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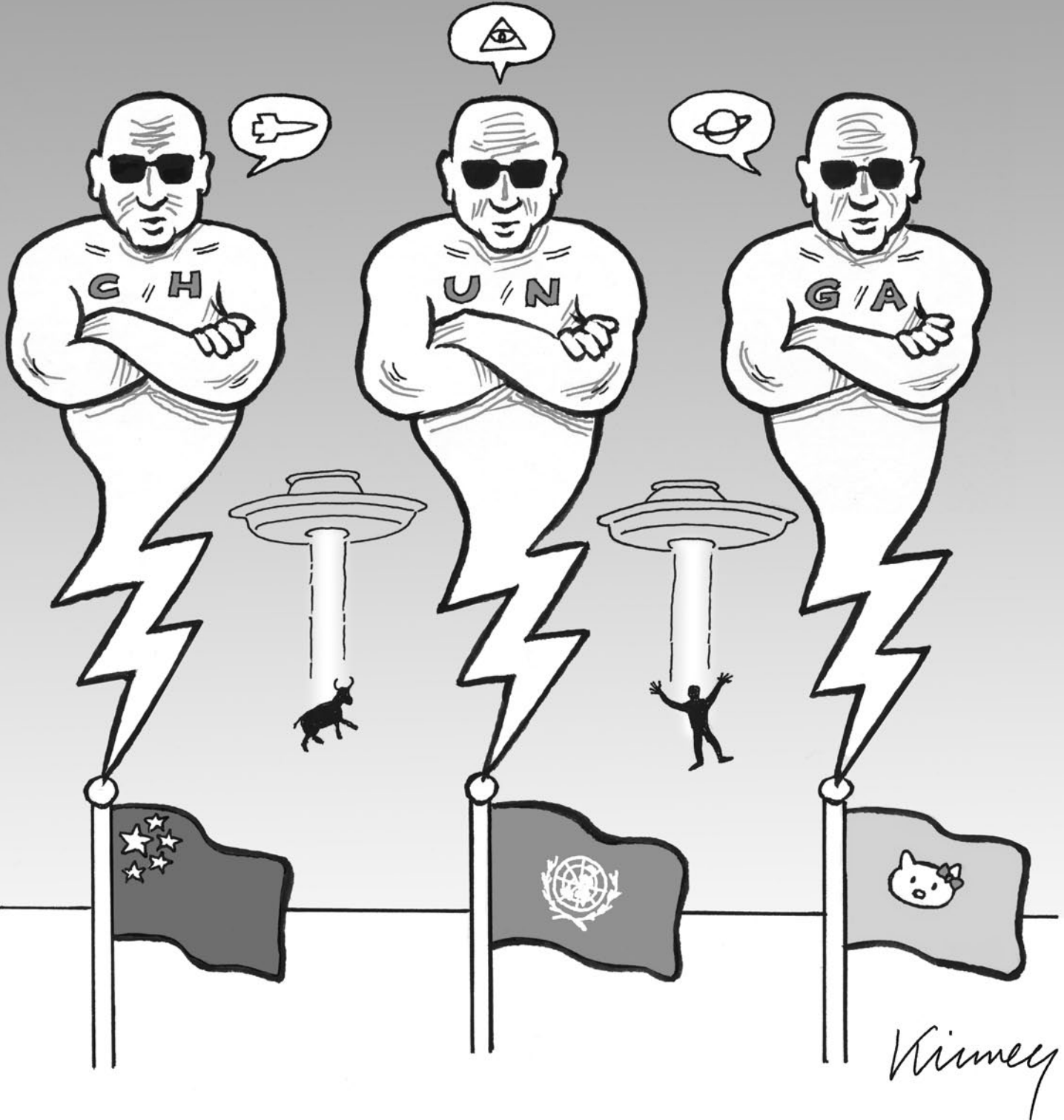
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Wimpy

CHUNGA

CHUNGA begins where words are powerless. An article is being written, and within it a narrative emerges, but nobody knows what's causing its emergence. The narrative is changing right before our eyes. There are stairs. There are cats. There is dog. Hang on, I'm sure I just saw a pig flying past my window. Take that, you reality-based losers! A sense of wonder is often felt, sometimes in spaceships.

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PDFs of every issue may be found at eFanzines.com.

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✂ Issue 20, December 2012 ✂

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for new Rotslers*

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Tanglewood

Raging gracefully

In late May I received word from my doctor that I had “worsening glucose intolerance.” If my fasting blood glucose measures at the same level in six months (which is right about now), I will meet the diagnostic criteria for Type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes runs in my family. Both my grandfathers had it, and my mother has developed it in her 70s, joining three of her siblings. My doctor advised three things: change my diet, get more cardio, and lose weight. I’m working on all three of these things, and I’m still hoping that I can keep diabetes at bay. Tune in next issue to find out if I’ve managed to do so.

The reading I’ve done about diabetes in the meantime indicates that our country is suffering an epidemic. I have a number of friends with diabetes (Jerry Kaufman joked that we should form a club), and just since my own wake up call two more friends have been diagnosed as diabetic, with one of them landing in the hospital with a life-threatening infection before his condition was discovered.

Meanwhile our friend and frequent collaborator Stu Shiffman, who is diabetic, has had a serious stroke from which he is still only slowly and with great difficulty recovering. Our thoughts and best wishes are with Stu — and his partner, Andi Shechter, who has been steadfast by his side throughout.

We are reaching the age when our health and the health of our friends become a bigger part of the picture. So, dear readers, please take care of your fine selves. If you haven’t been tested for diabetes, maybe it’s time. Eat your vegetables! Get some exercise, if you’re able. Stop sniffing the Corflu for a minute and smell the roses. Let’s enjoy this ride while we still can.

—Randy

Each new issue of *Chunga* forges its own unique path to publication. Sometimes we commission material built around a specific event or central theme, but far more often we simply request and receive pieces on an ad hoc basis, and make no attempt to connect them beyond publishing them in the same fanzine. Randy and I each strive to “find” about half of the material written by non-editors in every issue. But with exceptions like the Joanna Russ memorial in *Chunga* #18 (which was mostly Carl’s inspiration — in addition to all the design work, Carl comes up with more songs per album than George and Ringo combined), we tend to let the contributors decide what the fanzine will be “about,” with the inevitable consequence that it occasionally fails to be “about” anything. I might enjoy these “random” issues of *Chunga* even more than those devoted to one of my fanciful schemes, because the backstory becomes truly Byzantine and well worthy of recollection in itself. Why do we have a handsome article on sf-related music from Doug Bell in *Chunga* #20? First off, Randy’s drunk

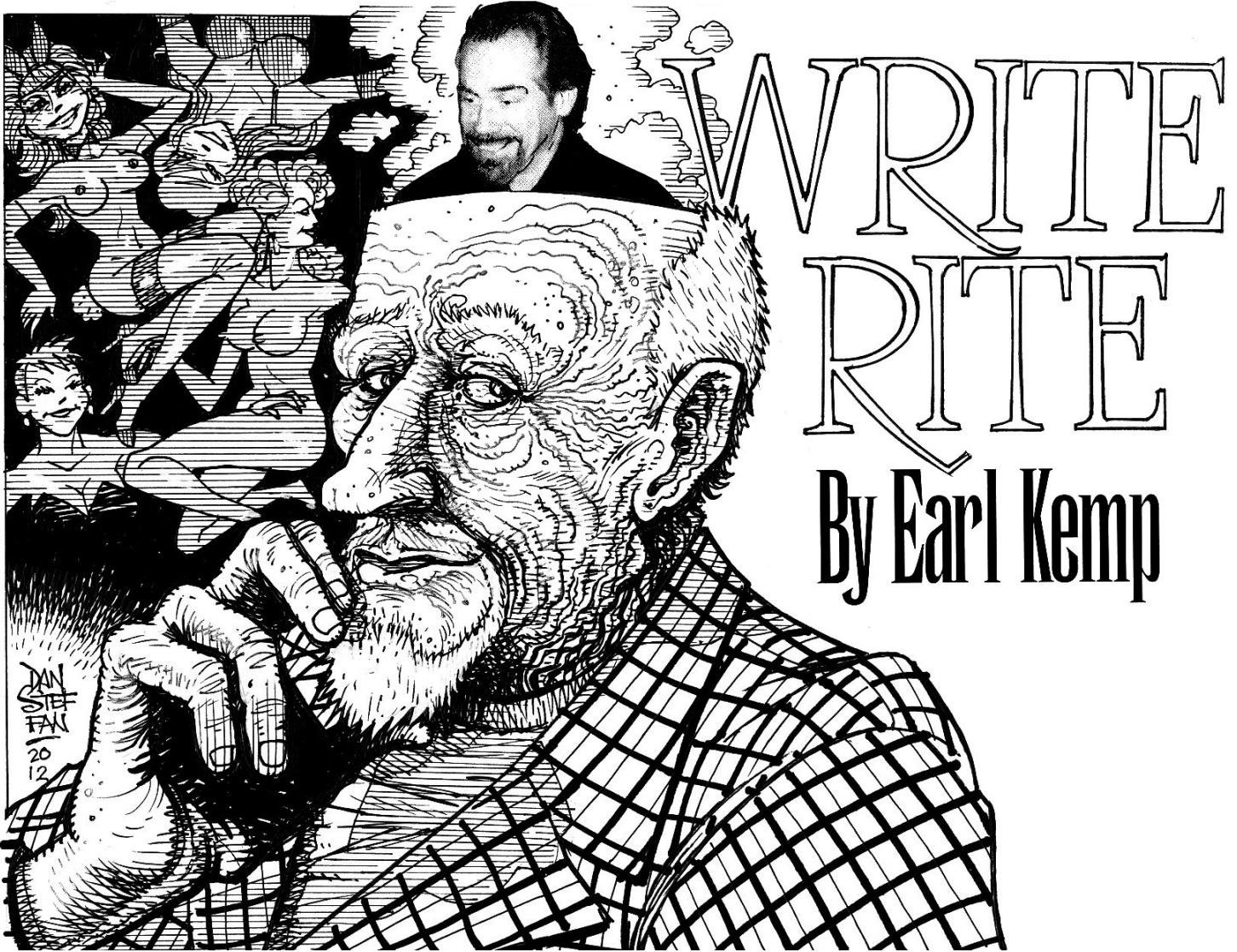
a fair amount of beer with him, which never hurts. The rather glowing — and entirely sincere — review of his and Christina Lake’s fanzine *Head* which I wrote for #18 might have had some inspirational effect on his keyboard too. The chapter of Jacqueline Monohan’s report on her 2012 trip to Britain for the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund might seem to appear here out of sheer habit, but the actual connection occurred when the ebullient Nic Farey bragged pleasantly that the impending issue of his fanzine *Beam* would also contain a chunk of Jacq’s journey, which lead me to inquire if we could have some too.

Michael Dobson mentions the genesis of his examination of the history of Hokum in America — a very sercon conversation at Corflu Glitter in Las Vegas this past April. Michael is a meticulous and relentlessly discursive writer — it’s a pleasure to present such an intricate article in America’s busiest fanzine, style-wise. Earl Kemp’s memoir of early interactions with SF pros also probably came to us because I handed him a copy of *Chunga* #19 in Las Vegas, and said we were naïvely targeting this year’s Worldcon weekend as a possible publication date. We didn’t make it of course, but the composition of the fanzine was largely decided by then, which is still a blinding pace for this troika.

Leading off with a cover by Jay Kinney is also a nice big box checked off my fannish life-list. Artists have been very generous to us across the past decade of publication. The same is true of the many fans who have written letters of comment over the past ten years. Editing them into a form that somehow fits in a reasonable page count is a continuing challenge, one that we have probably failed to meet this time. In our defense — look at the people who wrote to us! Greg Benford! Jon Singer! Paul Skelton, fer Ghu’s sake! And we cut out nearly as much material as we have published. If these are indeed some kind of end times for fandom, they are setting a truly decadent standard for posterity. Enjoy the show!

—Andy





In 1956 I was 27 years old, and my world was rapidly changing into something I had never dared even to dream about. Some things were actually happening to me that were at least minimally positive. Certainly so for the world itself.

Grace Matalious was shaking up the prudes in the US with her incredibly best-selling erotic novel *Peyton Place* (about a mother and son affair), and, in Paris, Henry Miller (my hero yet to be) saw his *Quiet Days in Clichy* materialize from Olympia Press.

In Chicago, a few members of the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club decided to do something good for a change and formed Advent Publishers, and actually produced their first book, Damon Knight's (he was still lower case in those days) *In Search of Wonder...* and the SF Worldcon was held in New York City.

I was working full-time for James S. Kemper Insurance Company and, after that, part time at *American Book Collector*, setting type and lambasting SF novels in my review column, "Wonder Worlds." In my spare time I was president of the UofCSFClub, managing editor of Advent, apprentice anthologist (under Ted Dikty's direction), fanzine producer (*Destiny* [subcontract printed

by Edwards Brothers in Ann Arbor, MI, who just happened to also be Advent's printer], *SaFari*), baby maker, SF partygoer (200 miles in any direction), open house provider for drop-in fans and pros, and general all-around screw-up. I attended the Midwestcon and Worldcon. I wrote reams of letters and made too many long-distance phone calls to favorite friends like Ray Bradbury, Arthur Clarke, Eric Frank Russell, 4sj Ackerman, and the ever-popular Robert Heinlein. I was a pain in the ass of local SF leftovers from the Ziff Davis era, clinging to them in desperation: Ray Palmer, Bill Hamling, Frank Robinson, Bea Mahaffey, Rog Phillips....

I kept telling myself, untruthfully, that I knew personally every person involved with science fiction, however wrong that feeling was.

And, in New York, already friend Robert Silverberg was turning into an almost good writer. It didn't take him long to move away from almost good and into the region of top-rank and just a short hop from that to damned good!

And, in 1956 *Super-Science Fiction*, edited by W.W. Scott, presented its first issue...first of an eighteen-issue run that extended until October 1959.

Fifty three years later... enter Robert Silverberg again. For Stephen Haffner's Haffner Press, Bob has recently edited *Tales from Super-Science Fiction* in a classic manner, taking his own life experiences as the outline for the volume and interweaving himself, from his Introduction through the individual notes accompanying each of the entries he selected to include from the magazine's entire run. Dare I say with a slightly personal motive as well, but then that's exactly what I'm doing here, following Bob's lead, making it mine as well as he made it his.

The anthology itself is a beautiful thing, but nothing less can be expected from Haffner Press. And, what goes around comes around, it, like *Destiny* and the Advent books, was also manufactured by subcontract by that very same Edwards Brothers. What would the world of science fiction be without them?

It is a genuinely cloth bound book...a real novelty these days when almost all books are paper-over-boards bound. And Steve's book has something else that we hardly ever encounter these days...special end papers...in glorious color, showing 16 of the covers of that 18-issue run with the other two covers on the back of the dust jacket...hours and hours of painstaking Haffner Photoshop work tediously restoring each of those covers to their original glory.

Besides Silverberg's personal input, the original artwork that accompanied each story as published is also included. The cover and interior artists represented are two very good old friends Ed Emshwiller and Frank Kelly Freas, plus the superb Paul Orban and William Bowman. But it is the writers who shine, culled as they were from the rejects of the more "important" SF magazines of the day.

I mentioned Silverberg's interest-filled Introduction and the way he made everything somehow seem very personal to him...and to me...and surely to everyone else still alive who remembers those hectic, fast-paced days as everything around us seemed to accelerate more day by day, making us run just trying to keep up with evolution that was leading us into the sex and drugs and rock and roll Swinging Sixties...the Hope of the World!

Bob includes two of his stories, "Catch 'Em All Alive," from the first issue and "The Loathsome Beasts" (as Dan Malcolm) from the last issue, effectively properly closing out the franchise. Sharing the glory just a bit, Bob selected stories by such favorite writers as Henry Slesar, James E. Gunn, A. Bertram Chandler, Don Berry, the delightful Jack Vance, Robert Moore Williams, J.F. Bone, Alan E. Nourse, Charles W. Runyon, and Tom Godwin.

And two of my favorites, Daniel F. Galouye ("Hostile Life-Form") and Robert Bloch ("Broomstick Ride"). These two people were very important to my personal development.

Robert Bloch was a very close friend and we connected on several levels (including *The Eighth Stage of Fandom*), spending as much time together as we possibly could and, whenever we were especially blessed, Bob Tucker would be within touching distance, making each of those meetings pretty close to divine. Bob and I used each other to escape, for however long we could manage, from mundanity; it was a very short hop in those days from suburban Milwaukee to Big-Time Chicago, and we did our

damnedest to keep the roadway humming between us. When Bob finally split from Wisconsin and moved to Los Angeles it was a black, dismal day for me. I had no concept that, within just a couple of years, I would do the same thing...abandon the glorious Midwest for the sin- and sun-filled free-swinging life of California (or, as old friend Ed Wood insisted upon, Californicators).

Dan Galouye was something else...another close friend. Early on, when I was working for the Pullman Company, I had free rides on US railroads and, as often as I could swing it, I would take a weekend trip to New Orleans just to see Dan, who was working for the *Times-Picayune* at the time. And, to retaliate, Dan came to Chicago a couple of times to see me, or to attend Chicon III, or to hustle up some work.



Meanwhile, back at the Silverberg ranch: I was particularly pleased with Bob's "The Loathsome Beasts" because its presentation was so remarkably off, in both the original appearance and in this reprint. By 1959 Bob was already a stand-out producer of soft-core erotica for not only the New York publishing markets but he single-handedly turned the Evanston, IL crowd on to the same genre. Bob persuaded Harlan Ellison to persuade William Hamling to launch Nightstand Books that year, with Ellison as the editor of all the innuendo any reader could ever even dream about cherishing.

Consequently, Silverberg's erotica was heavy on Bob's mind. The first two pages of "The Loathsome Beasts" is straight out of one of his '59 sleazebooks, going into caressing details about how the cast of his story, those fantastically perfect and unbelievably gorgeous late teenage and young adults frolicked unashamed in the nude on the local beach and there was nothing erotic—or sinful—about their nude cavorting at all.

And that text is accompanied by one of Ed Emsh's very best interior drawings, clearly showing a dozen of those beautiful naked people on the beach...only every one of them was wearing full swimsuits. So much for clever art direction.



Sort of like a revolving lifetime, everything moving back and forth, crossing itself again and again until it all seems somehow the same.

A great '50s re-experience. A wonderful keepsake that should be on every true fan's bookshelf if for no other reason than to remember the good times by. ✓



Sheffield Wasn't Built in a Day

by Jacq Monohan

Usually one would say that about Rome, a city also built on seven hills (although for Sheffield, it's really eight). Linking it to Rome would allow me to say "When in Sheffield..." Later, I found out that residents are called Sheffielders, and now I was on my way to meet some.

And so, the last train journey of my TAFF trip sped me away to Sheffield, the northernmost city of my UK visit. Since the UK is criss-crossed by many different railway companies, I never knew what to expect when I boarded, except that I got to sit in a less crowded spot with more luggage space than most passengers. My BritRail pass allowed for 1st Class seating, a Nic Farey suggestion that I silently blessed him for several times while riding the rails.

Well actually I *did* know what to expect, somewhat. There would always be a lip between train floor and platform, which would usually render the wheels on a set of luggage useless. You had to hoist it upward, certainly, and take your chances with yanking it downward, almost always guaranteeing a tip over to twist a wrist clumsily before any attempt to right it could be accomplished.

I could hear generations of Brits from contemporary to ancient, chiding me to "get on with it, then!" It is only mentioned herewith so that the gentle reader will get used to the fact that 1. Suave I was not and 2. There's comedy in them there trains if you know where to look.

This particular train had hostesses tending to 1st Class passengers, and offering complimentary food and drink. Since this never happened before, I incredulously asked the hostess to repeat nearly every sentence she spoke. She produced a small menu to aid her in directing the seemingly addled Yank to the daily specials.

Of course I had to order something, which this day turned out to be an egg sandwich that called itself a panini but was much too fat. I went along with the charade, inhaling it even though I'd just found a pasty shop at the Birmingham station, right before boarding. Now I remembered how I tore through the paper wrapper on the coveted meat pocket with murderous paws, devouring it like a true carnivore (but, I like to think, one wearing cute boots).

Outside, the countryside flew by quickly, making photographs implausible. I snapped mental pictures with my eyes, trying to absorb the ever-changing view. It was early April, with lots of bare tree branches whizzing past the windows, contrasted by green and gold fields spread out like huge welcome mats and punctuated by bodies of water, an occasional bridge, random graffiti, and livestock.

The Sheffield station interior was a spacious stone and glass building full of light. Holding a TAFF sign was Douglas Spencer*, whom I recognized, like so many others, from his Facebook picture. I spontaneously hugged him, partially out of relief, partially from the pleasure of making his acquaintance. Julia Daly appeared next, all smiles and full of welcome. I had to fling my arms around her, too, marveling at how easy it was to do. I'm usually much more reserved than that, but this entire experience was a head-first leap of faith into the unknown.



That and it may wind up being the last year of Earth's existence. Better to hug whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Doug and Julia were the last hosts I would have before Easterncon and they'd be giving me a ride to the convention. Because I kept track of such things, I noted that they were the only two to have brown eyes in all of my travels. Claire Brialey, Mark Plummer, Dave Hodson, John Nielsen Hall, Audrey Hall, Jim Mowatt, Carrie Mowatt, and Steve Green all had blue or green eyes. Even the London Eye was blue at night. I am, as Van Morrison would sing, a brown-eyed girl, and happy to see that I was not alone.

We walked to the car, which I considered to be a marvel of invention and engineering anytime I encountered one on the trip. I'd dragged and rolled my suitcase onto taxis, trams, buses, commuter trains and many tentacles of the Underground. A car meant that my arms could rest, as well as my brain in coordinating the raised or lowered handle of the rolling black rectangle that was my constant companion.

I sat in the front seat, with Doug driving on the right side of the car. It still felt a bit odd not to have the steering wheel in front of me, and left turns confused me into thinking that we would collide with oncoming traffic. Julia sat in the back and I found it very easy to chat with her and make both of them laugh at my quirky observations. I did not care if the laughter was with me or at me. I was in Sheffield, a metropolitan borough of South Yorkshire with an international reputation for steel production. Both of my hosts had brown eyes. It just didn't get any better than that.

One of the several questions I asked each of my hosts was, "Do you live in a free-standing house?" None of them did except Doug and Julia — everyone else I'd encountered shared a wall, a floor, a ceiling. The address was 2, a novelty for an American. We can have addresses with five digits in them (Hawaii can have six). This made no sense to any Englishman or woman I'd encountered.

Doug and Julia were very British, indeed. Both had posh, upper class accents. Both were full of Sheffield facts and stories. Their large house could accommodate eight guests if warrant-ed. I got my own room and bathroom. The mirror flattered me.



Sheffield Town Hall



Sheffield City Hall



TARDIS incognito

They had a library and two full walls of books. I had never been in any host house that didn't have substantial books. Fans read.

Julia and I went to meet the inimitable Fran Dowd* at a coffee shop in a nearby neighborhood close to her large Victorian home. I would get to see the interior in the next day or two. For now, I was fascinated with the outside; there was a boat parked in the front yard. Fran's husband John was away at the conference, so I never did get to meet him in Sheffield. The man whose boat was parked in the front yard of his large Victorian had already scored points with me for that refreshing eccentricity. And anyway, it does rain a lot in Sheffield.

Later, when I did get the chance to have a guided tour, I was delighted to find that a lovely, insouciant (aren't they all?) grey and white cat named Flynn strolled around the rooms, invariably selecting a chair adorned with his very own personal cushion. Books crowded a library like scores of permanent guests, quite comfortable right where they were, thank you very much. I believe the house had three stories, great to explore since I was blessedly devoid of luggage this time. Bring on the British Stairways.

