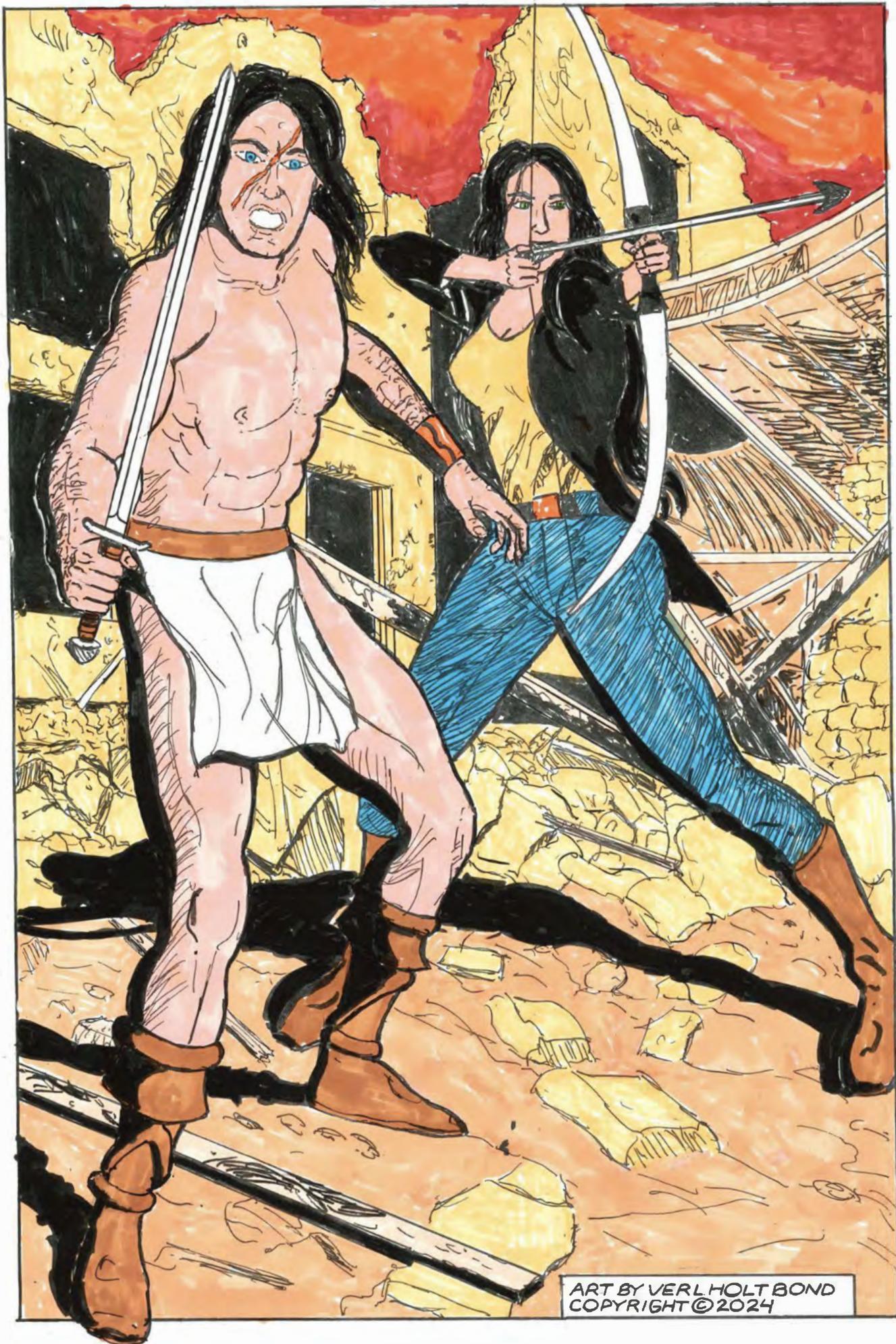


The Stf Amateur 12



ART BY VERL HOLT BOND
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The Stf Amateur 12
September 2024

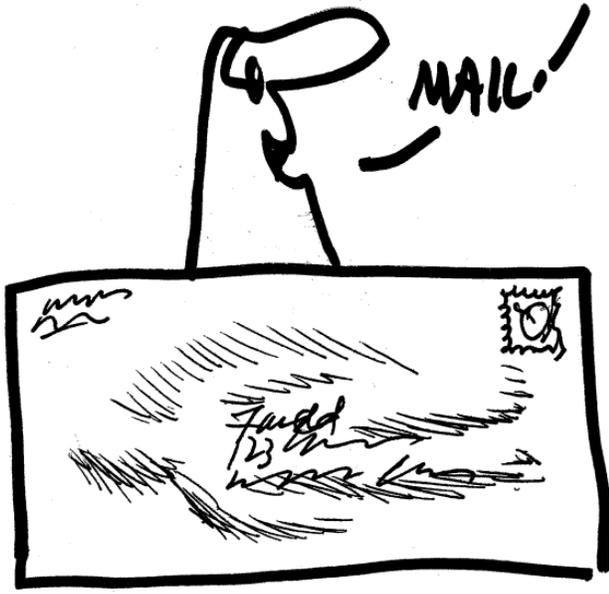
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You can learn more about cover artist Verl Holt Bond at <https://www.facebook.com/verl.bond.14>.

