



tightbeam #277

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TIGHTBEAM 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 efanzines.com web site thru the generous courtesy of webmaster Bill Burns.

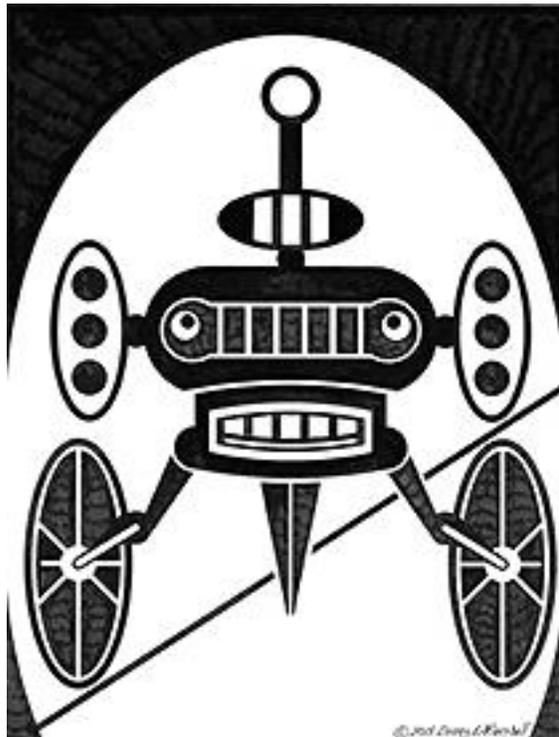
This is issue **#277** and is edited by Bob Jennings. Letters of comment are solicited from everyone reading this; also, reviews of books read, movies seen, and convention experiences recently attended, and any other fannish material that would be of interest to our members is also requested. Please contact Bob Jennings at—

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

cover illustration by Gavin Callaghan



LETTERS



Lloyd Penney; 1706-24 Eva Rd.; Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

I have *Tightbeam* 276 here, and slowly but surely, I am catching up with all the fanzines resident in my Zines to Loc box on the desktop. I was five weeks behind, but now, only three. I must be doing something right.

My loc...I think what few fanzine reviews I wrote may have been inspired by Guy Lillian's style of review. He is largely positive and concise when he writes mini-reviews of zines for *The Zine Dump*, and I'd rather be positive and supportive of the zines we still have.

Hugo Madness indeed. I have never liked military SF, especially because it is aimed directly at American readers. The rest of us will probably go and read something else. I don't download e-books because I have plenty of paper books yet to read, not that I am reading them these days. Of all the books discussed, which one would I like to get? The new Bloom County book. I already have most of the books from the 80s, and this one would be great to get. But as you say, it is overpriced, and finding all those new strips online would be the best for our tight budget. Yvonne bought Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, and this big Harry Potter fan never finished the book. We had thought to go and see the two-part play when we were in London this past August, but the tickets were mostly gone during the time we were there, and what tickets were left were horribly expensive. I gather this two-part play swept the British stage awards this season, and had the best box office.

I have never collected comics, but even non-readers knew about Supergirl, and all the various incarnations she's been in, from that issue of *Action Comics*, to the Supergirl TV show, to the modern DC Superhero Girls for the kids. She's more of a theme than an actual character.

When it comes to films, well, nope. I don't care to have Netflix at home; we know we'd be watching that all the time, not getting anything done at home, and besides, expenses again. On the other hand...Hidden Figures was a great movie, and it certainly deserves all the praise and awards it's been getting. I gather at the Oscars, Katherine Goble Johnson was brought on stage to thunderous applause.

Later on this week, I was actually able to get myself a little bit of work, through an agency I thought I'd never work for again. As a result, while there is a big comic convention in the south part of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, I will be working the registration tables for a real estate expo in the north part. I expect to run into a few people I know, but I think I'd rather be in the north part. Right now, I need to make some money, not spend it.

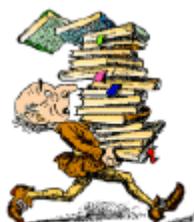
Thanks for this issue, and I look forward to the next one, and that includes *Fadeaway*, Whichever title arrives, we will see you then.

###The point of the fanzine review column here in *Tightbeam* is to review fanzines, not just to post a list of their contents and the publisher/editor's address. I am always happy to point out things I like about fanzines, and discuss them in detail, but as a reviewer I also owe it to the reader to point out things I find that could be improved, or things that strike me as odd, or jarring, or even controversial. The column is not just a checklist of what fanzines are out there, but hopefully it will be a guidepost to the type of fanzine the publisher is offering so that people who are interested in his particularly style or emphasis will be follow up and try out the title. It would be useless and counterproductive, for example, for somebody like myself who does not like or understand poetry, to take up an editor's time and resources sending for a poetry fanzine just because some fanzine review column gave it a cheery recommendation without explaining what the fanzine was about or what kind of material it actually published.

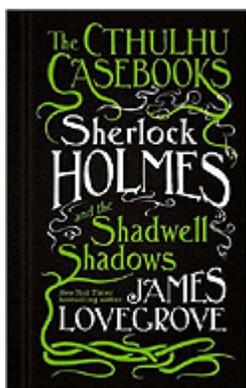
E-books are becoming even more popular. In addition to the generally lower cost for purchasing the pixel version, there is the matter of eliminating the weight and storage problems of books printed on paper. In a society where people are increasingly mobile, often shifting to distant

locations rapidly and often, having to NOT move a library of bulky, heavy printed books becomes another agreeable reason to go with the e-book mode. For people who just want to read books one time, public libraries are still the best option, and due to the miracles of modern technology, and inter-library loan, many titles that may not be available at a person's local library can still be ordered and enjoyed without spending money purchasing anything.

I wish the new Bloom County book had been a better product. I would have settled for it being complete, or at least nearly complete, but it wasn't. It offered a scattering of the new Bloom County comic strips, not even in the right order, and the huge two-strips per page layout was a total rip-off ; plus, it was overpriced based on the page count to begin with. Brickbats and hisses to IDW Publishing (who normally do a superlative job with most of their other comic strip reprint volumes) for turning out a clearly inferior, rip-off book with "Bloom County Episode XI: A New Hope" .###



BOOKS



SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SHADWELL SHADOWS (The Cthulhu Casebooks); by James Lovegrove; Titan Books; 448 pages, Hardback, \$19.99; e-book version \$7.99

Titan Books, is a British company that produces a series of interesting comic books, many of them based on or spun off of popular television series and movies, and is also the authorized publisher of a number of trade paperbacks taken from the pages of the British weekly comic *2000AD*, plus they also publish trade paperback collections of popular British comic strips including Modesty Blaze and James Bond.

They also have a sub-division devoted exclusively to producing brand new stories starring Sherlock Holmes, mostly with fantasy or science fiction themes. Since the Holmes character has fallen into public domain, there has been a virtual avalanche of new material devoted to the character, some of it pretty good and a whole lot of it pretty

awful.

This new novel falls into the pretty good category, altho I have some serious reservations about this particularly volume and the way its author has handled both the Sherlock Holmes character and the interaction of the Holmes character with the world of H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos.

