



TIGHTBEAM 273#

is produced on a bi-monthly basis by the N3F –The National Fantasy Fan Federation, a world-wide club for fans of science fiction/fantasy and related subjects. Copies are sent electronically direct to all current members, and copies are also posted, somewhat later, on the efanazines.com web site thru the generous courtesy of webmaster Bill Burns.

This issue is edited by Bob Jennings. Letters of comment are solicited from everyone reading this; also, reviews of books read, movies seen, and convention experiences recently attended, and any other fannish material that would be of interest to our members is also requested. Please contact Bob Jennings at—

fabficbks@aol.com or

thru regular mail at 29 Whiting Rd. Oxford, MA 01540-2035

You may learn more about the N3F by going to our website at n3f.org



WELCOME TO THE NEW, REVIVED & UPDATED TIGHTBEAM...

Tightbeam has been part of the National Fantasy Fan club package for many a year, decades in fact, altho publication has been somewhat erratic in this new century. The last regular issue of *Tightbeam* appeared back in May of 2015. This new version of the fanzine will appear only in electronic format, no print copies at all will be printed this time round.

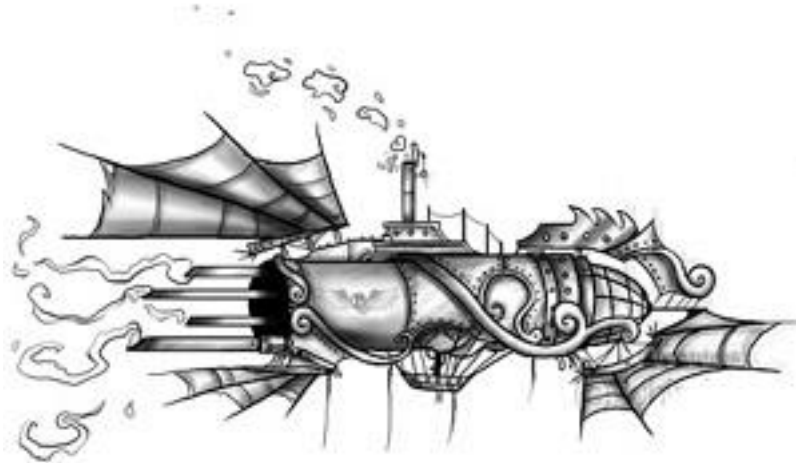
The reasons for that decision are many, but primarily, costs are the main factor. The price of paper, envelopes, ink, and especially postage are much greater now than in years past. Producing a fanzine in pixel only format will save the club a considerably amount of money.

In addition the reality is that almost all of our members, as well as those fans who might be interested in this fanzine, own a computer or have direct access to computers, so they can access the internet easily, so they can download and read an e-zine easily. Electronic fanzines don't take up storage space either. It's one of those crazy Buck Rogers type things science fiction was always writing about that has actually come true in this new century, and we here at the N3F are going to take advantage of it by making *Tightbeam* our first completely self-contained e-zine.

So, what is *Tightbeam* and what are we trying to do here? Basically we envision the new *Tightbeam* following in the footsteps of earlier versions of the title. *Tightbeam* will function primarily as a letterzine, a place where fans can make comments, offer opinions, discuss subjects of interest to them in a space where other fans with similar interests can read their opinions and offer their responses. The opportunity to speak to like-minded individuals is an enduring interest among fans, as witness the long letter columns offered by many other fanzines in the hobby.

In addition this publication will also offer reviews and commentary on SF/fantasy/horror books, both new and old, also movies, comics, conventions, games, even television programs that might be of interest to our readers. We hope to offer some short articles, either factual or opinion on related subjects as well.

Got something you want to say about the book you just read, or the film you just saw? Think about writing up a review and letting us run it. Your comments will be read many other fans who are interested in learning your opinions and sharing some of their own comments on the matter. Because we are publishing in an electronic format, we are not bound by constraints of page count the way a print fanzine would be. You can write your essays as long or as short as you please. We must insist that your comments and letters refrain from profanity, lewdness or malicious insult. We want this to be a civilized forum of interested individuals with shared common interests. You are cordially invited to be part of our next issue.



DEADLINE FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IS **7 November 2016**



BOOKS

Lock In by John Scalzi—\$8.99 in paperback, also available as an e-book

This novel is set 25 years after a global pandemic, eventually named Haden's Syndrome, killed 400 million people worldwide. Named after the most famous victim, the wife of the President

of the United States, the first symptoms were flu-like and later, if the victims survived, symptoms like those for meningitis. The two main characters were survivors left with permanent changes to their brains. Leslie Vann, who contracted the disease when she was sixteen, became an "integrator", a survivor whose brain can become possessed by another Haden syndrome victim. Chris Shane, who was affected at age two, became a "lock in", a person who is so completely paralyzed that they cannot even talk or eat. Advances in neural networks and human/computer interfaces allow the lock-ins to possess integrators, connect to the Internet, and remotely operate robotic avatars that look so much like C-3PO from *Star Wars* that their popular name is "Threeps". Vann and Shane, who also serves as the narrator, are both FBI agents investigating a murder in the Watergate Hotel of all places in which an integrator is the prime suspect.

The police procedural aspect of this novel gives it a plot, and the setting is fascinating. It is definitely in the future, but not so different from our time to be unrecognizable. On the other hand, it relies heavily on coincidences to move the story along. For instance, one of Shane's roommates just happens to be an expert on neural networks. Also Vann is a stereotypical hardboiled detective, and the identity of the perpetrator is telegraphed very early. Overall however, this is an enjoyable book.

---Review by Tom Feller



• **Ready Player One by Ernest Cline—discount retail about \$12.00 in hardback, also available as an e-book; ISBN-13: 978-0307887436;**

In 2044, eighteen year old Wade Watts, a high school senior, lives in a slum called a "stack", which consists of 20 doublewide mobile homes stacked into a tower. He and his aunt share their doublewide with 15 other people. However, he spends most of his time connected to OASIS, a worldwide on-line role-playing and virtual reality system that has replaced the Internet. The world's fossil fuels have been exhausted, and a large percentage of the population are out of work and/or homeless. Wade attends a virtual high school within OASIS. Five years earlier, the creator of OASIS, James Halliday, had died and left his fortune of 240 billion dollars to whoever can find an "Easter Egg" within the system. Wade is one of millions of people, called Gunters (short for "egg hunters"), searching for it. Wade's avatar is named Parzival, and this novel is about his quest, which he narrates. His main competitor and love interest is Art3mis.

Halliday was born in 1972, and there are numerous pop culture references, including *War Games*, *Blade Runner*, *Airplane*, *Back to the Future*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, John Hughes films, Joss Whedon TV shows, and *Family Ties*, allusions to video games such as *Adventure* and *Pac-Man*, and references to specialty subjects such as *anime*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, and *manga*.

