). She's also just flat-out awesome!

Alissa McKersie – No. 40

Runs a Martial Arts school in Tempe, Arizona, and is currently fighting her way to being state Champion, 4th, 5th Degree Black Belt, 30 - 39 YEARS OLD category, while not running the Chicago Kids programme.

Steven McLean – No. 87

A long time wrestling and briefly a commentator for one of the fake AWAs, Steven is also one of the few people to have ever beaten Chris at SpaceWar!

Alex Mendoza – No.

Alex is a screenwriter living in Los Angeles. He can usually be found hanging out around the Haunted House scene in SoCal during the season and has written for several television shows and produced two short movies.

Tim Miller – No. 59

Tim Miller is a SMoFish fellow who is deeply involved with the founding and running of FenCon. He's also a Who fan and a generally awesome human being!

Mary Miller - 259

I like her!

Helen Montgomery – No. 160, 161

Helen is one of those SMoF types you keep hearing about. She's also more fun than a barrel of monkeys that someone also gave a mess of uppers and some of those really cool paddle-and-ball things.

Alan Moore – No. 301

Well, I suspect you know who he is...

SaBean MoreL – No. 17

SaBean is a former ballet dancer, a former zinester and oddly enough, is one of the few people who has enjoyed Chris famous crockpot meals and not complained!

Fred C. Moulton - No 319

Another BASFAn, he's a damn good human being!

David Moyce – No. 27

Dave is a good guy who used to be the layout guy and copy editor for SFSF. He's also a helluva Klingon!

Kat Mukley – No. 56

Kat is a lovely woman who does great art that you can see some of at <http://www.katmulkey.com/>. She also happens to be Unwoman's Mom!

Helena Nash – No. 179, 202

London Comics Fan, Helena designed a Role Playing Game based on Robert Rankin books, and has had a comic story published.

Inn Nerd - No. 79

Artist whose smart and well-made art is at [inn\\_nerd.deviantart.com](http://inn_nerd.deviantart.com)

Kim Newman – No. 18

Is a stunningly Brilliant writer. Titan books have released Anno Dracula, and its gone up to its seventh printing. A constant voice for the BBC on elements Science Fictional and Horror, Kim's writing, especially his short stories are brilliant.

Kostas Nikellis – No. 9

Kostas is a Greek artist and you can find his work at [kosv0.deviantart.com/gallery](http://kosv0.deviantart.com/gallery)

Brian Nisbet - No. 46

Brian is a game designer and I forgot to get more details for his bio. He also likes... planes?

Jessica Norris - No. 177

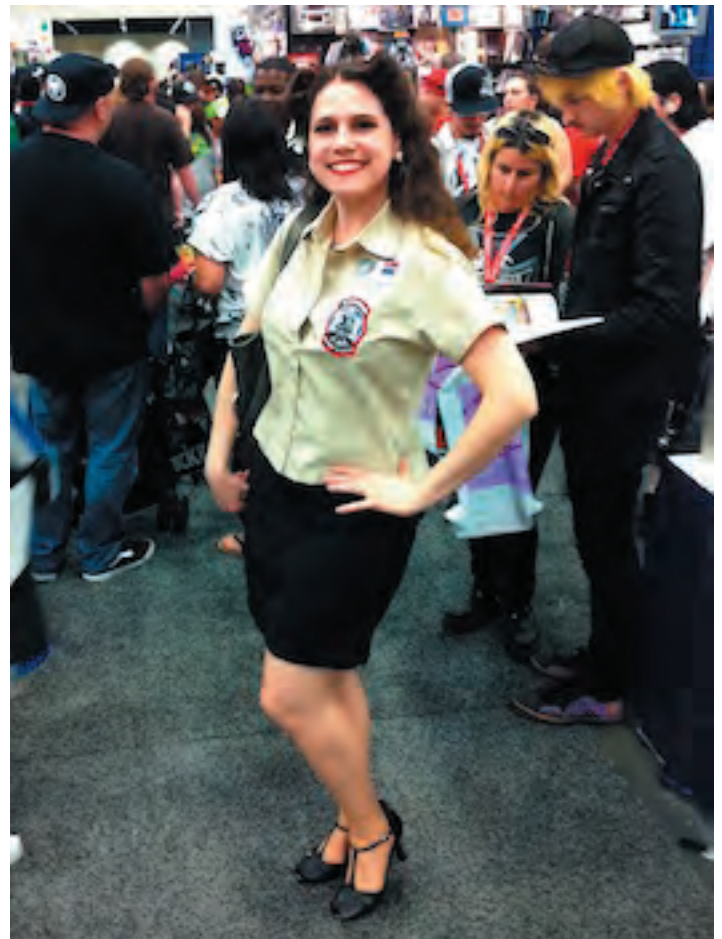
She's currently a student at Cal and you can see her great stuff at <http://lidiagrll.deviantart.com/>