For openers author Lovegrove decides to tell us that all the works of Sherlock Holmes written by Dr. John Watson, are all false, pure literary inventions devised to disguise the real story of Sherlock Holmes, which are encounters in which he and Watson were actually battling the minions of Cthulhu and the efforts of these Cthulhu followers to use supernatural methods to commit atrocities and crimes of unspeakable horror, which Holmes and Watson were (mostly) fortunate enuf to be able to defeat.

Lovegrove has opening framing chapters in the classical tradition, in which he relates that he, Lovegrove, is a distant relative of H.P. Lovecraft, and that a special sealed box containing some manuscripts of John Watson was forwarded to Lovecraft in the early 1930s. Those manuscripts have now come into his own hands.

I am a firm believer than when reading any book you have to Buy The Bit; accept whatever set-up the author is trying to establish, and then judge the story by how well he handles it within the story framework he has established. However I had a lot of problems Buying The Bit here. We are supposed to believe this contrived story that both the Cthulhu Mythos and Sherlock Holmes were both genuine real-life things, and that the “true adventures” were about to be related thru a series of three new books based exclusively in inside info provided by Watson, handed off to H.P. Lovecraft, and now in the hands of Lovegrove.

This kind of cutsey-poo interaction with fictional characters, pretending they are real life individuals has always irked me, even when handled carefully, but in this case it is insulting and pretentious, since it automatically relegates all the works of Sr. Arthur Conan Doyle to the trash-bin as literary junk. This from an author who purports to admire the stories of Sherlock Holmes. He wants to sweep away all the work of creating the world’s most memorable and important literary detective and arrogantly places himself at the helm of the property by now vowing that his words are correct and true, while the stories by Doyle are worthless lies.

OK, personal rant over. Buying The Bit, I have to admit that Lovegrove tells a pretty good story, and the fact that he has also written four other new Sherlock Holmes adventures with science fiction or fantasy themes indicates he is dedicated to the character. I just wish that instead of the framing device he used, he could have simply had Holmes and Watson engage in a series of adventures in which they battle the supernatural Cthulhu mythos baddies without having to trash the established Holmes cannon of tales in the process.

As you might expect there is a lot more action and adventure that you might find in a pure Holmes story, but then, the writer has a whole book to fill out, while Doyle primarily dealt with short stories. In 1880 John Watson has returned from Afghanistan and a nightmare encounter with creatures in a hidden cavern that held the remains of an ancient city, an encounter that slaughtered most of his companions and left him shaken to the core of his being.

He encounters Sherlock Holmes, who is investigating a series of grisly “accidental deaths” in the Shadwell section of London, deaths that may, or may not, be connected to an odd pattern. The victims were apparently starved to death, yet every one of them was observed hale and healthy mere days before. The deaths, and the appearance of some stalking entity that is making Shadwell even more unsafe than usual, may be linked to an oriental master criminal reportedly expanding his drug and prostitution trade.

The clues unfold logically, but at a rapid, almost frantic pace, as Holmes and Watson soon find that they may be facing forces that have supernatural, or at least, para-normal powers. What’s more these other forces, whether directed by human beings or using human beings as mere pawns in some gigantic unseen game, want no undue publicity, especially not from a meddling private detective, or the police. Efforts to kill off the investigators lead to other clues that blaze a trail to a fantastic scheme of greed and supernatural manipulation by agents of the Elder Gods.

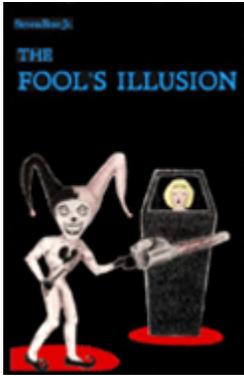
I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was fast paced, it was fun, it had a lot of suspense with plenty of twists and plot turns that kept this reader guessing thru much of the story. At the finish Holmes, Watson, and their police force allies have dealt with an extraordinary menace, but, they are also aware that the forces behind this powerful scheme will not be satisfied with this setback. That means more adventures in the world of the Cthulhu Mythos, and what luck, the next volume titled “The Adventure of the Deadly Dimensions” will be out in early July.

I do have one other objection; specifically regarding the format of this novel. The physical size of the book is small; 5-1/2x8-1/4”, with no dust jacket either. Yes, books and magazines cost a lot more in the UK than they do here in the States, but \$19.99 seems like an overly ambitious price for this book. I note that the next volume will be a Trade Paperback, with a US price of \$14.98. Many book sellers, including internet sites, are offering the next book at a sharp discount price, which is fine. Altho I enjoyed this first book in the series, I wish I could also have enjoyed a discount price when buying it.

---review by Bob Jennings

The Fool’s Illusion by Steven Rose, Jr.; Trade Paperback; 249 pages; \$8.99; ebook version at .99 or free if you have Amazon Prime

This is a self-published collection of short stories. The genre is difficult to identify; I’d classify the stories as fantasy. The title short story, “The Fool’s Illusion”, is very strange, even bizarre. It starts out being about a magician’s trick but becomes stranger when the use of an ancient Egyptian magic spell is revealed.



Two of the stories, “The Puppet Show” and “Orbitville” remind me of the literary school known as “Theatre of the Absurd”. The crux of the stories seems to be that the protagonist is seeing things differently from everyone else. “The Puppet Show” is ostensibly about the theatre, so already there is a dissociation from reality. “Orbitville” takes place in a future when everyone seems to live most of their lives in virtual reality. In such a situation, how is one to tell what’s real?

“Digital Love at First Sight” also pits the digital world versus reality.

In “The Inheritance” the protagonist slowly uncovers a family secret; this story seems closest to traditional fantasy. “Coming Out” is a similar story that seems like regular fantasy. “Spam” is also apparently a traditional fantasy.

“Planet of the Dead” reminds me of the Ray Bradbury story about the Edgar

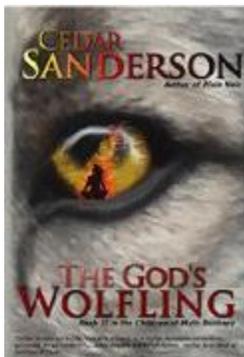
Allan Poe recreation on Mars. In this story the graves of almost everyone on Earth have been relegated to a cemetery on another planet. The original reason was to make more space available for the living. Eventually it became convenient to exile the dead, so people didn’t have to think about them. However the caretaker of the cemetery has a nefarious plot.

“Strange Phenomena” is somewhat similar. It’s about a marine archaeology expedition in the Mediterranean that runs into something that seems to be straight out of mythology.

I once went shopping at an Ikea outlet. My experience there has kept me out of the stores ever since. “The Bazaar” reminded me of that experience. A man finds himself at a superstore, and he can’t find a way out. He’s worried that he’ll be late getting together with his girlfriend.

The self-published nature of the book is apparent in the number of type-setting errors. It seems as though the book was not copyedited very well. On the whole the errors do not mar the impact of the stories, but they can be a little jarring. I would recommend the book, with some reservation because of those errors, for people who like something a little different from the usual. Think *The Twilight Zone* or *The Outer Limits*.

