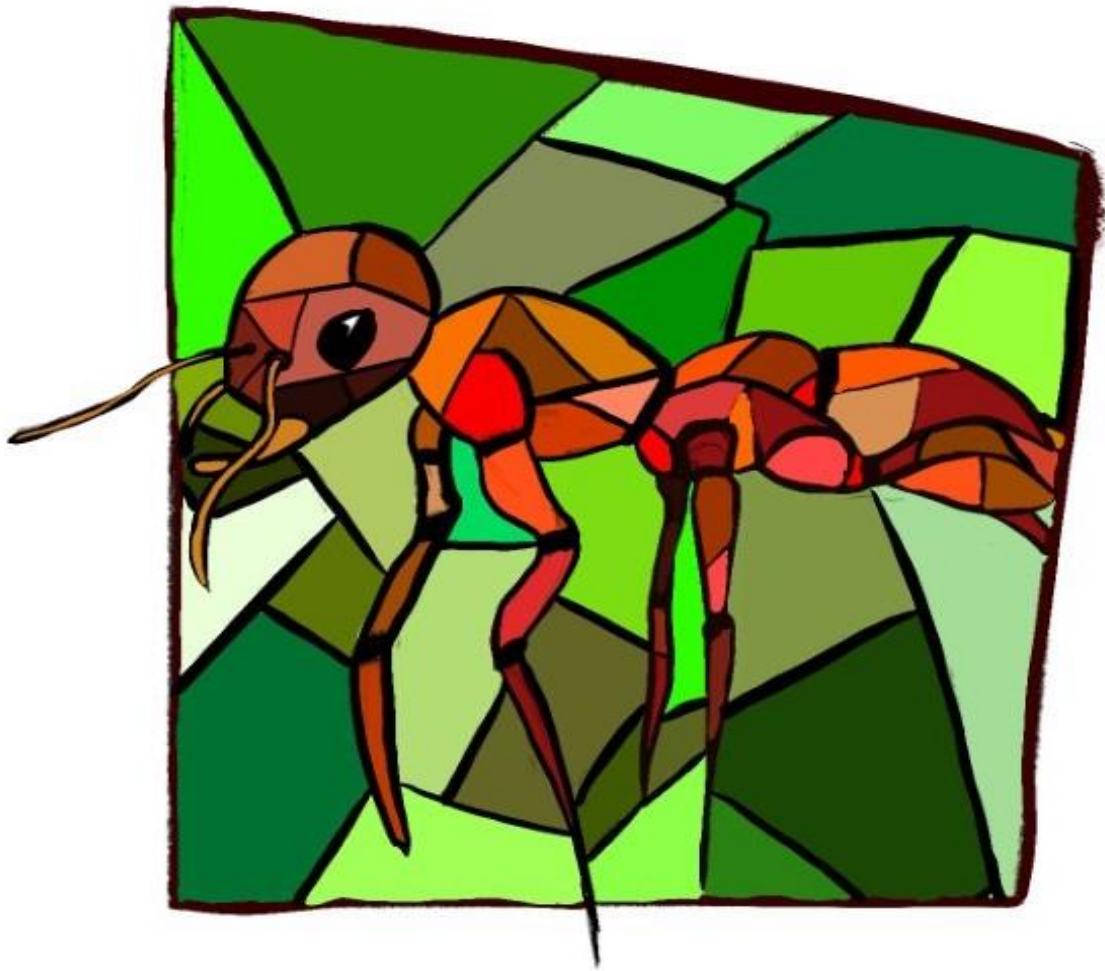


Tightbeam 347

August 2023



Kidnapper Ant Mosaic
by Artist Fish

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What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

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Letter of Comment

Editors:

I enjoyed reading Chris Nuttall's piece "Picard and the Star Trek Franchise". I'm only able to watch SF series that appear on free-to-view channels. To watch Picard, I've had to buy the first season on DVD. Although I have misgivings about the following seasons, I'm compelled to buy them at some future date.

Regarding Chris' history of the development of the Franchise, I am surprised that Babylon 5 was not mentioned. My understanding of why the series following ST: TNG had to be different is Babylon 5. Babylon 5 showed that it was possible to write a SF series that contained a story arc. I even remember reading back in the day that the choice to set the next series on a space station was a deliberate choice to try and 'spike' Babylon 5. I also read that JMS (J. Michael Straczynski) had been involved in discussions about the post-ST TNG franchise and that he had mentioned the idea of using a space station. Of course, one should probably pay no credence to the rumours that used to circulate.

The first season of Picard was almost, not just one of the best season of any Star Trek franchise, one of the best seasons of any SF show. If only Picard had died at the end of Et in Arcadia Ego it would have been most satisfying conclusion to Picard. Of course, that would have meant no season two or season three. But it would have been most excellent story telling. Is it fair to label the solution of Picard's mortality a deus ex machina? If we accept the definition of this Latin phrase as an unexpected and unlikely occurrence we could argue that the place of Picard's near-death experience means that the resolution is neither unexpected nor unlikely. But I do find it unsatisfactory. Far better to have him dying as a consequence of the experiment failing. Accepting that Picard survived the procedure, the explanation as why he does not have the life span of an android was unsatisfactory.