This was Cline's first novel, and it won an Alex Award as a young adult novel from the American Library Association and a Prometheus Award. It reminded me of "True Names" by Vernor Vinge. Cline had previously written the screenplay to the 2009 film *Fanboys*, which is about a group of *Star Wars* fans.

---Review by Tom Feller

The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham—many different formats and prices, also available as an e-book

This is the second time I have read this book, and I have also seen at least two movie adaptations. My science fiction book discussion group chose the book at my suggestion, so I re-read it. I had forgotten how good it is. The premise is that the world suffers two calamities. The first is the appearance of walking, carnivorous plants called Triffids. At first they are kept under control and even cultivated because of the oil derived from them. Then a meteor shower causes the vast majority of the world's population to go blind, and Triffids escape and began killing off the blind humans. The extermination of humanity is a very real possibility. The story is narrated by Bill Masen, who had missed viewing the meteors because he was recovering from a Triffid sting to his eyes. The main female character is Josella, a party girl who missed the shower because of a hangover. Otherwise, Bill and Josella are pretty ordinary people, although Josella is a minor celebrity, to her embarrassment, and the story is about how ordinary people are coping in a post-apocalyptic world.

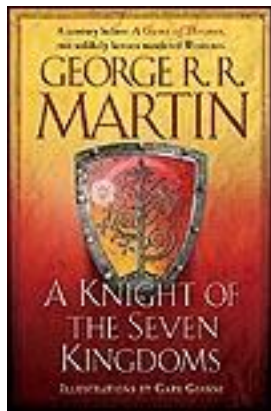
The book was out of print at one time, but I checked out the 2003 Modern Library trade paperback out of the library. This edition calls it a "20th Century Rediscover" with an introduction by Edmund Morris, the biographer of Theodore Roosevelt, and even a Reading Group Study Guide.

---Review by Tom Feller

The Monstrous by Ellen Datlow—\$16.95 in Trade Paperback, but for sale at discount prices in many stores and websites, also available as an e-book

This is an anthology of 20 horror stories with all but one, "Corpsemouth" by John Langan set in Scotland, having been previously published. Contributors include Peter Straub, Kim Newman, Adam-Troy Castro, and Gardner Dozois. However, I thought the best story was "The Beginning of the Year Without Summer" by Caitlin Kierman in which humans conjure up the monsters. A.C. Wise's "Chasing Sunset" is in the tradition of H.P. Lovecraft. The Dozois story, co-authored by Jack Dann is a vampire tale. As is normal for anthologies, some stories are better than others, but there are no bad stories.

---Review by Tom Feller



A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms by George R.R. Martin—discount retail about \$18.00 in hardback, also available as an e-book

This book is a prequel to *The Game of Thrones* set about 100 years before the events described in that book and the TV series. It features two main characters, Dunk and Egg. Dunk is a hedge knight known as Ser Duncan the Tall. A hedge knight is one who does not own any land and is not permanently sworn to anyone's service. Since they are itinerant, they get their name from the custom of sleeping underneath a hedge. Ser Duncan is of such humble origins that he never learned to read or write, and he is called "the Tall", because he is almost seven feet tall. His squire, Egg, on the other hand, is really Aegon Targaryen. If you are familiar with the books and TV series, you would know that this makes him a member of the royal family. However, at the beginning of the book, he is the youngest son of the youngest son of the king, so he is allowed to travel around Westeros incognito. The first third of the book explains how they came to be traveling together.

Dunk and Egg are mentioned in *The Game of Thrones* books, although they were long dead by then. Another character who is still alive in those books is mentioned in the prequel. There is, however, one character in this prequel who is not only still alive at the times of the other books and the TV series, but is also a major character, although under another name.

My edition included 160 illustrations by Gary Gianni, who had previously done the illustrations for *Prince Valiant*. This book can be read as either an introduction to the series, aka *A Song of Ice and Fire*, or as a refresher for those of us who have read all the other books. I enjoyed it immensely.

---Review by Tom Feller

Just One Damned Thing After Another by Jodi Taylor—\$12.99 in Trade paperback but widely sold at discount prices, also available as an e-book

This is the first book in a series about time traveling historians called *The Chronicles of St. Mary*, which is a reference to the university that supports the time travelers, and it is the author's first novel. The premise is similar to Connie Willis's Oxford Time Travel series, but the emphasis is on the conflicts between two competing groups of time travelers, and there is more action. The two series are also similar in that there is an additional premise that History resists change. The main character is Madeleine Maxwell, a historian who is recruited to become a time traveler. The story follows her during her orientation, training, and first several trips back in time. I found it quite readable.

---Review by Tom Feller

Starship's Mage by Glynn Stewart—about \$14.00 in Trade Paperback at discount prices, also available as an e-book

This is a curious hybrid of space opera and fantasy. It is set in a future interstellar empire headquartered on Mars. However, the method of faster-than-light travel is based on magic. Of course, considering the technobabble that some science fiction writers use in justifying FTL travel, they might as well be magic. This writer goes all out and requires that each vessel capable of FTL carry at least one mage, hence the title. The title character is Damien Montgomery, a very talented and conscientious mage, who, unfortunately, has no family connections, so he has to take a position on a less than desirable freighter. At least the rules of magic are very well developed and consistent throughout the book. It was a very entertaining read.

This author has read Heinlein. One of the ship's stops is on a space station called "Heinlein's Station". The society is a combination of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, where there is a fee for everything, and *Beyond This Horizon*, where everyone carries a firearm.

---Review by Tom Feller



The Strain by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan---\$12.99 in Trade Paperback, price is widely discounted, also available as an e-book

My wife and I watched most of the first season of the TV mini-series on the FX cable channel, but got behind and never bothered to catch up. Then one of the members of my science fiction book discussion group recommended the book the series is based upon. While it is a vampire/zombie novel, the authors at least attempt to provide a scientific explanation for vampires and zombies, so I guess it qualifies as science fiction in the broadest possible sense. As a vampire/zombie novel, I would rate it as above average. As science fiction, it is really not all that interesting. Like most of the science fiction/fantasy/horror novels published these days, it is the first book in a trilogy.

The story is set in contemporary New York City, and several of the main characters are medical professionals trying to stop a vampire infection from spreading to the general population. The protagonist is Ephraim, a doctor working for the New York office of the Center for Disease Control. He is a divorced workaholic in the middle of a custody battle over his 11 year old son. One of his allies is a combination Holocaust survivor/pawnbroker/vampire hunter named Abraham Setrakian. The head vampire, Sardu, is in the Dracula-tradition of having an Eastern European aristocratic background. The vampires cannot be seen clearly in mirrors and are vulnerable to silver-tipped weapons and sunlight.

---Review by Tom Feller



CINEMA!