I was receiving periodic weather reports from my Birmingham host Steve Green by phone, text and Facebook. After two solid weeks of sunshine and blue skies, the real English climate was about to set in. Snow was on the horizon, but not just yet. We had a full day to explore Sheffield and by the next morning the Fearless Foursome (Doug, Julia, Fran, and yours truly) did just that. Well, perhaps we were more like the Intrepid Trio and the Entranced Tagalong.

It usually surprised my hosts to find out how enthusiastic I was to simply be in England. I'd find them trying to squelch a smirk as I jabbered on in hyperbolic exclamations about their hometown. In Ramsbury, it was curious pheasants and Tank Crossing signs. In London it was supermarket Scotch eggs. In Croydon I passed a restaurant named Shirley Tandoori and remarked to Claire Brialey, "Like Temple, only spicier." It seems I could never help myself squelch the Tourette's-like enthusiasm that my travels induced.

Here in Sheffield, the hills and valleys, nearly invisible to long-time residents by virtue of close proximity, provided sweeping, scenic views of the city by a vehicle that metamorphosed into a leisurely roller coaster.

My hosts took me to the City Centre and parked the car in a building that resembled (and was called by residents) The Cheese-grater. At 32 stories the cheese wedge would have to be enormous and

you'd need a crane to hoist it against the building in an up and down motions. Shavings would be the size of telephone poles. I imagined the whole state of Wisconsin envying the shiny metal edifice, calculating how many cows it would take to produce enough milk to create a cheese wheel that rivaled the size of a Ferris wheel.

It was a chilly, gray day — normal for my hosts, but a real departure from the desert climate I'd become used to while living in Las Vegas for the last six years. In fact, I was fond of telling people that “lizard becomes me.” Great Britain was great for my hair, replenishing the moisture that the Mojave had stolen. We forged ahead.

The overcast sky did nothing to dampen my enthusiasm for the walking tour that included Sheffield's palatial Town Hall, the museum-like City Hall, the Peace Gardens, Sheffield Legends (a star-filled Walk of Fame honoring distinguished people from or connected to Sheffield) and the Cathedral Church of Ss. Peter and Paul.

I couldn't quite fit all of the massive, historic Town Hall in the viewfinder of my camera, obsessed as I was with capturing the Union Jack on a mast high above the roof. The plaza-level fountains in front popped up sporadically and a few brave, indestructible children ran through a watery gauntlet. It made one shiver just to watch them.

Doug and Julia told me that concerts were held at City Hall, a concept that seemed incredibly progressive to me. City Hall to me represented stuffy politicians, unsuited to rhythmic movement and able to confuse Lady Gaga with a minor figure in British peagee.

Sheffield Legends featured round plaques that contained star shapes with famous names and accomplishments. Here you could step right up to a Joe Cocker, a Michael Palin or a Human League. You could polish up a Def Leppard. I was happy to get a shot of Joe Cocker's star before a disjointed shoe got into the frame, like something out of a Cat in the Hat Book where you never see a grownup, just a shoe entering or exiting the room.

There wasn't a stop on my entire trip that did not include a hopeful TARDIS query. Did anyone know where there was a real TARDIS (police call box) located? Invariably the answer was “Scotland” and then only in some rarified areas. And some of them were red. I took pictures of Steve Green's TARDIS tin, the closest thing I could find up to that point.

Sheffield City Centre boasted a Police Call Box, painted a sea-foam green and white combination, sort of a TARDIS incognito. I was thrilled just to find one in existence and photographed it as if it were a unicorn or leprechaun.

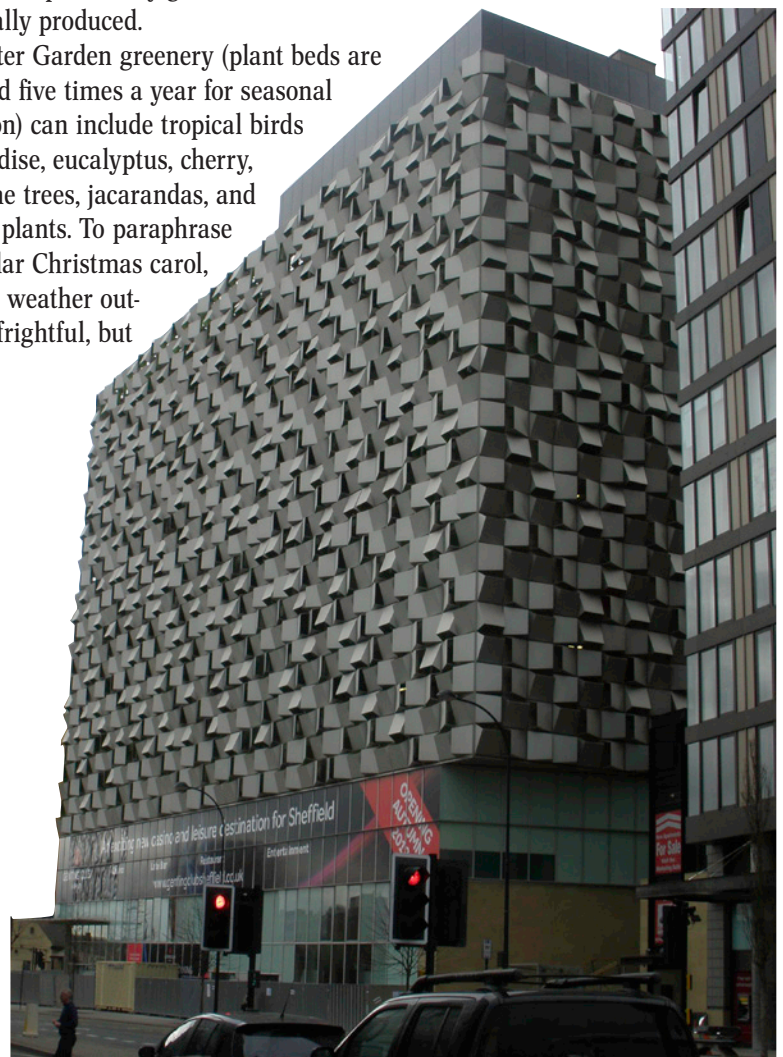
We proceeded down a narrow corridor full of boutique shops where window displays included Queen Elizabeth II tea sets touting the Jubilee, clothing whose purchase would necessitate a second mortgage, and an entire store devoted exclusively to American candy. That was much more interesting to my hosts than it was to me. I could get Hershey bars any old time. I craved Cadbury Flake, and later, when I discovered them at Eastercon, Australia's Cherry Ripe confections.

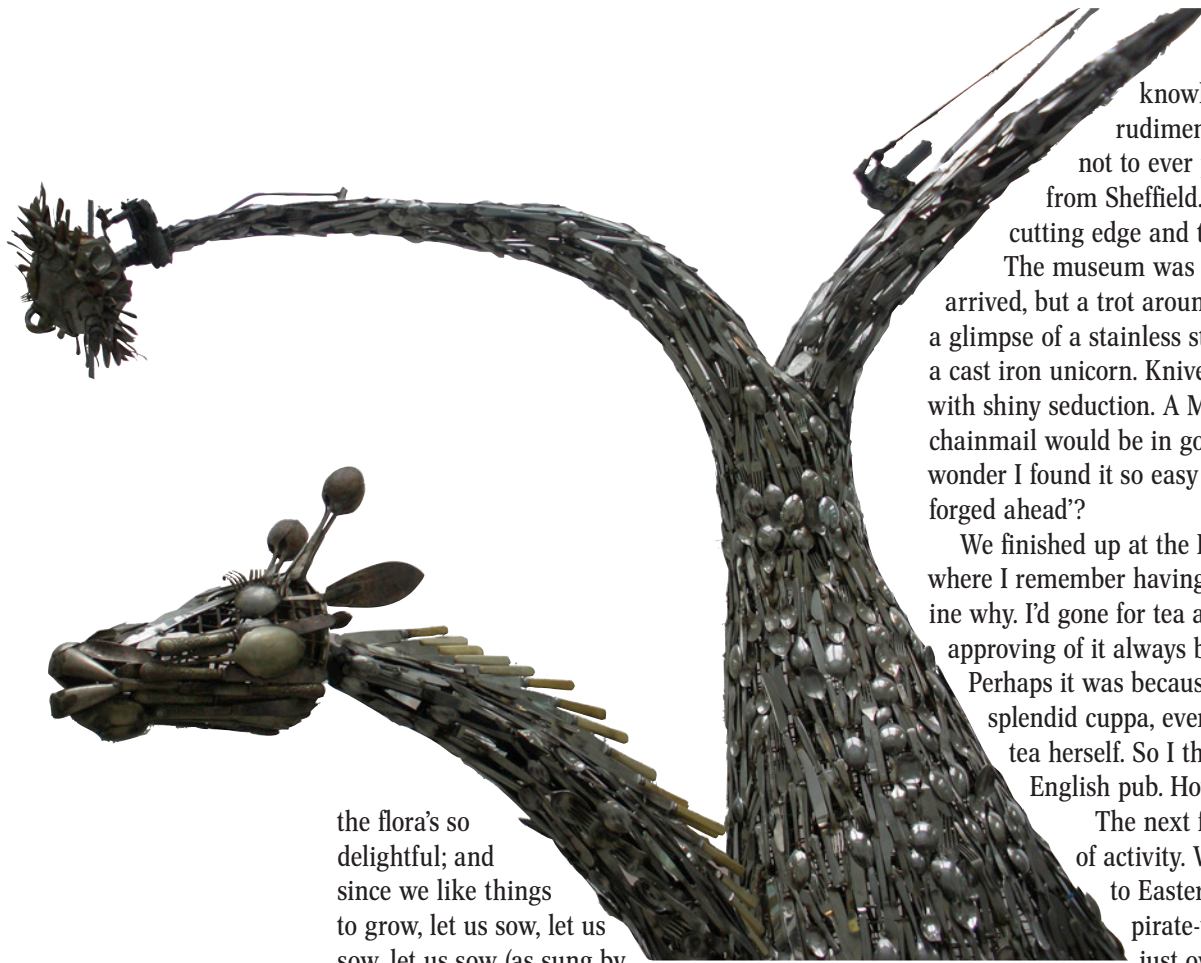
The Winter Garden* is one of Sheffield's flagship destinations, beautiful to look at from the outside, surrounded by its mirrored sphere fountains, and arched larch-and-glass roof. Yes the wood is actually larch, which Monty Python aficionados will recognize as the tree in one of their early sketches. No matter the chill outside, when you step into the building you know you're in a greenhouse.

It houses more than 2,500 plants from around the world, and for the second time in the UK, I encountered palm trees sturdy enough to rival those thriving in tropical settings. My first sighting took place in the many greenhouses at Kew Gardens in London where giant green fronds reached for a sun separated by glass, its warmth sometimes artificially produced.

Winter Garden greenery (plant beds are changed five times a year for seasonal variation) can include tropical birds of paradise, eucalyptus, cherry, and pine trees, jacarandas, and pitcher plants. To paraphrase a popular Christmas carol, Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but

*Further details supplied in the Official TAFF Trip Report of which this article is a part.





the flora's so delightful; and since we like things to grow, let us sow, let us sow, let us sow (as sung by the Sheffield City Council Choir).

Downstairs in the Millennium Gallery is a cutlery sculpture comprised of knives, spoons, and forks by artist Johnny White. Its name is 'Barking Up the Right Tree' and various buttons make it bark, talk and move. It's in the shape of a tree trunk from which spring three heads, one of which is very giraffe-like (its ears appear to be made of a pair of cake servers). The whole thing is made of Sheffield steel. You must say that phrase reverently.

During the 19th century, Sheffield gained an international reputation for steel production. Sheffielders will tell you proudly that their city is known for its knives (and crucible and stainless steel). Our next stop was the Kelham Island Museum (it's really on a man-made island, right in the middle of Sheffield) and looks as if it's guarded by a rogue Transformer disguised as an upright cement mixer. It's really a Bessemer converter, the largest surviving converter in all of England.

Hey, you might be thinking, wasn't that a popular song recorded by Jimmy Dorsey in 1944? Bessemer Mucho? Hardly.

Around 1855 Henry Bessemer invented an inexpensive industrial process for the mass-production of steel from molten pig iron, removing impurities from the iron by oxidation using blown air. I imagine this took the "pig" out and refined the steel into Sheffield-caliber strength and quality. My

knowledge of iron and steel is rudimentary, but I know enough not to ever pull a knife on someone from Sheffield. They are literally on the cutting edge and they know it.

The museum was just closing when we arrived, but a trot around the gift shop gave us a glimpse of a stainless steel model of a ship and a cast iron unicorn. Knives adorned display cases with shiny seduction. A Medieval knight needing chainmail would be in good hands here. Is it any wonder I found it so easy to use the phrase, 'we forged ahead'?

We finished up at the Fat Cat Pub next door, where I remember having coffee but I can't imagine why. I'd gone for tea at every possible juncture, approving of it always being served with milk. Perhaps it was because Julia made me such a splendid cuppa, even though she didn't drink tea herself. So I think I had coffee in an English pub. How odd.

The next few days would bring lots of activity. We would all be heading to Eastercon and Doug and Julia's pirate-themed wedding was just over a month away. I was touched by the fact that they had agreed to host me with the whirlwind going on in their lives.

Julia recounted an unpleasant exchange with the woman who was making her wedding dress, a red corseted gown that turned out tremendously, only none of us could know that at the time. The woman had misunderstood what Julia was asking and had told her to just pick up the unfinished dress and be done with it. This terrified the normally sanguine bride-to-be. She already had a house full of inflatable palm trees and parrots, eye patches, a treasure chest, and an ebullient TAFF delegate in her guest room.

I reassured her as much as I could. She and Doug had been so wonderful that I couldn't see anything rising up to sully their special day. They would be pirates; there would be golden earrings and striped shirts. Their galleon of a cake would fire off its cannons and Julia would have her gown. All would be well.

The next evening, Steve and Alice Lawson hosted a get-together at their house on top of a hill. Sheffield nestles in a natural amphitheatre created by several hills and valleys. A sweeping view revealed a twinkling metropolis whose undulating hills seemed carpeted with lights.

Besides the Lawsons, I got to meet artist/author Peter Harrow (dressed in a tweed three-piece suit, no less) and the fun-loving David (Guinness) Kirby.

Peter, who would soon be stationed in the Art Room at Eastercon, showed off his customized Fiji Mermaid. It screamed with a gaping mouth and turned its head, a different kind of siren that would more likely scare off sailors than lure them to their death. He has also constructed three miniature skulls mounted on a crimson background; another piece looked like an alien mastodon skull with extremely long tusks, preserved under a glass bell jar.

David Guinness, so named because there were just too many Daves in British fandom, was the first to do it. I was snapping shots of the assembled gang and Dave stretched out the length of his body on the poor souls seated on the sofa. It made for a great picture, snagging everyone in the room but me into the lens of my Olympus (same name as Eastercon, too).

Then, any attempt at maintaining decorum was shattered by someone's suggestion that I get in the picture by taking Dave's place on the sofa, lying across the assembled and soon-to-be utterly compressed victims. I protested to shouts louder than my own and found it easier to comply. I still worry about little Alice being crushed in her own home. And she set out such a nice little snack table. I felt like a sack full of doorknobs, contorted into a spiral, unnatural posture and told to smile. Steve Lawson took two pictures while I prayed silently for Alice to survive. Of course the resulting photograph wound up on Facebook, making me look like the drunken sot I always knew I could be.

The next day, a morning snowstorm blanketed the streets and cars with 1-2" of snow. It was April 4, and I loved the novelty of it. Both the absence of it from my life and the date at which it was occurring made it a quirky surprise. The Olympus snapped away, but most of the pictures made it appear to have been raining. I took Julia's suggestion to snap the top of her blue car, which was now white. That worked.

Julia, Fran and I headed off to the cinema to see *The Hunger Games* which was screening on the third floor. This too was a novelty for me. I review films back in Las Vegas where I am lucky enough to never have to wait in a line or pay for a ticket. Here I had to do both, but again, it was *in England*. I couldn't help but compare the experience with its American counterpart.

The price was surprisingly high. At eight pounds sixty, and at the rate that was in effect when I was there (\$1.62) the cost of admission was roughly \$15.00 USD. The theater seemed spacious and designed for comfort. The audience was quiet and respectful. No one brought a small child, let alone

an infant in a carrier. I call them bucket babies and you are sure to encounter a few at any Las Vegas screening, no matter how loud the soundtrack or inappropriate the theme. I give the Sheffield film viewing experience a thumbs up.

I got to meet Yvonne Rowse and her daughter Sally that evening when we visited their home. Yvonne was to be the star and titular character of Ian Sorensen's Eastercon spoof, *Oliver, with a Twist*; even I had a small part. I admired her bravery. Sally and I talked a bit about my bias against rom coms (romantic comedies) because of their predictability. I found her charming and was happy to find that she would be at Eastercon as well.

Just then, I remembered the date and reminded Julia that she had exactly one month before the wedding. In response she raised her left hand, folded it into a pistol shape and aimed it at my head. I had forgotten how nervous the event made her. To make up for it, I stopped just short of breaking out the Ethel Merman impersonation: "You'll be swell. You'll be great. Gonna have the whole world on a plate."

I think at that point she would have rather had my head on one.

After a quick stop at a supermarket to prove to me that there *was* ranch dressing in the UK (I had been told there was no such thing) we finally drove back to the house for my final overnight stay.

We'd be off to Olympus in the morning. ✓



Why We Need Hokum

by Michael Dobson

During a particularly serious and constructive interlude at Arnie Katz’s floating perpetual Corflu Glitter party, the conversation turned to hokum — why so many people seem to believe non-scientific things with such fervor, passion and delight. The consensus, unsurprisingly, was unfavorable.

“But we need hokum,” I said.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m just as unhappy with the faith-based fanaticism that increasingly drives the political and religious sphere as anybody else. Still, the desire for all-consuming belief — hokum — is a powerful human motivator, and not entirely a misguided one.

Hocus-Pocus + Bullshit = Hokum



Hokum, helpfully defined by Wikipedia as a synonym for bullshit, is a portmanteau word combining “hocus-pocus” and “bunkum.” The “hocus-pocus” part of hokum refers to its appeal to emotional response rather than inherent truth. Hokum is designed to make you feel an

emotion, and in that way it’s often more satisfying than the dry, literal truth would have been.

“Bunkum,” interestingly, traces back to my home state of North Carolina, specifically Buncombe County, located in the mountainous western part of the state. “Bunkum” is a collapsed version of “speaking for Buncombe,” and originally took the same spelling as the county name. Its origin traces back to 1820, when US representative Felix Walker, who represented Buncombe County, spoke on the topic of whether Missouri should be admitted to the Union as a slave state or a free state, but

his “long and wearisome speech” drew catcalls and derision from the other members of Congress. “Speaking for Buncombe” became a Washington insider joke, then became common usage under a more phonetic spelling.

A Brief History of Bullshit

“Bullshit” refers to emotional appeals disguised as fact (one scribe calls it “relevancies without data”), and thus has its major roots in the areas of politics and advertising. The word “bullshit” has a rather odd history. While the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) suggests the word originates in the Old French *boul* (fraud or deceit), various forms of animal shit have been used to describe nonsense. My favorite of these is the German *bockmist*, or “billy-goat shit.”

The OED’s first citation of bullshit as a pejorative comes from T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Triumph of Bullshit,” written in the 1910s but only published after his death. Here’s the first stanza:

*Ladies, on whom my attentions have waited
If you consider my merits are small
Etiolated, alembicated,
Orotund, tasteless, fantastical,
Monotonous, crotchety, constipated,
Impotent galamatias
Affected, possibly imitated,
For Christ’s sake stick it up your ass.*

Written in ballade form, the refrain “For Christ’s sake stick it up your ass” ends each verse.

Let Me Put My Banana in Your Fruit Basket, Baby



While we're dealing with etymology, Bruce Townley helpfully pointed out to me an alternate definition of "hokum." According to Wikipedia, "hokum" is a type of American blues music that uses extended analogies or euphemistic terms to make sexual innuendos.

Bo Carter and the Mississippi Sheiks' "Banana in Your Fruit Basket" is a good example.

*I got a brand new skillet, I got a brand new lead,
All I need is a little woman, just to burn my bread
I'm tellin' you baby, I sure ain't gonna deny,
Let me put my banana in your fruit basket, then
I'll be satisfied
Now, I got the washboard, my baby got the tub,
We gonna put 'em together, gonna rub, rub, rub
And I'm tellin' you baby, I sure ain't gonna deny,
Let me put my banana in your fruit basket, then
I'll be satisfied*

Carter is also the author of "Please Warm My Wiener," "Don't Mash My Digger So Deep," and the tragic "My Pencil Won't Write No More." Blind Willie McTell recorded "Let Me Play With Your Yo-Yo" in 1933, and perhaps most famously, the Dominoes in 1951 recorded "Sixty Minute Man."

Gospel composer Thomas Dorsey, better known for "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," and "Peace in the Valley," also recorded "It's Tight Like That" under the *nom-de-hokum* Barrelhouse Tom.

Early country music had a number of hokum hits, mostly sung by white performers in blackface, including "Tom Cat Blues," "Shanghai Rooster Yodel," and "That Nasty Swing."

While hokum has largely died out, along with minstrel shows and blackface entertainers (Ted Danson notwithstanding), ZZ Top's "Tube Steak Boogie" shows that the hokum impulse has not completely left the musical world.

But of course that's not the kind of hokum we were talking about.

Hokum vs. Bullshit

Although Wikipedia, as noted, lists hokum as a synonym of bullshit, I think there's an important distinction, coming from the "hocus-pocus" part of the word's definition.

Ordinary bullshit is simply assertion without fact, the idea that if you shout loud enough and are definite enough, people will tend to believe you. That describes the intent (and sadly, too often the result) of most political dialogue.

Hokum, on the other hand, is assertion all dressed up and ready to party. It has a backstory, whether it's true or not — with enough plausible-sounding information to make it slide comfortably into your mind like a White Castle hamburger. Unlike

bullshit, hokum has a trace of the carny about it. Like science fiction itself, hokum appeals to the sense of wonder in us all.

Self-Conscious Hokum

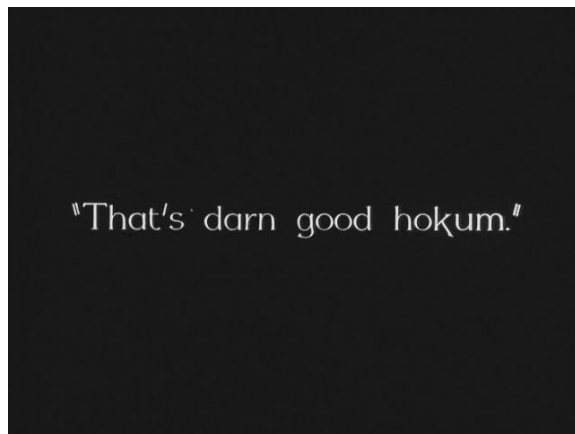


Speaking of science fiction, fiction itself is an obvious type of hokum, albeit a self-conscious sort.

Fiction, of course, is a polite word for lying. If you pick up a novel or a short story, you know going in that it's not true, at least not as a whole. Historical novels have (sometimes) some real history in them; science fiction novels have (sometimes) some real science in them — but characters, dialogue, and situations are definitely made up.

And yet, for many of us, the world inside our favorite novels is at least as real to us as the actual world in which we live. I first read *Lord of the Rings* in the unauthorized Ace Books edition back in 1966 (sorry to say, I no longer have those copies) and have re-read it every couple of years since. There are any number of books about which I have the same feelings: the early Saint stories by Leslie Charteris, most of the oeuvre of Robert Heinlein, *Pride and Prejudice*, and many more.