Returning to ST: DS9, I liked the way that in the early seasons it remained bound to the episodic formula. This was also the case in Babylon 5, though on a shorter time span than in ST: DS9. One thing that I really dislike about ST: Discovery is that a story arc is condensed into a single season. This leaves little room for stand alone episodes and has other more unsavory consequences. I'll leave my criticism of ST: Discovery until someone writes an overview of it in a future issue of Tightbeam.

There were a number of problems with ST: Voyager. I'll restrict myself to the problem that I identified in the first episode of season one. Namely, despite the unfathomable distance back to Earth it is clear that the final episode of the final season will see Voyager reaching home. In passing, I'd like to note one moment in ST: Voyager that I particularly enjoyed. The episode when Voyager came across a race that could have helped them return home, only to find out that the aliens would not help them because it would break their version of the Prime Directive. (I think I have that right; it's been a while since I saw the episode). This leads the crew to try and obtain the relevant technology by means that surely were not taught in the academy!

Although in this loc I am critical of ST Franchises, I continue to watch - and love - the show. I'll finish a final thought that is not original: the best post ST: ToS franchise is Orville.

Mark Nelson

Anime

A Centaur's Life/Centaur no Nayami

Review by Jessi Silver



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Himeno is a sweet, shy little centaur girl. In her world, everyone seems to be a supernatural creature, and all her classmates have some kind of horns, wings, tails, halos, or other visible supernatural body part. Despite their supernatural elements, Himeno and her best friends, Nozomi and Kyouko, have a fun and mostly normal daily school life! – MAL

Episode 1 Summary: Himeno, Nozomi, and Kyouko are your normal, everyday high school students. In their world, however, “normal” means sporting some kind of super-human marker, whether that be animal

ears and tails, extra limbs, wings, or other fantastic traits. Evolution took a vastly different course in this universe, and six-legged mammals eventually evolved into the variable humanoid sub-species that we might consider mythological. That said, Hime and her friends lead an especially average life, concerned with the things that might take up any student’s time and energy, like gym class or being in the class play during recital week. Of course, this present day scenario is downright idyllic compared to the atrocities and discrimination of the past, where centaurs were used as slave labor or were thrust into caste-like roles in society. But everything nowadays is fair and equal... or is it?

Impressions: I had every expectation that this show would be a silly, frothy, potentially (too?) fanservicey slice-of-life with some monster girls thrown in for flavor. What I didn’t expect was for there to be even the slightest suggestion of an unsettling backdrop to the story. While this isn’t an unwelcome variation on the theme, I’m concerned that the theme of the series might turn out to be a little bit too unsavory for my tastes.

The first half of this episode is devoted to a story event already in progress. The students are putting on a romantic short play, and Himeno is tapped to play the princess. The gag is that this has been the role she’s played since she was in kindergarten, possibly due to a pun on her name (the “Hime” in “Himeno” meaning “princess”), but more than likely due to her good looks and delicate personality. There’s a vaguely comedic mix up when a male student tries to position himself in the role of the prince but is found out and one of Hime’s female friends gets the role instead (allowing for a girl-girl smooch that seems perfectly aimed at a presumed straight male audience hankering for some yuri action), as well as a moment of tension when the set piece upon which Hime stands collapses under her weight (she is half horse, after all). It’s mostly kind of goofy and dumb, and serves mostly to introduce the main characters and make a few jokes at the expense of the titular centaur.



The second half of the episode, though, has a much more sinister undercurrent. In science class, the characters learn about human evolution from their teacher. All the humanoid variants in their world are the result of fish that evolved to have six fins, which began mammals with six legs, and eventually humans with several different varieties of additional limbs, horns, tails, and other accoutrements. Much like our own society, these various differences had the effect of causing discord and discrimination among the different tribes. This is all mildly interesting, and even sort of funny in that the assertion is made that four-limbed humans would only have been different in their skin color rather than their overall body composition, from which no sort of discrimination could possibly have resulted. Perhaps the creepiest part of this whole line of exposition occurs while two very shady individuals monitor the classroom from outside the door.



Their faces are mostly hidden but they appear to be listening intently to what the teacher is saying. The line she speaks seems perfectly rehearsed; she proclaims that equality is ultimately more important than anything else, including civil rights. Barring the fact that those two things are pretty darned related, in my opinion, the entire scene feels like some sort of bizarre authoritarian propaganda report. And the creepy men outside the door seem pretty pleased by it.

It's difficult to know exactly how these statements are meant to come across. I interpret them as indicative of some kind of extremely subtle dystopian society, where personal freedoms have been traded for peace and control, and that unsettles me. I'm not sure if the creator is making these statements to criticize moves to legislate equality, as have been done via various civil rights acts in real life (to varying degrees of actual success); while I might interpret these laws as meant to protect marginalized groups via the (imperfect) legal system, others (wrongfully) might think that they're being instituted to give some people "special treatment" (ugh). It could also be a statement about the harm that's done when we're made to think of everyone's experiences as being the same, when in fact they're very different based on a number of factors. There's a large chance that I'm overthinking a small aspect of an otherwise goofy show, but I think there's also the potential that the show is making an attempt to be political, and I have the feeling if it goes that route it's going to be really ham-handed about it.

A third potential interpretation, though, might not end up too bad. The creator could have set the story anywhere, but chose to use a high school as the backdrop for the story. We always hear about how the Japanese school system trains students in conformity and emphasizes sameness and group-think in order to maintain harmony. Knowing even what little we already know about what's going on in the background of this society, that setup sounds kind of familiar, no? There are already tons of anime, manga, and films that criticize this type of school environment, so it's definitely not the first (and probably not the best, either). But it does result in kind of an interesting variation on "cute girls with animal ears doing stuff," so that's a plus.