A look at interesting movies both old and new

The feature film of the evening was “Secret of the Incas”, a 1954 adventure movie starring Charlton Heston, along with Robert Young and Nicole Maurey. I first saw this film back around 1955 or 1956 in a theater and it made a big impression on him. I’ve been looking for a copy of this film for years, without success, until recently a friend who is a voracious viewer of supernatural horror films mentioned in his fanzine that he had seen this movie, and then gave it a short review. I immediately emailed him, and he let me know that he watched the movie thru Amazon Prime.

It turns out that there is no studio released English language version of this movie out there for sale. In fact, until relatively recently there weren’t even any reliable pirate copies. There is a Spanish language VHS tape, with no sub-titles, and then, there is the version available thru Amazon Prime where the price was, get this, FREE! That’s right, Amazon Prime members could view this film (and many others) thru their wireless connection over their computer or linked television for a price of zero dollars. This is apparently a gimmick to get more people signed up for the yearly Amazon Prime fee, which mainly offers free expedited shipping on anything the Prime customer orders thru Amazon. Amazon also offers wireless transmission of many other movies and TV programs direct to the viewer for very low prices.

How can Amazon do that you might ask? Well, in the case of “Secret of Incas” the owners of the movie let it fall into public domain in September 1982 for reasons nobody can figure out (altho incompetence & stupidity would be my first choices). Clearly somebody at Amazon either located a 35mm print, or they made an arrangement with Paramount to offer this picture (and possibly a block of others) as part of some larger deal made with the studio. We may never know the exact details, but Amazon is offering it free to their Amazon Prime members.

As it turns out that friend happens to be an Amazon Prime member, so it was no effort at all to set this film up in his viewing quire. The downside; Amazon has some kind of internet encrypting that prevents anyone from making a copy of the movie while it is streaming. My friend Jim reported that he had tried doing that with several other films and the system always shut down immediately. I am unsure if Amazon forbids you to watch the film again after any copying attempt, but this was the only way they are going to let their members see the flick.

“Secret of the Incas” is an exciting archeological treasure adventure in which Charlton Heston plays a rough and ready womanizing American living in Peru who makes his living guiding tourists around Cuzco and other nearby points of interest. His real reason for being in the area is because he is searching for a legendary lost Inca treasure, a Sun Disk made of solid gold, encrusted with numerous precious stones, said to be about two feet across and weighing easily thirty pounds or more.

The local Incan legends say that when the Sunburst Disk is rediscovered it will return the Inca Empire to its glory days. Meanwhile the local museum has a stone copy of the disc, all that anyone has ever been able to actually find relating to the legend. There are other people in the area who are also looking for this lost treasure, including local behind the scenes bad guy Ed Morgan (played by Thomas Mitchell), who has a working relationship with the hero, Harry Steele.

Harry Steele has managed to obtain a piece of an Inca stone relic that shows the location of the Sunburst, but he doesn’t have the money to get to Machu Picchu, the ancient imperial city of the Inca empire, where the tomb of their last legendary ruler Pachacuti might be located, and possibly the Sunburst as well.

The arrival of a beautiful female refugee fleeing from the communist authorities in Romania shifts the power balance. She wants to somehow be smuggled into the United States, but she has no money. With the Peruvian police hot on her trail, literally minutes behind her as she travels, she turns to Harry for help. Harry is a callous mercenary. He is attracted to her, but altho he helps her avoid the local police and provides her temporary cover at a local hotel, it’s a basic situation of no money, no aid, until he learns that a Romanian

official is flying into Cuzco in a private plane to pick her up and return her to Europe. An airplane is exactly what Harry needs to get to Machu Picchu and locate the treasure. Little does he know that an archeological expedition headed by Stanley Moorehead (played by Robert Young) is already established at Machu Picchu, excavating a sealed area that may hold the tomb of the last Inca emperor.

Harry steals the plane, and with refugee Elena in tow, heads for the wilds of Peru and Machu Picchu. They have to abandon the plane short of their goal, due to the treacherous mountainous terrain, but Harry has everything planned, include a cover story for when they finally reach the legendary Inca city.



This is a very good adventure movie, fast moving, with lots of action, romance, suspense and thrills aplenty as the plans to somehow locate the lost Sun Disk collide with all the other elements inside Machu Picchu. The Peruvian military is present, deeply concerned about thieves making off with local national archeological treasures, especially something as significant as the Sunburst Disk. Dr. Moorehead and the refugee Elena Antonescu (played by Nicole Maurey) find themselves romantically attracted to one another despite the difference in their ages, while the local Indians are very much interested in the outcome of the expedition, and have a priestess of their religion, Kori-Tika, (played by Yma Sumac) embedded in the archeological expedition as a translator and assistant. Then, with the expedition about to open the ancient tomb, Ed Morgan suddenly appears on the scene, threatening to expose Harry, his stolen airplane, and Elena unless Harry cuts him in on the Sunburst treasure.

Everything comes to a head with crosses, double-crosses, and action aplenty when Harry uses his piece of the stone relic to sneak into the tomb and locate the chamber where the disk has been hidden for the past five centuries, only to lose it to Morgan, who steals it from Harry and makes a run for it with the precious artifact. The ending is also satisfactory, altho the redemption of our cynical hero thru love and loyalty to his

adopted nation seemed just a little hard to swallow. On the other hand, rough hued heroes with secret hearts of gold have been part of adventure literature since the days of the ancient Greeks, so I suppose I shouldn't be critical.

There are few minor plot inconsistencies that seem mostly to be the fault of efforts to edit the film down from the close to two hour original shooting length. In the early fifties ninety minutes was considered the ideal length for a feature film. Even with some obvious snipping, cutting out several segments that clearly would have added a lot to the general background, the picture still came thru finished at about 98 minutes. If they were going to run eight minutes over, it's hard to understand why Paramount didn't let them run fifteen minutes over and close up some of the easy story inconsistencies; but then, I'm just a film fan, not a studio executive.

Much of this movie was actually shot on location in Peru at Cuzco and particularly at Machua Picchu, which had only been rediscovered in 1911, and was only partially excavated and restored at the time the movie was shot. In fact, the popularity of “Secret of the Incas” was directly responsible for a tremendous surge of interest and tourism into the area, bringing in a flood of foreign dollars that the Peruvian government desperately needed in the early 1950s. Most of the ancient city has since been cleared and restored so that it is now a World Heritage Site and the foremost tourist destination for all of Peru.

This movie was also significant because it marked the first film appearance of pop cultural musical sensation Yma Sumac, whose album “Voice of the Xtebay” was the foremost vanguard of the exotica music movement in the 1950s. Ms Sumac herself was quite exotic looking. She, her music, and her albums were often believed to be manufactured gimmicks concocted by Capital Records to create a flash sales fad. A huge sales blip was indeed created by the release and public reaction to her first album, but it turned out that Yma Sumac was actually a Peruvian Indian, just as she claimed, and that at least a few of the songs on her record albums were either authentic South



American Indian folk music, or were directly inspired by that music. In addition to her striking appearance, she had a remarkable five-octave voice range, something almost unheard of except for exceptionally gifted highly trained operatic singers. If Ms Sumac had ever had any formal voice training she never mentioned it.