---review by R-Laurraine Tutihasi



The God’s Wolfing by Cedar Sanderson, Trade Paperback 12.99; kindle 2.99

This is the sequel to *Vulcan’s Kittens*. We return to the adventures of Linnea Vulkane, whose ancestors within the last two generation are identifiable gods and goddesses of various mythologies. Linn is a very young teenager, just in the process of discovering her magical heritage and significantly before the process of discovering boys. She has a supportive mother who realizes that what she is doing is extremely dangerous but lets her go ahead anyhow.

In this episode, she is sent to rescue worshipers of a particular old god, with what would be a humorous misunderstanding if it hadn’t almost gotten her killed. She does things in a dangerous way, but is by no means invincible, so that several times she almost gets herself killed. She dodges this eventuality.

One could propose that being at ground zero of an exploding atomic bomb, after the atomic bomb has started to fission, is certainly not an optimal choice for protecting your health. The imaginings of a young teenage girl are very well done, but then the author has a teenage daughter to provide reality checks.

There are a series of passes through Norse, Greek, Roman, Hawaiian, Mayan, and Irish mythologies, primarily because characters from these places keep showing up. The explanation of where all of these characters actually obtain their powers is entirely original and will be left for the reader. The volume is definitely worth its price if you enjoy works of this sort with respectably happy endings rather than extremely gloomy endings. The author currently claims that she is not going to write another volume in the series. Of course her loyal readers all believe her.

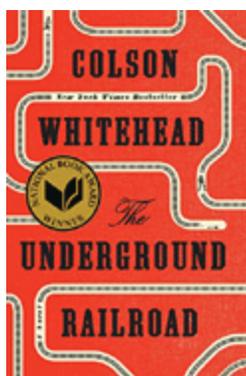
---review by George Phillis

Mixed in with this is something of a police procedural, because the magic creatures are in a small enclave in the middle of a medium-size human city, and the humans have a police force. The police force attempts to help, though the magical creatures are occasionally undecided if the police qualify as help or as a dietary supplement. Matters turn out, as one would expect, reasonably well.

There are overtones of a romance novel here between the heroine and the male protagonist, however, unlike modern romance novels, there is no passionate carrying on, highly graphically described. While it is technically true that the heroine and hero are in the same bed at one point, the hero is in his werewolf form and is next to the heroine because she had fallen into a frozen lake and is considering whether or not she should roll over and freeze to death. The hero serves as a fur-covered heating pad.

Once again I encounter a Roc book in which sadism and masochism are somewhat noticeable. One of the villains is killed by the water and winter elementals. They flood his lungs with water, and instantaneously freeze the water (but not him) solid. The book, the first of Anne Bishop's 'Others' series, is available in paperback for eight bucks or so at most bookstores and provided a fast, entertaining read.

---review by George Phillis



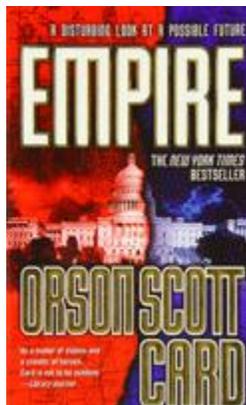
The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead:

Although it is not marketed as such, this is really a steampunk fantasy novel in which the Underground Railroad is really a series of railroads secretly operating underground in tunnels in the South to help slaves escape to the North. If you read the first sixty pages without any forewarning, you would have thought it was going to be a story along the lines of *Twelve Years a Slave*.

The main character is Cora, a teenage girl, who, along with her friend Caesar, escape from their plantation in Georgia and find a station on the Underground Railroad to make their way north. Her adventures in South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Indiana are like those in *Gulliver's Travels*, which is specifically mentioned in the text, and the places she visits are not historically accurate, although her sojourn in North Carolina resembles the life of Anne Frank in the "Secret Annex".

She is pursued by a slave catcher named Ridgeway, whose obsession with Cora is analogous to Javert's obsession with Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*. The chapters of the main story are interspersed with short stories about some of the characters, including Ajarry, Cora's grandmother, Ridgeway himself, Dr. Stevens, who is conducting experiments on African-Americans much like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Ethel, one of the people who help Cora on her journey, Caesar, with whom she escaped, and Mabel, her mother. This is both a National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize winner. Oprah Winfrey selected it for her book club, and I made it one of my nominations for the Hugo and Dragon awards.

---review by Tom Feller



Empire by Orson Scott Card; Tor Books; Paperback; 368 pages; \$7.99; no discount for the e-book version

The idea for this book did not come from Card himself but from a video game company who, in 2006, asked him to come up with a scenario for another American Civil War in the near future. His solution was for a war to break out between what we would now call Clinton supporters and Trump supporters. The main characters are Averell Torrent, a charismatic intellectual who appears to be playing both sides against each other, Reuben Malich, a U.S. Army special forces Major who finds that he is a pawn in the war, Cecily, his wife, and Captain Bart Coleman, his deputy. The war begins with the assassinations of the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary of Defense.

Although this is not Card's best work, it is a solid action novel that starts out as a political thriller, but weapons that would have been at home in a Battletech/Mechwarrior game eventually appear. Unfortunately, Card allows his own right-wing biases to affect the story by heavily favoring one side over the other.

---review by Tom Feller

The Town with Pep (Spoiler Warning)

by

Tom McGovern

One thing I rarely do is watch anything on commercial TV. I've mentioned several times before that, while I spend a good deal of time in front of the television, generally, everything I watch is sourced through Netflix. I have a streaming subscription, like everyone else in the solar system seems to have these days, and I've also maintained my disc subscription, two out at a time, with the Blu-Ray option. That being the case, I rarely run short of things to watch. As I write this, I'm deeply into the Arrowverse – season 4 of Arrow, season 2 of Flash and season 1 of Legends of Tomorrow. The stories of those three DC-based series – and these are last year's episodes - are interlinked in places, so I've downloaded a list of the proper order in which to watch them for maximum effect, and I'm following the list rather closely.

Now, that touches on one of the disadvantages of watching TV the way that I do. I'm always watching last year's episodes. All three of those programs are still running, and when people discuss them in various online venues, I'm behind the curve. I've never seen the most recent episodes. And it's not just those three programs; it's pretty much every network program. The only programs I have even a slim chance of staying up with are Netflix originals, like House of Cards and the various Marvel series.

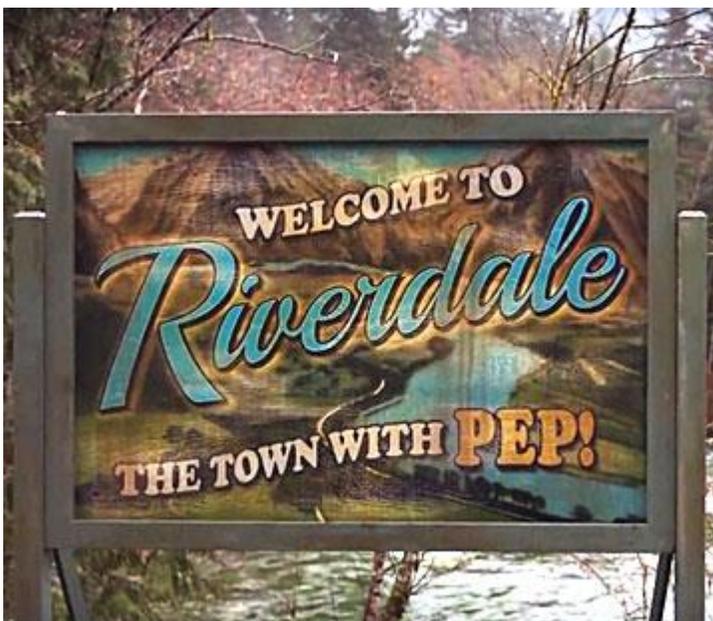
That being the case, it's pretty impressive that I broke tradition and actually watched the premiere of *Riverdale* on commercial TV. And I liked it enough that I've been following the subsequent episodes via the "On-Demand" feature of my cable system. Yes, it's a sacrifice; I have to watch the commercials (or at least endure their presence). But this show is good; it's worth it. And, yeah, I have to admit: it's a soap opera.