Of course, there's still a hefty dose of "cute girls with animal ears doing stuff," for good or ill. There are some errant panty shots, a few suggestive yuri situations (basically the first shot of the show is two girls kissing each-other on the lips... but it's okay because they're in a play together), and lots of "girl talk" that feels pretty manufactured and occasionally needlessly voyeuristic about body functions. I'm sure we all have questions about how centaurs wipe their butts after going to the bathroom, but I don't need a fantasy anime series to go into detail about those things when I just want to watch something dumb and silly. The up side, though, is that the characters are actually pretty cute. Somehow Himeno seems delicate despite being three

times the size of her friends, and that in itself is amusing.

The character designs are cute, but the animation quality is mostly just serviceable. This is another Chinese partnership anime, and while this one in particular doesn't feel like it was transported straight from the late 1990's, I feel sad that seeing a Chinese hand in the production still seems to mean that the show is lacking in quality control somewhere or that the show isn't given the resources and the time it might deserve. Then again, there are plenty of Japanese (and American) shows with similar issues, so perhaps picking on China in particular is wrongheaded of me.

This show isn't life-changing and I don't think it's that "holy grail" monster girl anime that I've been wishing for ever since *Monster Musuem* turned out to be a horny sex-fest of uncomfortable proportions. But if *A Centaur's Life* devotes some time to the issues of its broader society (I'm not sure how much the manga goes into it, either), I think it could be kind of interesting in spite of its various issues.

Pros: The story might have more depth than originally indicated. The characters are pretty cute.

Cons: There's some fanservice that doesn't sit well with me and seems like yuri bait. The overall visual quality isn't great. It's hard to say if the setting and authoritarian rules might be suggesting something worse than "the Japanese school system sucks."

Grade: B-

Impressions – Made in Abyss Review by Jessi Silver



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An enormous pit and cave system called the "Abyss" is the only unexplored place in the world. Strange and wonderful creatures reside in its depths, and it is full of precious relics that current humans are unable to make. The mysteries of the Abyss fascinate humans, and they head down to explore. The adventurers who venture into pit are known as "Cave Raiders." A little orphan girl named Rico lives in the town of Ōsu on the edge of the Abyss. Her dream is to become a Cave Raider like her mother and solve the mysteries of the

cave system. One day, Rico starts exploring the caves and discovers a robot who resembles a human boy. – ANN

Episode 1 Summary: 1900 years ago, a remote island surrounding a seemingly bottomless pit was discovered. As the world's last truly unexplored phenomenon, the "Abyss" as it came to be known beckoned explorers and relic hunters alike into its depths. Some unlucky travelers entered, never to be heard from again. Riko is the daughter of one such adventurer, and she and her friends Nat and Shiggy live at an orphanage where they and their ilk are trained in the dangerous art of cave raiding for various relics in the Abyss. Their lives are harsh and occasionally frightening, as their lot is exploited as cheap labor. One day on their first excursion without adult guidance, Riko and Nat are attacked by one of the Abyss's many terrifying creatures. Riko

is saved by a mysterious and powerful shot from the hand of an unconscious robot boy. Riko is ecstatic to have found such a treasure, and drags the boy back to the orphanage. The robot can't remember his name or where he came from, so Riko assumes that he must be from deep within the Abyss, a place where incomprehensible relics are said to be ubiquitous. Though this excites her imagination, for right now all she wants to do is keep Reg (her name for her robot friend) a secret from the authorities.



Riko goes looking for valuable artifacts. Copyright 2017 (c) Kinema

Impressions: I've actually been delaying watching this episode – not because I suspected that it might be bad, but that I've been looking forward to it so much and I wanted to give myself a chance to cool down and take it in properly. As with almost anything I've ever watched, I do have a few misgivings, but besides that this has absolutely one of the most impressive first episodes I've watched so far this season.

Looks certainly aren't everything, but in this case they're one of the first things one notices once the episode starts to play. The anime wastes no time in establishing a strong sense of place. The idea of a bottomless pit is intriguing and horrifying and everything in between; As Riko and her companions descend a mere 100 meters down at the outset, we're given an appropriate taste of both aspects via the background environment and the strange creatures flying through the air. The cliffsides are lush with strange flora, the sun penetrating enough to give us a look at the various plants and rock formations. As Riko uncovers an old cave system there's a palpable sense of age and mustiness as she breaks through rock walls and discovers strange objects and even old human remains dressed in unfamiliar clothing. The visuals tell a story on their own, about ancient peoples who may have lived in this strange environment and the tools that they used to survive. It also begins to raise the question thus far unspoken – why did they die out, and is this an ongoing threat?

As Riko and Nat haul Reg's unconscious body up from the area that they were exploring, the visual montage of the various parts of town, precariously balanced around the empty blackness



Riko is suddenly under attack. Copyright 2017 (c) Kinema Citrus

of the Abyss, is fascinating. It feels like something out of a film with a much higher budget, and there was clearly a lot of purposeful design and framing in creating the first impressions of this environment. I'm reminded a bit of Xam'd: Lost Memories, an anime with a similar kind of cinematic style and extremely distinct visual presentation and feel to it. Xam'd had a lot of very strong fantasy elements, as well as a profound undercurrent of body-horror that made for a very intriguing watch; I'm already getting the impression that this series might tend towards the same direction.