Nrlymrtl – No. 197, 198

This originally appeared on [darkcargo.com](http://darkcargo.com).

Pádraig Ó Méalóid – No. 299

Irish SF and Conrunning fan for over 20 years, Padraig



has worked in the book trade most of his life. In the last decade he has dedicated himself to the scholarship of all elements Alan Moore and is now one of the Top Moore-ian experts in the world. His Livejournal – Glycon – frequently publishes Moore items unseen for years.

Diane Osborne – No. 298

Diane is a BASFAn, an amazingly continuous reader and a helluva massagist. She's good people!

Dave O'Neill – No. 25

British Fan living in Northwest America, as well as being a computer amazingologist, he is a bloody brilliant Barman at parties and great craic.

Tara O'Shea – No. 6

Tara O'Shea is a writer and editor who happened to win her first Hugo for Best Related Work in 2011 for the awesome Chicks Dig Time Lords about forty-five minutes after we won ours. She's awesome!

Ashleigh Payne – No. 260

Ashleigh is a great artist and her Nouveau poison bottle really spoke to me. You can find her art at [bloodmoonequinox.deviantart.com](http://bloodmoonequinox.deviantart.com)

Hillary Pearlman – No. 69

Baltimore based Artist, Hilary has a fantastic sense of humor, excruciatingly pretty and intimidatingly tall, her art speaks for itself, as did her sales at the recent worldcon.

Lloyd Penney – No. 67

Probably the number one LetterHack in the world at the moment, Lloyd Penney is a Canadian Mad Man who somehow manages to LoC every zine in the world! He's a multiple FAAn and Aurora Award winner and has been nominated for the Hugo for Best Fan Writer.

Yvonne Penney – No. 283

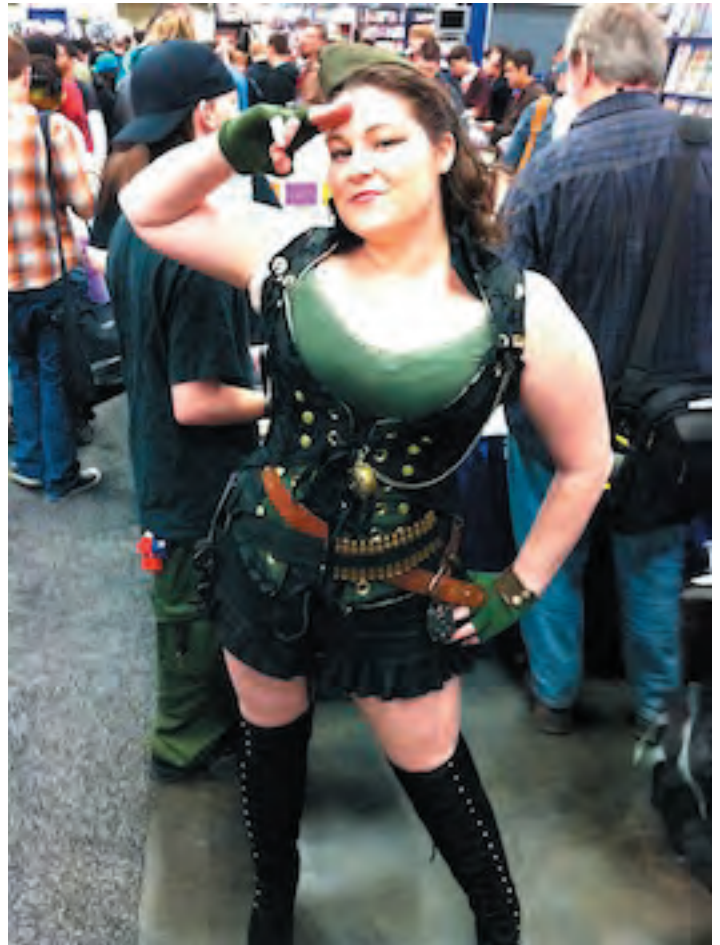
Long time fan and space awesomer, Yvonne is one of the reasons I love WorldCons so much! She is officially one of Our Canadian Cousins!