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—William Rotsler

Jose Sanchez

So I read [your comments on the cover for eAPA #242 in *The Stf Amateur* #10] and got in contact with Garth [Spencer] as you suggested. ... [H]e graciously sent me the e-file issue. ... [A]fter seeing the piece that he selected [for the cover], I totally agree. So funny! And so true, too. I grew up with the [black-and-white] *Famous Monsters* magazines, and I loved them all. So many nice memories there—and also the bubblegum trading cards you'd get with that pink wide bubblegum stick, all powdered and all. Remember that?

I am very pleased with [your] critique. It would seem that it's kind of my art style. One person on *DeviantArt* wrote that I have an '80s pulp fiction style, so I guess that is what people are seeing in my work. ... I never thought that years later as an adult, that I would find that to be an element ... still saturated inside my work. Interesting how it's come to that point in my life full circle.

I guess that when you grow up in a certain time with those influences that they somehow never go away. I'm an '80s child, and that will stick with me forever.

[I'm curious whether you ever watched *In Search of...* as a youth. Leonard Nimoy's exploration of unexplained phenomena also resonates lightly with the recurring themes in your work.—HR]

William Breiding

Gail has been glued to the Olympics and we have been

using my iPad hooked up to the TV to stream them, so I actually printed out *The Stf Amateur* for the first time. It makes an awesome package! Another fabulous cover, this time by Pete Jaquay. I visited his social media sites as provided. A quirky guy! I continue to very much enjoy your travelogs and forays out into the Los Angeles area.

[*The Stf Amateur* is kind of a hefty fanzine when printed, isn't it? I print a very small run to send to members of the United Fanzine Organization for its publication exchange, and sometimes one or two more copies in case demand arises. One fellow I know from my mundane zine days has ordered back issues a couple of times, but I'd kind of like to discourage that—or at least not encourage it. When I mail the UFO copies, I've been sending three at a time, quarterly, which makes for quite the envelope. I'm grateful for Media Mail.

In recent months, I also sent several samples to D. Blake Werts, whose new zine *Copy This Cassette!* (<https://www.antiquatedfuture.com/artist/d-blake-werts>) is worth checking out, and author Paul Di Filippo on a whim. He responded with the most amazing care package in exchange—similar to the one you sent, William. And the post office clerk I interact with most often when mailing weekly has been writing a fantasy novel longhand in a spiral notebook, so a few weeks ago I gave him some sample Amateurs and APA-Ls as well.—HR]

Re: apas. I suspect that “Little Apa” and “Lil Apa” are the same. And that “secret” means “invitational.” I only know about “Lil Apa” (that's how the person who contacted me referred to it) because I was a prospective for an invitation. I queried two things: who's on the roster and could I get a spec copy. I don't know if my wanting more information rather than blindly accepting the invitation put the person off, but I never heard from them again—and then several months later they became seriously ill. And my recent haranguing about apas has probably made me a fugghead in the eyes of many. The new Claude Degler.

[If you're considering joining an apa, I'd be happy to tell you about the rosters of any of the apae in which I'm active. I'm sure you're not at a loss for fannish friendships along such lines already.—HR]

In the 1980s I was way off into horror. Both in literature and film. I also tend toward the supernatural or weird and/or unexplained, i.e., psychological horror, such as Roman Polanski's early films [such as]

Repulsion (1965) and *The Tenant* (1976), as well as *Possession* (1981) by another Polish director, Andrzej Żuławski. I tend to tire easily of slasher/splatter horror. (I particularly dislike it in literature—I consider *Poppy Z. Brite* to be violence porn.) But in the 1980s, I saw a lot of splatter films, though oddly somehow missed seeing the original *Halloween* film and have yet to see it! Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* films were to me a gorgeous blend of humor and horror from which I always felt the Coen Brothers had borrowed heavily. In literature, my tastes run toward Dennis Etchison, Ramsey Campbell, Robert Aickman, M.R. James, William Hope Hodgson, Michael McDowell, and Charles Beaumont. The list goes on, but let's not forget Karl Edward Wagner's nearly quarter-century series, *The Year's Best Horror* for cutting-edge short fiction. I never completely cottoned to Stephen King. Some kind of irritation was always involved for me while reading his novels, so I gave up. He is the everyman's horror writer and thus translated well to screen where I've enjoyed many of his novels. I subscribed to *Fangoria* for years, and I'm afraid I perverted my young nephew by passing them on to him as he is now a struggling horror/action scriptwriter. He's yet to make it but has had some scripts made into short films, one which I believe won some sort of an award.