While it would be easy to be fooled (and maybe even put-off) by the cutesy character designs, there are enough clues in this first episode to indicate that this show has the potential to skew really dark. There are several offhand references to forms of punishment in which offenders are "strung-up naked" for their offenses. It's actually sort of easy to miss this since they're offhand

comments spoken by Riko in a comedically frantic way when it appears as if she's about to get into trouble. I've heard online from readers of the manga that the source material has the tendency to be dark and horrifying; while my search for specifics around the web came up mostly fruitless, I don't doubt that these comments in the anime are without basis.

This might be enough to give a lot of people misgivings, especially since most of the characters introduced so far are really young, and bad things happening to young people makes them seem doubly-terrible in most cases. To be blunt, I have zero desire to see any character, especially a kid get strung up naked in the town square, and if that's where this is all going it would probably be enough for me to drop it no matter how great the rest of the show might be.

What I'm hoping, though, is that the darkness of the narrative is more reliant on the terrifying unknown of what lives down the rabbit hole. It's easy to see why the Abyss would be such a tempting mystery; I think there's something romantic about an unexplored piece of the world, and it's just so easy to identify with the characters because as a viewer I'm just so curious to know what's waiting down there. It goes far beyond wanting to conquer nature or claim more land for this or that nation; knowing that there were people there once, and that they made and built and created things that still survive in some form, is almost magical in a way. The fact that one episode of the anime has the ability to create and cultivate that sense of wonder is truly an accomplishment.

Animation-wise, there are some great moments in this episode. I'll leave the specific technical commentary to the pros at Sakuga Blog, but to my untrained eye this episode is propped up both by its expressive character movement and the otherworldly-horrifying creature designs, of which the most interesting is probably the giant flying worm that nearly eats Nat and Riko during their excursion. There's something especially terrifying about it, which is effectively conveyed through the very different animation style used to bring it to life; the splotchy ill-defined nature of the beast gives the impression that it's almost too terrifying to look at and see clearly, which is fitting given the circumstances. I'm interested to see what other horrors of nature show up to give our characters trouble later on.

I haven't spoken about it yet, but I thought I might mention a little bit about the Amazon Prime/Anime Strike viewing experience, since I've read some other comments online about it. I've heard tell of some issues people have been having with ill-timed subtitles, and that hasn't been the case in my experience (it might have something to do with individual computer set ups, but that's not my area of specialty). What is kind of quirky, though, is that I had to actually turn the English subtitles on manually. I think in the case of other video services I've used, living in a primarily English-speaking region while watching material in a language other than English has meant that the subtitles would appear automatically but could be turned off. I did have a bit of an issue with video quality, which has been my experience with Amazon Video even outside their Anime Strike channel.

When the video starts, the stream is initially in kind of a low quality standard-def size, which is pretty pixelated. It then takes a while (probably less than a minute, truthfully) for it to adjust to HD quality. I have pretty fast cable internet service and live close to a major city, so the reason why some services are still struggling with this (I've had this happen with Netflix as well) is somewhat irritating. Otherwise the experience isn't nearly as bad as some would make it out to be, but it's still irritating to have to pay extra to add the Anime Strike channel when I already pay for Amazon Prime in the first place.

Video service issues aside, I'm digging this series a lot based on the first episode. I love the air of mystery it's cultivated so far, and I'm anxious to find out what sort of path the story might take going forward. While I have some misgivings about just how far the violence or other horrific material might go based on the related internet chatter, for now I think I'll just hope that the anime can maintain the tone while maybe leaving some things to the imagination. I think this is going to be a really striking, unique, and satisfying ride.

Pros: The episode quickly establishes a great sense of place. There are some great visuals, from the background artwork to the character and creature animation. The setting is mysterious and intriguing.

Cons: Signs indicate dark skies ahead – including content that might be objectionable to some, especially since the characters are young.

Grade: A-

Comics

Nexus: As It Happened—Volume One Review by Heath Row from Telegraphs & Tar Pits

This compact, black-and-white collection compiles the first seven issues of Mike Baron and Steve Rude's delightful sf comic book series Nexus. The book contains Nexus #1-3 and Vol. 2 #1-4, initially published between 1981-1983. The first three issues were originally issued as black-and-white magazines, while the second volume was a color, standard comic-sized series.

Capitol Comics' first Nexus comics were an eye opener for me. Focusing on the adventures, political intrigues, and personal relationships of a science fictional superhero (his powers draw on nearby suns, and there are spacecrafts and various alien races and societies), the story is by turns light-hearted and humorous, and very serious and occasionally dark.

Nexus is almost an anti-hero. He is generally pro-freedom, anti-slavery, and a proponent of universal health and wellbeing, but his powers come with a cost—and he's not afraid to make difficult choices. Besides, he's haunted by an initially mysterious past and tormented by dreams, which occasionally identify his next mission or target. I remember reading the first three black-and-white issues with rapt attention. The third issue even included a flexi disc audio drama of the issue, reminiscent of Power Records' book and record sets.