Mike Perschon – No. 286

Mike is a great guy and one of the leading lights in Steampunk with his blog Steampunk Scholar

John C. Pershing II - No. 196

I Met John at FenCon in Texas. He's a funny guy. Smart.



Perhaps too smart. I mean, talking with him, I felt like I was talking with a dude who could probably take over the world after building a secret volcano lair. I wouldn't cross him.

Selina Phanara – Nos. 33, 121, 228

Selina is one of my all-time favorite fan artists. Her work, whether drawing of cut paper, is whimsical and amazing. She's one of only three artists whose works I've ever purchased at an art auction.

Rachel Phillips – No. 54

Rachel is a former Boxing Ring Girl who retired to become a journalist. She lives in Vegas.

Pink - No. 180

I don't know much about Pink, but the image she sent was awesome!

Mark Plummer – No. 305

Mark has won numerous Novas and FAAn Awards for his fan writing and the zine Banana Wings that he does with Claire Brialey. He's good people and a lot of fun. He also took me to task for failing to accept Wales as a country. Sorry, Mark, but it's all England...

# TALES FROM THE HUGOS

SOMEWHERE IN NEVADA, 2011...

AND THE  
HUGO FOR BEST  
FANZINE GOES TO...  
THE DRINK TANK!



WHICH IS  
CONVENIENT AS  
CHRIS HAS BEEN SITTING  
HERE WAITING FOR  
SEVEN YEARS...



NO, SERIOUSLY JAMES  
I CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE.

SCRIPT IS TOTALLY  
PREPARED.



STORY: CHRIS GARCIA    ARTWORK: RIC BRETSCHEIDER

AND THE INNER MONOLOGUES...

TRY NOT TO SWEAR,  
DON'T SWEAR, WHAT EVER YOU  
DO, DO NOT SWEAR,  
DON'T SWEAR...

OH FUCK!



SO MANY OTHER HATS!  
NOT SO MANY FLINTSTONE T-SHIRTS.

**FTW!**



**YES!**

NOTE TO SELF,  
NEXT YEAR -  
FLINTSTONE SHIRT.



**THE END?**

John Purcell – No. 194

John's good people! He's stood for DUFF (Ran second to John Hertz), has edited several fanzines (Askance is the most recent) and plays a mean guitar. He's also a good roommate if you're ever looking for one at a con.

Valerie Purcell - No. 105, 108, 114, 247, 295, 314

Valerie's a helluva artist and jewelry awesomess, and wife to Mr. John Purcell, it was awesome to get to meet her at FenCon!

Mike Quackenbush – No. 78

Mike is one of the leading figures in US Indy wrestling today. He also probably doesn't remember meeting me at a Jersey All-Pro show in the late 1990s. I think he's retired twice before, which is relatively few times for a wrestler today...

Robert Rankin – No. 265

Robert Rankin is a writer of great, humorous novels like The Brentford Triangle and The Japanese Devil Fish Girl and other Unusual Attractions, we love his urbane mix of fortiana and humour as well as his steampunk-

ish alternative literary histories.

Ang Rosin – No. 42

Has a shocking sense of humour, and can do deadpan really well. She used to do these amazing fanzines, and we want more please. Please.

Greg Rieves – No. 66

A fantastic artist whose work is awesome!

Aimee Cosette Rixson – No. 274

Aimee's work is fantastic, and one of the best finds I've had in ages. She's at <http://aimeecosette.deviantart.com/>

Kevin Patrick Patrick Roche – No. 307

Kevin is a costumer, science, arter, and is Editor Emeritas for YIPE!: The Costume Zine of Record. He's also a damn good guy and you should look into attending Westercon 66 in Sacramento!