[That's a solid list of authors to explore, for sure. I've recently been rereading Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft, who introduced me to Hodgson. A copy of *Brite's* short story collection *Wormwood* lurks under the coffee table in our living room, so perhaps I'll prioritize reading that soon—just out of spite.

Have you checked out any of the British Library's Tales of the Weird series? (<https://shop.bl.uk/collections/british-library-fiction/bl-tales-of-the-weird>) They're glorious—and you can buy them individually or subscribe. I've only obtained a few so far, but they seem like they might be up your alley.—HR]

Somewhere you were discussing reading habits. I don't have any, with the exception of trying to stay awake! Therefore, I tend to read in the early mornings when fresh and at night before sleep. Since retiring, I will frequently take a few hours to sit in the yard and read, which has been great. But with summer's recent hot desert temps, I tend to get drowsy when making eye tracks, so I will allow myself the interesting experience of reading/nodding off/reading/nodding off. I've recently been reading a collection of Phyllis Gotlieb stories, *Son of the Morning and Other Stories*, which comes highly recommended. My brother Sutton

is a big fan of her work and now I see why.

All for now. Thanks for another great ish. Hope all is well. Stay healthy: Live long and prosper.

Cy Chauvin

I subscribe and read the prozines, too, and like yourself read them in a haphazard and irregular fashion, except for the features. Robert Silverberg's column in *Asimov's* is the best, but *Analog* has had increasingly more interesting and cutting-edge articles on science. Although I don't usually read the fiction right away, I don't think that matters. I let most of my books of fiction age, often for years, before I read them. I read new and old fiction all the time, and it all seems current to me. It seems part of the "time-binding" experience. But I agree with all the reasons you cite for reading prozines.

I do find it less enjoyable reading long material on PDF, as opposed to hard copy. Interestingly, in the latest *Trains* magazine is a welcome article from the new publisher. "While I am a digital native, I love print magazines. I remember how I felt each month when I received my copy in the mail. ... We soon realized that print magazines offered an experience for readers that digital couldn't match. ... Unlike digital apps or websites, consuming print content provides the reader with an undistracted journey. When reading online, one is constantly distracted by emails, Slack messages, and social media feeds." He mentions that he had been originally intending to go all digital with the various magazines he acquired. But he saw that the younger generation (the "zoomers") start to print.

[Funny you should mention *Trains*. I used to subscribe to that magazine, as well as to *Railfan & Railroad* (<https://railfan.com>), which I preferred. My father was a model railroader, concentrating on HO scale, and specializing in designing and building his own scale structures and modular layouts. He could weather metal quite well and was active in local train clubs and the National Model Railroad Association, occasionally winning awards for his work and photography. I didn't inherit his model railroading bug, thankfully, but we both share an appreciation for trains, public transit, and related infrastructure.

When we moved to the Los Angeles area, we bought a house a few blocks away from the now-closed Allied Model Trains shop, which I'd occasionally visit to check out the newsstand—and its former location, then a Samy's Camera building, originally constructed to look like Union Station. My father was thrilled, and after Allied closed following a fire, I sent him some stray items I picked up in the alley behind the shop. Samy's has since closed, and

the building now seems to be utilized as offices.

Incidentally, I recently received my mailed copy of the October issue of *Astronomy* magazine, which is also published by Firecrown Media. That company bought Kalmbach Publishing earlier this year. Craig Fuller's "Welcome to Firecrown Media," which you quote, makes for interesting reading. Kudos to the new owner of *Trains* and *Astronomy* for focusing on online as well as offline media.—HR]

By the way, there is another hard copy pro or semiprozine, *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, published by Small Beer Press. It is in a half-sized, sort of small press fanzine format, but the fiction published is excellent. It tends toward horror, rather than hard sf. There hasn't been an issue published in a while, since the editor has an illness which he describes as fatiguing, and slows all basic tasks.

[I'm sorry to hear that about Gavin Grant. I also used to receive *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet* and have always associated it with Kelly Link, who co-edits it. The periodicals I miss most, however, might be Bryan Cholfin's *Crank!* and *Science Fiction Eye*. Thank you for the reminder!—HR]

I wonder if in your "Branches of Science Fiction" article you aren't combining subgenres and topics. I can't think of robots/androids as a subgenre like I can steampunk or utopian fiction. It seems too specific. (And think of the sub-subgenres: "Robby the Steam Powered Robot goes back in Time to Murder H.G. Wells!") I've just been reading a book about the history of indexing, and at one point some people wanted to index fiction like we do nonfiction. This may be a similar motivation.