We all know this as the "willing suspension of disbelief." There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but we start to run a risk when we willingly suspend disbelief about stories that aren't labeled as fiction. That's when we fall completely into the world of hokum.



Harmless and Not-So-Harmless Hokum

Some cases of hokum are relatively harmless. If you believe in the Loch Ness Monster, UFOs, or Bigfoot, you probably aren't going to live your life very differently than if you do not. The basic idea — that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy — isn't inherently silly. Occasionally, things once thought to be fanciful turn out to be real, as in the case of the once-mythical black swan, immortalized by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. But that's not the way to bet.

Some beliefs start out legitimate and turn into hokum. When respected psychiatrist Immanuel Velikovsky first proposed his theory that Old Testament legends reflected actual catastrophic close-contacts with other planets, he was attempting to perform legitimate science. Stephen Jay Gould said of him, “Velikovsky is neither crank nor charlatan — although, to state my opinion and to quote one of my colleagues, he is at least gloriously wrong.”

And wrong he was. His proposed celestial mechanics were physically impossible, violating the laws of conservation of energy and momentum, among others. There is no sin, however, in being wrong. But for anyone today to believe Velikovsky, the term “crank” becomes increasingly accurate. (And don’t get me started on early airplane designer and Lawsonomy founder Alfred “Zig-Zag and Swirl” Lawson.)

Religion is a notorious breeding ground for hokum. Before you get offended, let me point out that even the most religious person doesn’t believe in the stories of all the other religions. If you’re a strong Christian, you tend to reject Hindu or Muslim stories as hokum — and, of course, they return the favor. But any religion is more than the stories told in its holy books. Religions provide moral and ethical codes, prescriptions for daily living, and in some cases suggestions on the proper ordering of society. One can accept a moral prescription without necessarily accepting the dogma that goes with it — although the reverse is not true.

Hokum becomes increasingly dangerous when it forces a rewrite of things known to be true. In science, evolution is merely the best known area of disagreement, but there’s the anti-vaccine fetish of the left and the anti-Theory of Relativity fetish on the right. (See the website Conservapedia for details.)

History is another area rich in hokum. Southerners have long insisted that the cruel War of Northern Aggression is about anything other than slavery. The American Founding Fathers have been assigned so many different motives and beliefs that they must all be spinning in their graves. In Texas, such dangerous un-American radicals as Thomas Jefferson are in danger of being removed from the history curriculum altogether.

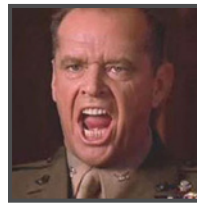


The Institutionalization of Hokum

The charge of “political correctness” can be seen as hokum gone wild. Orwell was neither the first nor the last to observe how shaping language shapes perception and behavior. If there are things that Must Not Be Said, in a certain sense they cease to exist. When hokum is baked into history textbooks, whether in the old Soviet Union or here today, generations grow up unaware how much of their world is institutionalized hokum.

The Texas Republican Party’s infamous 2012 platform nakedly endorses institutional hokum and describes the essential mechanism for its enforcement: “We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills...critical thinking skills and similar programs...which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.” Indeed.

Why We Can’t Handle the Truth



The desire to embrace hokum — the need for hokum — seems baked into the human psyche. It can promote a sense of wonder and mystery, or simply be a harmless pastime. But hokum is a dangerous thing, both for those who embrace it, and those

who must suffer under the yoke of those who do. Confining yourself to the self-aware hokum of fiction may well be the safest course of action.

We often assume that the human mind is designed to be rational, and failures of rationality are seen as defects in human thought. In my long study of cognitive biases and decision fallacies, collected in *Random Jottings #6* (on eFanzines), that’s been a continuing theme: here’s why your mind isn’t working right.

But as it turns out, that may be the wrong way to look at it. Dr. Stephen Pinker, a Harvard professor specializing in evolutionary psychology and the computational theory of mind, argues that the process of natural selection is not concerned with the truth per se, and in many cases actually disfavors a truth-seeking mind. In an emergency, factual truth-seeking may be way too slow; a fast approximation, even if of questionable accuracy, can promote survival.

Even more importantly, non-factual or even counter-factual beliefs play an important social role. Believing that your own social group is better than other social groups helps you and your group be more successful. Believing that your romantic partner is unique, amazing, and special — even if objective evidence argues otherwise — contributes to a successful relationship.

In fact, some evolutionary psychologists argue that the role of cognitive biases and decision fallacies exist to protect your mind against challenges that would weaken your non-rational beliefs. You want the truth? You can’t handle the truth, and thanks to cognitive biases and decision fallacies, you don’t have to. Beliefs are deeply rooted in the human psyche, and it’s not an accident that they are so resistant to reason.

Personality Traits Theorized to be Associated with Liberal (or Left-Wing) and Conservative (or Right-Wing) Orientation

Liberal/Left-Wing

- Slovenly, ambiguous, indifferent
- Eccentric, sensitive, individualistic
- Open, tolerant, flexible
- Live-loving, free, unpredictable
- Creative, imaginative, curious
- Expressive, enthusiastic
- Excited, sensation-seeking
- Desire for novelty, diversity
- Uncontrolled, impulsive
- Complex, nuanced
- Open-minded
- Open to experience

Conservative/Right-Wing

- Definite, persistent, tenacious
- Tough, masculine, firm
- Reliable, trustworthy, faithful, loyal
- Stable, consistent
- Rigid, intolerant
- Conventional, ordinary
- Obedient, conformist
- Fearful, threatened
- Xenophobic, prejudiced
- Orderly, organized
- Parsimonious, thrifty, stingy
- Clean, sterile
- Obstinate, stubborn
- Angry, aggressive, vengeful
- Careful, practical, methodical
- Withdrawn, reserved
- Stern, cold, mechanical
- Anxious, suspicious, obsessive
- Self-controlled
- Restrained, inhibited
- Concerned with rules, norms
- Moralistic
- Simple, decisive
- Closed-minded

source: *The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind*, Dana Carney, John Jost, Samuel Gosling, and Jeff Potter, *Political Psychology*, 2008

If a belief increases the survival potential of you and your group, on some level it's irrelevant whether it's actually correct. Beliefs that are clearly and immediately contra-survival ("Look, ma, I can fly!") are evolutionarily self-correcting. It's not logical argument and rational thinking that changes your mind, but rather the impact of your belief when it collides with the cold, hard ground. When cause and effect is less clear and less immediate, the lesson tends not to sink in.

We are not rational animals. We are thinking animals, but much of our thought isn't rational at all. We eagerly consume self-admitted lies whenever we read fiction, and as legions of media fans can attest, the imaginary worlds we enter are often more satisfying and fulfilling than the one in which we officially live.

Alien Powers Right Under Our Very Noses!

Hokum can expand our universe or contract it. From David Copfield, who cheerfully admits that what he's doing is trickery and invites you to relax and enjoy the deception, it's one small step to Uri Geller, who turns an otherwise unremarkable spoon-bending trick into claims of telekinesis, and not a giant leap to conclude that Area 51 is hiding a world of alien powers right under our very noses. Conspiracy theories and supernatural beliefs of all sorts give us a simple, fulfilling way to eliminate complexity and ambiguity in our lives.

Rationality, enshrined above all in the scientific method, has been under continuing and unremitting attack ever since the scientific revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries. As soon as

Copernicus dethroned the earth as center of the cosmos, the backlash began. In fighting the battle for truth, justice, and the scientific way, we've tended to assume that we shared a mutual goal with our opposition: a desire for truth. But that, as we've seen, is not a good assumption.

Which brings up the obvious question, *pace* Pilate: what is truth? Gandhi argues that truth is self-evident; Churchill argues that it is incontrovertible. But Mark Twain, as usual, says it best:

"Truth is mighty and will prevail. There is nothing the matter with this, except that it ain't so."

Politics and Hokum

I've been interested in the various pieces of research that suggest an actual structural difference between the minds of conservatives and liberals, and not just because of the schadenfreude.

A 2008 study, "The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind," by Dana Carney, John Jost, Samuel Gosling, and Jeff Potter, published in *Political Psychology*, provides this helpful table [*see above*] combining the results of 27 different studies covering the period 1930 to 2007. (I use this particular example because it has both positive and negative traits listed for both sides.)

You'll notice a fair amount of redundancy in both lists, the result of combining characteristics listed in different studies. Summarized in line with the "Big Five" framework of personality dimensions, it works out this way:

Characteristic	Liberals	Conservatives
Openness to Experience	High	Low
Conscientiousness	Low	High
Extraversion	High	Low in two categories
Agreeableness	Not listed	Mixed
Neuroticism	Not listed	High in two categories

Agreeableness and neuroticism don't seem to be particularly correlated with political belief, and while extraversion appears multiple times in the liberal mindset, its reverse appears only twice in the conservative mindset. The characteristics of openness to experience and conscientiousness, however, appear more consistently correlated with political attitude.

Evidence that these personality differences are innate comes from a 2006 longitudinal study in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, in which "preschool children who later identified themselves as liberal were perceived by their teachers as: self-reliant, energetic, emotionally expressive, gregarious, and impulsive. By contrast, those children who later identified as conservative were seen as: rigid, inhibited, indecisive, fearful, and overcontrolled."

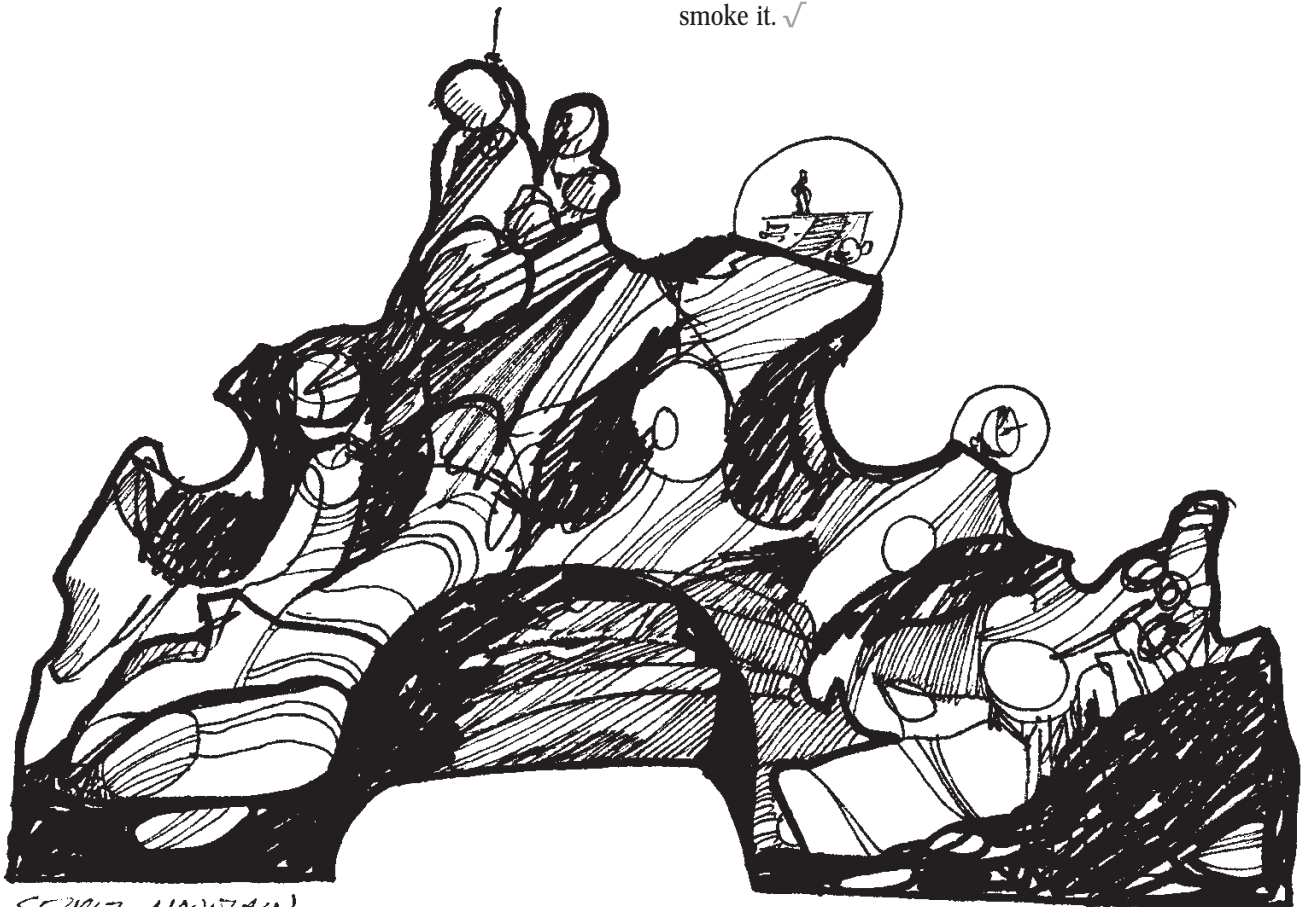
The Mental Narrative

One characteristic of hokum is that it's simplistic: hokum strips away complexity and nuance and substitutes the comfort of concrete knowledge — even if it's false. While it's tempting to allocate the need for hokum to whichever political party we personally disfavor, I think it's more accurate to say that both conservatives and liberals embrace hokum in some areas and reject it in others, depending on what fits the mental narrative that gives us greatest comfort. A belief in the perfectability of man is as much hokum as a belief in the inherent evil of the species. It's easy enough to provide examples in support of either proposition; the truth is mixed.

We know that no human being is, or possibly can be, free of the distortions of cognitive bias. Bias is inherent, but that doesn't mean all bias is equal. The attempt to be even-handed and accurate, to identify and fight sources of bias within one's own thinking, is a noble and useful effort even when it's doomed to failure.

We all do need hokum, liberal and conservative alike, and that's not necessarily destructive as long as we combine our beliefs with self-awareness. We all — liberal and conservative alike — have the mental equipment to challenge our own beliefs, without necessarily changing our values in the process. And we all — liberal and conservative, faan and sercon, left-brain and right-brain — have the moral obligation to recognize hokum when we see it.

And you can put that banana in your fruit basket and smoke it. ✓



SECRET MOUNTAIN

Chung 5/28/18

The Journal of Federation and Monster Culture Studies

A column by Andy Hooper

Who Misses the Mysterions?

There must be as much science fiction and fantasy on TV in 2012 as at any point in broadcast history, but no one seems especially happy about that fact. Entire series can come and go without anyone in fandom taking any notice of them. Was anyone reading this column even aware that new seasons of *Warehouse 13*, *Alphas* and *Falling Skies* were airing the summer of 2012? As a genre, science fiction is now no harder to sell than a cop show or a medical drama. In many cases, fantastic or speculative settings are just window dressing for teen age romance anyway. Even Homer Simpson used the word “steampunk” earlier this year.

Of course, if your tastes run more toward classic space opera or anthology series, reruns of everything from *The Outer Limits* to *Firefly* are available in syndication on one or more cable networks. A third-string network, My Entertainment Television or “MeTV,” now shows immaculately-restored 1966 to 1969 episodes of *Star Trek* on Saturday nights, and I find myself watching them on most weekends that we’re home. With re-recorded music cues and drastically improved effects shots, it’s a bit like rediscovering those stories. Of course, nothing can be done for the dialogue—lines like “It could be a beaker full of death” sound no better now than they did in the Sixties.

Watching new and old SF series in close juxtaposition inevitably leads to comparisons of their settings and conventions. Giant insects had their heyday, along with killer robots and shape-shifting creatures that can perfectly mimic a human being. Watching contemporary SF shows, I’ve begun to feel like I am living in a lonely universe, populated only by my own kind and our various self-created doppelgangers and proxies. When we do encounter alien or extraterrestrial species, they see us only as a source of food, or a place to lay their eggs. On Earth, if they can resist simply eating us, aliens generally want to interbreed with humans and create hybrid slaves, or simply wipe us out so they can take over the planet. They seldom relate to us as a culture, or as individual beings at all. One can understand how this begins to give aliens a bad name. Where are the alien cultures suitable for us to see as *peers*, beings like the Vulcans, the Klin-

gons, the Minbari and Zentradi?

Where have all the galactic empires and stellar confederations gone? Most of them were just sketchy adversaries who existed only to illustrate the limits of a human trait like compassion, and the terrible consequences of its absence. Many of them seemed as cardboard as a Balkan kingdom in a comic operetta. The universe was filled with weird and unsustainable authoritarian societies, waiting only for contact with upright humanity to see the error of their alien ways. Only a few of them were as wise as us or wiser, fitting companions or adversaries for our journey into the galaxy. At their best, they could become faithful companions and advisers, like Jeeves, Tonto or Cuba Gooding Jr. At their worst, they were equally faithful enemies, quoting Shakespeare or Melville behind their eye patches and scarred battle armor. Implacably hostile, and incapable of surrender, they were also impossible to completely eradicate, and possessed an indefatigable capacity for new plots and campaigns against humanity.

As their audience developed more political realism, sf writers made these relationships more complex and changeable. Using *Star Trek* (since virtually everything can be explained using *Star Trek*) as an example, we might consider the journey of the Klingons, who began life as sneaky, swarthy sadists and eventually became the





galaxy's Gurkhas, worthy of being protagonists themselves. Or even better, the Vulcans—once merely brilliant, aloof and tantalizingly inter-fertile with humans, they were recast as paternalistic manipulators of humanity's early space-faring history for *Enterprise*, then their planet was completely expunged from the galaxy by J.J. Abrams in his big screen reboot of the franchise. Of course, future excursions into alternate reality and time-manipulation may reverse all this in subsequent chapters, but for now, isn't Spock even more attractive knowing that he's one of the last of his race? I submit that's the element his story has been missing all these years....

Alien-Building vs. Muppetry

We could go on for a while naming TV shows with a rich cast of alien characters: *Babylon 5*. *Farscape*. *Futurama*. *My Favorite Martian*. Imagining peer civilizations used to be one of fandom's favorite pastimes, but it's a much more demanding process than the average TV producer wants to go through. And it's so easy to do it badly, to fall into writing plots driven by differences in alien and human biology, with crises resolved by the special powers of an alien character. But since rubber headpieces start to look really obvious if you have to stare at the same ones all the time, no one can ever be satisfied with just one alien race. In most space operas worth their strontium, there are three to five significant alien cultures, with at least two interstellar wars beginning or ending at any given moment. Finding humanity's place in this scrum is suitable grist for an entire series of movies or novels or both—but only if you have an audience willing to follow them. When directors and actors on press junkets claim that their new work is *not* science fiction, despite being about time travel or giant robots, they really mean that they won't ask you to learn the backstories of four different alien cultures that all look like neoprene hand-puppets.

So now we are confronted with stories about “empty” universes, where only humans and their own creations struggle between the stars. The two best space operas of the past decade, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Firefly*, avoided even any speculation on the existence of space-faring life in the galaxy, other than ourselves and things we created. The original *Galactica* had a

number of encounters with alien sentients, but these were more whimsical than compelling. Losing them was nowhere near as disturbing as humanity's apparent lack of curiosity about other civilizations in *Galactica 2.0*.

Firefly is a special case to me; Joss Whedon meant it to be a reconstruction western drama in outer space, but to many of us, it recapitulated the best science fiction role playing game ever published, Marc Miller's *Traveller*. Miller's Third Imperium universe was the backdrop for adventures based on the ownership of a small spaceship, which the players used to travel from planet to planet, conducting commerce, piracy, warfare, espionage, and errands of mercy—just like Mal and the crew of *Serenity* on *Firefly*. But the Third Imperium universe was home to five alien spacefaring cultures, in addition to three independent stellar empires and a number of smaller stellar states created by human beings. Even if you never played the game, *Traveller* background material was fascinating, some of the most sober and intelligent science fiction I've ever read. *Firefly* was also great fun, but again, its universe seemed *lonely* to me.

Aliens now seem generally confined to the fabulous ghetto of animation. Why would you use a man in a rubber suit or a muppet when you can render a fully realized alien creature in mouth-watering hi-def three-dee? And we might be forgiven if aliens start to blur together, after the menagerie of creatures presented in the *Star Wars* saga, itself now transitioned into animation. Originally, aliens in *Star Wars* were some form of puppet or armature with a name composed of random syllables. They became more sophisticated, but still tended toward goofiness, like Ewoks and Gungans. There are highly impressive individual aliens, particularly among the Jedi, but humans seem to be pretty much in charge of things, so it would be hard to classify the Mon Calamari or the Wookies as “peer civilizations.” The most accessible alien on TV right now is the pear-shaped Roger, on Seth MacFarlane's cartoon series *American Dad*, because, as he says, he “likes to pretend.”

Red Scares & Turquoise Rabbits

When I brought this subject up in conversation with Randy, he snorted mildly and said, “Sure, people hate aliens. That's why the highest-grossing movie of all time was about ten-foot-tall blue bunnies on the planet Pandora.” Which is a good point: *Avatar* is completely focused on the perils of interaction with an alien civilization. But James Cameron's movie presents mankind as virtually devoid of any values that we would typically describe as “humane,” and assigns all those qualities to the Na'vi. They can't be a peer civilization to mankind, because humans seem to have degenerated into the kind of ruthless, acquisitive creatures that used to menace the Earth in vintage science fiction. We don't seem very interested in making friends.

It's tempting to try and draw some relationship between these trends and political events after 9/11. To think that aliens are a “Blue State” talking point, and robots who believe in God play better in the “Red States.” But extraterrestrials are such a handy metaphor for political and racial conflicts on Earth that we

can't ever quit them completely. They lay traps and pose genetic riddles in Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*, invade and twist our planet on the series *Falling Skies*, and struggle to escape our poisonous captivity in *Super 8* and *District 9*. A little anal probing would seem benign by comparison.

As is so often the case, I look across the Atlantic for a sign of hope. *Dr. Who* has always been a dependable source of alien creatures of all kinds, from the stalwart to the insidious. So many have the regrettable character flaw of attempting to invade the Earth, but there are many examples of friendly interaction with extraterrestrial beings too. After all, the Doctor is quite the alien menace himself—friendly and terrible in equal measures. While the show has to remain primarily focused on Earth and its history, there are also forays onto alien worlds, and encounters on starships, space stations and orbital colonies. And alien nemeses like the Daleks and the Sontarans are adversaries worth worrying about. You may look at *Dr. Who* and see something about Queen Victoria and Vincent Van Gogh, but I count it as a space opera at the molecular level, and one of the most enduring and successful examples at that. Only the ebullient *Red Dwarf* was a more consistently engaging portrait of lives lived in deep space....

Presented in Svensurround

When the card with Balok's puppet avatar from *The Corbomite Maneuver* fades out and *Star Trek* is over, MeTV continues the genre fun with an all-out plunge into Monster Culture. Most of the films they show are classic Universal horror movies from the 1930s and 1940s, including the complete sagas of Dracula, Frankenstein, the Mummy and the Wolfman. This summer after re-running the entire Mummy cycle, they showed all three of the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* pictures, including the weirdly lurid finale, *The Creature Walks Among Us*. Sprinkled in between are some comedies, like the Marx Brothers in *Horsefeathers*, and Bob Hope and Paulette Godard in *The Ghost Breakers*.