In this movie three of her songs from the first album were injected into the film, while she herself played the part of a local priestess of the old religion. Unfortunately these songs were inserted directly from her album with Ms Sumac doing voice pantomimes, not particularly well done either. Included were some Hollywood ideas of what native South American native dances were supposed to look like. The whole effort distracts noticeably from the central flow of the plot. This might have been just barely acceptable when the film was shot in the early 1950s, but it is particularly irritating that the production crew, on location in Peru, could not have used some of the unique and eerie local native Peruvian Inca music, centered around the use of high-pitched pipes and other wind instruments, music which has since become popular world wide. That would have added a lot to the entire flavor of the film.



Anyone seeing this movie will immediately notice a considerable number of similarities between this story and Steven Spielberg’s Indiana Jones pictures, and particularly between the lead characters. The most obvious is that Indiana Jones dresses, acts, and looks almost exactly like Harry Steele in this movie, down to the leather jacket, battered hat, tan pants, and over the shoulder bag, except that Harry is played by Charlton Heston, and Indiana is played by Harrison Ford.

There are quite a few other similarities, too many to be coincidental, including the legendary lost archeological treasure, the use of the raft, the scene with the mirrors inside the ancient tomb, the role played by the female lead, the

jungle scenes and much, much more.

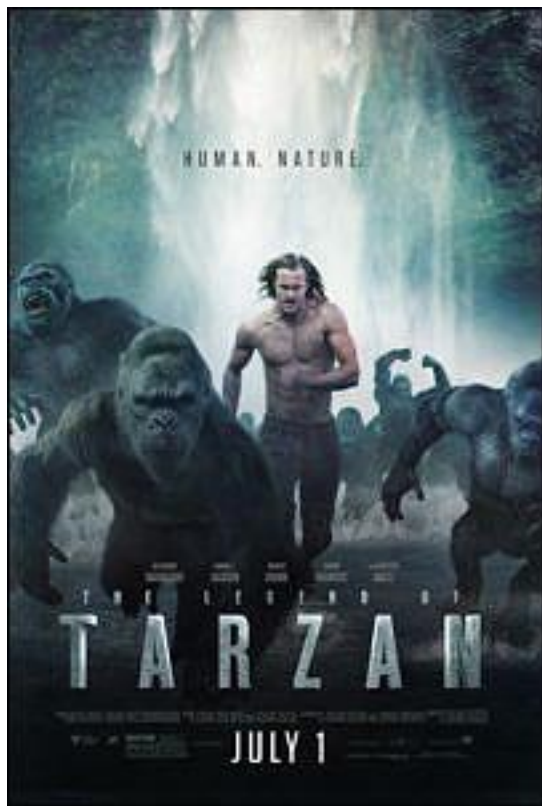
The production crew who worked on the first and second Indiana Jones movies reported watched “Secret of Incas” repeatedly, and according to “Raiders” costume designer Deborah Landis not only the look, but most of the plot elements of “Secret” were lifted direct and transposed into “Raiders”.

There is also a wide-held belief among film buffs that the primary reason that “Secret of the Incas” was never released on tape or DVD, or even offered as part of a TV package after the 1960s, is because Steven Spielberg or George Lucas made a deal with Paramount to suppress the film in order to keep the public from noticing the very obvious inspiration for the enormously successful Indiana Jones film franchise. The fact that “Secret” fell out of copyright in late 1982 must have come as a nasty surprise, altho it is worth noting again that despite that, no English language copies of “Secret of the Incas” have appeared in any form until quite recently.

This seems very strange for a successful adventure film, one that made such a splash when it was first released that it was even adapted as part of the NBC *Lux Radio Theater* series in 1954 with both Charlton Heston and Nicole Maurey reprising their film roles for the radio play.

However things sometimes have a way of working themselves out. Anyone who has not seen this fast moving adventure film should do so. If you don’t happened to have Amazon Prime, you can probably find a friend who does and watch it for free thru direct wireless feed. Or, you can now buy this movie as a DVD release. A good copy is currently being sold thru eBay for \$12.00 by seller ottveromit (yeah, not the kind of user name I would have picked either). His current listing says he has sold 729 copies so far this listing period. I’m sure he will be selling many more in the coming weeks. Finally, after all this time, I got to watch this nifty adventure flick again, and now you can too.

-----review written by **Bob Jennings**



The Legend of Tarzan (released by Warner Studios)

This is a very interesting version of Tarzan that keeps much of the original Edgar Rice Burroughs concept but attempts to place the story at a particular time and place. Tarzan (Alexander Skarsgard) and Jane (Margot Robbie) are married and living at the Greystoke estate in England. Although they go by his English name of Clayton, it is no secret that he is Tarzan. How they met and how he was adopted by the Great Apes is shown in flashbacks.

He is lured to the Belgian Congo by Leon Rom (Christoph Waltz) so that he can secure the diamond rights for the kingdom of Opar. Unfortunately, Opar is ruled by a king, rather than La, and he wants revenge on Tarzan for killing his son. Accompanying Tarzan is George Washington Williams (Samuel R. Jackson) who wants to expose the human rights abuses there to the world. Except for Robbie as a feisty Jane, the acting is pedestrian. The ending is never in doubt, of course, but I found it to be quite entertaining, although not as good as *Greystoke* (1984) or the Disney animated *Tarzan* (1999).

Skarsgaard has said that his father Stellan Skaragaard, also an actor, was a big Tarzan fan who introduced him to the character through VHS tapes of the Johnny Weissmuller films. Skarsgaard had to train four months to be ready for the shirtless

scenes and was on a diet that only allowed chicken, no red meat. This was genuine method acting, or at least genuine dedication to the role.

---review written by **Tom Feller**



Fanzine Reviews

by

Bob Jennings

A regular feature of *Tightbeam*

In my opinion fanzines are one of the pillars of fannish existence, as much the heart and core of fandom as conventions, correspondence and clubs. Despite the popularity of the Internet, there are still many fanzines being physically printed and actually mailed out to interested fans. I will try to take a glance at some of the print fanzines that I have received since the last issue of *The Insider* was mailed out. Copies of print fanzines intended for review should be sent to---**Robert Jennings; 29 Whiting Rd.; Oxford, MA 01540-2035**; e-zines can be sent to **fabficbks@aol.com**

Most of these fanzines are available to interested parties for "the usual", which is fan shorthand for sending the editor/publisher a letter of comment, or a copy of your own print fanzine in trade, or contributing written or artistic material for publication. Most editors will cheerfully send you a copy of their zine if you send along a card or letter (or email) asking for a sample copy, or, if you want to be a nice guy, you could enclose a couple of bucks to help defray the cost of postage



RAY X X-RAYER #124

8-1/2x11", 6 pages, generally published bi-weekly or monthly, except when Ray doesn't want to. Available from Ray PalmX; Box Holder; PO Box 2, Plattsburgh, NY 12901-0002; new issues are now posted for free on the web

This is an odd little fanzine that devotes itself to coverage of odd events. This is unlike most any fanzine you've ever read, since Ray spends a lot of his time to examining conspiracy theorists, UFO explainers, professional paranormal con men, ultra right wing loonies and more in the same vein. He does this by taking a quiet and sardonic look at what these assorted people are proposing and then points out some of the obvious flaws and contradictions in their philosophy, or how their claims might be in conflict with harsh reality.