Now, if you know who the cast of characters are, and you think you know what to expect because of that, you may be disappointed. This show is a story of Archie Andrews, Betty and Veronica, Jughead and the whole rest of the gang. Pretty much everyone you know from the comics is there, and practically nobody you know from the comics is quite the same character; some, in fact, are sharply different.

Archie is far from the "typical teenager" of the traditional comics, and he's not even really the same average guy of the rebooted series. He's more or less the kid with everything. He's on the football team, and he

has an amazing body for the 15 year old he's supposed to be (the actor playing him, K. J. Apa, is actually 19), he's a competent musician (and has had an affair with Ms. Grundy, his music teacher, who is way hotter than the crone that was Miss Grundy in the comics). In short, he's well above the typical range physically and socially.

Archie's aforementioned affair with Ms. Grundy has brought about some problems for him, though. It seems the two of them were down by the river on July 4th, together, doing – well, you can imagine – in the woods, when they heard a gunshot. That same morning, Jason Blossom and his sister Cheryl went down to the same river together - the vague implication seems to be that there was something incestuous going on - but only Cheryl returned. Jason was presumed drowned, at least until his body was



discovered at the end of the first episode with a bullet hole through his forehead. That's the mystery that is at the heart of the show for at least the first season, it would seem: what actually happened to Jason Blossom?

The Archie/Grundy tryst seems less creepy on screen than it really is if you think about it, particularly so because the actor playing Archie is a well-developed adult. In the show, Archie and his friends are supposed to be high school sophomores. That would make them about 15 years old. Ms. Grundy is played by a 34 year old actress, but she actually looks somewhat younger than that. So, visually, we have an athletic 19 year old with a woman who looks to be about 5 years older than he is. That doesn't seem all that odd. But within the actual storyline, it's a teacher in her 20s having an affair with a 15 year old boy.

I was wondering how long she was going to stay out of prison, but in a later episode the whole affair with Archie was exposed, with the young Miss Grundy quitting her job and leaving town.

Other characters and relationships are somewhat different, too. Betty is in love with Archie, but he seems to have her permanently friend-zoned. Archie has the hots for Veronica, but, knowing how Betty feels about him, they hesitate to get together for fear of hurting her. The real "mean girl" of the series so far is, neither Betty nor Veronica, the two of whom seem to be becoming fast friends, but Cheryl Blossom, head cheerleader and all-around harpy, who is churning up the most social capital possible from her bereavement over her brother's untimely death.

Jughead is an interesting character. Who, in the comics, was a more laid-back character than Jughead? He didn't care how much chaos was erupting around him as long as his supply of hamburgers remained unobstructed. But the Jughead of Riverdale is extremely intense, functioning as both narrator for the show and unofficial Jiminy Cricket-style conscience for Archie. As the show developed Jughead, who had been the perennial asexual character in the comic books, actually began dating Betty.

Reggie is much less the scheming conniver of the comics and more of simply a blundering bully. Dilton Doily is a nervous boy scout who, at least so far, has shown little evidence of being a genius. Josie and the Pussycats are here, too, and they do make some pretty tunes.

Kevin Keller was introduced into the comics as essentially a token gay character, and he functions as such in this show too. Too much so, if you ask me. The Kevin in this show isn't simply a cool kid who happens to be gay; he's almost a stereotypical flamer. He's Betty's second best friend (after Archie), and he helps her to deal with her feelings for Archie. In that sense, he serves an acceptable purpose to the story. But he has a tendency to hoot and holler every time a hot guy walks by and the "gay-ness" of the character is simply over-exaggerated, in my opinion. It is, in fact, Kevin who discovers Jason Blossom's body along with Big Moose. It seems that Moose has decided he wants to do some same-sex experimentation with Kevin ("everything but kissing"), and as the two of them head down to the river (where else?) to play, they stumble across the body.

This is an intriguing show. It's been compared to Twin Peaks. I wouldn't know, as I never watched that show, though I understand that they at least have in common a mysterious murder as the basis for the series. But it's certainly holding my interest, and I'll probably continue to watch it "On Demand" through the first season. If it sounds interesting to you, give it a shot. Just don't go into it expecting the same characters you know from the comics. The names are the same, and a few things about them will seem familiar, but this is definitely an alternate universe.



Marvelous duh-versity

– by Brad R. Torgersen



It's been a long time since I collected any of the Marvel comics. When I see panels like this (now infamous) example, I conclude that I am not missing much.

When I was introduced to my first Marvel title — *X-Factor*, in 1989 — it was through a friend who knew the Marvel mutants series backwards and forwards. I enjoyed the universe, eventually picking up several Marvel mutant titles over the course of about four years. Not every issue was a knockout, but the storylines were consistently well-written and the mutant concept itself was intriguing. Especially since the entirety of the Marvel universe wove in and out of the space specifically given over to the mutant lines.

If I'd been greeted with a panel like the one above, when first someone handed me a copy of a Marvel title, I'm not sure I'd have gone on to invest all the money I eventually invested in Marvel products. Because I'd have felt like I — as the audience — was being so crudely condescended to, it was either a bad joke, or an insult.

So, what the hell is going on at Marvel these days?

David Burge (aka: Iowahawk) once posted the following:

1. Identify a respected institution.
2. kill it.
3. gut it.
4. wear its carcass as a skin suit, while demanding respect. #lefties

The first thing I can see going wrong, is that Marvel has allowed certain time-honored characters to be switcheroo'd purely for the lulz. Gender, ethnicity, sexuality, they're all on Marvel's chopping block. And while it may be novel to flip Thor's sex, flipping Thor's sex and *then* having Thor utter lines as if Thor is a regular at Candace and Toni's book store . . . is a great way to let the audience know that you not only *don't* take the character of Thor seriously anymore, you don't take the audience seriously either.

If you want to “diversify” your comics, A-OK. Do it with *new characters* who grow to inhabit their roles over time, and — this is important — *don't* always sound like they spilled directly out of a grievance studies degree program from a trendy East Coast private university.

Last I checked, almost half the country voted in a way that the other half of the country did not. It might be nice to see some of this *intellectual diversity* inhabit a few costumes on the Marvel stage. I won't hold my breath, though.