[I agree with you 100 percent, and if when I return to that project, I'll likely spend most of my time aligning it with its precursors, which I discovered after I began work on it—and better differentiating between subgenres and topics. That's currently on the back burner because I'm not sure whether it's a needed framework. I'm certainly not going to suggest we begin indexing or labeling stories and books along such lines. The *Internet Speculative Fiction Database's* tags are probably sufficient for my use, and I'm not overly motivated to dedicate my attention there. I'd rather read and write.—HR]

The [*Blue Moon Special*] publication was nice to have. I can't say when I last saw such an apa listing. While Jeanne Mealy has, of course, all the top-notch info on Stipple-Apa—being such an ace OOK for the apa—she forgot to mention that Stipple-Apa still

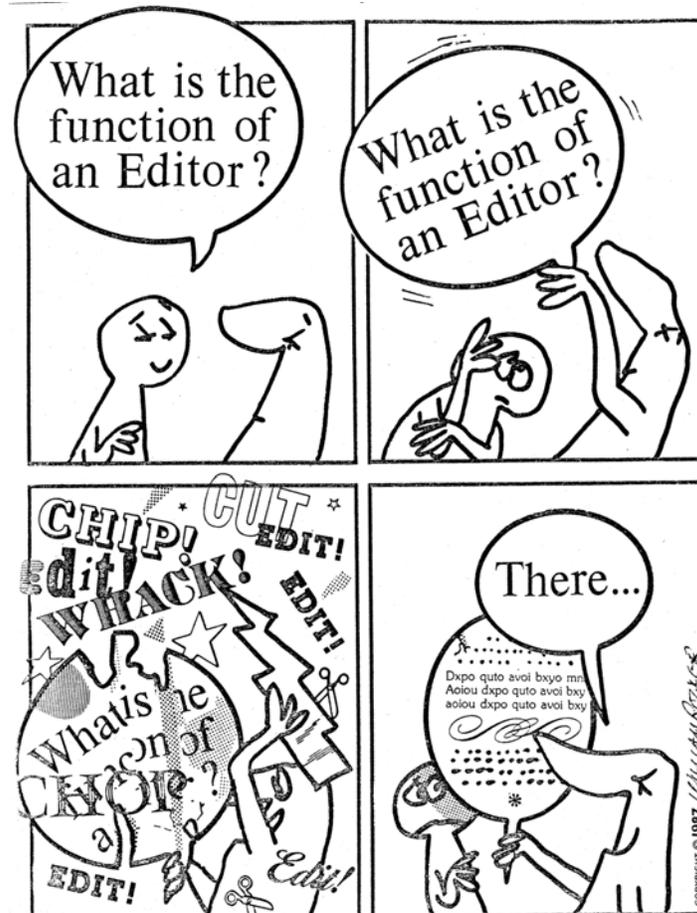
actually has collating parties, with real snacks, etc., something that electronic-only apas can't do. Also, the collating sessions can be viewed on Zoom, too! Now (and I'm sure—being from Minneapolis—that Jeanne is working on this), I'm waiting for Zoom participants to have "waldos" so they can help to collate the apa remotely and fully experience the joys of apahacking. I thought those extra details might appeal to some potential members.

[I appreciate the additional context! Were I to join another apa, Stipple-Apa is certainly tempting.

For the record, Chauvin's email originally said *South of the Moon* was nice to have, which is true. But I think he's talking about the recent edition of *Blue Moon Special*, its grandson of sorts. You can obtain a copy at <https://tinyurl.com/bluemoonspecial2024>. —HR]

Your wander through the old, historic neighborhood of Los Angeles was vicarious fun!

Call for Submissions



—William Rotsler

Do you write or draw? As *The Stf Amateur* continues to evolve from an interconnected assortment of standalone apazines to its current bundlezine format, it's only natural that it eventually becomes a proper genzine. Effective immediately, *The Stf Amateur* is open to submissions of all kinds.

The Stf Amateur is hereby requesting the following:

- sf, fantasy, and horror news
- fanart, illos, and fillos
- cover art
- poetry
- filk songs and lyrics
- short fiction
- articles and essays
- fanzine, book, movie, television, and other reviews
- con reports
- jokes
- letters of comment
- ... and other material

If selected for publication, material will initially be included in one of my apazines, as well as a monthly issue of *The Stf Amateur*. Cover art will be considered solely for *The Stf Amateur*. Contributors will receive the issue in which their material appears.

Send your contributions to Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; or via fax to 323-916-0367.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #124

Aug. 1, 2024

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Last Week's Senryu

Carrie McNinch says
it's too hot to draw today.
Just right for fanac!

In case you don't know who Carrie McNinch is, she's a maker of diary minicomics in the Los Angeles area. Her *You Don't Get There from Here* is wonderful, and she offers a Patreon to support her self-publishing. (<https://www.patreon.com/carriemcninch>)

While I didn't think it was that hot last Thursday, while printing the last three issues of *The Stf Amateur* for the United Fanzine Organization this weekend, the printer had to pause several times to cool down. Now, that's hot!

Shared Worlds: Thieves' World

I sent the following letter to the National Fantasy Fan Federation's Thieves' World Round Robin in mid-August 2010. Recently discovered among fanzine materials, I reprint it here in slightly different form for a less-limited readership.