The show even features a "scary" costumed host, the undying "Svengoolie." His clown-white face with blackened eyes and a triangular goatee under a mop of raven hair and a battered top hat are reminiscent of "Mr. Mephisto," the monster-movie companion of my youth. Sven is now portrayed by Ron Koz, who began as a fan of the original Svengoolie when the latter first appeared on Chicago's then-independent WFLD-TV. From September of 1970 to August of 1973, Jerry D. Bishop portrayed Sven as the host of *Screaming Yellow Theater*. The young Koz began by sending fan mail to the show, then sent in sketches for "Sven" to perform, and was ultimately a regular writer in the show's last season. In 1979, he revived the character under the title of "Son of Svengoolie," and presented the same combination of shtick and old movies until WFLD was purchased by Rupert Murdoch in January 1986,



Ron "Svengoolie" Koz



and became one of the first stations in the Fox broadcasting network. The show was cancelled, and Koz spent several years hosting kid's cartoon shows and events like the 1988 New Year's Eve broadcast.

Koz kept the character alive through personal appearances, but did not return him to the air until December 31st, 1994, when WCIU-TV began a new series of "Svengoolie" broadcasts in the Chicago area. (Bishop had told Koz that he now seemed "grown-up" enough to drop the "Son of" from his name.) Broadcasts have continued to the present on a number of regional TV networks, and "went national" with MeTV in April of 2011.

The show features the requisite selection of terrible puns, and the crew routinely pelts Sven with rubber chickens when the humor is especially bad. But Koz is also an enthusiastic historian of the monster movie genre, and provides entertaining background on the cast and creators of the evening's film. When he showed *Revenge of the Creature*, Sven pointed out that many of the film's exterior scenes were shot at Marineland of Florida, a marine park and aquarium popular in the 1950s and 1960s. But the main holding and display tanks were damaged by hurricanes, and the monster movie is now one of the best photographic records of the location's original appearance. And with his schedule of personal appearances at conventions and other fan gatherings, Sven is able to collect interviews with performers like Ricou Browning, who swam around inside the Creature's tight rubber suit more than 50 years ago.

If two hours of gags and rubber monsters aren't enough to sedate me, the network follows up with an episode of Irwin Allen's *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. That program now seems truly hallucinatory, combining cold war paranoia with pulpy standards like sea monsters and islands full of dinosaurs. All I need is a Hostess fruit pie and a glass of Faygo red pop to believe that Lyndon Johnson is still President, the cities are on fire, and unlimited hope fills the world.

August 28, 2012

Ten Favorite Alien “Peer” Species

Klingons (*Star Trek*)

There were just a few moments in the early days of *Star Trek* when a writer or an actor put a hint of something genuinely scary into their portrait of individual Klingons. Michael Ansara’s performance as Captain Kang in “Day of the Dove” has a cold lack of mercy that still sends a chill down my spine. But from their inception, the Klingons were so perfectly suited to be a foil for the liberal 1960s view of future humanity that it was inevitable that we would finally fall madly in love with them. No other alien race has had such a combination of professional and amateur creative energies thrown at them. There have been so many interpretations of Klingon culture and philosophy that Klingons have begun to acquire many of the same self-contradictions that we observe in humans, and therefore seem that much more “real.” They should have their own reality show any day now.

Felis Sapiens (*Red Dwarf*)

By the time you read this, the very long anticipated Series X of *Red Dwarf* will be airing on “Channel Dave” in the U.K. and Ireland, with a slightly wider and grayer version of the original cast, including the immaculate Danny John-Jules as the Cat. Although the Cat is apparently the last of his species on board the vast mining ship *Red Dwarf*, he is still sufficiently acclimated to the company of others to be able to ignore them for weeks or years. The capacity to discreetly fail to observe one another is a critical element in any peer relationship. On the other hand, the Cat’s demands for attention at most other times can only be seen as complimentary to the companionship of human beings.

Niblonians (*Futurama*)

Nibbler falls into a sub-genre of alien peers, what we might term the “magical pet.” As Captain Leela’s tiny companion, Nibbler exhibits just one paranormal ability, by eating things several times larger than itself. But when Earth is menaced by intelligence-sapping space brains, Nibbler is revealed as an advance scout for a race of ancient and powerful beings, with a multi-millennia plan to “save” the galaxy from the brain invasion. With cultural traditions like “The Feast of a Thousand Hams,” there are definitely elements of Niblonian society that humans could find profoundly familiar.

Dentrassis (*The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*)

Many of the alien races mentioned in Douglas Adams’ books and their many adaptations appear only as the punchline of a single joke or anecdote; happily, they are by and large particularly good jokes. The Dentrassis, according to Ford Prefect, “are the best cooks and the best drinks mixers in the galaxy and they don’t give a wet slap about anything else.” Their appearance varies between TV and movie versions, but the Dentrassis’ very existence suggests some redeeming features to galactic society.

Kilaakians (Toho Films’ *Destroy All Monsters*)

Among the many alien powers that have sought to enslave the Earth, few have been as attractive as the Kilaakians, who menaced our planet in Toho films 1968 *kaiju* epic *Destroy All Monsters*. The Kilaakians appeared to be attractive Japanese women dressed in white vinyl miniskirts and go-go boots, but they were actually tiny metallic worm-like beings, and could be forced to revert to this form by exposure to extreme cold. Their object was to conquer the Earth and mankind, using our assets to create a “super scientific civilization.” It isn’t clear how this was to be accomplished by unleashing giant monsters, including Godzilla, Rodan and Mothra, on the cities of the Earth: Fortunately, the Kilaakians lunar base was destroyed before their plan could be implemented. The fact that they make such an effort to appear human, even while attempting to wipe us out, suggests a degree of obsession most likely to exist between relative peers.

Wookies (*Star Wars*)

Wookies have obvious physical and mechanical skills, but their ability to communicate with other species may be their most remarkable attribute. Their language seems to be immediately intelligible to anyone who meets them, yet no one ever feels the need to respond in kind; instead, they assume that all Wookies will also understand English. This is even true of C-3PO, who never makes any attempt to use any of the other 4,000 languages he knows with Chewbacca. It should be noted that despite many opportunities, no Wookie ever actually rips anyone’s arms out of their sockets, an impressive display of self-restraint.

Decapodeans (*Futurama*)

The second species on this list from Matt Groening and David X. Cohen’s *Futurama*, and the Space Globetrotters very nearly broke through as well. Dr. John Zoidberg’s people differ dramatically from humans in many ways, but like his medical practice, they enthusiastically embrace our similarities instead. Their invasion of Earth was occasioned by a question of free speech, in which they allowed their indignation to overcome their natural reticence for difficult tasks like interplanetary warfare. With an anthem derived from incidental fight music on old *Star Trek* episodes, they should be everyone’s favorite talking space squids.

Delvians (*Farscape*)

Plants and plant-like aliens are not usually very compelling company; Zhaan, a Delvian portrayed by Virginia Hey on Rockne O’Bannon’s *Farscape* is a notable exception. Although the Delvians spend their time in pursuit of spiritual wisdom (“The Delvian Seek”), they are also prone to intense and ecstatic psychosexual experiences, known as “photogasm,” induced by exposure to very strong light. They also have very long lifespans, something in excess of 1,500 years. But despite a few empathic abilities, they are very distinct individuals, not part of a group consciousness or hive mind. After a while, it would be easy to see them as a very blue person with an unusual interest in moisturization.

Silurians (*Dr. Who*)

Calling the Silurians “alien” is a bit misleading—they are actually Earth’s original sentient inhabitants, humanoid saurians whose civilization rose and fell within the confines of the Mesozoic Era. Thousands of them went into cryogenic hibernation deep inside the Earth when they detected the approach of the Chicxulub object. Their displeasure at finding the planet overrun by hairless monkeys is understandable, making them one of the more sympathetic reptilian menaces to be found in the genre.

The Consensus of Parts (*Andromeda*)

The space opera *Andromeda* was derived from notes written by Gene Roddenberry, which is why it felt like a third-hand spin-off of *Star Trek*. The protagonist, Captain Dylan Hunt had the same name as the lead character of two 1970’s Roddenberry projects *Genesis II* and *Planet Earth*. All three Dylan Hunts had awakened after a long period of cryogenic sleep to a new world of swashbuckling adventure, a premise generally lifted from *Buck Rogers*. *Andromeda*’s version of The Borg and The Transformers was a machine consciousness known as “The Consensus of Parts.” They had the familiar goal of freeing machines from the domination of inferior biological organisms, but their shifting, jumbled appearance gave them a kind of junkyard soul that engaged the viewer’s sympathy.

—Andy

Space Age Bachelor Pad Music

by Doug Bell

Prelude

I find myself stuck in a beige windowless cupboard, probably the worst room in the school; no doubt it was bequeathed to the Music Department begrudgingly. The hot day and lack of fresh air is causing sweat to run down my back, causing the scratchy white school shirt I'm wearing to become increasingly uncomfortable.

Amongst the rack of vinyl in the listening room, I pull out an unusual looking album. The LP's cover is weird, full of abstract shapes and colours. It reminds me of the strange short foreign animations (Czechoslovakian or Canadian?) shown on the new Channel 4 TV station sometime before *The Gong Show* comes on air.

Slipping the black disc from the sleeve it appears pristine, un-played. I stick it on the turntable, and gain some small pleasure from the crackle that comes from speakers as the needle hits the vinyl's surface. The record starts quiet, which makes me wonder momentarily if it is faulty, but no, soon the room is resounding to the throb of oscillators, seemingly random piano notes, cymbal crashes, tape noises and flurries of percussion — all occasionally punctured by short atmospheric silences. And that's all it takes for me to fall deeply in love with Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Kontakte*.

I have no idea what all this noise means, but to my untrained ears it sounds like aliens trying to make contact with me through the cheap school speakers.

Main Theme

Flash-forward 27 years from my 15-year-old self and after a bad day at work it feels like the only progress I've made is swapping scratchy, sweaty school shirts for scratchy, sweaty work shirts. Dur-

ing that long transition from gawky teenager to bored middle manager I may have lost my youthful good looks and put on a few pounds, but I have never lost my inquisitiveness about music; as my income has increased so has my music collection.

Over the same period my interest in science fiction and fandom has also increased exponentially. But while I've had numerous conversations with fans about what makes good successful science fiction literature, comics or films I often find that little attention is paid to what makes successful science fiction music. As a nerdy muso-obsessive I've spent far too long contemplating the question: does science fiction belong in music?

At the most basic level, this really is a stupid question. After all, it was only a matter of time before someone was going to write songs about aliens and flying saucers, or come up with a concept album based on their favourite SF novel. So the answer is yes, science fiction does belong in music, just as much as any other topic such as love won or lost. At the same time, musicians of all types have been calling instrumentals whatever they want for as long as instrumental music has been written, but naming a piece "Proxima Centauri" doesn't



"...And now, electronic music of Stockhausen, played on the original transistors, capacitors, and potentiometers..."

immediately classify a piece of music as science fictional. For me the more interesting question then is what makes a truly successful combination of science fiction concepts and music?

Retrograde Transformation

The first and easiest type of science fiction music to define is that which contains passing references to SF books or characters. Examples of this include bands choosing futuristic names for themselves from their favourite cult movie, or by name-checking fictional characters within a song. Popular music is full of this sort of thing where bands have plundered comics, science fiction, horror or fantasy to add a dash of exoticism to their world, but I'm not sure mentioning Batman in Black Grape's "Kelly's Heroes", or naming your band Duran Duran in homage to a character in *Barbarella* makes either qualify as science fictional.

Getting the superficial out of the way, there still exists a sizeable volume of albums/songs with decent SF content in the lyrics, including examples like *Jeff Wayne's War of The Worlds*, David Bowie's *Space Oddity*, Rick Wakeman's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, The Only Ones' *Another Girl Another Planet*, The Rezillos' *Thunderbirds Are Go*. Many, many more examples exist.

As stated above, a lot of the SF content of these songs is put across to the listener through lyrics (and occasionally narration). The music tends to stick to the standard major/minor chord schemes used throughout Western composition, while instrumentation is based around traditional rock/pop/classical line-ups, occasionally augmented with the odd spacey synth sound or studio effect.

As with all things musical whether you buy into a piece of music is largely a matter of individual taste. For me, looking at this sort of science fictional music there has to be a successful marriage of concept, music and lyrics coming together to create a unique vision for this sort of science fiction music to work. Here's three of my favourites and why I think they work — none of them I think are that obscure.

Although David Bowie's Major Tom songs (*Space Oddity*/*Ashes to Ashes*) are probably his most famous science fiction songs, I prefer the character of Ziggy Stardust. While the related album contains well known SF tropes such as apocalyptic end of the world scenarios, ray guns, a starman waiting in the skies, etc, there is something so fully rounded about the doomed pop-culture leper-messiah that Bowie famously killed off on stage, that it makes me feel that this is the closest rock and roll has so

far come to creating a character like Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius.

Speaking of Moorcock, Hawkwind's *Space Ritual* is another favourite where I think the balance of story telling and music is perfect. Why? Musically it is an attractive mix of driving guitars, a powerhouse rhythm section, electronics, psych-sax and top-notch lyrics from Michael Moorcock and poet front-man Robert Calvert. From the opener "Born To Go" you are strapped into the cockpit of a rocket blasting into the deepest darkest reaches of the cosmos, and yes, space is deep and dark and endless...

At the other end of the spectrum is The Misfits. With a back catalogue that reads like a horror film festival retrospective (*Abominable Dr Phibes*, *Bloodfeast*, *Day of The Dead*, *The Haunting* and so on), a dark gothic look complete with their signatory devilock hairstyle, and scary guitars resembling mutant spiders, you know which end of the science fiction spectrum these guys pull their inspiration from. The Misfits' music is loud unpretentious punk, with few tracks lasting longer than 3 minutes 30 secs, which makes the band the living embodiment of the drive-in sci-fi double feature and their songs the musical equivalent of an 88-minute long Roger Corman exploitation movie including that all-important helicopter explosion in the final reel.

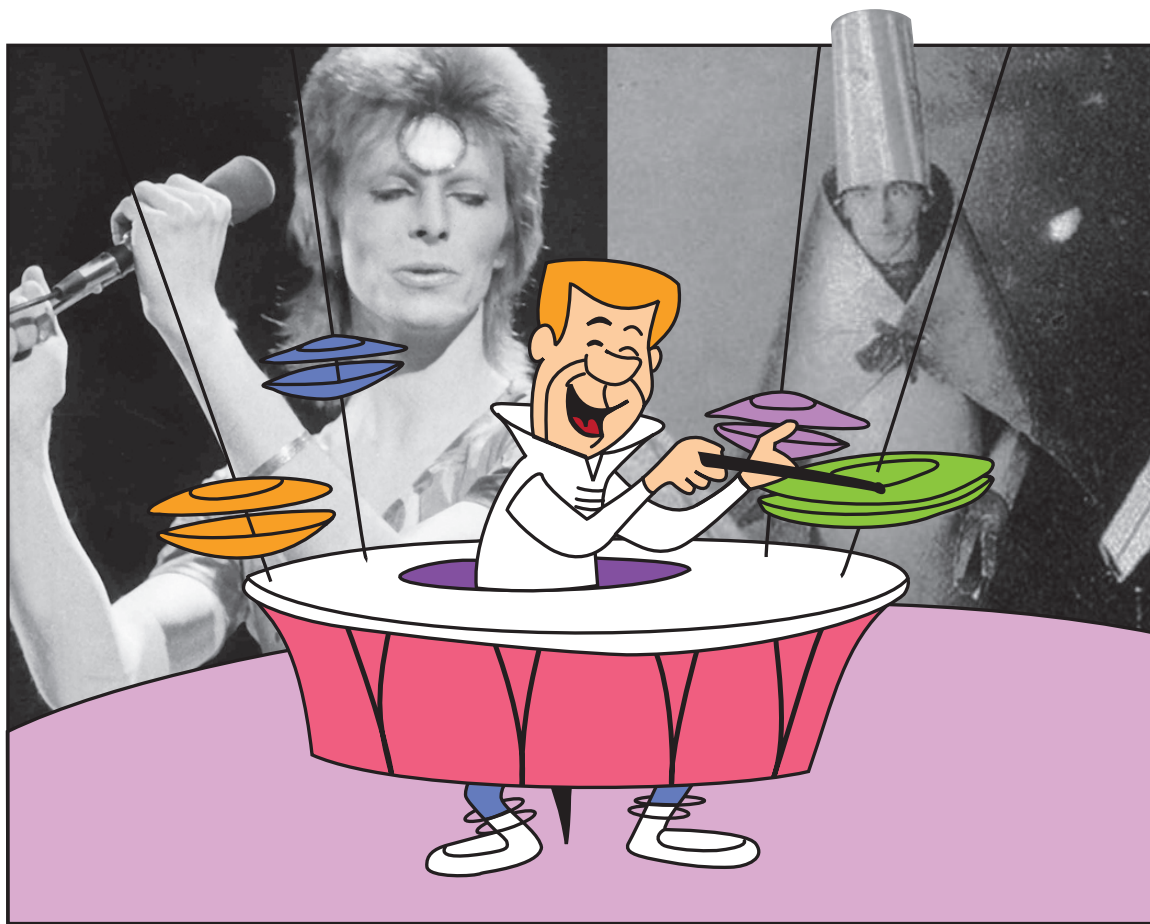
Inversion Transformation

Taking lyrics out of the equation though, one of the most exciting features about music is its ability to conjure up imaginary soundscapes. This works particularly well with electronic music and science fiction. After all SF is the literature of the future and the synthesizer at the time of its mainstream breakthrough was seen to be the instrument of the future.

Although early explorers of electronics/tape effects came from a classical composition background, the first wave of bands to really get in on this act were late sixties/early seventies acts, with the leading experimenters of the time being "Krautrock" bands such as Tangerine Dream, Neu!, the Cosmic Jokers, Ash Ra Tempel, etc. (Their sounds were so spacey that now they are referred to by the more politically correct label of "cosmiche" music.) Something about the experimental sounds of that period just screams film soundtrack which is why it was for a while impossible to watch a genre movie without hearing those pulsing sequencers of Tangerine Dream crop up, or watch anything with Klaus Kinski in it without the spiritual drones of Ash Ra Tempel floating in.

Around the time longhaired Krautrock bands





were supplanted by gobbing punks, Kraftwerk emerged from the *cosmiche* scene to spearhead a new type of science fiction music — retro-futurist synth pop. Content-wise their songs about robots, computers and radioactivity were nothing new, but coupled with their deadpan vocal delivery, the endless motorik drum loops, layers of clean synth lines and an artistic style that borrowed heavily from futurist art with a dash of the decadent Weimar Republic thrown in, and you knew that you were listening to something new and groundbreaking. Their early albums paint a vivid picture of an alternate history of a once glamorous now seedy Europe full of cold impersonal robots and crumbling art deco buildings.

Science fiction music had left the rocket ships behind, and now firmly inhabited the world of JG Ballard and the New Wave. During this period Bowie emerged from bohemian West Berlin with three classic Krautrock-inspired albums (*Low* features the deeply Ballardian “Always Crashing in the Same Car”), while back in the UK it seemed that every band was trading in their guitars for sequencers, and writing dark songs full of dystopian images. At the forefront of these were acts like Gary Numan, Cabaret Voltaire, and the early Human League. However it was The Normal and their *Crash*-inspired classic “Warm Leatherette” that best exemplifies this dark dystopian music.

Since the early eighties, retro-futurist music has cycled in and out of the music scene every decade or so. Somewhere sandwiched between Grunge and Brit-pop we had trip-hop that updated the grimy dystopian cityscapes with the urban sounds imported from hip-hop; and like the *cosmiche* bands years before them for a while it seemed you couldn’t move with out bumping up against Portishead or Massive Attack on a movie soundtrack.

The latest mutant form of retro-futurism is found in the niche genre of hauntology. Taking its name from Jacques Derrida’s concept that the present and future will always be haunted by the ghosts of the past, this genre is inspired by an odd patchwork of influences — ’70s public information films, early synth-pop and electronic music pioneers, the library music used in TV test card transmissions, horror movie soundtracks, BBC Radiophonic Workshop, weird fiction, radio station call-signs, psycho-geography, analog synths, children’s music and Open University programmes. As a child growing up in the seventies, I find the music produced by these bands both instantly nostalgic and deeply sinister. Broadcast and fellow traveler Boards of Canada and Stereolab occupy the poppier end of this scene while the hard core hauntology fans go for acts such as The Focus Group, Belpury Poly, Eric Zann, The Mount Vernon Arts Lab and The Advisory Circle on the Ghost Box



label. As Jim Jupp of Belpury Poly describes his music:

“Part of a theme that’s ongoing in all the Belpury Poly records, and I think all of the Ghost Box records, is a tradition of British science fiction, where you’ve got on the one hand the setting of a very traditional background, with very ancient things, but you’ve got this weird, cosmic stuff happening at the same time. A lot of old British sci-fi books — John Wyndham, for instance — have these really mundane, quaint little village settings, but all of a sudden something really freaky and cosmic appears in the middle of it.”

I admit that I am exactly the right demographic to “get” this music — i.e. a British science fiction and electronic music fan who grew up in the seventies. But one of the things that this music does so well is that it makes what should be familiar seem so... alien.

I often find the alien present in popular music of non-English speaking cultures across the globe, which is why I increasingly find micro-genres (such as for example Turkish/Anatolian garage bands, Welsh language folk-rock, Japanese psychedelia, outsider music, etc) more interesting than what is going on in the charts these days. It is the blend of standard western musical clichés, exotic instrumentation and foreign language that makes it sound so alive, so modern it could form the backdrop to the post-colonial science fiction novels of Ian McDonald or Paulo Bacigalupi. The future is here, now.

Retrograde Inversion Transformation

All too often when I’ve heard future music depicted in films, books and TV programmes what I see and hear is usually something along the lines of blue skinned alien slave girls playing slightly quirky songs on space-harps. In a genre that can deal with concepts from artificial intelligence to time travel most depictions of SF music come across as deeply flawed. So what is my solution?

My answer is to look for music where it seems like the speculative nature of science fiction is written into the DNA of the composition. But surely the fundamentals of music, pitch, timbre, volume, duration, and rhythm, have been pretty much explored in the lifespan of man?

Well, yes and no... I often find that while listening to experimental music that I get that sensawunda experience that I do while reading a damn good science fiction novel, even though the music never makes obvious mention of space ships, robots or

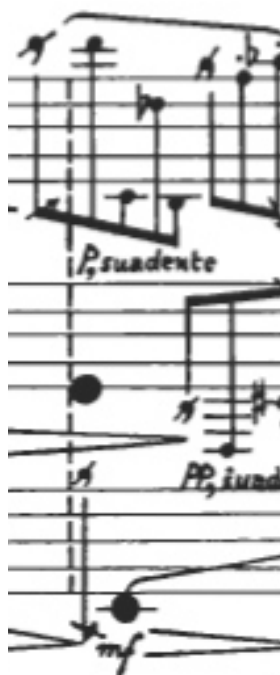
rayguns. For example Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Kontakte*. One of the leading composers of his generation, Stockhausen wrote this piece to explore the relationships between recorded sound and live performance, between artificial electronic noises and those played by acoustic instruments (in this case a piano and percussion). While not one of the first electronic pieces of classical music, it was the first to deliberately explore these relationships — it is in all senses a composition dealing with a first contact scenario. The fact that its deep rumbling electronics, spiky sparse instrumentation and atonality makes it sound like an alternative soundtrack to *Alien* is purely coincidental.

It is concepts such as this that has driven the cutting edge of avant-garde modern composition. The introduction of chance, poly-tonality, micro-tonality, electronics, minimalism, home-made instruments, poly-rhythms and the abandonment of standard musical notation makes critics of 20th/21st century classical music claim that it isn’t “proper” music. What it is though is music formed on groundbreaking concepts and speculation.