The second thing I can see going wrong, is that Marvel is trading in audience loyalty, for quick-sales stunts. More switcheroos purely for their own sake, because these may knock the numbers — for a given title in



a given month — up to double or even triple what they usually are. Remember when I wrote in this space about the marketing disaster of New Coke? I sorta see Marvel going down the same path. Whether or not Marvel has the good sense to resurrect Classic Thor or Classic Iron Man, remains to be seen. The minds at the top can either respect the core audience, or they can live in fear of being Twitter-shamed by Social Justice Zealots. Most of whom sorta don't give a damn about comics anyway. Comics are merely a very visible institution that Social Justice Zealots want to take over and own, for their own political purposes. Ergo, kill it, gut it, wear it as a skin suit, then demand respect.

Hopefully Marvel jettisons the switcheroos, but again, not holding my breath.

The third thing I think Marvel may be messing up — and this is hardly a problem unique to the comics world — is mistaking internal in-house excitement for a thing, for external marketplace *demand* for that very same thing. This comes from creators on the inside getting bored with the same-old same-old, and deciding to get cheeky, or daring, or inflammatory, with a given line or character. The marketplace will just happily follow along, right? And if the marketplace doesn't follow along, we'll call them all a bunch of names, right? After all, it worked so well for the *Ghostbusters* reboot. Which — by the way — nobody asked for.

And which never did domestically earn out its estimated \$144 million dollar budget.

I am pretty sure they still call that kind of movie, a flop.

If confessions from within Marvel proper are to be believed, Marvel is getting mighty nervous that it might have a few flops on its hands. As if nobody could have predicted that arbitrarily messing with several characters and lines simultaneously, purely for the sake of politics — changes which precious few people in the core audience desired or said they wanted — was going to go badly.

Back to Burge: kill it, gut it, wear it as a skin suit, demand respect.

A huge step in the right direction, would be to STOP taking the Magic Unicorn approach to diversity. Don't hang a damned blinking sign on the fact that your character(s) is gay, or trans, or a woman, or non-white, or whatever combination thereof you choose. "Hey, look everybody! The character of Tomahawk is both biracial and bisexual! Like, he's really REALLY biracial and bisexual! We will go out of our way to make sure you ABSOLUTELY KNOW that Tomahawk is biracial and bisexual! Oooooo! Oooooo! So edgy! So diverse!"

That kind of crap is the kindergarten version of diversity. It's not even Diversity 101. It's Remedial Diversity 077, for sheltered progressives who apparently don't spend much time around anyone who is not also a sheltered progressive.

Ordinary people — even gay, trans, female, non-white — don't broadcast their demographics like that. If they *are* broadcasting their demographics like that, just as with aggressive church evangelists, they're usually assholes.

It's hard (but not impossible) to sell a hero who is also an asshole. (*Lobo* fans are excused, okay? Jeez, pipe down already.)

The next step would be to quietly jettison any and all switcheroos performed on time-honored characters, and let those characters go back to being who and what they were, before the Social Justice Zealots decided to ruin things.

Yes, you will endure howling mobs of Twitter users trying to hashtag your company into the ground. But if you've got even a little bit of spine, you can take the heat. After all, the hashtaggers are not the whole universe. Hell, a lot of people would respect and admire a creative entity standing up against a concerted Two Minute Hate. The American public especially seems to have reached its threshold for that kind of crap. They're ready to support somebody — anybody — who looks like (s)he won't roll over and say "Uncle!" at the first threat of digital arm-twisting.

The final step would be, naturally, to stay the course. Keep the time-honored lines secure. Make sure the venerable characters stay *in* character.

By all means, bring on your diverse cast of non-white, non-male, on-hetero, non-cis players. Give them their own lines. Spin mighty arcs of story wonderfulness around these individuals.

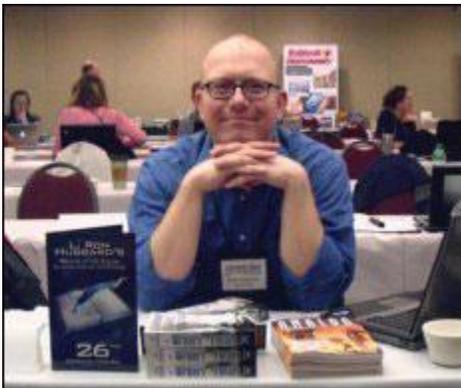
And leave the old-school characters OLD-SCHOOL.

Ya know, kinda like America itself? Old-schoolers and new-schoolers all walking down the same streets together, shopping at the same stores, watching the same movies, eating at the same restaurants, etc. Old-school and new-school, kicking it to their unique grooves. Because there's room enough in the world for everybody.

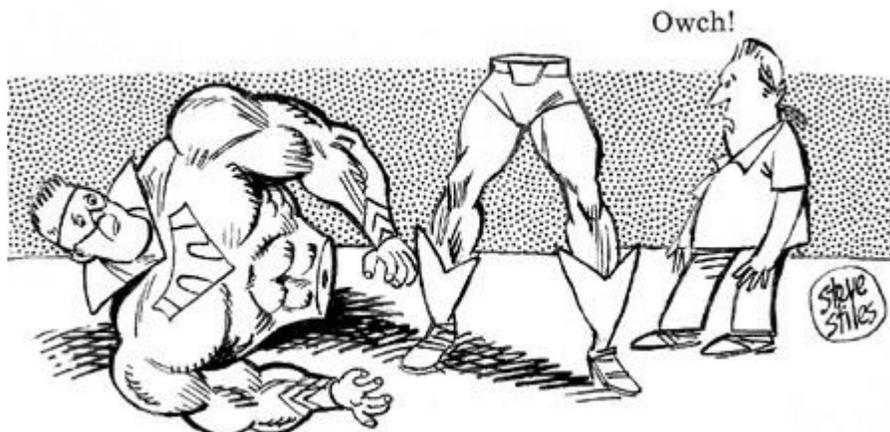
Unless you're a Social Justice Zealot. In which case the world before the year 2000 was a frightening wilderness of total and absolute oppression, and everything older than yourself must be sandblasted into an unrecognizable lump of nothingness.

I like to think the world of commercial creative arts has had its fill, where Social Justice Zealotry is concerned. That shit just doesn't sell. No matter how much you harangue or lecture people. There are only so many consumers who will open their wallets as a matter of political duty. Everyone else . . . is going to go where the fun is.

I think Marvel may be learning this. But is the damage already irreparable?



Brad R. Torgerson is a writer of science fiction and fantasy stories. He has published several novels, as well as several dozen short stories and novelettes, some of which are included in three anthologies of his work. Nominated for both the Nebula and Hugo Awards, new stories are always in the works. He maintains a website where he talks about speculative literature, the process of creating it, and he also plugs the works of other writers whose material has impressed him. Check it out at <https://madgeniusclub.com/>



cinema



KING KONG: 2005 VERSION

Recently a group of friends decided we really should watch the 2005 remake of “King Kong”, two hours thirteen minutes long, in glorious color, shown on an impressively large wall hanging giant TV screen, with four point total room stereo.