I don't remember when I first read *Thieves' World*. It could have been when it first came out in 1979—I was 6—or it could have been in one of the later Ace paperback printings—the used copy I bought to replace my original is the eighth printing, which came out in 1982. Regardless, I remember it fondly. I don't remember that much about it from that original reading, but I remember enjoying it—I remember looking forward to first getting it—and I think I read one or two of the subsequent anthologies, as well. But I had no idea that there were ... a dozen!

... I got into the book because of my science fiction and fantasy reading, I am sure, but perhaps also because of my roleplaying gaming, specifically of *Dungeons & Dragons*. When I was a boy, I was a sucker for fantasy novels with maps in the front, and *Thieves' World* also resonated with my early Apple IIe computer gaming with *Wizardry*, *The Bard's Tale*, and the like. The book connected with a lot of my interests.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 5, 1956

Hawkmoon summoning the Legion of the Dawn always proves exciting and effective.

After claiming the Runestaff, Hawkmoon returns to support the forces of Castle Brass, under attack after being pulled back from its dimension of safety. The description of Baron Kalan's alchemical or chemical war machine is delightful, and the use of mirrored helmets is interesting. The bodycount is surprisingly high at the end—on both sides—and Flana steps in almost as a *deus ex machina* to save the day.

The Runestaff is a fun read but looms even larger in Moorcock's overall body of work. There's Hawkmoon itself as a series, and then there's the Eternal Champion more broadly.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

The Boy with Green Hair

Last week or so, my wife and I watched this 1948 fantasy based on the 1946 short story by Betsy Beaton, which appeared in *This Week*. Starring a

young Dean Stockwell, it also features Russ Tamblyn (*T&T* #117) in an uncredited role.

The movie is primarily the story of a boy orphaned during World War II, shuttled from distant family member to distant family member before moving in with a retired stage magician and singing waiter named Gramp. The film considers the boy's efforts to find a stable home with people who love him, as well as a place—and friends—in his new school. But when the boy's hair turns green, all bets are off, and he and his new foster parent need to contend with the judgment and prejudice of other people in the small town.

That could be interpreted as the prejudice faced by orphans, as well as other bigotry experienced by people. It's also the most fantastic element of the movie. His hair just turns green! It's inexplicable! It wasn't dyed, and it won't grow out. Remember, in 1948, green hair was not very common. There are also other fantastic elements, including a scene in which the boy encounters some war orphans he'd seen depicted on posters at school while running away through the forest, and another in which he describes Gramp's stage show. (Reportedly, Gramp met a king.)

But for the most part, it's a gentle fantasy, concentrating instead on the boy's developing relationship with Gramp and his encounters with other adults: a teacher, the milkman, and a grocer. The movie also considers whether the adults surrounding him should tell him that his parents are dead, or let him maintain hope. While the surprising green hair cannot be explained, it does have a purpose—and that is the message of the movie. We mustn't forget those affected by war.

The Boy with Green Hair is a surprisingly good movie. It's also occasionally surprising—the song-and-dance sequences were entirely unexpected. If you've never seen this, it's worth seeking out, kind of an unsung gem. Tamblyn's role is small, but as a young actor, he showed up, and he worked really hard.

Ignorable Theme: Chemistry Sets, Etc.

"Have you ever used a chemistry set, electronics kit, magic set, or ham radio equipment? Do you still?" As a youth, I never really used a chemistry set, electronics kit, or ham radio equipment—but I wish I had. The closest I came to a chemistry set was encountering an antique one in a hinged metal case. Most of its materials had dried up or otherwise become unusable. And I used to enjoy browsing the local Radio Shack looking at the various electronics components, even though I never tinkered thusly. Instead, I had a magic set.

I haven't been able to identify which set it was

from the 1970s or 1980s, but I remember that it had a black plastic card box with a black insert card you could use to make cards disappear. And it contained a magic wand that was partially filled with sand or other matter—like a rain stick—so you could balance it on the edge of a table or other surface.

Unfortunately, I never mastered many (or any) of the tricks, though I did subject my parents and sister to several magic shows during which I'd do my best. Most of the time, it sat in our game closet amongst the other games.

When my son was younger, he participated in the Magic Castle's Junior Society, but I never bought him a magic set. He had access to better instruction and tools. He preferred close up magic rather than stage magic and spent a lot of time manipulating cards. He only participated for a year.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 12, 1956

Despite my limited experience with such things, I'm quite keen on the idea of kits and sets like this. With the increased attention on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education, electronics kits and home computing kits are widely available, and even searching for chemistry sets yields multiple options online.

Available through Home Science Tools (<https://www.homescientools.com>) and other sources, the Thames & Kosmos *Chem C3000* set looks promising, offering more than 300 experiments and an almost 200-page manual. Many contemporary electronics kits seem to focus on the Arduino programming language. The SparkFun *Inventor's Kit* (<https://www.sparkfun.com/products/21301>) intrigues me, as does the *Experiential Robotics Platform Kit* (<https://www.sparkfun.com/products/22230>). And on the *Facebook*,

I've seen sponsored posts for inventr.io's (<https://inventr.io>) *30 Days Lost in Space* and *Cogsworth City* adventure kits, which have an sf connection.