The tormented hero goes up against a cruel dictator, slavers, and a leader who seeks to harness the telekinetic power of disembodied heads arrayed in a sort of networked battery. Freeing them results in some wonderful panels and imagery. A visiting journalist falls in love with him, her boss arrives to brand her as a traitor and seduce Nexus herself, and our hero attracts a group of refugees, supporters, and other adventurers who seek to aid his cause. And near the end of the volume, there's a fascinating feline character who's formidable in combat as well as in the courtroom.

Nexus was very much a bright spot during the independent comic book scene of the early 1980s. Mike Baron's writing is top notch, and Steve Rude's artwork perfectly balances cartoon-

ishness and realism in its portrayal of the comics' sf settings and action. If you've never read Nexus, it's worth seeking out the early material. This edition is a great first step.

Skizz
Review by Heath Row
In Telegraphs & Tar Pits

Written by comic book mystic Alan Moore and drawn by Jim Baikie, this slim black-and-white edition collects an sf story originally serialized in 2000 AD #308-330 in 1983. There were two later sequences by Moore and Baikie printed in 1992 and 1994-1995; this volume only contains the first serialization.

Set in Birmingham, England, the comic focuses on the arrival and experiences of an alien—an interpreter from the Tau-Ceti Imperium—on Earth, in part inspired by the movie E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial. (Baikie's Introduction suggests that he and Moore started talking about the idea for the story before images of E.T. were even available.)

Most of the installments are four pages in length, but there are several longer pieces to accommodate the story's pacing. First concentrating on the alien as a primary character, the story soon develops into a tale about the human beings who gather to help him, as well as those who attempt to hunt him down for scientific research and other purposes—shades of E.T.

While the kangaroo-like Skizz is interesting himself, the human characters prove even more intriguing. Roxy is a teenage student who listens to new wave and ska music. (That leads to a clever line in which Skizz remarks that she taught him that the Police aren't as good as Madness.) And Cornelius Cardew, a burly pipefitter who suffered an injury at work and is now facing difficulties finding employment. They and another friend team up to help Skizz elude capture by the threatening Van Owen, who presumes Skizz is the advance agent of an invasion force.

A bit of an outlier for 2000 AD, the comic is largely a quiet consideration of isolation, first contact, friendship, and finding family. The story's arc is very similar to that of E.T., though there are notable differences. And Baikie's portrayal of the interpreter Skizz, his fever dream, and his eventual rescuers are wonderful. Otherwise, his artwork ably represents the mean streets of Birmingham.

Finally, despite Titan's current presence in British comic book and magazine publishing, I'd been unaware that it was in business almost 30 years ago. I'd also been unaware that it reprinted 2000 AD work in such nice slim editions—the book's format might be the exact size of the original comics tabloid, resulting in a delightful reading experience. It might be worthwhile tracking down other late-'80s Titan reprint editions.

The EC Archives: The Vault of Horror—Volume 1
Review by Heath Row in Telegraphs and Tarpits

Similar to its companion volume focusing on Weird Fantasy (T&T #74), this softcover collection compiles The Vault of Horror #12-17, which originally appeared bimonthly between April 1950 and Match 1951. R.L. Stine contributes a foreword that details his introduction to the

comic at a neighborhood barbershop when he was 9 or 10 years old, recognizes its impact on his own writing, and states that “What attracted me to these comics was that they were so hilarious. Had anyone ever concocted such a mix of horror and humor before?”

Formerly titled *War Against Crime* (also available from Dark Horse), the series’ first six issues featured covers by Johnny Craig and stories by Harry Harrison, Henry Kuttner, and others, as well as artwork by Craig, Al Feldstein, Harrison, Graham Ingels, Jack Kamen, Harvey Kurtzman, and Wally Wood.

Topics addressed include wax museums, werewolves, ghouls and vampires, murder, the undead, graverobbing, hunting humans, voodoo dolls, rats, haunted houses, swamp monsters, escaping from prison, and other cheery subjects—all wonderfully explored in an outre fashion.

Some of the pieces reminded of the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft. Stories in this run have been identified as influenced by Michael Curtiz’s movie *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Body Snatcher,” Richard Connell’s “The Most Dangerous Game,” Lovecraft’s “In the Vault” and “Cool Air”—the story I remembered—Clark Ashton Smith’s “The Nameless Offspring,” and Oscar Wilde’s “The Picture of Dorian Gray.”

One highlight of the comic is that, in the lettercol, “The Vault-Keeper’s Corner,” several issues recommend book selections. Those include Henry James, *Ghostly Tales*; Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* and the short stories “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Gold-Bug,” and “The Pit and the Pendulum;” Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*; Charles Lee Swem, *Werewolf*; and H.G. Wells, *Tales of the Unexpected*. I would have liked the literary recommendations to continue, but the lettercol turned into editorial commentary as issues progressed.

Also of interest were the full-page house ads for the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers, publishers’ attempt at self-regulation before the creation of the Comics Magazine Association of America and its Comics Code Authority.

Motion Pictures

Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny Review by Heath Row in *Telegraphs & Tarpits*

Last Friday morning, I went to a theater near the office to see *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*. I’ve appreciated the remarks that people have made during LASFS meetings, and even though I haven’t seen *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* yet, I consider myself a fan of the franchise. (Apparently, I own the DVD of the 2008 movie, so I can remedy that soon.)