Let me say right up front that I didn’t like this movie. Let me also say that I consider the original “King Kong” to be one the greatest motion pictures ever made. Any movie that attempts to remake a classic must be particularly selective and very careful to produce a superior finished effort since comparisons to the original by most viewers are inevitable. That said, at the same time it is best to try and judge any movie, even a remake, on its own merits and its own credentials as a cinematic production.

My opinion is that this movie failed on almost all fronts. This was not a simple remake, it was a rewrite, with new elements added and shifts in both character and plot that changed the entire focus of the movie. The person responsible for this version was Peter Jackson, who co-wrote, produced, and directed the film. This remake is also supposed to take place in 1933, the same year as the original, but

major divergences between the original and this remake appear immediately.

Yes, some characters, in name anyway, were carried over from the original, and yes, King Kong himself is still a monstrous primeval ape from a time-lost island somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and yes, he comes to New York, and is killed because he doesn’t conform to the perimeters of modern civilization.

That’s about the limits of the framework taken from the original. In the original version, iron willed showman Carl Denham, (played by Robert Armstrong) was determined to locate a legendary creature, and capture it on film. He launched an expedition to an unknown part of the Pacific in search of a myth, a triumph of determined ambition. During his encounters on the island he manages to capture the giant ape, and then decides to return with it to civilization.

In the remake Denham’s character has been replaced by a whining, selfish deadbeat who is solely concerned with preserving himself in the entertainment world, someone who is willing to sacrifice anybody and anything to somehow make it big in show biz (played with perfect slimy self-centered pettiness by Jack Black). He has no real idea where the mysterious island is located, or what is on it, or what his film will be about. In fact, he essentially kidnaps a screen writer and forces him to come up with a plot, any plot, to save him from box office disaster. Would that the producers of this particular film had taken the same precautions perhaps this finished product would have been worth watching.

The movie should have really been titled “Beauty and the Beast”, since most of the movie is used to show the emotional attachment between Kong and Ann Darrow (played by Naomi Watts the female star of this flick). Unfortunately this attempt at generating tender and warmhearted emotional capital with its inter-species romance does not succeed. It is clumsy, forced, and fails to produce any rationale as to why the ape and the woman should be even remotely interested in one another, even on a pet-to-pet basis.

Science fiction author Harlan Ellison once noted that modern filmmakers substitute scenes of massive property destruction and loss of life as attempts to cover their own inability to weave interesting or satisfactory story plots, and this movie is a prime example of both those qualities.

This begins with scenes at the remote island, and in the native village. In the original movie the villagers were shown as proud, intelligent survivors who sacrificed a woman periodically to the monster beyond their fortress wall to appease the god-like beast who might otherwise decide to destroy them.

In this remake, the village and its people are reduced to a scene from some splatter movie. The natives are portrayed almost like mindless zombies, not even sub-human, who barely exist beyond primal animal instincts, yet they are somehow they are both vicious and blood thirsty. The goal is not to add cohesion to the story plot, but to shock and horrify the audience, so logic and plotting are completely ignored.

Once beyond the village the true horror movie begins. Ann is substituted for the village sacrifice, and is grabbed by Kong who heads into the interior. The white visitors head out after them, and disaster ensues. Aided by computer generated animation we are able to watch assorted pre-historic monsters, from dinosaurs to flying insects, smash, rip, claw and shred the hapless human actors in graphic detail.

Yet even the dynamic use of brilliant computer animation is unable to cover the lack of talent on the part of the director of this effort. For example, in the bottom of a crevice, the human rescue party is attacked by huge insect-like creatures. A young character who has been previously shown not only to be emotionally immature, but also someone who has never fired a weapon in his entire life, nonetheless manages to blaze away with a Thompson submachine gun with incredible accuracy, picking off the insect attackers without so much as nicking a hair on the heads of the human beings he is firing towards.

Even more remarkably, when the carnage is finished, except for more dead bodies, those who survived this stomach churning attack don't even show a single scratch as evidence of their ordeal. In fact, their clothing is not even dirty. Our heroine, carried around the jungles by Kong, dragged thru swamp mud and narrowly missing being chomped by assorted marauding giant animals, splattered by gallons of blood and guts as Kong battles the attacking menaces right and left, never even gets her purple slip wrinkled let alone soiled, and her hair is always perfectly coiffed.

The ultimate insults to the intelligence of the viewer came in the New York scenes when the party returned with the captured Kong. As in the original, the monster ape escapes, grabs Ann and heads out into the city, but in this version he manages to go directly to Central Park. In an animated effort we see the humongous sized Kong sliding around and playing with the heroine on a frozen pond in the park. We see glaze ice, and piles of really badly drawn snow, but nobody, especially not the lightly clad heroine, even gets goose bumps, much less showing frosty breath. In addition almost every third scene or so the film makers forget that they had snow in the city, so we see shots where there is no sign of it even being winter, let alone any hints of a city wrapped in a heavy snowfall.



The scenes on top of the Empire State Building are particularly difficult to accept. In the original movie, Army Air Force planes made a few passes, machine-gunned the monster, and he expired in brief, but dramatic fashion, filled with the pathos of a creature ripped from his native environment and slaughtered by a civilization into which he could never fit.

These modern film makers wouldn't know what pathos meant if Noah Webster hit them square in the face with his unabridged dictionary. By my off-hand estimate, in the remake it took well over ten *thousand* rounds of machine-gun fire and close to an hour in film-story time to knock Kong off. The scenes where the heroine rushes up to join the ape in his final death throes are ridiculous. Carl Denham's mouthing of the final dramatic line from the original movie at the body of the fallen Kong, (delivered by actor Jack Black) is a pathetic caricature of the emotional climax developed in the original movie.

The makers of modern movies, and this one in particular, seem to believe that the stupidity of the viewing audience is only matched by its gullibility. And indeed, considering that this remark was a huge box-office smash when it was released in 2005, they are obviously correct in their assessment.

The film was originally projected to cost 150 million dollars to make, but rapidly incurred huge cost overruns, finally finishing up costing 207 million bucks, a record breaking expenditure at the time. Despite generally lukewarm reviews, the public rewarded the makers of the film and Universal Studios handsomely. It grossed 550 million at the box office, making this the fourth most successful film Universal had ever released. When the film was released on DVD it racked up another hundred million in immediate sales.

The success of this film at the cash register unfortunately meant that the film viewing public was going to get even more of the same. As I have always said, if you spend your money to see bad movies, the producers will just take your money and make more bad movies with it. The public casts its votes for quality or crap in movie theaters with their ticket purchases, and the fact that this ludicrous, inept and badly produced film made lots of money meant that other badly plotted spectacles were bound to be made, and indeed a stream of inane, ludicrous action packed epics with nonsensical plots have flooded the theaters in the years since this film was released. History continues to repeat itself. This kind of financial success does not bode well for the overall quality of cinematic material that will continue to be released by the major film studios into the future.

So, no, I did not enjoy the feature movie of the evening.

---review by Robert Jennings



Kong Skull Island

This is yet another King Kong movie, although, except for a prologue set in 1944, it is set in 1973 just after the Paris Peace Accords and when the U.S. military is withdrawing from Vietnam. One of the helicopter assault units being withdrawn is assigned to a scientific expedition to explore an uncharted island before returning to the U.S.