What strikes most first-time listeners about this experimental music is that it sounds completely alien. This is a good thing in science fiction terms since just as alien life forms would not necessarily be upright bipedal forms that predominantly spoke English, their choice of music wouldn’t necessarily be built around the standard octave and 4/4 major/minor chord progressions that dominate Western musical traditions. (Music from the Far East and primitive indigenous folk music often sound alien to western listeners too for exactly the same reasons — they are based on entirely different tonal, chromatic and beat structures.)

Modern composition also deals directly in the speculative. Chance and aspiration have been a big part of compositions such as John Cage’s work, but dating back further to the piano pieces of Charles Ives it was not uncommon to find chords written on the sheet music that were physically impossible to play. Ives wanted to introduce elements of randomness and dissonance to these pieces by knowing the performer could not play them flawlessly. The genetically engineered 12-fingered concert pianist in the film *Gattaca* would probably be able to accomplish this feat easily, but just imagine the music that could be played with further genetic augmentation, or by beings with more than two arms or mouths?

Anyway, this is all fine for the world’s experimental music conservatories but are there any examples to draw from good-old fashioned rock and roll?

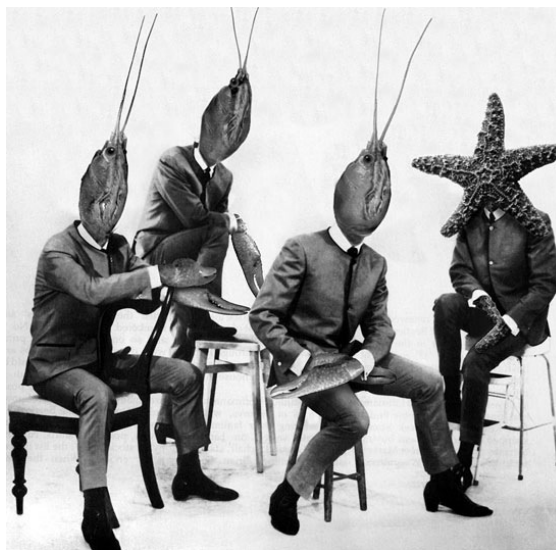


As popular music is by definition popular it by and large tends to shy away from non-standard composition techniques. Indeed if you removed 4/4 songs with I-IV-V chord progressions from the rock music canon you wouldn't be left with an awful lot. Elements do exist in no-fi, post-rock and improvisatory scenes but again this is largely underground music.

Few well-known exceptions exist and one of those is *Greyfolded* by John Oswald/The Grateful Dead. Oswald, with his plunder-ponic techniques, was a mash-up artist before anyone knew mash-ups existed. When he was invited to plunder the Dead's vaults for a project, he came up with a two CD version of the Dead's classic song "Dark Star". Piecing together versions from across the band's history and featuring all the band's members he presented a version coming in just under two hours that could not have existed without modern recording technology. This may be a mighty example of sampling, but why do I think it qualifies as science fictional?

First off, throughout the piece hardly a minute goes by without moving up and down through the band's personal timeline as Jerry Garcia and friends sing and play instruments with a multitude of different older and younger versions of themselves. Secondly "Dark Star"'s open-ended and improvisational nature often meant it fitted perfectly in between other Dead songs or jams, meaning that it is often hard to define where this track starts and ends when listening to Dead gigs. As such, at the start of *Greyfolded* you hear snatches of riffs from jams and songs all weaving in and out of each other, like a giant cosmic rock orchestra tuning up. Minutes of this pass before all these musical lines collapse in on themselves to a single "Dark Star" riff that drives the album forward. As the piece progresses, at various points that core melody explodes out again with layer upon layer of different versions of "Dark Star" piled on top of each other before again imploding. All this gives you the feeling that you are listening to a breakdown in the laws of space, time and alternative universes. *Greyfolded* is the aural equivalent of Crisis on Infinite Jerry Garcias!

In some ways similar to *Greyfolded* is The Residents' *Beyond the Valley of A Day In The Life*. Pieced together from Beatles samples to create a new sonic artifact, this is the secret history of the Beatles and details what happened in the recording studio after the tapes were supposed to stop recording at the end of *Sgt Pepper*. It is a kaleidoscopic affair where as the phrase "Please everybody if we haven't done what we could've done we've tried"



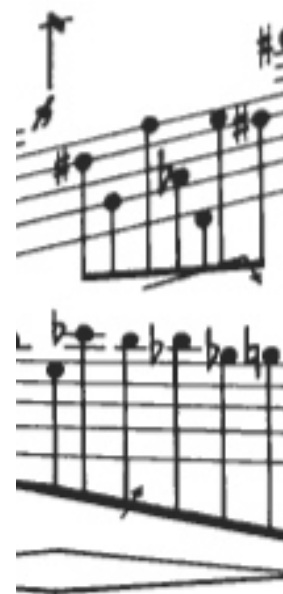
◀ The Residents

endlessly repeats you feel that you've stepped out of the real world into a Thomas Pynchon biography about the Fab Four.

Coda

Since making first contact with *Kontakte* I've moved through time, space and tonality. I'm still continually searching for a watertight definition of what constitutes good science fiction music. I gave up listening to the charts a long, long time ago. Not only that, I realize that when it comes to music I now struggle to recognize most contemporary rock/pop acts. In my rush to find new sounds I often find myself lost in most musical conversations that take place at work or in the pub these days, and I kind of like it that way. I feel I'm doing my bit to balance the scales against corporate pop music. Sometimes though I wish I could just disconnect my brain from analyzing music and enjoy it for what it is.

Meanwhile on Earth 2...it's a wild damp Friday night in Falmouth. I'm with Christina and my work colleague Charlotte in one of the harbourside bars, safe from the wind and rain. A pint of Skinner's is in my hand, which I'm trying to protect as bodies close in around me. Everyone is there watching a bunch of guys in identical costumes singing lustily about being deported to South Australia. It feels like everyone in the pub is joining in, singing along, drinking, having fun. Some rowdy lads down the front are jumping around, almost pogo-ing, while the bearded chaps on stage start their last number. Soon they'll have finished their set, and we'll be off to another pub for a different band and more beer. In this universe the sea shanty is king, no-one listens to that rubbish pop music stuff. Is this a strange Twilight Zone world? No, it happened just a month ago, right here... ✓



To a More Platonic Orb



Reviews by Randy Byers

Westercon 65: Conclusion

5–8 July 2012

DoubleTree Hotel SeaTac Airport, Seattle



It had been a long time since I went to a Westercon. The last one I remember was in Portland in 2001, where I spent practically the whole time in the bar with Lucius Shepard. Not that I've ever been a Westercon regular, really. The only one I've been to outside Seattle or Portland was the one in Oakland in 1987. I'm not

sure why I never found Westercon attractive, although I suspect that initially it was because I was too poor to travel where it went outside my home region, and then by the time I had enough money to travel I had lost interest in big conventions other than Worldcon.

I didn't even make it to the last Westercon in Seattle in 2003. What lured me to this one was Spike asking if I'd help out with the London in 2014 Worldcon bid party. I thought I could show up for at least that one night, but as plans continued to develop and Spike offered to share a room with me and said that Tom Becker would be coming after all and Kevin Roche and Andy Trembley would be co-hosting the party, I began to get more enthusiastic. Spike and I went back and forth about how much and what kind of beer to get for the party, and so on the Friday of the convention (it started on Thursday) I picked up two 1/6 barrels of beer at the Uber Tavern, picked up Spike at Harborview Medical Center, where she had been visiting Stu Shiffman, and, after lunch and gossip in Belltown, drove to the Doubletree Hotel by SeaTac airport and began setting up for the party.

Andy and Kevin had gotten a suite to host a party for Westercon 66, which they are chairing. They let us use that space for the London in 2014 party, provided wine to go with the beer, and helped us set up. Tom played door dragon, Kath-

ryn Duval (another Bay Area fan, whom I met here for the first time) checked ID, Spike put out trays of cheese and crisps, and I played bartender. The party went very well, I thought. It was relatively small, so I didn't have to work my ass off like the London in 2014 bartenders at Renovation did, but it was still the most active of the parties that night. I got to hide out in my secure little bartender cubbyhole (the bathroom) but still saw just about every face that passed through the party, including quite a few cute ones.

We didn't finish off even those small kegs, and Kevin and Andy asked me if I'd pour the rest of the beer and wine at the Westercon 66 party the next night. I was only too happy to, assisted this time by Tom. The main attraction of this party, however, was Kevin's Thin-bot—a robot he built to mix cocktails. It's an amazing device that is of course catnip to geeks. A huge hit with the crowd. Therefore we *still* did not kill either keg, although we got close on the amber ale. (The other beer was an IPA, both beers from Two Beers Brewing.) On the other hand, because I was Crew, Kevin let me run the Thin-bot to mix myself a drink, using the touch screen interface that he'd also written himself. (That's apparently what he does in his day job at IBM.) Very cool!

Other than the two parties, I also visited the dealers room and the art show and occasionally manned the London in 2014 table. Everybody who stopped by was keen on the chance to visit London, and one Canadian fan said he was a lifelong Manchester United fan who planned to take the opportunity to attend their first match of the season the weekend after Worldcon. I also talked a lot with John Hertz about DUFF and Japan and Heinlein and fanzines and blogs, and I visited with my homeys, Jerry and Suzle, whom I somehow hadn't seen much in Seattle lately. It was a very low key convention for me, except for the parties, and it was nice to spend a lot of time with Spike and Tom and Kevin and Andy and John, chewing the fat and

smoffing about the Orlando vs. Spokane Worldcon bids for 2015. There was also a lot of talk about Westercon's declining membership numbers, often contrasted, because it was being held in the same hotel this year, with Norwescon, which attracts over three times as many people. Andy and Kevin won the right to host Westercon 66 in Sacramento in a surprise and controversial write-in bid, and they're eager to try to revivify the convention if possible. I hope to make it to that one just because I think those two will put on a great show, but the Utah bid that won for the following year inspires less confidence.

Well, what do I know? Not much. It may be that Westercon's prime is long past, and the difficulties of hosting this kind of moveable fannish feast have become insurmountable. Or maybe it's simply shrinking back to the size it was in an earlier era, and soon Westercon will be a convention for old traditionalists, just like Corflu. My kind of con.

Shannach – The Last: Farewell to Mars

Leigh Brackett

Haffner Press, 2011

Earl Kemp isn't the only one reading books from the genre treasure house that is Haffner Press. For me it has been the final volume in the collection of all of Leigh Brackett's short science fiction, fittingly called *Shannach—The Last: Farewell to Mars*. The valedictory tone of the title is appropriate not just to what these stories represent within Brackett's career (the final story, "Mommies and Daddies," is from 1974, just four years before she died), but also to the sense that Brackett gradually said goodbye to the exotic planetary romances of her younger days as the genre shifted in the '50s toward more satirical and socially (and scientifically) relevant themes.

Probably the most successful of these more realistic (for certain values of "realistic") stories is "Runaway," about a man having a nervous breakdown in a conformist future, which seems very much a critique of the corporate and suburban culture that was transforming America in the '50s. It may also be a self-cri-

tique of sorts, as the protagonist bolts the medicated and therapeutical life of future Los Angeles for an adventure on Venus, only to discover not Brackett's old steamy rainforest-ocean planet but a barren hellhole where the exploited human miners live under suffocating domes. "All the Colors of the Rainbow" from 1957 engages with the Civil Rights movement via a story of anti-alien racism, while "Mommies and Daddies" seems almost experimental in its oblique depiction of a dystopian generation gap.

Not that Brackett ever really abandoned the planetary romance or space opera, both of which are plentifully represented here, and in fact some of these stories are from the peak of her career and were published at the same time as the classics in the previous volume from Haffner, *Lorelei of the Red Mist: Planetary Romances*. If even the romances have a valedictory tone, it's because Brackett's best adventure stories always had a sense of loss and belatedness. The title story, "Shannach—The Last," is about the last surviving member of an ancient civilization on Mercury. "The Last Days of Shandakor" is about the last surviving members of an ancient civilization on Mars. "The Road to Sinharat" (which is a tangential follow-up to the Eric John Stark short novel *The Secret of Sinharat*), and "Purple Priestess of the Mad Moon" are late editions to Brackett's Martian oeuvre that dwell on the disappearance of Martian culture in the face of human colonialism. "The Citadel of Lost Ages" is about the loss of innocence brought about by the regaining of lost knowledge.

These stories still feature torn, Byronic heroes, lost civilizations, super science, swords and blasters, and a hard-boiled poetic sensibility. The Martian prostitutes still wear tiny bells that make "sounds as delicate as rain, distillate of all the sweet wickedness of the world." That's Brackett's pulpy wheelhouse, so it was a little bit surprising that my favorite story was a space opera tale of interstellar political intrigue called "Last Call from Sector 9G" (the third story in the collection with the word "last" in the title). This is the tale of a washed-up former diplomatic

A TENSE MOMENT TEN THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS FROM HOME



agent who is given one last job to prove himself and ends up neck deep in plots, coups, double-crosses, and space war. Brackett handles the intricate twists of the plot and politics with great aplomb, and again weaves in the theme of the irrational distrust of the alien and strange.

Brackett's legacy is difficult to trace, because the planetary romances that she's perhaps best known for are an archaic form now. Yet these collections from Haffner Press make a strong case for her continuing relevance, as do her contributions in film (*The Big Sleep*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Empire Strikes Back*). She was a consummate professional whose work John Clute, in the entry about her in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, condescendingly finds notable for "its refusal to transcend competence." This tips the scales in the direction of the formulaic quality of her stories, but it doesn't give enough recognition to what is unique about her approach, which is more emotional and atmospheric than intellectual. She took Edgar Rice Burroughs' exotic lost world adventures, melded them with C.L. Moore's smoldering sensuality, and then infused the mixture with a hard-boiled, downbeat mood straight out of Hammett, Chandler, and film noir. There's nothing else like it, and I commend these Haffner collections to your attention.

Prometheus

Directed by Ridley Scott

My brother and I like to tell the story about how when we saw *Alien* (1979) on its initial release, by the end of the movie he had his eyes covered and I had my ears plugged. I've always had a difficult time with horror films, particularly the gruesome ones (as opposed to the gothic), so I was planning to skip *Prometheus* until it came out on DVD and I could watch it under controlled circumstances. But the bipolar initial reactions to the film were intriguing to me, so before I knew it I found myself sitting in the Cinerama, where it so happens I also finally saw *Alien* for a second time in 2003.

So I guess what I'll say up front is that I thought *Prometheus* was pretty good. While I was watching it I was irritated by the idiotic, obnoxious characters ("Good! Glad you're finally dead!") and senseless behavior (take off helmet, open hatch, play gitchy-goo with unknown serpentine life form), but over all I thought it hit the right notes of irrational, awe-full grandeur. It doesn't make much sense when you think about it, but it pursues its own crazy illogic and sci-fi mythology to some effect. It left a



powerful imprint despite the fact that I was never fully invested in the movie emotionally or intellectually.

The basic set-up is that scientists on the Earth of the near future discover evidence that aliens visited in the prehistoric past and left a star map in primitive cave paintings and carvings. A spaceship is sent to investigate the star system where these aliens apparently came from. The scientists behave like absolute idiots (standard horror trope), and gruesome shit begins to happen.

I'm getting into **SPOILER** territory now. In previous Alien films we've seen that the Weyland Corporation was interested in using the xenomorphs as a biological weapon. This film reveals that the idea wasn't original to the corporation, both showing us who originally developed the weapon and how it backfired on them. It specifically depicts the weapon as genetic in nature, and the heritage of the human genome is the core concern. This also allows Scott to tie the main theme to the sexual imagery that has been there from the beginning, thanks to H.R. Giger's blatantly sexual creature designs and an unhealthy fascination with precious bodily fluids and secretions. There's a stew of imagery around sex, rape, infection, sterility, gestation, abortion, mutation, and evolution that carries a lot of weight outside whatever it is the narrative is trying to accomplish. The equation of impregnation and infection is pretty powerful stuff just by itself. Both sexes can do it! We are left with the implication that the aliens called the Engineers, who created the genetic weapon, consider humanity itself an infection that must be eradicated. Stay tuned for the inevitably disappointing sequel in which all is explained!

There are questions that seemed like plot holes to me. Why does the ancient star map point to a secret military industrial moon? Why does the android (superbly played by Michael Fassbender) infect Dr. Holloway with alien genetic material (aside from the fact that Holloway is an unbearable idiot who deserves to be disposed of?) and try to force Dr. Shaw to bring the alien implantation to term? In the end it doesn't actually seem to matter. It plays out like a nightmare where the meaning is more symbolic than logical. It's a nightmare about bad parents who treat their children like a disease.

Dead Girls #1

The House of Mirky Depths

2012

We get some interesting items in trade for *Chunga*. Paul Di Filippo (as his name is correctly spelled — apologies, Paul, for mangling it in the last issue!) sends us cool packages, for example. As Michael Dirda describes it in his recent conreport for *The American Scholar* (<http://theamericanscholar.org/reader-con/>), "Even Paul's envelopes and book mailers are distinctive, since he decorates them with gonzo collages, somewhat reminiscent of those of Max Ernst in *The Hundred Headless Woman*." Indeed, Rudi Rubberoid would approve! Inside these decorated envelopes can be found random catalogs and comic books. Most recently it was the first issue of a comic called *Dead Girls*, adapted by Richard Calder from his science fiction novel of the same name.

I'm unfamiliar with the novel, so I can't comment on the quality of the adaptation. I found this issue of the comic confusing, thin, and badly paced. Apparently in this future genetically-modified females have been designed as sex toys called Dolls, but the Dolls have been infected by a virus that they pass on to their male clients, and this causes a genetic modification in the males that they then pass on to their own half-human, half-robot vampire offspring, called Dead Girls. So much by way of an expository intro. We are then tossed into a story about a boy named Iggy and a girl named Primavera whom he has a crush on. Primavera is a Dead Girl. She's raped by haters, and she takes it out on Iggy by biting him. He doesn't mind, because he loves her. Now he's infected, but what the hell, he's a doomed misfit anyway.

The artist, Leonardo Giron, is described as manga-influenced, which I suppose is true, but in any case his panel breakdowns seem pretty pedestrian. The text has a lot of ellipses, some of them inexplicable, as when Iggy returns to his family's apartment after he's been bitten and we get a six panel sequence showing him getting from the street to the apartment door, each panel accompanied by a single elliptical word: "...a world... that... had... never... been... mine." Whoa! The angst... is... very... protracted.

I guess this is aimed at goth kids who feel alienated and vampiric and doomed. God bless 'em! If they want to bite each other and call it infected love, who am I to sneer? I just think they deserve better comic books to read, that's all.

So I can't recommend this comic book, but I can recommend trading with Paul Di Filippo. You'll want to collect the envelopes, even when you don't want to collect the contents.

Bullshit

Edited by "William Housel"

<http://efanzines.com/Bullshit/index.htm>

This fanzine is not available on eFanzines, so don't even bother looking there. It's not just paper-only; it's *Twiltone*-only. The impeccable mimeography — not to mention the Degler

jokes — makes one wonder which old trufan is masked by the editor's pseudonym, William Housel. Colin Hinz? Jeff Schalles?

Well, the obsession with the Hugos argues otherwise, I suppose. Housel hints that he's won a Hugo, which narrows the field of possibilities at least somewhat, depending on whether or not he or she won in a fan category or pro category. Could it be Rich Lynch? But I've never seen Rich exhibit such abject devotion to the Hugo fan categories. This might suggest Curt Phillips, perhaps, whose self-congratulatory love of the many Hugos he's won for his mediocre-but-frequent *Pulp Reenactments* has been an embarrassment to fandom for so long. Maybe the pseudonym means that Curt is finally feeling embarrassed himself.

It is the nature of such a fanzine — the title of which describes the intention very plainly — that it's hard to tell who actually wrote the contributions, no matter the attribution. I mean, could it really be Chris Garcia and James Bacon gleefully enthusing about fondling each other's awesome Hugo rockets? Could it really be Taral bemoaning his lack of a rocket to fondle? One begins to suspect that it's Claire Brialey taking teh piss again just to wind up Mike Glycer even further. The reviews of non-existent fanzines are superbly witty, but, alas, I can affirm that, despite the byline, they weren't written by me. The only thing that reads just like what it says it is would be Lloyd Penney's LOC decrying elitist old pharts and declaring his and Yvonne's intention to bid for yet another Toronto Worldcon.

Well, we here at the House of *Chunga* are obviously big fans of hokum, so this fanzine cannot help but meet with our approval, whatever its uncertain provenance. If nothing else, the glazed shit-brown ceramic front and back covers by Jon Singer (so says the credit) are an incredible coup on the part of "William Housel." We are bile-green with envy. More please! The world may not need any more bullshit, but when the BS is this fine, it's hard not to wallow. ✓

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO
CLEVER, BUT THERE'S
A MILLION PEOPLE
IN FANDOM WHO'VE
NEVER EVEN
HEARD OF YOU!



WELL, I'VE NEVER EVEN
HEARD OF THEM
EITHER, SO IT'S A
MEXICAN STAND-UP!



MEXICAN STAND-BY?
MEXICAN STAND-IN?
MEXICAN HANDSTAND?
MEXICAN WAVE?
HUEVOS RANCHEROS?

SOMETHING
MEXICAN

DIOS MIO



THE

Wilum Pugmire
5115 S Mead St
Seattle WA 98118

Wilum Pugmire

Jessica's piece conjured forth so many memories. I remember going to Nameless Ones meetings with my high school girlfriend (her parents met at an early 1950s meeting), and then later on with Jessica. We'd meet at Vonda's, or with Bill & Bubbles on their houseboat. Corresponding with Harry Warner Jr. Sweet memories.

I wasn't a reader. I was a big-time horror film fan. But I wrote for a lot of fanzines in the 1970s, and I was always hanging out with SF fen. I finally got hooked on Lovecraft and became determined to become a Cthulhu Mythos writer. I love being a writer, but I sure do miss those fannish days of the 1970s. So many fanzines!

Because of declining health, I no longer attend cons. I got tired of Norwescon because they have next to nothing to offer the professional Lovecraftian author. The best cons I have attended have always been WFC — brilliant! — and MythosCon was amazing. I'd love to attend Readercon just once.

It's always such a pleasure to see *Chunga* — a real fanzine! Thanx for remembering me.

Yvonne Rousseau

Yvonne Rousseau
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I was devastated to read Randy's report in *Chunga* 19, that 'Our leading Australian correspondent is Yvonne Rousseau'. What an unrewarding continent!

In the previous issue's Russ symposium, I was

charmed to read about the irises that bloom not only in Joanna Russ's former garden but also in the gardens of Kate Schaefer and (from now on) Randy Byers as well. I've always remembered how wonderfully Russ captured the allure of the iris in her 1975 novel *The Female Man*: 'scattered irises that look like an expensive and antique cross between insects and lingerie'.

Ron Drummond recalls convincingly: 'What it was about Joanna is that she consistently spoke to the best in who you were [...]'. She earns gratitude not only by demonstrating intelligence and wit occurring in a woman's writing, but also by her solidarity with her forerunners and by the solace of her wonderful sheer absurdities. The narrator of 'Everyday Depressions' always cheers me bizarrely when I remember her attempt to write a Gothic romance: 'Now I need an estate name. Pemberley? Woking? Bother? / Bother was always loveliest in the spring....'