This entry in the line of movies dating back to 1981 is surprisingly true to the first two, cementing its place in my affections. While previous outings have been slight fantasies—with most of the plotline focusing on the action, adventure, and archaeology rather than the fantastic—this instance even moves into the area of science fiction. It does so in a way that’s true to the earlier movies, concentrating on the ancient archaeological potential of sf.

The movie opens with some de-aged footage of Harrison Ford portraying Jones as he goes up against the Nazis to obtain the Lance of Longinus, sought by the fuhrer, only to discover that they also have Archimedes's Antikythera, which has been separated into halves, perhaps to avoid mishaps with its storied powers and potential. So far, the movie is still relatively grounded in history and archaeology. Adolf Hitler was interested in occultism. The Holy Lance—presumably used to pierce the side of Jesus— and the Antikythera are real or near-real objects, with four known asserted versions of the first in Armenia, Krakow, Rome, and Vienna, and the latter an ancient Greek example of an analog computer retrieved from a shipwreck near Greece. Even before the sf elements of the movie kick in, it might be an alternate history because Archimedes is asserted as the inventor of the Antikythera. In actuality, the found device was built after he was alive, and while his theories and work might have led to the development of the mechanism, he is not believed to have constructed it. Similarly, it seems that the complete Antikythera was found in 1901, so it's having been broken and secreted away could also qualify as alternate history.

The movie then moves to 1969, the dates of the Apollo 11 mission, Jones about to retire from Hunter College after 10 years of teaching. The rest of the movie is absolutely wonderful: the thieving daughter of a former colleague, a thieving child taken under her wing, reunions with old comrades, archaeological investigations, a nightclub scene, and travel in search of the other half of the Antikythera.

There are enough echoes of—and quotes from—previous movies to connect viewers to the previous, much-loved movies. And Jones is very much Jones, even at the end of his career. Regardless, the end of his career might lead to a new, even more rewarding life. Interestingly, the de-aging in the beginning of the movie was done not with CGI, but by training an artificial intelligence using previous Indiana Jones and Harrison Ford movies and footage that didn't make the cut for the previous films. "I don't know how they do it. But that's my actual face," Ford said in an interview quoted in *Variety*. "Then I put little dots on my face and I say the words and they make [it]. It's fantastic."

The new Indiana Jones movie is indeed that: fantastic. And if you go to see it, you'll see what makes it science fictional—beyond the alternate history aspect.

SerCon

William Nolan Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

William Francis Nolan was born on March 6, 1928, and died on July 15, 2021, in Vancouver, Washington, from complications of an infection. He was an editor and an author who edited/wrote stories in the science fiction (SF), fantasy, and horror genres.

Nolan is probably best known for co-authoring the novel *Logan's Run* (with George Clayton Johnson), but he had literally hundreds of other genre publications. He also had a long career writing for TV, and co-wrote the screenplay for the 1976 horror film *Burnt Offerings*.



Personal Life

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, to an Irish-Catholic family, Nolan attended Kansas City Art Institute, 1946 - 1947; San Diego State College, 1947 - 1948; and Los Angeles City College, 1953. He married Marilyn Cameron Seal in 1970.

Nolan moved from Los Angeles to Canada in 2010 “to give his wife some space.” Despite his success, the couple had been heavily in debt for many years. Being a writer meant good times alternated with droughts. The financial roller coaster took its toll on their relationship. In an interview, Nolan said that they still had a good marriage despite the physical distance, and he hoped to move back down to California at some point to be with her.

Genre Novels



Logan’s Run (1967) was followed by Logan’s World (1977), Logan’s Search (1980), and Logan’s Return (2001); but the sequels weren’t as successful as Logan’s Run, probably because the first book in the series had been made into a popular movie.

He also wrote a series of cross-over SF-mystery books that featured his hard-boiled future detective Sam Space: the novels Space for Hire (1971) and Look Out for Space (1985), and the collection 3 for Space (1992).

Anthologies Edited

In addition to the Sam Space collection, listed above, Nolan edited several other collections of genre stories, including the following:

Impact-20 (1963)

Man Against Tomorrow (1965)

The Pseudo-People (1965)

3 to the Highest Power (1968) [stories by Bradbury, Oliver, Sturgeon]

A Sea of Space (1970)

A Wilderness of Stars (1970)

Black Mask Murders (1974)

The Human Equation (1979)

The Black Mask Boys (1985)

The Future Is Now (1990)

Urban Horrors (1990) [with Martin Greenberg]

The Bradbury Chronicles (1992) [with Greenberg]

California Sorcery (1999) [with William Schafer]

Tales from William F. Nolan’s Dark Universe (2012) [with Jason Brock]



California Sorcery contained stories by 12 members of The Group

(see below), plus a remembrance of the various members by Nolan.

Pseudonyms

Nolan occasionally used the pseudonyms of Frank Anmar, Mike Cahill, and F. E. Edwards.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

Nolan received several awards during his career, including being voted a Living Legend in Dark Fantasy in 2002.

In 2006, he received the honorary title of Author Emeritus by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America.

In 2010 he received the Lifetime Achievement Stoker Award from the Horror Writers Association.

He was named to the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 2021.

He also won special awards from The Mystery Writers of America.

The Group

In the early 1950s, Nolan was close friends in Los Angeles with several other young SF writers, including Ray Bradbury, Chad Oliver, Richard Matheson, George Clayton Johnson, Jerry Sohl, and Charles Beaumont. Nolan called them “The Group.” Genre critics have referred to them as the Southern California School of Writers, and as the Southern California Sorcerers.