This film's King Kong has better luck with the military than the one in the original 1933 film. In the new one, he wipes all the helicopters out rather than being forced to fall to his death and then without any rest, he battles the other monsters that inhabit the island. The lead scientist (John Goodman) wears an outfit similar to the one worn by Robert Armstrong in the original, and there is even a female character (Brie Larson) who is rescued by Kong. The CGI is excellent, and the best acting performance is turned in by Samuel Jackson as the commander of the helicopter unit. Reportedly, there will be a sequel in which this King Kong fights the most recent Godzilla.

There are several references to the novel *Heart of Darkness* and the film *Apocalypse Now*, which is loosely based upon it. For instance, there are characters named Marlow (John C. Reilly) and Conrad (Tom Hiddleston), the narrator and author of the novel, respectively, and the overall look and feel of this film resemble the film. The soldiers even try using napalm to subdue Kong! This film also fits in the tradition of "Hollow Earth" stories in that Skull Island is where there is an opening between the surface and the monsters that live below, which could provide room for other sequels.

---review by Tom Feller



Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell

Susanna Clarke's book of the same name was a literary sensation ten years ago, and this BBC miniseries adaptation brings the story to the small screen. The book is well suited to the miniseries format, since the source material takes its time in establishing the premise and characters. The seven-chapter miniseries gives the story a chance to breathe and develop. The whole series is now available on Netflix, as well as on-line viewing as a pay feature of BBC America.

In the early 19th Century Mr. Gilbert Norrell takes it upon himself to rescue English magic from 300 years of neglect. He succeeds in demonstrating the efficacy of magic by animating all of the gargoyles in a Yorkshire church. He is soon installed in London and is called upon to perform his arts by resurrecting a recently deceased Lady who is vital to the finances to a certain Lord MP. He succeeds, but only by awakening a Fairy Lord, who is decidedly Not Nice.

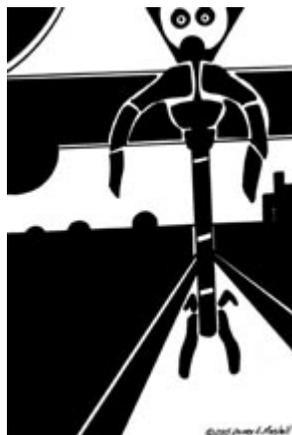
Meanwhile Jonathan Strange is a gentleman recently come into heritage of a sizeable country estate, but with little idea of what to do with himself or his young bride Annabelle. Strange discovers he has an aptitude for magic and moves to London to become Mr. Norrell's apprentice. Jonathan is so adept at magic that he is conscripted into the army and placed in the service of Lord Wellington. Strange's heroism is not taken kindly by Mr. Norrell since he feels that Jonathan has delved into Black Magic in order to defeat Napoleon, and the two have a bitter falling out.

What the men do not realize is that they have unwittingly freed the ancient powers of Faerie which have been dormant for 300 years in England, and that the resurrection of Raven King is a greater threat to the Empire than Napoleon. The two rivals realize that they must work together to end the faerie threat and discover if there are other paths to magic that don't lead through the Faerie Realms.

The show is well acted and very high production values. I wish that Doctor Who could get some of the budget that BBC obviously lavished on this production! Altho the story is very dark in places, I enjoyed it. While the story does come to a satisfying end, there is certainly room to continue the series if that's in the plans.

This is an excellent binge-watch that doesn't go on for too long, but does manage to tell an engaging story with a great deal of detail.

---review by Gary Robe



FANZINE REVIEWS

A regular feature of

TIGHTBEAM

by

Bob Jennings



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**

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 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



COPY THIS #33

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 issue features a long in-depth interview with Matt Feazell, the multi-talented cartoonist and comic book artist, most famous for creating Cynicalman and AntiSocial Man, but a creator who has also turned out plenty of other material during his long career. In addition to discussions of his art, and his involvement with the world of comics, he relates that one of his prime periods of creativity came during the recent Great Recession a few years back. While many comic book publishers, and comic creators, were dying off or facing very bleak times during that period, he managed to complete a couple of graphic novels, finished work on the Cynicalman movie, and even did work for textbooks and college laboratory workbooks, among other projects. "I owe it all to the Lehman Brothers collapse and bankruptcy!" he said, echoing the philosophical karma of his creation Cynicalman.

He talks about getting involved in the world of comics thru a letter by fan/pro Mark Evanier in a *Kamari* comic book letter column that mentioned *The Comics Buyers Guide*, which introduced him to the world of mini-comics thru their classified ad section. It was, as they say, something of a life changing moment. Even while doing comic art, Matt was still doing commercial art, including steady work for a newspaper in Detroit. The paper decided to give him a big break when it published his full page illo for a feature story, for which he was paid \$50. That was the same amount of money he had been paid for an illo he had done for a college paper twenty years earlier. It dawned on him right then that his future was in comics, not commercial art, and he has never looked back since then. This is a very interesting interview, covering a life filled with improbable success stories, a talented individual who stuck with his interest in art, but never lost interest in the other parts of his life.

The interview features lots of illos from Feazell's past and current art projects. *Copy This* provides some of the best interviews in the hobby; going right to the heart and soul of their subjects, not just the surface gloss that many semi-professional fanmags seem to dote on.

There are also pages of letters and commentary following up last issue's information about the untimely death of Jim Ryan, a great talent who will be sorely missed in this hobby. 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. This issue also comes with a free insert, a complete 4 page sample mini-comic titled "I can Do This". The mix is interesting, and the art is pretty good. *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.



LOFGEORNOST #126

8-1/2x11"; 10 pages of small type;

Quarterly from Fred Lerner; 81 Worcester Ave.; White River Junction, VT 05001---available for 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 niceties and precision in the written use of English grammar, particularly the proper pronoun for the proper situation, especially whether male or female pronouns should be used for alien beings, or for speakers whose gender is unknown to the reader. I have to admit my eyes glazed over a bit as I read this essay. I'm sure this was all pithy and exhilarating to somebody deeply involved in the proper etiquette of the language, but that ain't me, and it's probably not something that concerns a lot of other fans either. But if you do care about such things, Fred's discussion is long and exhaustive.

The letter column takes up the rest of the issue this time, a free-wheeling assortment of comments from a wide variety of people covering topics from Sherlock Holmes, to fantasy geography, to fantasy without magic to Robert Heinlein and plenty of subjects in between. *Lofgeornost* runs one of the best letter columns in the hobby, easy to jump into and almost addictive in it's variety and wealth of well thot out opinion.

This fanzine only comes out four times a year, but it is always worth the wait, and these issues are always enjoyable.



DAGON #684

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 focuses on current political events. John is no fan of president Trump, especially not his reliance on "alternative facts", and is swift to point out that many people in the nation are also less than thrilled with the chief executive's off-hand approach to reality. John makes some fearless predictions about upcoming special elections, but I suspect he has underestimated the mainstream public's disgust with professional politicians and the do-nothing attitude that has jammed up

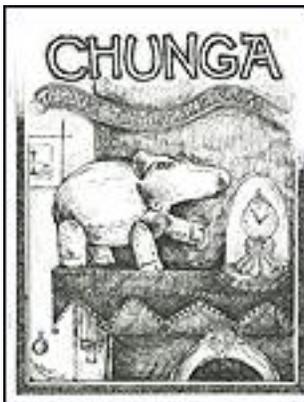
Congress for many recent years. His opinions are interesting, but his logical deductions are not necessarily straight-line evaluations; at least not in my opinion. I suppose time will tell.