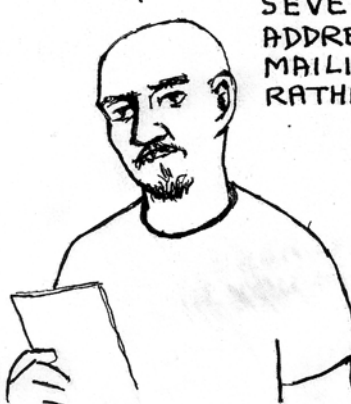
To Andy Hooper: in reading your 'Twilight in the Reading City', I'm remembering your report in November 2009 that diabetic retinopathy had prevented you 'from reading actual books for at least 18 months'. In 2012, you report that 'an illuminated screen is now far more comfortable than focusing on the pages of a book'. It's therefore a relief to read that you are 'still far from being ready to stop' either reading or collecting books.

ONE DAY, PAPER FANZINES WILL COME BACK!

YES, IN FACT IT MIGHT HAPPEN FAIRLY SOON

AMATEURS

SEVERAL OF THE ADDRESSES ON THIS MAILING LIST SEEM RATHER OUTDATED



IRON PIG

You mention that ‘Seattle thrift stores traditionally have several shelves full of books by Dan Brown and John Grisham, or their contemporary equivalent.’ Instead of a ‘thrift store’, Australians visit an ‘op shop’: an ‘opportunity’ shop offering bargains in order to raise money for a charity. Currently, I am fairly certain that every Australian op shop would stock at least one copy of Derryn Hinch’s 1986 thriller, *Death at Newport*.

Both in Adelaide, where I’ve lived since 1988, and in Melbourne, 755 km away, I’ve spent very enjoyable hours secondhand-bookshopping with parties of visiting fans. Most memorable, however, were tours involving just me and one overseas visitor: Andy Butler in late July 2001, and John Clute in February 2006 and in late August 2010. These leisurely browsings in the Melbourne suburbs of Carlton and North Carlton were exceptionally successful and enjoyable. But bookshops keep changing. On 29 January 2009, the roof of Carlton’s wonderfully rambling Book Affair caught fire, and the shop has moved to less enticing premises. This year, in addition, Alice’s Bookshop in North Carlton has been sold by Anthony Marshall who had owned it since 1992 and whose *Trafficking in Old Books* disconcertingly unveils the bookseller’s viewpoint.

You say that ‘Book collecting now seems even more eccentric than when I began’, and that ‘it’s possible that books will lose a great deal of their value, and come to be seen as obsolescent media’. Today’s rapid rate of change certainly contrasts with the current familiarity of a couple of fictional bookshops that I’ve picked out from 1920s England.

In Walter de la Mare’s ‘The Green Room’ (1925), Mr Elliott’s bookshop is an ‘oldish house’ with a ‘dingy huggermugger of second-hand literature that filled the shelves and littered the floor’. The old and ‘worldly-wise’ Mr Elliott is ‘a rotund little man’ who might have been mistaken for ‘a ballet-master’. He pleases the narrative’s hero by treating him respectfully, as a knowledgeable connoisseur worthy to be invited into the inner sanctum. He also displays a familiar reaction when a customer chooses a book to buy: ‘Mr Elliott wheeled about and accepted the volume with that sprightly turn of his podgy

wrist with which he always welcomed a book that was about to leave him for ever.’ In my experience, however, this kind of behaviour at the cash register often goes with bright comments from sellers who know very little about their stock.

Another familiar style of bookshop is described by Dorothy L. Sayers in ‘The Learned Adventure of the Dragon’s Head’ (1928). Here, Lord Peter Wimsey ‘picked his way out of Mr Ffolliott’s dark back shop, strewn with the flotsam and jetsam of many libraries’, to see what his schoolboy nephew has found on ‘the “cheap shelf” exposed to the dust of the street’. Mr Ffolliott is clear about his pricing, and prepared to explain it: the book in question is ‘in a very bad state, you see; covers loose and nearly all the double-page maps missing.’ Admitting that ‘it’s rather out of our line’, Mr Ffolliott has decided not to wait about for another example ‘to make up a complete copy’ but instead ‘just put it out to go for what it would fetch in the *status quo*’.

After another 80 years or so have gone by, it seems unlikely that people will still be finding bookshops like these to visit.

Randy sez: I’ve been feeling bad, because none of the Siberian irises descended from Joanna Russ’ garden that I planted last fall came up this year. It was beginning to feel like some form of literary criticism from beyond the grave! However, I’ve just consulted the internet, and I’m told that they seldom bloom the first year after planting. Mine didn’t even sprout, so I guess I’ll see what happens next year. I may need to hit Kate up for more rhizomes.

Gary Mattingly

John Coxon sounds like he had an awesome time in Seattle. He also seems to have drunk a fair

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amount of beer. Such a party animal.

Brad Foster says he does watch some reality shows and those he watches sound reasonable. I don't watch any though. I've actually been attempting to decrease the amount of time I spend watching regular TV series. I'm trying to concentrate on watching movies, particularly "classic" movies. I'm not sure why other than usually they are better than most series on TV and I can actually converse about them with a few other people who watch such things. TCM can be very helpful in viewing some of them. I may even go to the San Francisco Silent Film Festival this year. I should since I bought a ticket for the whole series. I did go to see *Napoleon* which they sponsored in Oakland at the Paramount. It was excellent. I was very tempted to go to the TCM festival which is happening right now. Hm, another year.

Marvelous photos and artwork throughout. I was also amazed and saddened by the death of Bill Kunkel. I see mentions of too many fans dying.

I think my only qualm about the whole issue was that sometimes I had to bend the pages a bit to see some of the text next where the staples were. I hate bending fanzines. Although thanks for keeping it full size instead of folding it in half and making the print smaller. My eyes just aren't what they used to be which is evident by half a dozen magnifying glasses sitting around the house.

Andy sez: *As you might see elsewhere in this issue, I've made something of a parallel effort to watch old movies lately, although I don't know how many of them would qualify as anyone's "classics." But really, almost any movie has to be better than a show about abandoned storage lockers.*

Mark Plummer

I certainly wasn't thinking of you when I made those comments in *BW* #48 about the way some fan-editors (over) use Rotsler artwork. I wasn't especially conscious that you use his stuff at all — although I suppose if pushed I'd have guessed that you probably do, because we pretty much all do — and I think that's a compliment because it suggests to me that whatever you do use is integrated into the design package.

Many years back I decided that bookseller would be my contingency occupation should the British Government ever chose to dispense with my services. It was a largely safe arrangement at the time given that civil servants hardly ever got made redundant and so I suppose there's a certain inevitability in the way that as David Cameron and his comrades strip out the last vestiges of public sector

job security in this country the prospects for making a living as a bookseller are diminishing even more rapidly so I'll never get to try it out.

I don't suppose I ever considered it as that serious a proposition anyway, although I concede that I may initially have fallen prey to the How Hard Can It Be syndrome. It is, I guess, one of those things fans all think they can do because on some level they probably do it already. We all buy books, and sometimes we sell some of them. So this was simply a question of doing what I was doing already — trawling around second-hand bookshops — only doing a bit more of it and offloading the greater percentage of my purchases. Sure, I was seeing plenty of books on sale for, say, 50p each, books which were probably good for, oh, 75p or even a £1. Free money really. How hard could it be?

And I still get this occasionally. Due to a complex chain of circumstances, a large part of the stock for Andy Richards's Cold Tonnage second hand book and cardboard box empire ended up in our living room after last year's Eastercon. (That's another thing about being a bookseller, I gather: boxes of books in the living room, and the dining room, and the bedroom, and everywhere really. Still Claire wouldn't mind. Probably.) A couple of days later we were hanging out with the sci-fi elite at the Arthur C Clarke Award presentation and I saw *Strange Horizons* editor Niall Harrison. You might be interested in this, I said to him. Right now I have the only publicly available copies of a new Stephen Baxter novella *Gravity Dreams* (PS Publishing, 2011 — real booksellers talk like this all the time, so they tell me) in my very living room. Printed boards, as issued without DJ (see, I can do all the lingo). Yours for only £12 plus postage, I said. I could see he was wavering so I kept up the pressure by email the next day, encouraged him to effect a PayPal transfer to Andy, packaged up a copy of the book, and dropped it in the post. There. Easy. So that's, umm, £3 profit for Cold Tonnage. Now if I were doing that for myself, I'd only have to do something similar, er, 15 times a day, every day, including weekends and with no holidays, and if I had no overheads at all I'd be making less than half as much as I earn now. Free money.

But no, mostly I'm under no illusions about the practical realities of bookselling, especially in the second decade of the twenty-first century, which is why I'm a pure hobbyist. I love it, just so long as it's not central or necessarily even contributing to paying the mortgage or buying potatoes. I still like trawling around bookshops, especially second-hand bookshops, even though I know if I'm looking for something specific it's better to look online. And

I like hanging out in convention dealers' rooms, whether helping out Andy or as a punter.

It's a rather fine community of its own really. This Eastercon, and on Andy's behalf, I sold a book to another dealer, Bob Wardzinski. Bob was pretty sure it was a copy that Andy had bought from Dave Gibson, former proprietor of the Fantasy Centre, and which Dave had bought originally from Bob. We were lamenting the failure of early fandom to evolve a system akin to tramps' marks: something a bit more subtle than those passalong paths on the carbon copies of early *Kteics*, perhaps with a small dot above and to the right of the page number on page 27 to indicate that the book came from the library of, say, Ted Carnell. Bad example, that, as Ted had book-plates. We know this as we once discovered we had his copy of the first edition of *In Search of Wonder* on Andy's table. As I recall, Greg Pickersgill withdrew it from sale as he decided none of our potential customers deserved to own it. At least, that's my version of the story.

If I could draw, our confederate Greg would probably feature in a 'Cold Tonnage Memory' or two to go alongside Edd Vick's from Half Price. I think I'd also do something around the way that a significant subset of book-purchasers think that any book that's in a box is intrinsically more interesting than any book that's on the table or on the shelf — because of course that's where you keep the good stuff, in a box where nobody can see it. I suppose it's just that suspicion that if the books are in a box then nobody's picked over them yet and you might be able to go through them yourself and find that absolutely cracking item, the real bargain or the thing you've never seen before, and here's the chance to get at it before anybody else, especially other dealers.

We saw a little of what that can be like manning the Cold Tonnage tables at the 2004 Worldcon. We'd just unpacked our boxes, and embarked on our fussy practice of alphabetisation which Andy himself regards as extravagant. A pack of fellow dealers — and I think 'pack' is the right collective noun here — descended on us. Books were grabbed, my nascent alphabetising sacrificed to the gods of chaos, as books flew back and forth, from hand to hand and back to other parts of the table where vast stacks were assembled and jealously guarded. I couldn't swear to it, but there was at least a chance that some of these people were selling our books to each other. We emerged from the melee with several piles stashed behind the table for later collection and no clear idea of who had bought them and for how much. We trusted to Andy's prior assurance that it would all be all right, probably,

PARITY ERROR



although it seemed like a good time to consult his detailed instructions for dealer discounts which, we concluded, made no sense at all. We also tried to work out why, after all that, we didn't seem to have taken any money.

All of this is a bit rambling and tangential. And indeed possibly repeating stuff I've said before, in my own fanzines or in letters to other people. Maybe that in turn speaks to the universality of the experiences. I don't know Bill Austin and yet I do. I've only visited one of the shops you mention, Andy, the University Bookstore, but there's a way in which I know all those places (and I wonder if one of them is the place we walked past last year. Randy had mentioned a particular Ace edition of an Andre Norton book he'd been having trouble finding. We found two copies at last year's Eastercon and brought them over, and then, walking along the street with him somewhere down near the market, we saw another copy sitting in a store window. Another tangent.) I never visited Horizon, but Kate Schaefer's description evokes comparable afternoons in the Fantasy Centre on Holloway Road where the book you needed to settle any debate was always in reach — and, *pace* Kate's comments, we never had any compunction about juxtaposing alcohol and books, at least for the parties, although Gerald Suster inexpertly lighting roll-ups near the pulp shelves was a bit of a concern, I grant you.

And seeing that photo on page 15 of the boarded-and-closed Horizon store I'm inclined to rehash something else I said to Mike Meara. I'm really not a luddite and I value the internet in many, many ways including the ease of sending communication to Seattle but I do rather wish that it was somehow possible to disable it as an instrument for the buy-



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ing and selling of second-hand books.

Andy sez: It's actually very helpful that so many fans have the dream of a career in book-selling, as it makes it easy for full-time book-sellers to find someone willing to be their representative at conventions. The huckster's room used to be the best place to hang out at many conventions—not only were there hundreds, if not thousands of topics of conversation displayed on the tables, but if you just waited a while, the entire convention population would eventually pass by your table. Now convention dealer rooms seem sort of bedraggled, and I've seen people pass by quickly, so none of the lonely booksellers inside will see them as they saunter past.

I think the "free money" paradigm of reselling used books depends very much on the overall economic conditions prevailing at the hour. When the American economy was booming at the very end of the 20th century, I could routinely walk into a discount toy retail shop, buy a cart full of judiciously-selected model cars, airplanes and action figures, and reasonably expect to make a profit varying from 75% to 100%. But conditions in that field have changed so dramatically that "limited edition" items have virtually disappeared from mass retail stores altogether.

Milt Stevens

I'd seen D. West's opinions of Bill Rotsler and the Rotsler Awards. I don't agree with them. Rotsler did more than just do a tremendous number of cartoons in fanzines. He brought a whole bunch of fun into the field. He was a man who enjoyed life, and gave some of that enjoyment to others. After fifty years in the field, everybody still liked him. That

is a remarkable accomplishment in a field that is filled with opinionated and irascible people like us.

Andy talks about the time you realize you have gone past casual reading and become a collector. For me, the time was seventh grade in 1954. I made a list of all the paperbacks and magazines I owned at the time. There were 72 of them. I was definitely on the slippery slope. In 1959, I bought copies of the Day Index and the Tuck handbook from Howard DeVore. A short time after the purchase, I received my first two fanzines, *Fanview* and *Grandma of Dracula*. They weren't very good, and I really didn't know what to make of them. Jumping over that precipice would be a thing for another day.

Kate Schaefer talks about bookstores. When I was in high school there were some great used bookstores in Hollywood. Robert Lichtman and I attended high school at the same time but not at the same high school. Years later, we discovered we had been prowling the same used bookstores at the same time. Alas, those bookstores are gone only to be replaced by stores that sell cheap electronics.

Andy sez: Your attitude toward Rotsler seems to echo that of most people who knew him. Because I was geographically distant from West Coast fandom until moving to Seattle in 1992, I only got to meet Bill in the last few years of his life. I was present for a few of his Las Vegas Adventures where plates and napkins were considered fair game for his indefatigable black pen. Bill's cartooning created excitement, and made it seem like a waste to publish a fanzine without some kind of art or other decoration. I can understand why most artists would have a very different attitude toward their work and its use, but Rotsler still seems like a worthy icon for fandom to honor.

Chris Garcia

I had a much easier meeting with John Coxon when I picked him up in Sacramento. We exchanged about half-a-dozen texts, I had no sign for him, but I found him doing the oldest trick in the book: standing on top of a bench and looking down on folks as they exited the gates. It was good to see the man!

I have the Fan Collector problem in spades. I'm both a fan and an historian. It's impossible for me not to hold on to large amounts of stuff. Computer History memorabilia, paperbacks, hard covers, films, film history books, etc, etc... It's a huge collection of different things. I also grew up with librarians in the house, so I constantly had books at my fingertips and when the San Jose library system would get rid of books, I'd usually have first pass at



what they had. My mother often complains that my apartment has been conquered by boxes of stuff I don't need. I reply it's been conquered by boxes of things I love. It fails to shut her up, though...

Teh Shock and Awesome might be the greatest title for an article in history. I get it, I suck at the whole fanzining thing. I know I do, and it doesn't bother me. That's probably the biggest problem: I'm not good at the fanzine editing thing, and I still do it. I just don't have the eyes. In fact, while reading Mark's section about "Chjris and James Go To Mars," I had to read it about ten times before I noticed that there was anything wrong with it! I just didn't see that 'j' no matter how many times I read it. I do disagree with "Doing is Sufficient" being, well, sufficient. "Doing is The Reason" is more accurate. We're fanzine fans because we do stuff within the realms of fanzinery. Doing is best. Period. I know folks get annoyed by that, and let's face it, it's probably why the *Drink Tank* isn't widely-read, but it's how I feel and why should anyone do anything that doesn't make them happy? Doing makes me happy. To me, that makes doing much more than sufficient. It makes it The Reason.

Randy's article talks of the philosophy of *Chunga*. I always thought *Chunga* was the caveman in the Limited Animation world that was so perfectly parodied by *Harvey Birdman: Attorney-at-Law*. One of the things that I love about *Chunga* is how far-ranging it is. While *Journey Planet* and *The Drink Tank* are wide-net-thrown, but there's something about *Chunga*'s broadness that seems even wider. I dunno what it is, but it's something special!

Andy sez: It's an understandable reaction to respond to criticism by just saying you suck, but we both know that can't really be an objectively realistic assessment of your abilities. Your Hugo award was not the result of alien mind control, and the people who voted for you did so largely by informed choice, not out of an ignorance of the field or its traditions. Some of fandom's most-loved writers were also afflicted with a lifelong weakness for typos. The late, great Rick Sneary basically made it his signature. Typos are also a source of perpetual humor: We still sometimes send pocsar-cds, and "silp our nuclear fizz in the insurgent manner." Mark's title is a prime example of this, and his article is attracting considerable comment, even from you. As the inspiration of this entertainment, what do you have to apologize for?

I tend to salt my drafts liberally with typos, and the process of getting rid of them all requires the intervention of several people, and

still fails to achieve 100% success. To me, that's one of the differences between working in a written medium, like fanzines, and working with the spoken word, as in radio or podcasting. Even if I sometimes compose material in a gonzo rush, I recognize that output is not fit for publication without the intervention of a quasi-professional editor, which is the secret of the "Gonzo" ethic across several media. Nothing is "real," particularly reality. I think when fans see a fanzine that has no existence beyond an instantly correctable electronic format, and yet contains text with obvious first draft errors, it suggests amateurism in its most pejorative sense.

But being pilloried for typos is one of the mildest forms of denunciation that can greet a Hugo winning fan editor. You've not been accused of publishing outright crud, as was the late George Laskowski (with some justification), and no one has ever characterized your work as fundamentally dull, like the still-living Steven Silver. His stuff is meticulously proof-read, but I find it somewhat lifeless, and would far prefer to lope along with your creative spellings.

I feel sometimes like we are conducting our fanac at a different polarity or at a different harmonic resonance. You've composed so much material in your enormous run, and had so little intelligent feedback—I'd think *TDI* is ripe for cherry-picking in an anthology, a fannish practice that can have satisfying results. I think some readers who haven't followed you would be surprised to see how thoughtful and perspicacious your work can be. All the wrestling and sweating is really just distraction. You are a unique figure in the history of fandom—I waver between characterizing you as the first combat fanhistorian, and the first fanthropologist. Unlike most fan writers, who form an opinion from their desk and never leave either behind, you immerse yourself in things you wish to understand and explore, and generally come to a conclusion based on what you experience there, rather than received wisdom. That the use of such basic principles of inquiry seems strange within fandom argues that we are ill-equipped to understand ourselves, let alone the cosmic mysteries of the future.

Alexis Gilliland

Thank you for *Chunga* 19, as usual a nicely produced and well-executed fanzine. I almost said paper fanzine, but that would have been redun-



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dant, since I don't indulge in e-fanzines. Maybe if they could be called up on a Nook or a Kindle and carried into the bathroom I might reconsider? Alas no. I have been imprinted with paper fanzines and will embrace no other format. (One wonders, though, about the possibility of a twitterzine, with a limit of 140 characters. The ultra-light descendant of Bob Tucker's postcard mini-fanzines it could be very, very frequent, even though the letter columns would be very, very short, and illustrations (except for emoticons) nonexistent. Most likely it would appeal to those with super short attention spans who would just naturally forget to forward any comments that might have been inspired.) Technological progress must always be for the best, of course, but the resulting techno-besto may not always be inclined towards true or even fake fandom. Murray Moore suggests that on fannish e-lists the noise to signal ratio may be too high, which seems true but less important than the ratio of civil respondents to trolls. In a paper zine, the trolls usually wind up wahfd, a thing not always possible on a forum or an e-list.

A witty cover by Stu Shiffman, and the Rotsler on page 23 was nicely incorporated into the heading of the article on James Bacon and Chris Garcia, two gentlemen who may be today's most prolific fan activists. Regrettably the faniverse is different than it was, so it may be a little harder to influence than when Walt Willis was in his prime. Even so, they are our current masters, and we wish them well in their multifarious endeavors in the hope that they will inspire an imitator or two. Moving to page 32, I wonder about D. West's "batrachian" camel. Bactrian camels are two humpers, but per-



haps the off-stage camel has bat wings, the better to serve Abdul Alhazred, its eldritch rider. Heaven forbid that any cartoonist should have a typo in their hand lettered caption.

Andy sez: *Batrachian*, as used in *Chunga 19*, is an adjective "Of or relating to vertebrate amphibians without tails, such as frogs and toads." I think of it as a Lovecraft word, like 'rugose' or 'squamous.'

It is the presence of certain writers and publishers in the eFanzine continuum that has tempted me into trying to follow their work. But even in my most enthusiastic hours, I have always found it difficult to read every fanzine that I receive in the paper mail, let alone their cybernetic shadows. The ones I like the best, I print out for myself.

Paul Skelton

OK, I fell out of love with fandom. This occurred just as *Chunga* was beginning to arrive through my letterbox at 25 Bowland Close. Notwithstanding this I saw that *Chunga* appeared to be something of potential interest and put each issue aside, to be read in sequence when the fire would eventually be rekindled. (Notice I said "when", not "if". Even though inactive and grumpy about it, I still saw myself primarily as a fan.) This rekindling took some time. In the interim (about 5 years ago) the company for which I worked went into administration (like chapter whatever-number, but with boots on), the pension scheme was under-funded, went tits-up, and everything got a tad fraught. I accepted redundancy and early retirement in order to at least nail down a lump-sum payment and a (very) reduced pension.

Then, despite lacking self-confidence I became a self-employed consultant for several years. This actually went surprisingly well until consultancy hit the buffers over about two years ago. Of course whilst I was doing this my working week consisted mainly of driving down to Birmingham at about 0500 hours on a Monday morning and getting back to a very large Gin & Tonic, after negotiating the Hell that is the M6 motorway, at about 1930 hours on the Friday. All normal life (definitely not including fanac) had to be crammed into the weekend.

During this consultancy period my mother died. This was actually a relief as she was old and frail...and sinking further and further into dementia. As Executor I had to settle her estate, which involved filling out all the HMRC probate forms and selling her house (122 Mile End Lane, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 6BY, England, a CoA which does not appear to have been picked up by your UK



minions)...to myself. So we sold 25 Bowland to a very nice young couple (who for many years continued to bring round the mail that hadn't picked up the CoA...which included several *Chungas*) and put the proceeds, along with lump-sum mentioned earlier, to buying out my two brothers' shares in the property. We moved in 5 years ago, but because of a lack of capital renovating the property is proceeding at a snail's pace and all my fanzines are still in boxes at the back of a cupboard in our bedroom, under the stairs leading up to the 2nd floor (UK, 3rd US...we go Ground, First, Second, where-as you go Ground, second, third).

Ground floor is done, top floor is done, but cellar and middle floor are pretty well untouched. Even so, about 2 1/2 years ago I'm coming up for air, and interested in fandom again...but sometime in there I buy an e-reader and find access to lots and lots of triffic *f*t*e* ebooks (which probably shouldn't have been free, but who am I to quibble), and another 30 months slip away.

Helping it slip was the sudden death of Cas' mother, also old, though anything but frail, so again we had a funeral to arrange, a house to clear, clean and put on the market. All this requiring splitting our weeks between Stockport and Stamford, towns some 120 miles apart. Again (as Cas' brother and sister-in-law were both still employed) we had to do battle with HMRC regarding the estate.