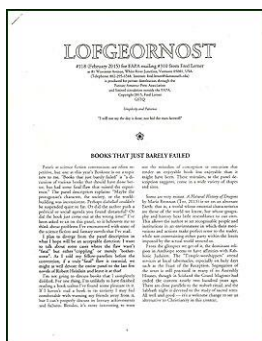
This issue Ray bemoans the loss of dedicated cynics in the world of UFO research, and notes that the fading interest in the subject of UFOs might be caused by a lack of something suitably sensational, something exciting or bizarre enuf to attract the attention of the mundane media. Reports of unusual lights

behaving strangely in the night skies, or even discs seen flying in formation without some subjective official verification are still coming thru on a regular basis, but they only seem to attract the attention of those already involved with the subject. Ray concludes that something is probably up there, something we don't know anything about. Whether they are aliens from another planet, or some unexplained natural phenomenon or just more "swamp gas" remains to be seen, and without some kind of public focus on these events there is likely not going to be a great deal of new official examination into these sightings, and UFOlogy will remain in the doldrums.

Ray concludes the issue by taking another look at a juvenile book he got in his bargain book sale days, "Plant People" by Dale Carlson, despite using deliberately simple language (presumably because it was aimed at a young audience), Ray found to be creepy and borderline scary, as the author created a tale of alien invaders turning the people in a small rural town into plants for their own nefarious purposes. The book even came with photo illos, which Ray, a photographer himself, concludes were very effective, especially for a 1973 book aimed at the older grammar school crowd.

Ray has been at this for a long time, as witness the fact that he has made it to issue #124. Altho he often seems to focus on the lunatic fringe in the assorted paranormal worlds, he is not opposed to genuine research into subjects which appear to be on the edge, or even well beyond the fringe of known science. It is the lunatics, the outrageous scam artists and characters who are clearly delusional, along with the ultra-conspiracy freaks who scream and never try to provide any information to back up their claims, that obscure the work of real people doing real research trying to find answers about some of the odd and unusual happenings in our little corner of the universe. Those individuals deserve support, even if you don't necessarily agree with their viewpoint. Unfortunately it is hard to hear the rational arguments when whackos get all the press and the air time.

It's a weird world out there, and this fanzine is devoted to looking at it all and trying to debunk some of the looniest of the bunch. Ray used to print up copies, but these days he is posting all issues of his zine on the internet. Those interested can check the latest issue out at the efanazines.com web site.



LOFGEORNOST #118

8-1/2x11"; 8 pages of small type; Quarterly

from Fred Lerner; 81 Worcester Ave.; White River Junction, VT 05001---the usual

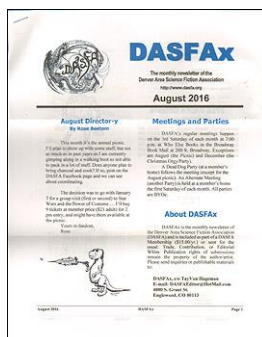
This is Fred's FAPazine, but it contains no mailing comments and has extensive distribution outside FAPA. Each issue features a long essay by Fred generally concerning some science fiction theme, followed by natter that is often related to the central essay. From time to time he also runs long travel reports about his vacation excursions. *Lofgeornost* never runs illos of any kind.

This issue's lead article discusses two fantasy novels that offer complicated fantasy worlds populated by many, many characters, and many gods who are trying to interact with that world. The problem with this setup is it requires the reader to keep track of an enormous number of characters, plus all the threads of intrigue and

subterfuges that the characters, and their supernatural god enemies or protectors engage in. It is interesting that one of the writers is Chinese, since Chinese culture is well supplied with stories in which there are large numbers of characters who influence the story plot to a greater or lesser degree. As Fred notes, it's a bit overwhelming for those who are not necessarily interested in learning about a brand new universe where you almost need a program book to tell who's who and what's what.

The letter column this time is extensive, it makes up most of the issue. The writers cover a wide expanse of subjects, including comments about traveling in Japan and the far east, as well as the American fascination with the British royal family, even tho, as one British fan points out, nobody in the US seems to have a clue as to the actual process of royal succession. There are even comments and opinions about science fiction and science fiction authors. The letter columns in this fanzine are always interesting, and varied.

This fanzine only comes out four times a year, but it is always worth the wait, and this issue was another enjoyable read.



DASFAX August 2016

8-1/2x11", 6 pages; published monthly by the Denver

Area Science Fiction Association; c/o Tay Von Hageman; 4080 S. Grant St.; Englewood, CO 80113; comes with club membership, membership fees are \$15 per year, or available for The Usual.

This is the newsletter of the Denver area SF club. The group is unique in that almost every meeting features a guest speaker, often a popular SF/fantasy author. There are also club wide games, discussion groups, and the meetings are usually followed by a party at one of the member's homes. The first Saturday of each month there is an Alternate Meeting, which is another party hosted by a different club member.

This slightly abbreviated issue features an equally abbreviated editorial by club director Rose Beetem, mostly discussing the author/artist guest events at recent

monthly club meetings.

The heart of every issue of this fanzine is the feature article written by 'Sourdough Jackson', a long time club member, and a long time fan who discusses science fiction and fantasy as part of his "Writers of the Purple Page" series. The subject range is very widespread, but usually the focus is on previously published material,

as in, pre-2000, and more often, pre-1975 stuff, but that emphasis is certainly not a hard and fast rule. The observations and analysis is always interesting, often insightful.

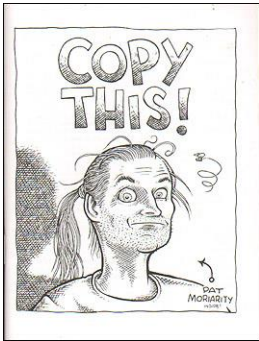
This issue the focus is on the contrasts between Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover series and Isaac Asimov's Foundation future history stories. He mentions that whereas Asimov began his series with an idea of what he was trying to do and where he wanted the series to go (abet with some shifts in character development along the way), Ms Bradley seems to have originally had no great interest in keeping her Darkover books internally consistent, nor did she apparently envision the enthusiastic response fans would take to her world and its multi-cultural aspects. This led to some problems down the line, which she tried to adjust with rewrites on some of her important stories to cobble the universe together into a cohesive whole.