Some Conclusions

Nolan included stories by his friends in the SF anthologies he edited over the years.

He also wrote several non-fiction books: bibliographies, books on automobile racing, and biographies, including Nolan on Bradbury (2013).

In his later years Nolan moved to Vancouver, Washington to work with Jason V. Brock and others on comic books and other writing projects.

Sources

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Swartz, Jon D. *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Authors*, 2010.

Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 2: Who’s Who, M – Z*, 1978.

Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

Short Stories

A Review by Heath Row in Telegraphs and Tarpits

So far this week, I've been reading Planet Stories Vol. 6 #5 (March 1954), a browning copy with a detached cover chipping edge flakes onto my abdomen and lap as I read. So far, I've read two short stories and the lettercol, titled "The Vizigraph."

Mack Reynolds's "The Galactic Ghost," illustrated by Lawrence Woromay, who also worked in comic books, is an intriguing piece about first contact, human rights, and globalization. An alien visitor arrives to warn the Earth's population of an impending disaster. The visitor's race is preparing a nearby hospitable planet for colonization and indicates it'll return in five years to transport humanity's 1,000 colonists. The bulk of the story focuses on how humanity can best—or, most humanely—determine who the 1,000 colonists will be, as well as the unique solution at which they arrive.

"The Toy," by Bryan Berry, concentrates on the experiences of a time traveler who ended up many years in the future, during the time of homo superior rather than homo sapiens—and homo superior's X-ray eyes and other abilities. The story was illustrated by Ed Emshwiller. Homesick and all alone, the time traveler wants to return but cannot, lest he alter history—until his homo superior hosts come up with a possible solution.

Both stories are enjoyable reads, though I found the table of contents descriptions to be woefully inadequate. "The Vizigraph," however, is great fun. Correspondents discuss the British reprints of prozines and the late arrival of stories overseas—and recommend the work of the above-mentioned Berry—consider recent covers, stories, and letters; examine pen names and the artwork of Kelly Freas and Emshwiller; complain about sf slang and acronyms; propose expanding the lettercol; and interact with other letter writers. A reader from Racine, Wis., even enclosed a photograph of herself "in case anyone thinks I look like a fink." Another reader contributed a poem about the lettercol.

There are also a couple of southern California connections beyond the mention of Freas. Many correspondents share their feedback on Ray Bradbury's "The Golden Apples of the Sun," which some readers didn't like at all ("It stunk on ice!"), but which Long Beach reader Ron Ellik (T&T #35) enjoyed immensely.

Not only was I impressed by the liveliness of the correspondence, the lettercol was seven pages long and the letters quite lengthy. Kudos to Planet!

Television

Doctor Who Series 13

Review by Heath Row in Telegraphs and Tarpits

Within the last week or so, I watched Doctor Who Series 13, Jodie Whittaker's final series as the Doctor, in full on DVD. Subtitled "Flux," the series originally aired in six episodes between Oct. 31 and Dec. 8, 2021. It's a rare example of a serialized story over the course of a series, an approach much more common in the earlier years of the program. Even though six new episodes feels awfully short for a series, much less the final series for a Doctor, the serial aspect

works very well, and “Flux” succeeds as a whole, as well as as individual episodes. I’d welcome future serials.

There are a couple of new elements to the show in this series. Comedian John Bishop joined the show as a companion, and the series was set in his hometown of Liverpool, allowing for some wonderful scenes featuring the city and its landmarks. Another aspect is that multiple enemies from the past all coalesce in the face of a newfound threat. The Weeping Angels are instrumental throughout. Sontarans seek to align with Cybermen and Daleks to defend against the threat. And a new alien race is introduced: The Lupari, canine warriors.

Without giving too much away, the primary threat is—wait for it—the end of the world. The universe is about to end, to be replaced by another. Two very stylish but evil figures seem to be the masterminds behind the transition, and the Doctor and her companions stand up to their machinations, as well as those of the Division, which was new to me. The two masterminds utilize a kind of humanoid thumb drive to harvest the energy they need.

I also really enjoyed the aspect of the Williamson Tunnels in Liverpool, as well as the character Joseph Williamson, who was constructing them to prepare for a cataclysm. It turns out that those are real—even to the name—and that people to this day don’t know why the tunnels were constructed under Liverpool. (<https://tinyurl.com/Liverpool-tunnels>)

Despite fannish debate about Whittaker’s time as the Doctor, I quite enjoyed her stint on the show—and think she brought a lot of good. “Flux” was a solid ending to her tenure, and a strong return to the serials of the past.

Travelers

Review by Heath Row in Telegraphs and Tarpits

This episode throws several curveballs, some of them related to the main storyline, some of them seemingly separate from our primary concerns, and some of them perhaps both. Only time will tell. The first curveball is that Philip attends an update session—the “update” of the episode title—at which he receives new future memories that he can use to better navigate time as it unfolds, as well as to finance his team. At the update session, he receives a bottle of yellow pills that he can take. Apparently, learning in this manner can open up historians to being able to see fragments of the multiverse and alternate timelines.