This being John Boardman, there is also some discussion of happenings in the world of gaming, with an in-depth review of the latest issue of *Car-PG*, the role playing magazine that serves the hobby. He also take umbrage at the lack of basic writing skills of some of the people who write the 'crawl' news lines popular on some network and cable news programs. His point is well taken; if these stations expect people to pay attention to the information and headlines they are presenting in text form, then they need to be able to communicate easily and directly with the people watching those shows. Jumbled information, misspelled words, and incoherent sentences do nobody any favors, but they do make those programs and those networks look bad in the public forum.

There are other short essays on the modern system that blended the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln together into one all-inclusive Monday holiday, recent escapes from the Washington zoo, uneasiness in some quarters that Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar" is scheduled in so many prominent venues for their annual free summer Play In the Park series. Gee, I wonder what kind of comparisons might be running thru the minds of those people who object to the bard's masterpiece being performed in various large cities across the nation? What a puzzler!

The remainder of the issue is devoted to APA-Q mailing comments, which are fairly oblique this time round, altho there are a few good one liners and zingers contained in the mix.

Most issues of *Dagon* make for livelier reading. Most issues carry a mixture of John Boardman's views on the world and they are almost always interesting. *Dagon* is fanzine that is well worth sending for.



CHUNGA 25

8-1/2x11"; 60 pages; published irregularly; contact Andy Hopper; 1013 North 36th St.; Seattle, WA 98103; \$5 or The Usual

This is a join effort of three Seattle area fans who contribute various amounts of written material each issue as they see fit and the mood of the moment strikes.

Altho providing itself on being a very fannish fanzine, with a primary focus on people in the hobby and their activities, every issue provides new and often unique glimpses at the greater umbrella of science fiction/fantasy as well.

This issue's lead article is by Andy Hooper and takes a look at the people who attended the very first World Science Fiction Convention in New York City back in 1939. He provides mini-biographies of many of those people, with photographs. He notes that a considerable number of those first attendees went on to become influential people in the world of science fiction or hard sciences. It is sort of

amazing when he runs down the numbers, people who started as wild eyed fans became accomplished scientists, or accomplished authors, or agents, or publishers, people whose efforts affected and continue to affect the science fiction/fantasy we read and enjoy to this very day. Getting accurate background information was easy on some of the most famous of these individual, but it took a lot of hard research to get the facts on many others. This series will continue in future issues of *Chunga*, demonstrating the astonishing influence the people and the event had on our genre.

Chunga also offers up humor each issue, but altho the smattering of cartoons this time are as good as ever, I found Graham Charnock's purported letter exchange between people working on the Manhattan Project back in the early 1940s to be oblique and not funny. Slightly better but still way more subtle than it should have been (to the point of being only casually amusing), was Kim Huett's discussion of a purported major internet

feud among fans of the Mr. Ed TV program as to whether the animal playing Mr. Ed was actually a zebra in clever make-up, or a female mule. Yeah, right. Out of my orbit completely.

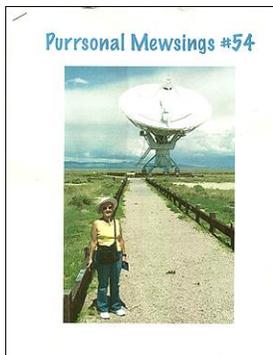
There are other interesting articles about odd subjects, including Lesley Reece's fascination with artificial languages constructed for use in fictional stories (think Klingon from Star Trek as a perfect example). He notes that despite the original intentions of the people who use these devices, the very fact that the fake-literary device languages are used at all forces the creators to come up with meaningful words, especially verbs, and even rules for the way the language is structured. Very odd, but very interesting, especially with the many examples cited that I never even thought about before. Of course any language beyond simple basic English is a big mystery to me, but even so I found the article to be fascinating.

Randy Byers relates his experiences in trying to organize and run the fanzine lounge at the recent Seattle World Con, a monumental problem. He had no idea how difficult the project would become, a situation made even more difficult by a series of health problems that ultimately revealed he had a cancerous tumor in his brain. Luckily he had willing fan friends to aid him in his moments of uncertainty and crisis. Again, excellent descriptions, amusing at times, and a very well written tale of the ins and outs of how those events are actually put together for the conventions we so casually enjoy.

There's more, including an article by D. West on his ideas about artwork, creating it, displaying it, wrestling with the concept of art ideas, especially creating artwork for fanzines and the semipro small circulation publications he worked with all his life. I think his best observation is that art has to be intensely personal; that the artist has to satisfy himself first, and not worry about impressing anybody else, because the world is full of artists, many of them producing far better work than anything he could turn out, so he had to make sure he satisfied himself first, and not worry about what the rest of the world might think of his efforts (alho, of course, praise and egoboo were always good to have.) This long article is illustrated with many of West's pics to illustrate the points he makes.

There are other articles by people such as John Hertz, Sarah Gulde, and Jean Gomoll, plus one of the most varied and interesting letter columns in the hobby.

I also have to compliment the professional looking layout and the fine selection of spot illos scattered thru these pages. This is an excellent fanzine, one of the best in the hobby. If you have not encountered *Chunga* before, you should pick up this latest issue right away.



Purrsonal Mewsings #54

R-Laurraine Tutihasi; 2081 W. Overlook St.; PO Box 5323; Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 8-1/2x11", 10 pages; irregular; available for The Usual

This is the new title for two of the editor's old zines, now combined in hope that she will be able to produce the new title on a more regular basis. This also doubles as the editor's apazine for Stipple-APA.

New readers may find this issue difficult to get involved with. Most of the zine is composed of mailing comments related to the past mailing of Stipple-Apa, pretty much incomprehensible if you are not a member of that particular group.

There are a few brief reviews of local plays and movies seen recently, along with a short letter column. It is short because other readers seems to have difficulty coming up with comments about the trip report that headlined the last issue, but the

letter column is still entertaining and could be expanded to become the heart of this zine with not a lot of extra effort. I hope this happens, or that editor Tutihasi adds more content not related to apa mailing comments.

Each issue always features a generous assortment of illos from a wide variety of sources, both color and b&w, including photos of some javalinas that are roaming her property, chomping on her outdoor plants. She considers them cute and entertaining, whereas most people regard the critters as noxious pests. The format here is clean and open, with wide margins and distinct type font.



SHAMELESS PLUG DEPARTMENT!

I want to take the opportunity to mention my own fanzine, *Fadeaway*. Issue #53 is now out, 50 pages long, featuring articles by Rich Dengrove on Johnny Jupiter, an early TV kid SF show, and Dale Nelson on H.P. Lovecraft's world view thru his characters, a look at golden age comic book investigator of the supernatural Dr. Drew, 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 fabficbks@aol.com.

THE DEADLINE FOR TIGHTBEAM #278 IS 20 JUNE 2017!