Rorynumber2 – No. 83, 85, 94, 117

Rory is an artist who specializes in wrestling women. You can find his stuff at [rorynumber2.deviantart.com](http://rorynumber2.deviantart.com)

Yvonne Rowse – No. 184

Is a voice of reason amongst the madness. Her ishoes fanzine is perfectly formed.

Lynda Rucker – No. 106

Lynda is a helluva writer of horror stories. She's had stuff appear in all sorts of places, including the Best New Horror, Black Static and, well our zines, for which we are grateful.

Bob Ryder – No. 86

Bob Ryder runs [1wrestling.com](http://www.1wrestling.com) and is the current Director of Talent Booking and Travel for TNA Wrestling.

Lisa Rye – No. 183

Lisa's a great artist. You can find her stuff on Deviant Art at <http://risachantag.deviantart.com/>. She has a couple of great Steampunk pieces.

Robert Sabella – No. 146

Robert edits a zine called Visions of Paradise, which you can find on [eFanzines.com](http://eFanzines.com). He's also a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, where he is a staple!



Manny Sanford – No. 82

Manny owes Chris five dollars. As soon as he pays up, he gets a bio!

Juan Sanmiguel – No. 207

Juan is an occasional DrinkTank contributor and a good guy who I sadly get to chat with only at WorldCons, it seems. He's involved with the Orlando WorldCon bid, I believe. He also was the first person ever to say to me "I'm glad I voted for you" back at teh Montreal World-Con.

John Scalzi – No. 22

Hugo-winner John Scalzi is one of the prime movers of science fiction today. The President of SFWA, his blog Whatever is one of the best-known and loved of all SF-themed blogs.

Jason Schachat – No. 157

Jason schachat is a writer, artist and filmmaker currently in Orange County, California. He's a helluva guy, was the Fan Guest of Honor at Trepidation in 2009, and then at WindyCon in 2010. He's also half the man he used to be.

Liam Sharp – No. 261

Comic Artist and writer, Liam has worked on a huge variety of Comics, from Judge Dredd for 2000ad to the multi hundred thousand seller Gears of War. We like his prose too and recommend God Killers: Machivarius Point and Other Tales

Espana Sheriff – No. 57, 278

Espana Sheriff is an artist, writer and all around bon vivant from San Francisco. She's a lot of fun to party with at a con. Or any place really. She co-edits YIPE! and Science Fiction San Francisco.

James Shields – No. 297

Ireland's hardest working fan, is a total Lego Expert and Computer Fraud. His understanding of binary is basically complex. Currently battling to bring the Eurocon to Dublin, he is a great sort.

Steven H Silver – No. 8

Steven H Silver has a ton of Hugo nominations, co-founded the Sidewise Awards, does the awesome Hugo-nominated fanzine Argentus, and is an all-around mensch. Steven was the Fan Guest of Honor at Fen-Con in 2011 and you can hear his GoH interview as

a part of the Drink Tank Review of Books at johnnyeponymous.podbean.com.

Dave Singleton - No. 150

Dave works with Adrienne Foster and made the little Ghost cartoon for her business cards. I like it!

Michael Marshall Smith –

Is possibly one of the Greatest Living Science Fiction writers on the planet. Only Forward and Spares need to be read by all fans of the genre, they are beyond parallel, and Science Fictions loss was the Thriller genres gain, as that is what he works on now.

Bill Sienkiewicz - No. 269

Is an Eisner-winning artist and an amazing one at that! His work on New Mutants is enough to get him into the Hall of Fame, but Add Elektra: Assassin and so many amazing covers and you're down-right looking at one of the true legends!

Randy Smith – No. 203

Randy Smith is one of my favorite fan writers. He's written for several zines, including The Drink Tank, and it's always good stuff. He's also a minister in Richmond! His family threw a great little party at WorldCon this year!

Michael Marshall Smith - No. 270

Michael is a good guy!



Dag Spicer - No. 77

Senior Curator at the Computer History Museum, Dag's Canadian.

Stephen Sprinkles – No. 1

Artist and filmmaker, Sprinkles (or Gus to his Russian friends) has made some great movies! His film Pincushion is really freakin' rad! He's previously graced the cover of Claims Department issue 1!