The second curveball is that Rick Hall and Luca are out of prison early, all charges against them dropped, as Grant soon learns. The two approach multiple members of the team, including Marcy, with whom Luca plays up the separated siblings’ situation, and Trevor, who is not open to interacting with them at all. The ex-cons continue to insinuate themselves throughout the episode, welcoming a disturbed classmate of Trevor’s—more on that below—as a new traveler, and causing Kathryn to have a miscarriage of sorts. It turns out that Hall’s intent was to save Kathryn’s life—childbirth would have killed her—and she wasn’t meant to die. Protocol 4, don’t you know.

Trevor is thrown his own curveball, when he learns from a classmate and fellow concussion sufferer that their football coach abused his teammates sexually. Philip informs him that it eventually becomes known publicly, and after Trevor’s opportunity to confront him with the classmate (the new host, don’t forget) passes, he decides to take matters into his own hands.

“Release the materials,” he says into his comm unit leaving the coach’s office.

“What does that mean?” his abuser asks—and soon finds out.

That brings us to the fourth curveball, and the one that might—or might not—have repercussions in the future. Part of Philip’s update gave him lottery numbers that were destined to win. He gives them to Marcy and Carly so he doesn’t attract attention winning the lottery again, and when David copies Marcy’s numbers on his own ticket, he wins too. At first he feels guilt about taking money from Marcy. He debates giving his money to her before he decides to distribute it among the homeless and destitute he helps on the streets. We shall see if the impact of such large sums of money end up hurting or harming them rather than helping them—which would be a strong signal that one shouldn’t tamper with the future.

All in all, an interesting episode, though a bit of a breather or brief pause among the primary timelines underway. I expect that the multiversal aspects of Philip’s update will come into play in a meaningful way in future episodes.

Food of Famous Authors

Eat This While You Read That: William Joseph Roberts Cooking by Cedar Sanderson Chili Mac MRE



Widowmakers is set in WWII, which always makes me a happy reader, and it’s fantasy, but not so fantastic you won’t get into the details of airplanes and bored soldiers doing what they have done since time immemorial. The First Reader enjoyed this book as well, and wanted to know if there are more (not yet?). If you want gremlins, tanks, planes, and a rogue group of rough and ready men sent to do the impossible, pick up the book! Also, it’s very reasonably priced and in KU.

When I talked to Roberts (I can’t call him William. It’s far too formal for him. Roberts is more natural to me in this setting for some reason) about his idea for a meal to go with the book, he initially suggested I not cook at all. Just buy a chili mac MRE!

Heh. Well, I did that. And then I found the USMC mess recipe for chili mac. As I commented to my First Reader, and to Roberts, I have eaten MREs, and even C-rats, although I never served. But years in the CAP and being a military brat open you up to some, ah, odd experiences. C-rat fruitcake in a tin was pretty darn good, as I recall through the mists of time. Crackers in MREs? Could be used as e-tools in emergency. But I digress. I was dubious about the edibility of the chili mac. That, and for some reason I got it into my head that there would be cheese involved.

This is a muchly-scaled down recipe, and abnormally for me, I stayed fairly close to the recipe I’d found, trying to capture that something remembered by the GI in my house, at least. His assessment? “About right,” added salt. “Yep, that’s it.”

Ingredients

8 oz dry macaroni noodles
 1/2 tsp salt
 1 tbsp oil
 1 lb ground beef
 1/2 onion, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
 5 tsp chili powder
 1 1/2 tsp cumin
 1 1/2 tsp paprika
 1/2 tsp salt (wasn't enough. But you can add more)
 1/2 tsp garlic powder
 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
 14 oz can of diced tomatoes
 6 oz can of tomato paste
 14 oz (use the diced tomato can) of water

Instructions

Put a pot of water on high heat, add salt, and cover. This is for the pasta.

In another heavy pot (I used my dutch oven) saute the onions, and brown the ground beef.

Drain any excess grease off.

Add all the spices and stir, while on the heat, for a minute.

Add in the tomatoes, paste, and water, stirring until well combined.

Reduce to simmer, cover, and cook for 30 min on low heat.

While sauce is cooking, when water reaches a boil, add in the noodles. Cook to al dente (don't overcook, or they will mush in the sauce) and drain. Toss back in pan with the oil (I used olive, but the recipe simply said 'salad oil' so anything will do).

When sauce has simmered for the required time, remove lid, gently fold in noodles, ensuring they are evenly coated, and heat for another minute or so.

The end result – It's full of flavor, but not heat. You'd have to add hot sauce (which I am out of) for that. All the spices! I really liked how much flavor went into this. Sauce simmering – don't let it come to a full boil, you don't need to and it could burn. Good sauce-to-noodle ratio.

I was asking the First Reader about plating. He looked at me funny. "Well, in the mess you get these divided trays..." Not what I meant. Besides, I haven't got those and am not inclined to acquire them for a recipe, even though, yes, I have bought stuff for presentation in the past! Now, what did you get with it? I wanted to serve it with some grated cheese, a little sour cream, maybe salsa... "You got it plain. No GI ever got all that stuff."

So I photographed his bowl, and mine. Then he put all that stuff on his and ate it, because it's good that way. This made a very nice, filling meal and it's definitely comfort food. The Johnny



Chapman sorghum hard cider paired very nicely with it, having a tart bite to cut through the spice and richness of the meal. I wound up not opening the MRE. It's stashed in the pantry. I'm not sure what to do with it! The Little Man will probably claim it for camping, actually. They work well for trail food, it's what they were designed for, after all.



Tribute to Close Encounters
by Jose Sanchez