Speaking as a reader of the series I found her cultural city-states, and social orders to be fascinating, but her wholly artificial concoction that on Darkover the Compact forbids the use against humans of any weapons that strike from a distance as ridiculous and absolutely unbelievable. Wars tend to be huge, desperate cauldrons where nations resort to almost any activity to win over their enemies, and even without armed conflict between governments, it is impossible to believe that the criminal underclass on Darkover or anywhere else would not be unscrupulous or ruthless enuf to violate that rule on a regular basis. A rule violated consistently become impossible to enforce at any social level.

Another problem is that the author allowed important recurring personalities to shift and change completely from one book to the next, which is very irritating for readers trying to find unity and order in the series. Bradley was also not particularly concerned with geography, so sometimes important locations, including capital cities or even whole kingdoms might be randomly moved to a different part of the globe with no explanation at all. She spend the next twenty years trying to rectify some of those problems, solidifying her efforts with "Sharra's Exile", which essentially rewrote and reestablished the very first, core novel of her series.

This article is a well written discussion of the entire Darkover series, mentioning the strong and the weak points, and well worth checking out.

You do not have to be a member of the Denver club to get copies of this fanzine, altho supporting memberships are offered at very reasonable rates and would certainly be appreciated.



COPY THIS #30

4-1/4x4-1/2"; 32 pages of very small type; mostly monthly from D. Blake Werts; 12339 Chesley Dr.; Charlotte, SC 28277---available for The Usual

This is a mini-zine which happens to be a newszine devoted to mini-zines. For those not familiar with the term, mini-zines are physically small amateur publications (usually roughly 4x5" in size) devoted to comic strips or cartoons. These have been the new underground comics and the new frontier for cutting edge humor for a long time now. Circulations of mini-zines range from a few dozen to a thousand copies per issue, or more. The range of art and creativity is also very wide. There is some brilliant work being turned out in mini-zines, but then there are also some absolutely awful crudzines being offered out there as well.

Copy This tries to keep up with what is happening in this sub-species of comic art creativity. In addition most issues provide one or two in-depth interviews with mini-zine creators. These interviews are almost always insightful, and cut straight to the quick of a creator's career, his art, and the subjects he deals with.

This time *Copy This* devotes almost the entire issue to a long in-depth interview with Pat Moriarity, an important and versatile artist who has been around the underground comics and fan commix scene for quite a long time. He talks about his interest in comics, comic art, and his involvement with both comics fandom and self publishing mini-comix. Moriarity is an artist who has many styles to artwork, and his art is strong enuf to speak for itself, so he has been a fan favorite for a long time, a guy who was also involved in many different projects. His vision of what he wanted to say with his art has shifted slightly over the years, but he was and remains devoted to art as the true primary expression of creativity. Moriarity is an interesting person both as an individual and an artist. I found this one of the most refreshing interviews *Copy This* is turned out this year.

The remainder of the issue is devoted to a batch of reviews covering the latest mini-comics and independent comix releases from the past month. The mix is interesting, and the art is excellent. *Copy This* inserts freebie sample mini-comix several times a year as a way of promoting both new and old artists whose work editor Werts feels deserve broader coverage.

The format is tight and well presented. Editor Werts has enduring enthusiasm for the mini-zine art form, and the people who create them. I really can't stress how interesting and informative this fanzine is. Anyone with even a trivial interest in the mini-comics scene or the world of amateur cartooning should definitely give be getting this mag.

OPUNTIA 351

1 June August 2018



OPUNTIA 351

published monthly by Dale Speirs; Box 6830; Calgary; Alberta; CANADA T2P 2E7---a previous print zine that is now exclusively distributed in e-fanzine format, with many issues also on display at the efanazines.com website.

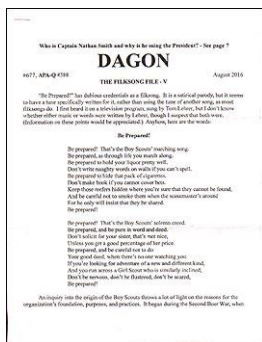
Technically a FAPAazine, *Opuntia* enjoys a considerably circulation beyond that amateur press group. Whenever Dale does include some selected mailing comments, he makes sure his references and responses are framed so that someone who is not a FAPA member can understand what is being discussed. With only rare exceptions, everything in every single issue of *Opuntia* is written by Dale Speirs himself.

This time round Dale has visited the badlands northwest of his home in Calgary, and he brought his camera along. People who have a preconceived notion of what Canada is like will be stunned by his photos of desert, prickly pears, and deserted ghost towns, as well as scenes of barren slopes and rich forest growth, all in the same area. The photos are vivid and some are almost panoramic. Dale has been running a lot of photo essays in *Opuntia* of late, showing off his skills with camera and composition. This is certainly one of his best.

Much of the rest of the issue is devoted to reviewing and discussing the writings of Stephen Leacock, a Canadian writer of satire and humor who was very popular in the first third of the 20th century, a name that will probably be almost unknown to today's generation. He was an early proponent of what we today call alternative history. Much of his material is science fiction or fantasy and one of his satires is a biting commentary on the nonsensical common themes of the preachy utopian fantasy novel that was very popular in the late Victorian age. These Leacock satires certainly stand the test of time. Dale offers some interesting comments and quotes from Leacock's works. He was particularly adept at parodying and poking fun at different literary styles, particularly the best selling popular novel trends of his time. Unfortunately many of those same kinds of hackneyed formula novels are still being published to this very day. Some of his material is dated, but not a whole lot of it. Unfortunately the publishing world has decided to leave Leacock behind, almost everything he every wrote is currently out of print, altho copies can be found on book selling sites such as alibris.com and Amazon. Perhaps the book publishers secretly decided to drop his books out of print in revenge for his scathing wit and cutting edged humor applied to their regular stock and trade.

Dale follows up with a look at a new collection of "Diesel-punk" stories. Apparently the quality of this particular collection is very uneven. Brief comments about the impending problems with ecology and the potential dangers to world agriculture follows.

Opuntia usually offers much variety and a uniquely different focus. This used to be a print fanzine, but the economics of printing, and particularly the very high cost of postage in Canada has made *Opuntia* a permanent e-zine. Copies of this issue can be seen on the efanazines.com website.



DAGON #677

8-1/2x11", 10 pages, published monthly by John Boardman; 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871; \$15 for ten issues or The Usual.

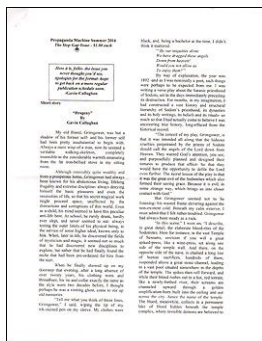
This is technically John's APA-Q zine, but he usually doesn't bother with mailing comments and when he does they are extremely brief. This is a mostly monthly fanzine devoted to whatever John happens to find interesting or worth commenting on at the moment.

This issue offers another installment of what John refers to as the Filksong File. Filk songs, for those who might not know, are SF fan songs in the folk tradition with SF or fannish lyrics, often humorous. Tunes are usually traditional or from the pop music charts, but sometimes the melodies are original too.