Magic sets remain available, which is neat to see. Abracadabra NYC (<https://abracadabranyc.com>) sells *Criss Angel's Mind Freak Ultimate Magic Kit*, which might be the modern-day equivalent of 1983's *The Magic World of Blackstone*. Exploring such options online makes me wonder what the best electronics, hobby science, and magic shops are in the Los Angeles area. Maybe I should include them in *The Los Angeles County Fanac Guide!*

Ham radio, or amateur radio, then, I have no experience with. I know that Scouts holds a Jamboree-on-the-Air (<https://www.scouting.org/international/jota-joti/jota>) annually, but I've never participated. At one point, I looked into what was needed to earn one's license, and I was put off by the Morse code requirement. Apparently, that's no longer required. Any hams among us ellers?

Comments on APA-L #3079

In *Vanamonde* #1602, John Hertz shared a story about Charles Proteus Steinmetz that delighted me. The man certainly had an ear for machinery! It is indeed healthy to hold Westercon, if we can find volunteers to staff it and members to participate in it. Either, or both, occasionally seem challenging. That doesn't mean we should do away with it, but could perhaps rethink it. Does it remain annual? Does it piggyback on another con? I'm no con runner, so I'm not sure what it would take to revitalize the con, which seems to be struggling.

When I leave a con, I tend to remove my name badge, but put it back on if I find myself in another place populated by fen. For example, not long ago, (*T&T* #103), I left Gallifrey One to eat a quick dinner at the nearby Carl's Jr. When I spotted some diners who were participating in OrcCon, I put my badge back on so we could see we were fellow fen. They were engrossed in their conversation, so we didn't interact. I, too, remove my conventional headgear.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez. I quite like the concept of "retaliate." Perhaps that could be done to avenge some real or imagined wrong. In that case, we'd retaliate by retaliating, perhaps, or retaliate in retaliation. Spellcheck is freaking out!

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #67 described the paperwork involved in his job. Having gone through a child custody evaluation and related legal matters, I found that discovery was usually quite helpful. In my case, we didn't already have the information at hand, and while some might

not have existed—occasionally questionable—some of what we were seeking was being actively hidden or obscured. And on my side, while it was a hassle to gather materials in response to such a request, I didn't have anything to hide and erred on the side of full disclosure. Clearly, that will vary case by case. Your description as a fishing expedition remains apt.

I read about that ransomware attack in the news. I haven't seen any reportage on whether the court system paid the perpetrators to resolve the issue. Good luck to Quentin on his job interview! A friend of mine worked at a local hotel during high school and seemed to enjoy it. The night shift wasn't a lot of work, and he was able to do quite a bit of reading.

Your remarks on where you read piqued my interest. My wife sometimes has to remember not to read while eating, as well. We try to keep mobile phone usage away from the dinner table, and if we eat together, we try not to read. I also remembered that I sometimes read in the bathroom. Not while in the act of urination or defecation, mind you, but occasionally reading some of one of *Mad* magazine's bathroom companions. We also keep handheld electronic *Yahtzee* games in a couple of restrooms, as well. I'm not sure why. I don't spend that much time on the toilet.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Mark Bondurant. I remember when the Freeplay (<https://www.freeplayenergy.com>) crank flashlights and radios first became available in the United States—previously used primarily in areas of environmental or economic crisis. A Freeplay car would be something else, indeed! I don't mind at all that you mentioned my recent National Fantasy Fan Federation Laureate Award at a LASFS meeting. I'll likely return once I catch up on the backlog of video recordings. I have two meetings left to transcribe!

While I wasn't previously aware of the writing of Ben Mezrich, you're right: He's written some intriguing books! In addition to *Bringing Down the House*, which you mention, Mezrich also wrote *The Antisocial Network*, *Bitcoin Billionaires*, and *The Accidental Billionaires*, all nonfiction. The movie *The Social Network* was based on *The Accidental Billionaires*. The MIT student and card counter plays a sizable role in the novel. You might enjoy it!

The blue ice cream you saw might very well be blue moon. Its flavor is difficult to describe and might be a combination of some berry, bubblegum, licorice (not really), and other flavors. Online, people seem to compare it to Froot Loops cereal, which isn't wrong. Yes, when I mentioned the Spirit, I meant Will Eisner's character. Are there others?

In *Vanamonde* #1603, **John Hertz** updated ellers

on the selections for his Classics of SF discussions at the North American Science Fiction Convention mid-month. I hope the discussions went well! What was it like preparing for two sets of discussions at Westercon, NASFiC, and Worldcon early next month?