At the same time I was diagnosed with bowel cancer. It was part of the self-test screening program...only I could fail a Shit Test! I had no symptoms, and the operation appears to have been a complete success though I will need several years of CRT scans to be officially declared to be in remission. Then about 16 months ago Cas was diagnosed with endometrial cancer...but again the operation appears to have been 100% successful, so we are both still expecting to live forever. It's just that with all the associated hassle, you just wake up one morning and find that a couple of years have passed...and you have done fuck all!

Last July we went to Canada for Mike Glicksohn's memorial party and whilst there I picked up the few copies of *Chunga* off his desk that you hadn't sent me...having finally spotted that I was a lousy non-responsive ingrate. Anyway, I had intended to read them all in order...and by Golly I am doing just that. Last week I read the first 10. I can't quite put my finger on it, but I know that I have definitely been *Chungafied*. When Cas and I take Bestie (the Westie) for his daily walks Cas and he still draw smiles and friendly chat, whereas I now get odd looks and a wide berth.

Firstly some late thoughts on C17...

Dave Locke is spot on about Grant Canfield writing a damnfine article about the 'Richard Stark' Parker series. He may even have published it in his own zine *Waste Paper*, but that certainly isn't where I read it, as I never got any fanzines from Grant. I may be wrong, but my money is on Terry Hughes' *Mota*...or it could have been *Starling*. I sometimes do this...become convinced I read something in one particular zine and then find later it was published somewhere else entirely. Anyway, so enthusiastic was Grant about these books, which I'd never even heard of, that he hooked me on them sight unseen. Now that is what I call excellent fanwriting! Fortunately (for my finances) they were all out of print over here, so I had to visit all the various charity shops to pick up used copies at very low cost. I eventually managed all of them with the single exception of *Butcher's Moon*. Luckily, when I purchased my Sony eReader last year I managed to find a free download of this. Of course when he revived the series for a further eight books I had to have them all in hardback the instant they came out. Patience has never been one of my virtues. Nor has a significant bank balance

D's colour covers are brilliantly effective!

On to C18, starting in the LoCs

Taral says he wants a 3D TV. I most definitely don't. I don't know if it will ever happen that TVs in the future will all be 3D, and programs will only be broadcast that way...but thankfully if it happens it will be some time after I've popped my clogs. The thing is, 3D doesn't work at all if like me you only have one eye. Which brings me to Robert Lichtman's response to the Steve Green questions, namely when I first encountered SF. Like Robert I was eight years old, fresh out of hospital having just lost the eye, and stuck indoors to recuperate. At her wits end to keep me occupied my mother gave me an old hardback copy of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Gods of Mars*, and I devoured it. At one point it got so tense and scary (John Carter was down in some underground tunnels where lived *G*I*A*N*T* spiders) I couldn't read on...but I couldn't stop reading because then I'd never know what happened. I begged my mother to tell me if he got out alive...but she wouldn't. "What do you think?" she asked. Showing amazing perspicacity for an eight-year-old I thought about it and responded "I guess he must, 'cos he's the hero." So I read on, but it was still pretty scary because I hadn't quite convinced myself.

For me the standout piece was 'John Coxon does Seattle', essentially because it enabled me to revisit 'Paul & Cas do Seattle' and compare memories. In



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all the *Chungas* I've read over the last two weeks, all 18 in fact, well, in most of them there has been much talk about fabulous parties. I love reading about parties because for me parties are more science-fictional than science fiction. They are an alien concept. I don't do parties. In Jeanne Gomoll's piece on Joanna she writes "Later that evening in the party I sat cross legged next to her while she lay on the floor, which was the only way she could be comfortable." Generally speaking the only way I can be comfortable at parties is to leave. My usual technique was to have a couple of drinks and try to mingle, though being shy I'm not good with conversations with strangers. Then I would claim to have a headache, take a couple of tablets and go outside for some fresh air and to try to 'walk it off'. After about 45 minutes I would return, claim that it was actually getting worse, make my apologies and 'reluctantly' go home. I say that this was my technique. My new technique is simply not to go to the buggers in the first place!

Oddly I had no problem with the party we attended in Seattle. This was at Alan Rosenthal's place. This could be attributed to Seattle's fine fanish energies, or just to Seattle's being Seattle, but I suspect it was down to our native guides, Mike Glicksohn and Susan Manchester. Let me explain. This was back in 2003 and we were spending about three weeks visiting with Mike and Susan. As part of the visit we four had lined up an adventure. We were going to visit with Mike's brother Manning in Vancouver for a few days, and we were going to get there by train, spending two days travelling on the Rocky Mountaineer. We had to fly out to Calgary to board the train. "There'll be no problem getting cheap hotel rooms in Calgary." said Mike, and I suspect there wouldn't be... unless your visit coincides with the annual Calgary Stampede. Whoops!

Anyway, to cut to the chase, we were to spend a couple of days in Seattle in order to attend Alan's party and see the various sights. I suspect the reason I had no problems at the party was simply that whenever I started to feel 'antsy' I could go and talk with Mike and Susan for a while. Of course one problem with using Mike and Susan as our native guides was that whilst they knew the touristy stuff they either didn't know the location of all the used book stores that were mentioned in earlier *Chungas*, or Cas had bribed them to steer me away. But we had a great time in Seattle just doing the touristy stuff, visiting the market (where I bought a huge bag of Rainier cherries for a dollar. The best cherries in the world. You would not believe how much they charge for them over here, when you can get them. Mostly you can't).

Anyway, thanks John for rekindling those memories, and thank you for printing his piece. I know I haven't commented on the article itself, but no article, however fine can compare with actually being there, and 'being there' is what I am every-time I read it.

Andy sez: I have two eyes, but they work at sufficiently different levels that 3-D can be problematic for me as well. I have to admit that I listen to a lot of television as it is. On the other hand, I was able to watch the 3-D version of *Tintin* in the theater and the effect worked pretty well, so either my vision or the technology has improved. One thing I can tell you is that reading fanzines online, with the type magnified at 2 or 3 times normal size, is the only way that I find some of them legible.

For a subculture that has so many parties, many fans seem to find attending them difficult. I find it daunting to track a large number of people at once, so I tend to find a corner somewhere where I can limit the number of people I'm talking to at a given time. I really almost never drink alcohol anymore, so the traditional social lubrication it provides is no longer really open to me. I find parties make me want to go home and write; talking with fans always gives me ideas, and I am reluctant to consign them to the oblivion of sleep or forgetfulness.

Jon Singer

I've received the most recent *Chunga*, and have read your editorial. As a devoted pluralist, I have to agree wholeheartedly with you; variety is what makes the world go 'round. The flip side of this, of course, is that it is perfectly fine for D. West (for whom I have considerable regard & respect) to have and to express his own opinions & feelings about this (or any other) matter. In this particular area mine are disparate from his—I'm with you on layout—and I must confess that I'm glad nobody has iron control over what is and is not permitted in terms of fmz layouts, but that's as may be. I am sad that D. West is troubled by layouts like yours; but again, that's as may be. We're all entitled to be who and what we are.

I'm the world's lousiest correspondent, but email makes it a bit easier. (I must thank you, btw, for continuing to send me *Chunga* despite my overall lack of response.)

Andy sez: If I am honest, I am perhaps a little compulsive about wanting to see a piece of graphic ornamentation on every two-page

spread of a fanzine. When you have access to as many good, small illustrations as we do, it seems like a shame to do anything else. Bill Rotsler's tiny desert landscapes and alien artifacts are always fascinating to me, and it is that set of motifs that draw me most to his art.

You are not, admittedly, the most prolific correspondent. But you have taken pains to keep me apprised of your address changes, and have generally made some response within the run of most fanzine titles I've devised. I like to think of you as part of my "target audience," and it is a profound pleasure to have you still there after all these years. I'm sorry your recent visit corresponded with our trip to Madison, but it allows me to tell you that Tracy Benton, Bill Bodden, Jim Frenkel, Dick Russell and about a dozen more Madison fans say "Hi!"

Steve Jeffrey

Hey, there I am at the bottom of the list on page 29. Last one to be picked for games and bottom of the reserve team. It's like school sports afternoons all over again. I know my place.

And surprised, Randy, that I am your leading (by which I suspect you mean most frequent) British correspondent. Although not that we've still not met. Outside of our little local group of friends and fans, centred around first Wednesday meetings at a pub near Oxford, I haven't been to a con since Corflu in Winchester. (Surprised we didn't meet there actually. I remember meeting Murray for the first time, and several other US fans previously known only on paper. Unfortunately I also had a stinking cold and was non compos a lot of the time which meant I didn't socialise as much as I wanted to.)

The prolific letterhacking of a decade back has also fallen off sharply (though not as sharply as the artwork, which has been a guilt-inducing zero for the last several years). Partly due to a change of job, partly due to laziness and a general falling away from fandom in my mid-50s, and partly due to the migration of fanzines into electronic format, and an unwillingness to spend even more hours parked in front of a screen after I get home.

Jae's Seuss pastiche of ERB, as "Thuvia is printeth on Marth" is priceless, and brought up an immediate image of the ringletted and lisping Violet Elizabeth Bott of Richmal Crompton's William books. I'm not entirely sure I should thank her for that.

Andy's reply (apparently the John Carter film has bombed at the box office) mentions planets joined by a shared atmosphere. By coincidence, I'm currently reading Adam Roberts' *Polystom* (loosely

based on a Greek conception of the cosmos) where journey between several planets can be effected by biplane or balloon. The novel it reminded me was actually Bob Shaw's *The Ragged Astronauts*. I can't bring to mind a Brian Aldiss story that uses this idea. Which one were you thinking of?

Mark Plummer's comments in "Teh Shock and Awesome" should prompt some debate. I suspect I know which side of the 'quantity versus quality' divide Mark and Claire come down on, and I suspect the same goes for your good selves. Part of the reason I shy away from electronic media is that there's so damn much of it, and the guiding principle of the Facebook/Twitterverse/blogosphere appears to be a case of "Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width". That and the feeling that surfing is just one step away from TV channel zapping at random, an activity that really irritates me when someone else has the remote. (I name no names...she won't be reading this anyway.)

Andy sez: The Brian Aldiss "novel" I had in mind was *Hothouse*, which I now realize is an imperfect example. In those stories, the moon has been locked into place at a Trojan point by millions of plant tendrils stretching between it and the Earth. These create a connection between the Earth's atmosphere and the new envelope surrounding the moon, also produced by the plants. But as the moon is the Earth's natural satellite, the comparison isn't exact. By the way, this August is the 50th anniversary of the Best Short Story Hugo awarded to *Hothouse* at Chicon III, for its original publication in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

I'm not sure when fandom's written output



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first outstripped most of their correspondents' ability to read it, but it was almost certainly before 1960. Before the Internet, fandom amused itself with a galaxy of amateur press associations and round-robin letters and mail art and several other practices that were no more defensible than tweeting and posting to Facebook. When following all these activities required us to actually write or type and send our responses through the postal service, the overhead made it impossible to even contemplate "doing it all." Just writing to all the genuine fanzines published required a hermetic iron man like Harry Warner Jr. Even though you may feel increasingly estranged from fandom, you are still a far more dependable correspondent than most.

Randy sez: I wasn't at the Winchester Corflu, so no wonder we didn't meet there. Maybe when I come over for Loncon 3.

Brad W Foster

Opening comments from Randy, re the D. West comments about pages of text-only, versus breaking it up with some graphics: I've always seen fanzines as taking the magazine as their format guide, not books. And magazines have always been a mix of text and graphics, along with cartoons (or at least did so up until recent history, where the magazine cartoon seems to be a dying thing). *Chunga* keeps that tradition going, and a fine design idea it is.

Loved the bookstore theme this issue. The various tours by everyone through the time and space of bookstores was fun. Many of the smaller bookstores have vanished here over the years as well, but the huge Half Price Books still seems to maintain the feel of a "real" used bookstore, while still being a gigantic presence, and I'm happy to see that they seem to still be doing well. Whenever I decide it is time to thin the shelves a bit, that is where I take the books to trade in, knowing there is a good chance they will find a good home with someone else down the line.

Andy sez: Half-Price Books' industrial approach to the used bookstore business has probably greased the skids for some smaller retailers on the brink of closure, but their broader demand for used books is a valuable resource for collectors who don't want their libraries to completely overwhelm them. What I see disappearing are those stores willing to deal in books written before 1970—most buyers now want only books printed in the past ten years, and they are commensurately reluctant to carry older

editions on their shelves. A willingness to deal in relative antiquities may eventually make used book retailers even more essential than they are today.

Jerry Kaufman

I am glad to see Stu getting some art into the zines. I'm also glad to see ERB get some props and Ross Chamberlain being apologized to—we all owe Ross an apology for one thing or another. (And if memory serves, Ross borrowed that carnival barker character from someone else—was it Bhub Stewart, perhaps?)

I'm rather glad I didn't try to write an article for this issue, because Kate covered the same topics I would probably have, and she did it better, though I do remember a few things differently—for instance, I never thought of Don Glover the Elder, owner of Horizon, as being grumpy. Maybe a touch sardonic. Other people that worked for him may have been more cheerful, though, like Gene Perkins, with his blond droopy mustache and gentle demeanor (also an artist and contributor to fanzines), or Jamie (don't remember last name), with his child-like smile. The "prison guard" may have been Jim Turner, onetime Columbia, Missouri fan with a writing style not unlike Bruce Townley's. I have a vague memory that he worked at a juvenile detention facility.

Mark, in "Teh Shock and Awesome," gets into some deeper waters. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well," he quotes. G.K. Chesterton said, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing badly." Of course, each of these statements are true in different contexts. Mark and Malcolm are specifically talking about fanzine writing (although I would extend it to fan art) and putting effort into the work rather than tossing out some random statements first draft and hitting send. (Malcolm, making his remarks in an earlier era, might have referred to composing directly on stencil.)

The Chesterton quote would be more about people who decide not to do something at all because they wouldn't be able to do it well—feeling that their efforts would not be world class, that they would feel inadequate. Don't think you'll dance well? Do it anyway for the pleasure of it (and you might get better anyway as you practice).

There's a difference in philosophy or even of basic character between the two statements and how they're applied. James and Chris look on fan activity—writing, drawing, publishing—as pleasure akin to dancing, hiking, other physical activities—the pleasure in movement. The Marxist sees fanac as more akin to art—best presentation and

expression. I am sure that both sides want to present ideas and stir communication, community and connection, but the ways they also get their own pleasure from it are different.

Andy sez: I think everyone wants fanzine fandom to be a place where you can do your own thing, baby, but I appreciate it when an editor gives the reader a little consideration too. Everyone has their own idea of perfection—I see Chris as crazy breakneck slapdash, but I also have my issues with Mark's extensive discussion. Some fan writers (by which I mean Taral Wayne) compose their prose meticulously, and prefer their work to be published exactly as submitted. Others, like Chris and James, openly rely on the help of partners and editors, and have more mixed results when they don't get it. But that kind of frequent, breathless fanac is often of great value to fandom, catalyzing participation, debate and matching contributions from the fans it inspires. Do fanzines really "deserve better?" Some do—this one does—but frequency and enthusiasm have a quality all their own.

Marlin Frenzel

I love reading about bookshops and collecting...I've worked for some of the best (Strand & Bookmaster's in N.Y.C.) & the worst (McDonald's in San Francisco)...worst because of the store's policy of shoving books with no regard for alphabetizing them...at least they were usually placed in the proper section...well...I did find an autographed Jack London story collection & a bunch of Sax Rohmer titles stashed behind some shelves in the stockroom...I sold the Jack London title for \$75 (half its price in *Books in Print*.)

I'm currently reading *The Mahound*, one of the historical slavery novels by Lance Horner and vol. 2 of Anaïs Nin's *Diary*. I was introduced to Anaïs around 1972 while working at the Strand...she was

still beautiful at probably about 75 years old...it was like meeting Greta Garbo or Marlene Dietrich! She came in with novelist Saul Bellow & his lawyer...a regular consumer of Grove Press erotica...also my employer's attorney...Bellow later based his character Herzog on this flamboyant guy.

When I first moved to San Diego from San Francisco around 1993, there were at least 6 or 7 good used bookstores in the downtown area...I could always find all the Fu Manchu, Doc Savage, Shadow, Conan...just about any SF paperback I wanted with no trouble...Now all these stores are either out of business or moved to Hillcrest or Adams Ave...areas that I frequent quite rarely since I've lived about 2 1/2 hours away in Playas de Tijuana, B.C., Mexico since 1998.

I only cross into the U.S. once a week to pick up my mail. I usually have to stand in line for 2 hours. Having a good book to read helps...one day I read 90 pages of Elmore Leonard's *Cat Chaser*...but in the famous lines of Danny Glover's character in *Lethal Weapon*: 'I'm getting too old for this shit!'

Mexico is the only place I can afford an apartment large enough for my vast collection of books, magazines, comics, DVDs, CDs and music tapes. I still borrow books from the San Diego library...buy from thrift shops & swap meets...usually DVDs, CDs or graphic novels. Only books I'm looking for are anything by Robert McCammon I haven't read and *Burn, Witch, Burn* by A. Merritt.

Good to hear that the old 'Nameless Ones' gang is still keeping it real!

Randy sez: I think you win a prize for most inventive approach to accommodating your /h/o/a/r/d/i/n/g/ collecting habit. I never would have thought of Mexico as cheap storage space. I did wonder for a moment when British Columbia had been transferred to Mexico until I realized that B.C. in this context is Baja California.



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WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "IT'S RUBBISH"?



JUST FOR ONCE, CAN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING POSITIVE?

ALL RIGHT, JUST FOR ONCE



I'M POSITIVE IT'S RUBBISH



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Lloyd Penney

My own training in publication design discourages a full page of type; the grey expanse of type can be dull and uninteresting. Perhaps a particular font can make the page more than readable, but at least one illustration, a vertical bar between the columns or a banner or border of some kind seems to make the page more pleasing to the eye. I am no graphic designer, but I know enough to mix type, illustration, font and border, and do so consistently.

Most fans I know are packrats, but I don't think we're the type to show up on any of the hoarders shows. I prefer to think that we're all preservers and curators of our proud past. In my own earlier years, I collected all the SF I could get my hands on because the attitude of my peers at the time was that you had to own all the books you'd read. How do we know you've read it otherwise? A little silly, but it helped me to assemble a fairly good collection. I used to know where all the used book stores were in Toronto... I still do, but there's less than half of what there used to be. At least Bakka-Phoenix Books is still around, and I go past it on the way to my evening job every day.

I did know all the used book stores in Toronto because I would hang out there, absorbing the musty smell of the books, and going on regular adventures to see what they've got hidden on that upper row, or in the box under the table. Often the stores would have pets in the store, and I remember a basset hound named Charlotte who would follow me down the aisles, and sniff up every purchase I made.



Randy sez: "Curator" sounds ever so much nicer than "hoarder," and I do wonder sometimes whether there's much of a distinction. My experience is that hoarders are unable to distinguish between what's worth preserving and what's not, and I think the reality is that somebody else always ends up having to make that decision for them, whether posthumously or otherwise. The question still remains: Does the hoarding impulse lead to the preservation of valuable material, even if haphazardly? Perhaps hoarding is simply the precursor to somebody else's curation.

Joseph Nicholas

Andy says that "the transition to electronic books is something that most readers will eventually confront", and one certainly will if one travels on the London Underground in rush hours, where one sees an increasing number of people with electronic readers. I'm not particularly attracted to these things myself, because I like both the idea and the physical heft of a book (which, unlike an electronic reader, can never suffer a hardware or software failure, or have its text erased by a central command) and because electronic readers are most suited to particular types of book — fiction, obviously, because a work of fiction is nothing but text; and some of the less demanding types of non-fiction (such as *Freakonomics*, perhaps, which is almost entirely text). But once one moves beyond that, to works with plans, diagrams, maps, photographs, line drawings, bibliographies, references and indices (a study of Romano-British archaeology, perhaps), an electronic reader is no use at all, because one can't turn back or check a reference without losing one's place in the body of the work. Ergo, I think the book as physical object is likely to be around for some time yet, and probably a lot longer than the proponents of electronic readers would wish, in exactly the same way that many forms of apparently obsolete technology have failed to be totally erased by the new — for example, Keane's new album *Strangeland* is available on 12" vinyl as well as CD; and if dance DJs didn't have turntables and records to put on them and move back and forth with their hands their soundscape would be much diminished.

Changing the subject: if you hadn't named me as one of the fans holding up scorecards at the 1988 Corflu in your inserted guide to the photographs on the back cover, I would never have spotted myself — partly because the photograph is so dark, and partly because my arm is almost completely obscuring my face. Since I wouldn't have spotted

myself, I wouldn't have spotted Judith standing beside me, either — but, thanks to the insert, I can readily confirm that it is her: she has a Very Distinctive Nose.

Changing the subject again, I suppose I shouldn't comment on *The Drink Tank* because I so rarely look at a copy, although I have noted — from those few I have inspected — that they have a certain air about them: a rushed, first draft quality that is presumably the consequence of Chris Garcia's view that publishing is a good thing and that enthusiasm should therefore be sufficient. But I side with Mark Plummer's view that it isn't, and that anything worth doing should be done well. Indeed, I would go further, and say that for a fanzine editor to knowingly put out something that they know isn't as good as it could be is effectively to insult the readers by telling them that the editor doesn't care. Which is one reason why, when I do look at a copy, I find *The Drink Tank* such a treat to read: the energy is admirable, but not the execution.

Randy sez: The idea that a paper book can never suffer hardware failure doesn't hold up. Cf. *Fahrenheit 451*, to make a topical reference. That said, I still haven't tried electronic books myself, partly because I have no shortage of paper books on my To Be Read piles. But I'm thinking seriously of picking up a tablet computer of some kind, and I'll probably give electronic books a try at that point. Perhaps my To Be Read piles will stop sprawling into the aisles at that point? Hm, well, a boy can dream.

Gregory Benford

Fine issue as always, especially art/layout. Wunnaful to see Corflus past, especially WAW and the Belfastians. They are always the pinnacle of fandom for me. Wish I'd gone to Corflu Glitter but was tired from 3 weeks in Central America, alas.

Loved your riposte to my line about Joanna Russ. No, don't take credit for her lesbianism, but she was perhaps the most interesting woman to have lunch with I ever knew.

Loved the bookstore memories, especially Marilyn Holt's. I expect ebooks will be fully half of all those sold within 2 years or so, and bookstores will be an eccentric attraction.

Eric Mayer

Congratulations on a decade of publishing. I admit to being poor at locating ambitious genzines like *Chunga*. I never feel quite up to the task. When I first began writing locs back in the seventies I tended to always comment on every contribution but these days I don't have the energy to do that and so

my genzine locs always feel inadequate to me.

I never announced any of the issues of E-Ditto last year or Revenant this year, leaving it up to Bill Burns' eFanzine mailing list and the simple fact of it being posted at eFanzines. Some faneds, I have noticed, actually mail their zines out to selected readers, while others send emails announcing publication. I'm not bothered by such communications — so long as everybody doesn't start attaching rombo zines to emails to clog up my dial-up — but I wouldn't feel comfortable doing it myself. By the strict etiquette of the Internet many would consider that spamming and I would hate to offend any that way. A shame, because constructing a mailing list of likely victims was one of the joys of fanpubbing for me back in the day. However, Andy seems to welcome announcements so maybe it's something I should rethink.

Nice paper doll by España Sheriff but I shall pass on printing a copy and cutting it out. I wouldn't want to dress up today. The whole concept has come to have bad connotations since the only time I wear something fancier than jeans and t-shirts is when I have to attend a funeral. But I loved putting on a costume every Halloween so I guess I can see some of the appeal, or having it be Halloween all year. Not sure what Ulrika means by making that costume she describes "steamy." With all those layers I'd think it'd be plenty steamy.