SRN:The Signal – No. 120

SRN The Signal is a podcast that you can hear at <http://srnthesignal.tumblr.com>.

Kevin Standlee – No. 129

Kevin is the leading Parliamentarian in the Fannish World. He also chaired a WorldCon and if you throw enough twenties at him, I'm sure he'll chair another..

Maurine Starkey – Nos. 5, 102, 110, 111, 112, 126, 154, 201,

Mo Starkey is the regular cover artist for The Drink Tank who has done covers for each of the issues featuring 52 Weeks to Science Fiction Film Literacy. She's also been nominated for Best Fan Artist and is one of the leading lights in BArea fandom.

Alan Stewert – No. 232

Alan is a former DUFF winner and a great guy! He and Bill Wright have kept me supplied with my Australian supplies (and Aussie Rules Football memorabilia) and is a member of ANZAPA and a regular WorldConer!

Jack Teagle – Nos. 75, 81

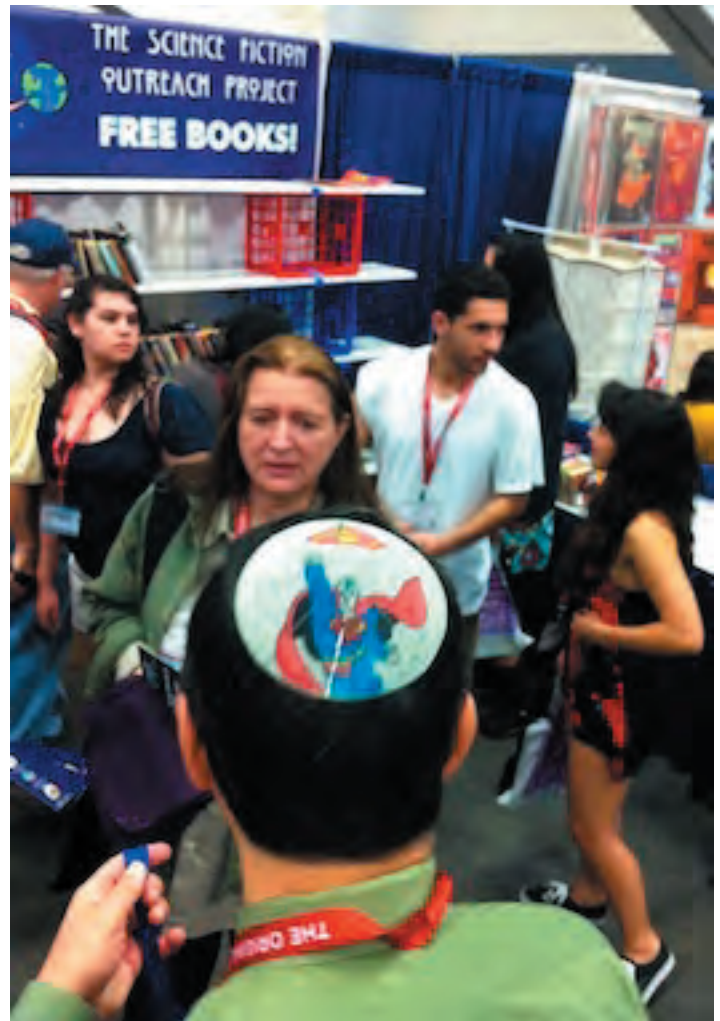
Jack is a freelance illustrator based in South West England. He keeps many sketchbooks and goes through many tubes of paint. Jack loves collecting action figures, reading badly written silver age comics and watching classic horror films. [jackteagle.co.uk](http://jackteagle.co.uk) is his website!

Olajos Tibor – No. 182

Olajos is an artist who work you can find at <http://gothichun.deviantart.com>

Toni – No. 155

Toni is Toni - [Tonite.deviantart.com](http://Tonite.deviantart.com) and does great art stuff! His piece was a class assignment to recreate a piece and he chose Mr. Whelan's well-known image. I think he did wonderfully!



Andrew Trembley – No. 103

Andy Trembley is one of the leading figures around BArea fandom. He's run cons and bids and is one of the best Hoaxers I've ever seen! His photos are amazing and featured regularly in YIPE!. I am anxiously awaiting the second issue of his zine iKinook Reader!