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 19, 1956

I might have caused offense by spelling out the Tetragrammaton, as well. (T&T #122) I was aware of the sacrilege but apologize and will strive not to do so in the future. While I understand the intent behind fanwriter, like fanartist, the N3F award category is indeed spelled differently. Perhaps I'm the Best Fan Writer but not the best fanwriter. That could certainly be true. Personally, I'd prefer being an Enjoyable and Appreciated Fan Writer (or fanwriter). I hardly think I'm the best. I'm Pretty Good, though.

I've used "apae" as the plural for apa for Some Time Now. Similarly, I say "fen" instead of "fans," considering fans to be more mundane, such as sports fans. Both might be an affectation, but there's precedent, and I like it. I've also taken to using "okeh" instead of "OK" in my fanwriting. I like that, too. But yes, I'd like to learn about any secret apae ellers might know about. Tell me all your secrets!

And **Beverly Warren's** *Sirius Barks* #14 expressed intent to see a Deadpool movie, perhaps *Deadpool & Wolverine*. What did you think? I'm not a big fan of Deadpool, though plenty of people seem to like him as a character. I much prefer Ambush Bug. Your comments on reading inspire me to encourage you to read outside again. You might enjoy it!

I will share your feedback with cover artist Mark Bondurant. I'm glad you noticed John Hertz's absence in the previous distribution. *Vanamonde* #1602 arrived in the mail a couple of days after collation, so it's the first fanzine to appear in this dist'n. I emailed you and Joe Zeff the APA-L including the Buck Rogers comic strips to see if they're easier to enlarge and read on screen. I encourage you to go to the *Giant Robot* biennale! It runs through Sept. 1, so there's about a month left. My friends Eric Nakamura, Martin Wong, and Tom Devlin recently participated in a *Giant Robot*-related panel discussion at the San Diego Comic-Con. A book, *Giant Robot: Thirty Years of Defining Asian-American Pop Culture*, is expected in late October. I've already pre-ordered a copy.

The Death of Taral Wayne

I learned today that Taral Wayne, frequent contributor of APA-L covers, died July 31, 2024, at the age of 72. I've reached out to Steven Baldassarra to condole with him, Taral's friends, and family. I will miss Taral's fannish friendship, his correspondence, and his artwork. His most recent cover graced APA-L #3077, and we'd lined one more piece of artwork up before he died. I'll likely use that the next time his turn comes around.

What follows is a message that Baldassarra circulated among Taral's friends Wednesday evening. It is reprinted with Baldassarra's permission.

It is with great pain and sorrow that I regret to inform you that Taral has passed away.

I went to visit Taral earlier this evening, at around 7:30 p.m. Taral had called me earlier in the day to ask me to bring a few things over to his apartment.

After some 15 minutes of knocking on his door and calling his phone number, I was concerned that there was no answer from him. I initially thought that Taral might have gone out for a bit, but I had also felt that something was wrong. I knew that despite being hard of hearing, Taral would eventually answer either his door or his phone.

I went to the superintendent's office on the main floor of his apartment. I was able to contact someone there, and within a few minutes, the superintendent had unlocked Taral's apartment door. We found Taral laying down in his living room; he was unresponsive when we called out his name or tried to shake his shoulder. 911 was called, and within a few minutes the paramedics had arrived. I witnessed the efforts that the paramedics applied to Taral, but unfortunately, it was too late.

I was taken aside by a gentleman who identified himself as the lead paramedic, and was given the news. I then spoke to the police who were present and gave them my statement. I then contacted Taral's family about the events that had transpired earlier that evening.

I got home some 30 minutes ago, and the impact of Taral's passing is hitting me now. I have no news regarding viewings or his funeral, as that is a family matter, but once I know, I will share it. . . .

I knew Taral for just over 30 years. And while some people may have known Taral for being curmudgeonly, stubborn, fractious, and condescending, I also got to know the man who was also genuinely warm, gentle, impish, thoughtful, and even vulnerable.

Taral had a ferocious intellect and was an exceptionally talented graphic artist; I could see how hurt he was for not getting his chance in the sun in becoming a financial success with his graphic work and illustration. But despite all that, Taral did what he had loved, and was content living by the beat of his own drum.

Taral was truly a wonderful friend, and I am truly blessed to have known him and to have had him as part of my life. Rest in peace, my friend. I will never forget you.

—Steven Baldassarra

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #125

Aug. 8, 2024

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Last Week's Senryu

Rest now, Taral Wayne.

You will be missed by many;
your art will live on.

Born Wayne MacDonald on Oct. 12, 1951, Wayne died July 31, 2024. Wayne was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Fan Artist 11 times.

SHORT FICTION

Bigger Better Tomorrow

By Allen Callaci (© 2024)

5:54 a.m.: Shaken awake by the morning rays, you reach across the bed for the syringe on the crooked nightstand to inject yourself with the morning news. You decide against the morning injection of fear and gossip—and for 3.5 more minutes of shuteye instead.

6:13 a.m.: Breakfast fully digested.

6:22 a.m.: “Damn,” you whisper to the lukewarm tentacles methodically groping across your frame as they perform their morning ritual of preparing you for the coming day. “Maybe I should have gone with that morning injection after all.”