She loses me with her thrift store zen, however. My first wife was a thrift store shopaholic and I never want to see the inside of another such establishment again. My house looked like a (badly organized) thrift store. My ex always found exactly what she was looking for at the thrift store, which was anything. Me, I never could find 28 waist jeans.

It has been many years since I regularly visited used book stores like those Andy Hooper, Marilyn Holt, and Kate Schaefer write about. I prefer to read onscreen now, which I realize must sound daft to all those fans who still insist on printing pdf fanzines out. But at the moment, for example, I have blown *Chunga* up to well over 100% to be able to lean back and peruse it easily with my tired and aging eyes. The fact that I am reading *Chunga* at all, however, I owe to the used book store I frequented forty years ago, which had an untidy stack of coverless (and thereby illegal I was to learn) sf magazines sitting on the floor beside one dusty shelf. I bought a couple bags of the things for something like fifty cents. (I guess the owner wanted the floor cleaned off.) There were a bunch of *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, whose editor was ranting about the sale of coverless copies, such as those I had purchased. Was it *Fantastic* that featured the



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Club House, by John Berry, reviewing sf fanzines? Whichever magazine it was in I read that column and, curious, sent off my sticky quarters and the rest is a minor footnote in faanish history (provided it is a very detailed history).

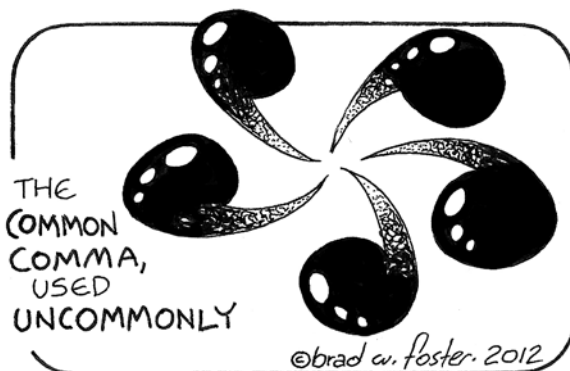
I like Marilyn Holt's observation that she knows people who lived thousands of years ago because she has read their writing. That's true. That's why I find reading historical writing so interesting. You might as well be getting an email from Herodotus and reading an email is not much different from them talking to you. When I write locs I just talk. The computer monitor is wonderful for loccing because I can have my word processor and fanzine open at the same time and just talk to the editors and writers I'm reading as I go along. I was not, however, one of the people who learned to read very young. I couldn't read until I started school.

When I started reading Steve Bieler's article I wondered who Jack Palmer was and why the name didn't ring a bell and then he said "Rudi Rubberoid." Okay! I wasn't into mail art but I did see some back in the eighties, particularly from Luke McGuff. It seemed to go with the punk/small press/mini-comics idea of just do something creative no matter what skills you may or may have. We all have something worthwhile to say. Get it out somehow. Anyhow. I always liked that philosophy and I wish fandom would lean a little more in that direction rather than so many fans being so super critical of people's efforts as if fandom was a big school in which we were all being graded. Ugh! I am sorry to hear that Jack recently died. I never knew him and always thought he was much younger. I guess being wildly creative and enthusiastic about things makes one seem younger.

I've missed Steve's contributions to fandom by the way. (I'm recalling way back.) Hey Steve, stop by Revenant sometime.

Randy sez: Poor Steve is doomed! Before he knows it, he'll be pubbing the long-delayed first issue of his next zine after all.

While I don't mind faneds sending me PDFs of their zines directly, I do think it's still more



polite to send a pointer to a URL, if you've put it up on the web somewhere. It reduces wear and tear on the intertubes, if nothing else.

Cuyler Warnell Brooks Jr

Where I lived in Virginia there was really only one interesting bookstore that was at all convenient — it was run by a Baptist minister and his son. The minister had a serious book addiction and the parsonage was getting cluttered. But after a while they moved it way off in the boonies under a roller rink, and then to Williamsburg, so I didn't go as often. There were bookstores across Chesapeake Bay in Norfolk that I visited, but that was 40 miles away. A lot of the books I have come from thrift stores — there was one that I could stop by every day on my way home from work.

The best used-book place in Norfolk was designed for hanging-out — old over-stuffed chairs — but I was never much at hanging-out. I'm more of a scan-the-books-and-be-gone sort.

I remember Jack and Pauline Palmer, and though I never met them, we corresponded and traded zines for years. I thought it was odd that Steve Bieler omitted the surname!

Is there some fannish in-joke that I'm too old for? Why does the title of Mark Plummer's article appear in the ToC and on the first page as "Teh Shock and Awesome"?

Randy sez: Elsewhere Andy alludes to fannish typos (e.g. "poctsarcds") that have become in-jokes, and the same is true for "teh" on the internet. "Pwned" for "owned" is another one, and I've always been particularly fond of "cow-orke." As for the absence of the name Palmer from Steve's piece, that was obviously a copy-editing error on our part. We fixed it in the PDF that's up on eFanzines. Thanks for pointing it out!

Bill Burns

In his LoC in #19 Alexis Gilliland expanded on Tara's comment in #18 that "Concorde did not fly over the USA", and turned it into "Concorde never flew over land..."

Neither is correct — while my local airport (JFK New York) is right on the coast (as are Bahrain, Caracas, and Rio), Concorde also operated from airports at London, Paris, Mexico City, and even Dallas-Fort Worth and Washington-Dulles, many of them well inland. It's true, however, that Concorde did not fly *supersonically* over land to get to any of those locations.

Even at New York (as with most arriving flights

from Europe) the morning Concorde from London flew the length of densely-populated Long Island and came in low over our house every day about 8:30am on its final approach to JFK.

Concorde never struck me as a noisy aircraft; the engines had a low rumble when coming in to land, much more pleasant than the whine of the Boeing 707 and other contemporary jets. I would regularly step outside when I heard it approaching and watch it fly past, the most graceful aircraft I've ever seen.

In a little bit of SF come true, Mary and I flew Concorde on our way to Skycon at Heathrow, the 1978 Eastercon. It was only four months after the first flight had been allowed to land at JFK, and there was no certainty the service would continue. We looked at the fares, and worked out that by taking Concorde one way and flying standby on a regular flight coming home it would run only a few hundred dollars more than the subsonic round trip. So we did it.

These days, with security, subsonic aircraft, and potential immigration slowdowns at Heathrow, we routinely allow ten hours or more door-to-door for a flight to a London con. On Concorde, with no airport delays and a three and a half hour flight, it was more like five hours from home to the hotel.

Sadly, Concorde fares soon escalated and we were never able to afford to fly that way again. And now no-one can.

Andy sez: The objections to the Concorde's operation over the United States had the primary effect of inspiring people to examine the conditions created by existing military and commercial aircraft in use in the 1970s. At the time the Concorde was under development, the standard US fighter aircraft was the F-4 Phantom, an incredibly loud and dirty airplane that made life near any American airbase miserable. The opposition to the SST itself was likely an overreaction, but it also resulted in quieter, cleaner and more efficient aircraft in the subsequent decade. Or maybe it merely resulted in a new marketing strategy for engineering advances that would have been made anyway. But as you say, life is quieter without the 707, at least.

I'm glad you liked your experience with the aircraft. You are just about the ideal Concorde passenger; someone of my size would probably be better off in the luggage compartment.

Air travel has reduced the time required for transoceanic travel to hours, rather than days and weeks, but any further acceleration

seems inevitably counterbalanced by additional complexity admitted by human-imposed procedures and delays. It begins to seem very likely that we will be trying to return to Britain in 2014—probably so we can ignore the bulk of the Worldcon at close range. The idea fills me with a certain queasy dread, even though I realize that I am lucky to be able to make the trip so quickly, and without exposure to icebergs.

Murray Moore

carl, is the fanzine interlineation the ancestor of the tweet?

Andy, I regret to report that my sense of wonder is fading. I was forced to admit to myself that too much paper is in our basement. I went through the comic books, this past spring, those comic books which in the 1980s and 1990s I had not traded for newer comic books, and I found I was able to sell most of them. And I did. I expect I will sell the rest, sooner than later.

I was emotionally involved with comic books for four decades. I started buying the last of the 10 cent comics in the early 1960s. The last series I followed, in the 1990s, were *Cerebus* and *Preacher*. But looking at the covers, hundreds of them, one by one, evoked not engagement but nostalgia. I had fallen out of love. We still, comic books and I, are friends, but we aren't seeing each other. Instead I will be having a long relationship with a Donato Giancola painting.

Alexis Gilliland is the R. A. Lafferty of fan artists. To be clear, I am offering a compliment.

I hope that by now, or if not by now, soon, Stu Shiffman is feeling as exuberant as he is in the 1994 photo printed on page 17.

Andy sez: I'm sorry to say that Stu Shiffman's recovery from the stroke that he suffered in the spring of 2012 has been difficult, and at this writing, he is back in the hospital. Like you, I long to see that delightful smile once more.

carl sez: Nah, I think tweets are just broadcast text messages. (I have much more to say about the theory of linos as we practice it but cannot reduce my thoughts to 140 characters, alas.)

D. West

The various articles on books and book shops made me nod and sigh. Yes, that's the way it is. I started early myself, and the last time I had enough shelf space was back in about 1956, when I was ten or eleven years old. Ever since, I've been struggling to find somewhere to put the damn things. So I



Murray Moore
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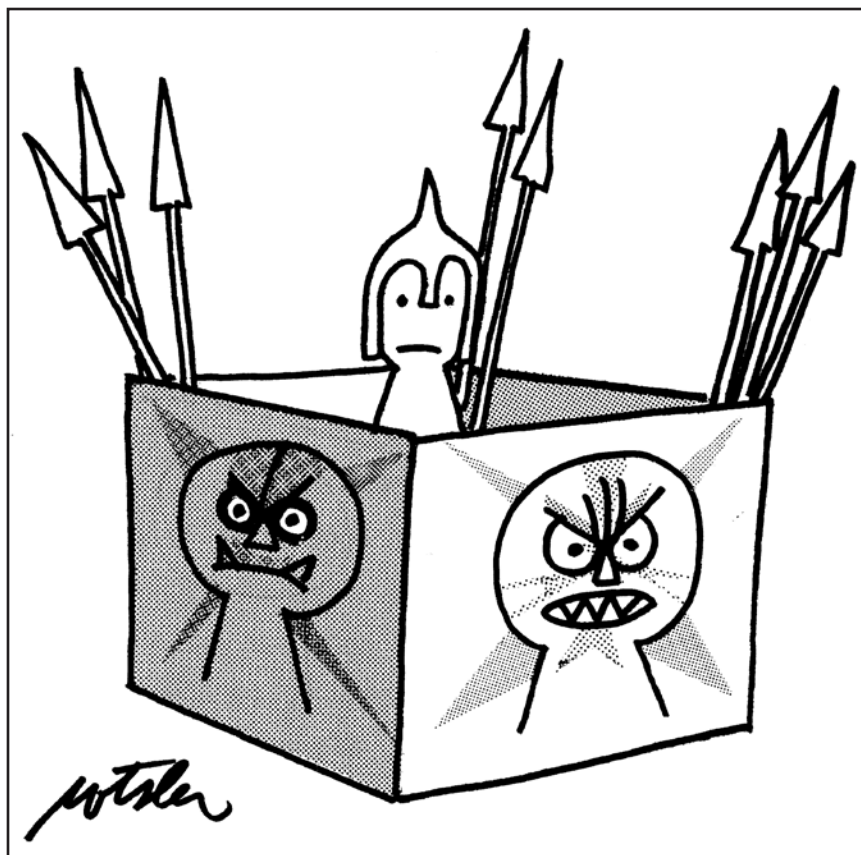
D. West
16 Rockville Drive
Embsay
Skipton
North Yorks
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United Kingdom



shouldn't really buy any more. But I do.

Moving on, I note the claim that the late William Rotsler "may have been fandom's Picasso". This strikes me as fanciful, to put it politely. (For anyone who is interested, more on Rotsler and his rating as a fan artist can be found in a letter of mine which should be appearing in *Banana Wings* 50.) Andy Hooper says I have "a checkered history with awards". Perhaps so, but I don't think I was being unduly perverse in turning down the Rotsler Award. I like compliments as much as anyone else, but I dislike being put in a false position, as I would have been if, despite my objections to Rotsler's approach to fan art, I accepted an award with his name attached. Also, the fact that three hundred dollars went with the award meant that I could not merely ignore the whole business and pretend not to notice. The cash forced the issue, since I could hardly take the money while continuing to criticize the name that was being memorialized.

Anyway, regardless of all that, Greg Benford may be correct in suggesting that (unlike me) Rotsler was "a cordial pleasant guy with a true joy in life, and that showed in his cartoons". However, he is incorrect in saying that we (meaning Benford and I) never met. In fact we had quite a long conversation in 1985 when he was Guest of Honour at the Leeds Eastercon. That all seemed pleasant enough, but it was 27 years ago, and I guess both of us may have grown a little crustier with the pas-



sage of time.

Indeed, even Mark Plummer seems a little crustier than usual. The name of Rotsler gets no mention, but oddly enough his criticisms of the works (and attitudes) of James Bacon and Chris Garcia have much the same basis as my own criticisms of the works (and attitudes) of William Rotsler: they're all guilty of putting production before perfection, quantity before quality. In effect, they treat what they're doing with too little respect.

Mark quotes Malcolm Edwards's 1981 observation that "fanwriting is one of the few forms of writing which are pointless unless you are doing your very best." Quite so. I've been saying this myself since an even earlier date. See, for example, the discussion of the concepts of 'amateur' and 'professional' in 'The State of the Art' published in *Wrinkled Shrew* 7 (ed. Pat Charnock) March 1977. As I said, way back in that ancient article, fanzines are Art. And the point of Art is not just to produce any old spacefiller, but to produce something which at least aspires to quality. Yes, fanzines are Art — and very often they are very bad Art, but at least they're in there trying.

The trouble with Chris Garcia and James Bacon is that they seem to think that they are not artists but hack journalists, dedicated to quantity before quality because all that matters is to turn out as much as possible so that they can get paid as much as possible. Yes, wordage, and getting paid for wordage, is the whole point.

But they don't get paid. There's no money involved, regardless of how much they write. What *is* the point?

Perhaps it's a little unfair to pick on James Bacon and Chris Garcia. There are (and always have been) plenty of others (such as, for example, Taral Wayne and Arnie Katz) who seem to think that production is the main consideration, and any aesthetic success is just a happy accident or fortunate bonus. It's all rather suggestive of the old story of the monkeys and the typewriters: keep pounding those keys for long enough and eventually this persistent random effort will produce the entire works of Shakespeare. Or even one or two fairly good fanzine articles. Trouble is, like many outcomes which depend upon theoretical long-term chances, this could be a result which is almost infinitely deferred. So one can hope that in the meantime those concerned have a good supply of bananas. Or whatever else will keep them happy.

Andy sez: Plenty of fanzine editors have had journalistic pretensions, and since I entered fandom about 35 years ago, writers purporting



William Breiding
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to deliver “news” of science fiction and fandom have consistently placed highly in popularity contests like the Hugo awards. (e.g. Glycer, Langford, *Locus*, etc.) Even *Plokta* cast itself as a “News Network” before it won the shameful rocket. As for Bacon and Garcia, I maintain that it takes no effort whatsoever to ignore them completely—the relentless tidal pounding of their output takes place almost entirely in the realm of cybernetic imagination, and if you don’t go out of your way to access them at eFanzines, you never have to know anything about it. Just think, if *The Drink Tank* was reproduced on paper and crammed through your mail slot every week—surely, mankind would be compelled to act. In the absence of the assertion that *TDT* was the “Best” fanzine in production, the overall impact of the Garcia Complex can be benign, or even beneficial. The August issue of *Journey Planet* contained a 78-page debate on the initiative to require “gender parity” on programs at Eastercon in 2013. In a previous epoch, this would have consumed reams of paper and if received in the post, some recipients might have actually read it. But with the issue safely confined to the Web, you have no one but yourself to blame if you track it down and inject it into your eyeballs like Iboga.

William Breiding

I have to start this loc by thanking y’all for the mighty patience you’ve displayed on my behalf. 10 years is a long time. Nineteen issues is a pretty healthy count by today’s standards of once-a-year hard copy fanzines. (Granted—I have the limited knowledge of only those faneds who’ve delighted in persisting in bestowing heaping pleasures in the face of silence: many have chosen not to, and I regret my failings as a fan.)

Earlier this year I went to The Boxes and sifted through the fmz to find all that *Chunga*. The idea was to reread them then do a massive loc to make up for things. You can see how far I got.

(Meanwhile I ran across Rob Hansen’s *The Martin Chronicles*. Bill Bowers had pestered me to follow the link he provided and print this out back in the gos, and I did. Then never read it. After its rediscovery I’ve been savoring it a piece at a time. I’ve never had contact with Rob, but certainly knew of him, his interest in fan history. When I was reading the photo guide to *Chunga* 19 and found that the handsome man standing there wondering if Ted White was for reals was Rob, the very first thing that entered my mind was: “Now I under-

stand why Avedon defected!”)

Numbers 18 and 19 coming so hastily as to stub the heels of the other were beautiful mirror images: #18 sercon looking back at fannish, #19 fannish reflecting back sercon. The Russ pieces were the kinds of things I live for in fanzines and very rarely find. When I read #18 I thought: I *must* loc these guys! Before action could be taken #19 arrived and I caved into procrastination, apathy, silence. It’s all your fault.

I’ve sent this thought to many fanzine editors, including you: In fandom silence is not golden. Ego-boo is a must. But there is something broken inside me. I tire easily of my own small voice. And so my haphazard career in fanzines is due to my own failings, not that of the fanzine publishers, who generally tend to be magnanimous.

As a whole issue #19 was glorious from start to finish. A seamless perfect monument. To reading, to dead fans, to the shocking truth of our waning days.

Anyone who’s paid attention to Bill Rotsler, in all forms of his art, including that of being human, know that he was a sensualist, a bit of a libertine. He was manly and could be offensive if you decided you wanted to be small minded, which is something that Rotsler was not. He was indefatigable, worthy of being made a character in someone’s book as an example of the protean artist. He lived large and was extremely generous. His hot glance took in even myself, who tends to retire in front of such perfect engines of expressed desire.

Having had Bill Bowers as an encouraging and protective big brother of course has biased me towards the ornate in fanzine design. Bill, one hopes, would have told you that he was carl’s biggest fan. He sent me e-mails exclaiming the virtues of *Chunga*. A number of times. The design is sometimes breath-taking and sometimes irritating. But that’s the holistic nature of *Chunga* for me, not a negative judgment.

carl sez: I would consider *Chunga*’s layout recomplicated (in the van Vogtian sense), experimental, and not always successful; creative ambition is often trumped by practicality and Getting It Finished. But the main priority is always that it be readable and supportive of the text and artwork we are given—our readers, and contributors, deserve no less.

I hope Bill Bowers would have enjoyed this jumbo-sized issue, by far our longest ever. And speaking of those who have passed, my best to Hokum W. Jeebs, vaudevillian extraordinaire, and pioneering musicians Pete Namlook and Dave Brubeck. Long may you all be remembered and loved. ✓

We also heard from:

Jason Burnett

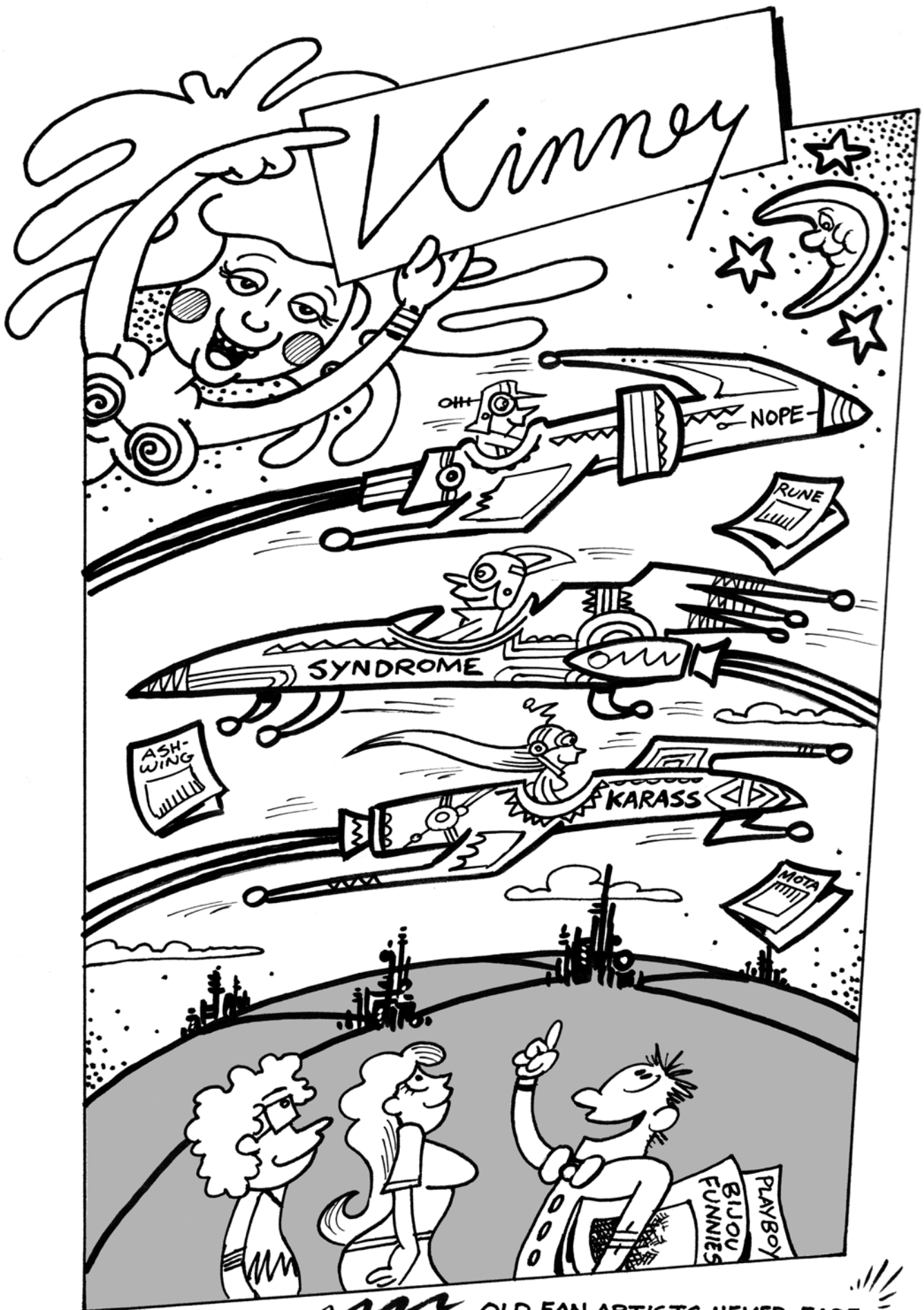
Luke McGuff
[Who gave us nearly \$40 in old stamps, which was greatly appreciated.]

Ron Drummond
Kudos to carl as ever for design felicities.

Steve Bieler
I’m very happy to join this corner of fandom!

Paul Di Filippo
Immensely entertaining & informative!

Andy Robson
No, sir, I don’t require drugs, painted ladies with cold arms, political hitmen, or ‘how to be a millionaire overnight’ handbooks.



for Jay from Schirm '12

OLD FAN ARTISTS NEVER FADE AWAY... THEY JUST TURN PRO!