Unwoman – No. 115

Unwoman is a cellist, pianist and singer from San Francisco. You'll see her at local cons and generally being awesome! <http://unwoman.com/> is where you can find her stuff, and her latest recording is AMAZING! You can also see a couple of videos of her performing at [http://www.youtube.com/my\\_videos?feature=mhee](http://www.youtube.com/my_videos?feature=mhee)

Heather Urbanski – No. 164, 275

Heather teaches at Southern Connecticut State University. She's also a big ol' SF fan! I think I met her at the 2007 NASFiC.

Alex Van Thorn – No. 118

Alex runs cons, and is a good guy! I can't think when I

met him, but it must have been in the past!

Vanessa Van Wagner – No. 152

Vanessa is an LA fan and a damn good person!

Jan van't Ent – No. 64

Netherlands fan who is a stalwart of the British SF conventions Newsletter room. He has a wry sense of humour, quiet and gentle but always calm and smiling, not much ruffles him.

Kavin Veldar - No. 236

Kavin's a big fan of Logan's Run! He's got great

Leane Verhulst – No. 32

Leane's good people and she's one of the driving forces behind the Boston Christmas WorldCon Bid!

Susan Voss – No. 244

Julie Wall – No. 119

Julie's the Chair for DeepSouthCon 50 in Huntsville next year!

Grant Watson – No. 28

He's Australian, a fantastic writer and good stuff!

Tara Wayne - No. 317

Tara is one of the leading Fan Writers in the World, and quite possibly the busiest! He's been in The Drink Tank with both art and articles over the last several years. He's been nominated for Best Fan Artist too many times to not have won one. He was also the Fan GoH at Anticipation, the Montreal WorldCon!

Toni Weisskopf – No. 36

Toni's awesome! She's the publisher at Baen Books and is a Southern Fandom Legend. I believe she's the only person to have won all three Southern Fandom Award given out at DeepSouthCon (The Rebel, the Rubble, and the other one whose name I can't remember!)

Julian West – No. 11

Dubliner who has won a number of writing competitions, including The James White and Aeon awards.

Michael Whelan – No.

Michael Whelan has won more Hugos than most of us will ever dream! He's one of the leading lights of SF art

for thirty years and has done some of the best covers you'll ever see!

Mike Willmouth – 122

Mike runs cons, and damn good ones! He's Arizona's leading SMOFish figure!

Michele Wilson – Nos. 34, 96, 165

Michele is an artist living in North Carolina, but from San Francisco!

Jeanette Chere Wood – No. 271

Jeanette used to work with me at the Computer History Museum. She's also a helluva artist. Her bellydancing photos are great, too!

Roger Wood – No. 284

Roger does exceptionally cool assemblage work in the area of Steampunk.

Delphyne Woods – Nos. 3, 19, 26, 65, 71, 123, 126, 168, 190, 212, 219, 239, 250, 280, 291, 304, 308, 318

A long time fan artist and Hugo winner, Delphyne is the artist who Chris Garcia has wanted to work with for the LONGEST time! Her work has graced zines, art shows and book covers.

Joel Zakem – No. 97

A great dude from Louisville. He's a bourbon fan, much like the editors here and is one of the good folks in fandom!

Beth Zuckerman - No. 208

Beth is a Science Fiction fans who reviews the great many novels she reads on her Facebook page. She has remarkable insights and puts 'em out there!

Eric Zuckerman – No. 285

Eric is also known as Eric in the Elevator, which is a conveyance-based talk show that started out at Baycon and has moved to several other cons. I've appeared on it a couple of times.

# INGLORIOUS BASTARDS ACTION FIGURES!

Introducing:  
Chris Garcia as  
"LUCHA BASTARD"

Complete with  
extra head for  
evenings off, easy  
switching action in  
case of sudden bar  
fights!!

Illustration  
By:  
H.A. Pearlman



# INGLORIOUS BASTARDS

ACTION FIGURES!

Introducing:  
James Bacon as  
"Mad Irish Bastard"

Complete with an extra  
pack of cigarettes for  
putting out in the eyes  
of Nazi \$#@%ers!!

Illustrations By:  
H.A. Pearlman