In this case John discusses a Tom Lehrer song titled "Be Prepared" that, while not a fan written filk song, is nevertheless popular with filksingers at many conventions. This leads him into a discussion of the history and relevance of the Boy Scout movement. John then moves on to explain what a scientific theory is, and why the word "theory" is an unfortunate word choice for principles that scientists accept as correct unless/until something much better comes along with verified observations and experiments that explains the situation more completely. What most people regard as the meaning of the word theory, scientists refer to as a mere "hypothesis". Language comprehension is important at every level of human society. Unfortunately too many people in this modern world neither know nor appreciate the subtleties involved in the comprehensive of language. Just check the current political screaming matches if you doubt that last statement.

From there John jumps to a discussion of the current Presidential campaigns; a subject that is weighing heavily on the minds of a great many people. He points out past facilities of political parties that tried to adopt candidates and programs that were too conservative or too liberal for the electorate to swallow. Often this lead to a near total crushing of the political party that took years to rebuild. In older times such devastating defeats have led to the losing party disintegrating outright. This year's US elections has proven far more volatile and unpredictable than almost anyone could have predicted back last year when things began to ramp up for the campaign. Time will tell whether John's own conjectures will come true or not.

Every issue of *Dagon* is well crafted, and each issue is a mixture of John Boardman's views on the world and they are almost always interesting. Well worth sending for.



THE PROPAGANDEA MACHINE summer 2016 8-1/2x11", 6 pages, mostly published on an irregular schedule from Gavin Callaghan; 7108 Daggett Terrace, New Port Richey, FL 34655; \$3.00 for a sample issue, after that The Usual

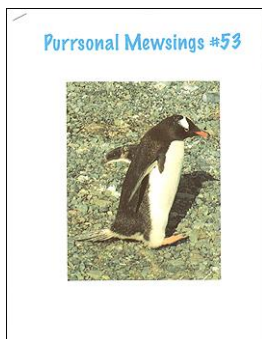
Please note Gavin's new address. Thieves had been breaking into his mailbox and stealing letters, so he has shifted his mailing address to a more secure location.

This is a very short issue of what is an especially unique fanzine. Gavin is primarily an artist who does cartoons and has a free-wheeling, long running adventure with humor overtones comic strip that runs here and there, and sometimes shows up on the internet too. He is also a long time collector and scholar devoted to the works of H.P. Lovecraft and the original Lovecraft circle of *Weird Tales* writers of the 1930s.

This issue is marked Summer, and as stated, is mainly a stop-gap emergency issue produced to save his membership in the UFO fanzine co-op. He promises larger issues and a more frequent publishing schedule in the near future.

Most of the issue is given over to a supernatural story by Gavin titled "Progeny", presumably published here for the first time. The tale is set in the year 1892, and is one of those ancient-lore-uncovered-and-misused-by-meddling-investigator-who-now-deeply-regrets-it-even-tho-it-is-way-too-late-to-avoid-awful-consequencies tales. This motif was old in early years of the last century, and it creaks now in 2016. While it is a reasonably interesting story with good writing the story theme is far from new, and the ending is a bit of a letdown because the concluding concept is not better developed. In my opinion more fiddling with the ending would have resulted in a far stronger story.

There are also some poems, and a few reprinted pieces of ephemera from yesteryear. Every issue of this fanzine provides something new and interesting. Nothing is ever the same in Gavin's world, and this latest issue of his fanzine demonstrates that principle in great detail.



Purrrsonal Mewsings #53 R-Laurraine Tutihasi; 2081 W. Overlook St.; PO Box 5323; Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 8-1/2x11", 23 pages; irregular; available for The Usual

This is the new title for two of the editors old zines, now combined in hope that she will be able to produce the new title on a more regular basis.

This issue has a long trip report covering her recent cruise trip down to Antarctica. If you are expecting breath taking tales of adventure among the Penguins & Seals & Icebergs Oh My! you will be disappointed. Editor Tutihasi can be an interesting, engaging writer when she wants to be, but far too often when she decides, as she did here, to run an article about a family visit, or a weekend at a convention, or a travel cruise, often these reports fall flat. These are not convention reports or tales about the

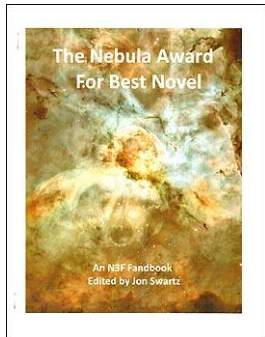
joys of a vacation; they are more like trip diaries, with an occasional bit of emphasis on the actual places visited on the trips. There are notes and mentions of when and what she ate, which I frankly find of no interest at all, along with names of people the meals were taken with, total strangers unknown to me or anyone reading the report. Who cares if somebody had blueberry pancakes one morning while their friend settled for scrambled eggs and bacon? There are some asides and observations about a few of the unique sights of Antarctica, but not very many. The whole write-up is very Spartan. I sensed that that she enjoyed the cruise, but it is hard to tell because she talked mainly about food and travel conditions.

There are also brief reviews of local plays and movies seen recently, mostly with comments about the performances but not the qualities, or lack there of productions themselves.

There were also some brief apa mailing comments, pretty much incomprehensible if you are not a member of that particular group, and then a longish letter column, where editor Titihasi's talents as a writer finally unfold. She has many interesting comments in reply to letter writers observations. She details some of

her problems with last year's broken hip, she talks about her performing schedule, and generally reveals that she is a genuine human being who can write and communicate well with readers about a wide variety of subjects. I would really prefer a lot more of that and a whole lot less of those stilted trip reports she has been running in her zines the past year or so. Ms Tutihasi is interesting, but a list of her car mileage, or her dinner entrees are not.

Each issue always features a generous assortment of illos from a wide variety of sources, both color and b&w.



THE NEBULA AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL

8-1/2x11" side stapled;

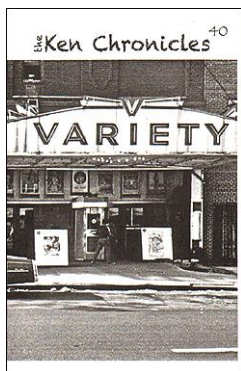
18 pages; a one shot from the national Fantasy Fan Federation; contact editor George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Dr., Worcester, MA 01609 or by email at phillies@4liberty.net; free with annual membership in the N3F

This is a one-shot publication, the latest of what was at one time a regular service provided by the N3F, fanzines denoting SF history or significant material members might be interested in. Edited by N3F historian Jon D. Schwartz, it sports a handsome full color cover supplied by NASA. The one piece of interior art is uncredited so far as I can tell.

Jon provides a short history and overview of the Nebula Awards, basically awards for the best science fiction stories, with voting restricted to professional authors who happen to be members of the SF Writers Association. The list of winning novels is long and impressive. There is also a biography section featuring short bios of every Nebular novel winning author.

Absent from this presentation is any mention of the conflicts and controversies the Nebula Awards have generated over the years. There is a section for books that won both the Hugo Award and the Nebula. That list is short. The Hugos are awarded by fans for what they believe was the best novel each year, and the differences of opinions between the buyers/readers of the literature and those who write it is often wide. Authors tend to vote on style, presentation, the handling of plot, including how well characters were integrated into the context of the story. Fans vote for good plots, memorable adventures, startling new ideas, impressive characters. This is a void that is probably never going to be crossed, but winners from both lists are usually excellent novels well worth reading.

This is a nicely produced fanzine with the info presented in a compact easily accessible unit. Was this publication necessary, considering that everything is posted on the internet on numerous sites? Probably not, but it is nice to have the list, the history, the bios all in one place at one time, without have to search out all the individual components on the web.



THE KEN CHRONICLES #38

5-1/2x8-1/2" fold over saddle stitched; 26

pages; published quarterly from Ken Bausert; 2140 Erma Dr.; East Meadow, NY 11554-1120; \$2.00 or The Usual

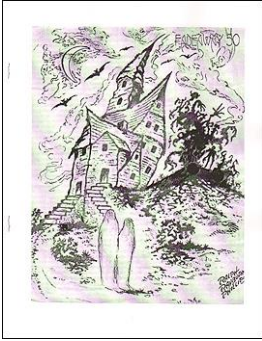
This is Ken's perzine. As he says right up front "it's all about me!" While some personality zines wallow in self indulgent spiels of inner musings that sometimes border on self pity and offer very little to interest the casual reader, this one does none of that. Ken is a very entertaining writer who has been around the hobby for a long time, so when he discusses something he manages to find points that will interest all the readers, including those who might have no initial knowledge at all about the subject matter.

This time round the issue covers nostalgic reminiscences about old neighborhood theaters and swimming pools of his youth, plus a favorite restaurant he and his wife frequented thru the years. Then he adds some comments and full color photos of exotic birds he photographed on his past winter's Florida vacation. There is a section on repairing his aging hot tub, and restoring an even older reel-to-reel tape recorder (boy, I could sure use his help on a few of my old R-to-R machines); a look at a New York crematory build in the 1884 in a classical architectural style with Tiffany stained glass windows. He provides photos to go with the commentary and for most of his other write-ups and remarks.

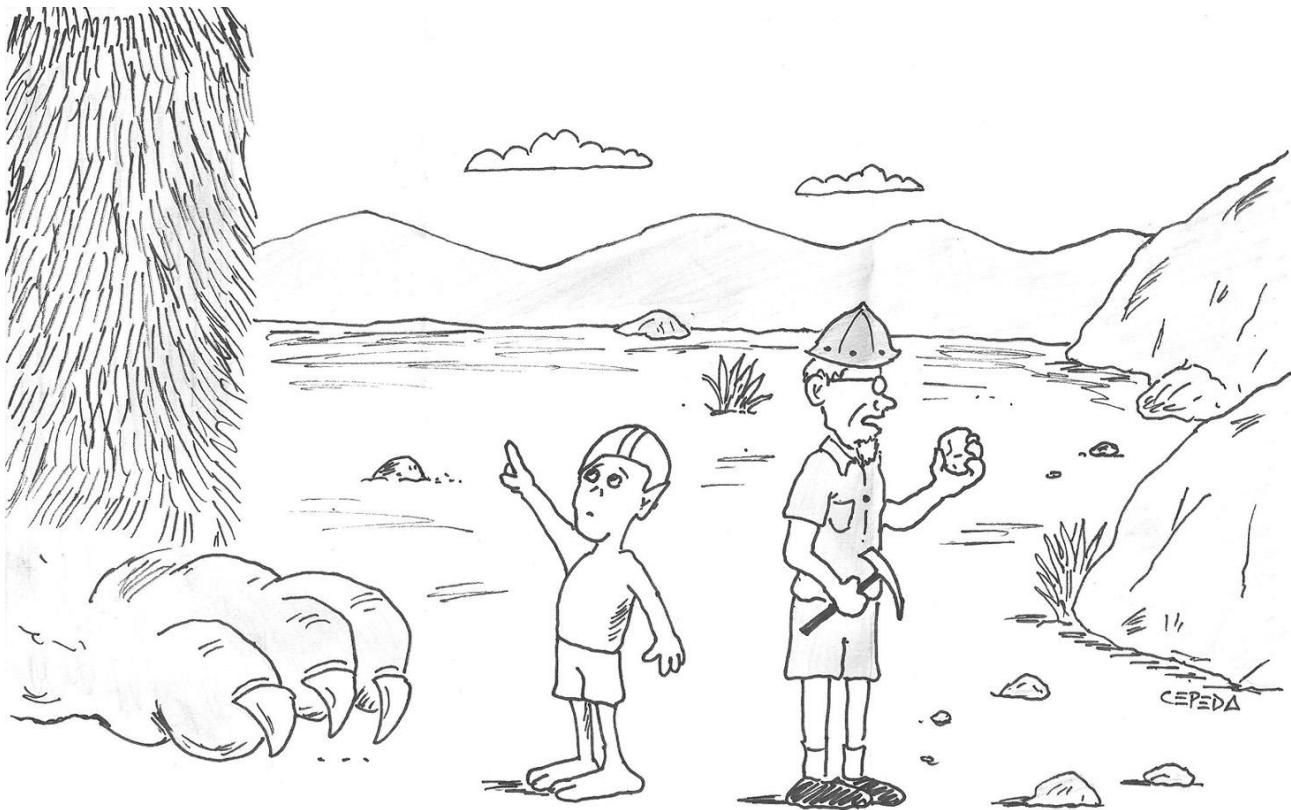
There are also reviews of recent books Ken read, new music acquired, and reviews of fanzines received from other people, none of which are involved in any way with science fiction or comic fandom. There is an extensive world of amateur zinners out there, people still publishing words on printed pages for distributions around the world. In fact there is an annual ziner flea-market like event held every fall in New York City, so even if the number of SF related print zines sometimes seems to be in recession, rest assured there are still plenty of other creators who support the tradition and embrace the world of printed fanzines.

This was another relaxed, fun read all the way thru. Give this mag a try, you'll enjoy it.

SHAMELESS PLUG DEPARTMENT!



I want to take the opportunity to mention my own fanzine, *Fadeaway*. Issue #50 is now out, 48 pages long, featuring an by Dale Nelson on the first golden age of fantastic literature, the Victorian Age, an in-depth look at *The Whistler*, a program from the golden age of radio drama and suspense, plus a long meaty letter column. A sample copy will be sent free to anyone who has not previously received a copy. You can contact me direct at fabficks@aol.com.



"Nonsense! Any creature such as you postulate would invariably collapse under its own weight."

DEADLINE FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IS 7 November 2016