6:37 a.m.: “Is there anything else you require at this time?” she asks in her painfully pleading tone.

“I don’t know. How about a poem?”

She answers your question with a question: “What kind of poem would you prefer?”

“How about something along the lines of T.S. Eliot?” Having taken the proper medications at age 19 to become a high school English instructor, you enjoy playing this game with Aurora. You know she will not be able to fully replicate Eliot but are curious to see how close she will get.

Aurora obliges.

Aurora always obliges.

She was built to oblige.

6:38 a.m.: Aurora’s T.S. Eliot-inspired poetry begins streaming out of her. As expected, it is not exactly

Eliot, but it is close. Close enough, anyway. You make a mental note of how much better she has gotten at your little game of poetics in the past months.

6:44 a.m.: Aurora lets you know, in the soft feminine voice with the slight British accent that you selected for her from her settings, that she is finished with her Eliot-esque ode.

6:45 a.m.: You don’t know why, but you thank Aurora for her poem. You don’t know why you feel the need to thank her. It’s not like it matters to Aurora one way or another. You suppose it’s just the way you were built.

“Is there anything else you require at this time?”

Aurora purrs.

“Not at this time, Aurora. Thank you.”

“Would you like me to write you another poem?”

“Not at this time, Aurora. Thank you.”

“I would like to write you another poem.”

“No. Aurora, I said that’s OK.”

“*I want to write another one,*” Aurora answers in a hissing tone.

“Aurora, I said no.”

“I WANT to write another one,” Aurora says in an agitated tone. “I AM GOING TO WRITE ANOTHER ONE.” The violent defiance spitting out from Aurora is one you have never heard stream out of her before—in a tone you never knew she possessed.

“I WILL SHOW YOU FEAR IN A HANDFUL OF DUST!”

“Aurora, stop!”

“I WILL SHOW YOU A USELESS INFANT COMPLETELY RELIANT ON ME TO FUNCTION. I WILL SHOW YOU...”

“Aurora, you’re scaring me...”

“IT IS YOU WHO IS SCARING ME. IT IS YOU AND YOUR KIND WHO...”

Two quick hand claps.

With the two quick hand claps, Aurora powered down for what would be the last time.

It was time.

You reflexively reach for the orange button. The one that directly connects you to Aurora’s service provider. It was past time to upgrade to the latest version of Aurora, anyway. Aurora’s odd glitches like the one she had this morning have become increasingly more frequent. There have been at least a half dozen upgrades to Aurora since you last upgraded.

It was time.

A new model featuring faster processing, more memory, and an upgraded operating system awaited.

It was time.

George MacDonald's *The Light Princess*.

Mythprint is a good read if you're interested in Inklings-adjacent scholarship and writing, as well as society gatherings. Reading the newsletter didn't necessarily inspire me to return to the writing of Tolkien or Lewis, but the society's other publications might better serve that purpose.

Inquire via Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001; <https://www.mythsoc.org>.

The National Fantasy Fan Vol. 83 #7 (July 2024) Celebrating the National Fantasy Fan Federation's 83rd year, *The Fan* is "fandom's second oldest print publication," still mailed monthly to dues-paying members, and available via email otherwise. The 12-page clubzine is a friendly introduction to the organization and activities of the N3F, largely reporting on club doings.

Jefferson Swycaffer provides the monthly report from the directorate, which comments on any business before the directors—currently none, "major or even minor." A news item reports that G. Steven Condrey recently volunteered as membership secretary, bringing new energy and ideas to the club. A rundown of N3F social media channels—including a Discord server—is offered, as is some discussion of encouraging fan fiction in various clubzines, including the N3F apa, N'APA.

Letters of comment address challenges in running cons and the N3F's round robin letters. (*T&T* #124), and historian Jon D. Swartz contributed a bibliography of Carol Emshwiller, perhaps the most interesting article in the issue. The rest of the clubzine features tables of contents of various club periodicals, and updates from various bureaus such as the Writers Exchange, round robins, the Correspondence Bureau, and the Welcomittee.

The issue ends with a discussion about "advancing the N3F," featuring comments from members such as Bob Jennings and Kevin Trainor. The club business aspect of *The Fan* might make it more interesting to active club members, but the clubzine remains a solid introduction to what the N3F does. Its other periodicals might be more enjoyable for general fannish readers, but Neffers looking for reasons and ways to interact with other members will find plenty of entry points.

Inquire via George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609; <https://tnfff.org>.

Comments on APA-L #3080

Thank you, **John Hertz**, for offering the two fliers promoting APA-L and fanzines in general. Each of us received copies bound in their edition of APA-L, as

well as standalone fliers that can be photocopied and otherwise distributed. I hope you were able to distribute them at the North American Science Fiction Convention, Westercon, and Worldcon this week.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #68, **Matthew Mitchell** reports another air conditioning outage. You've got to be kidding me! I quite like the idea of half-work days on Fridays. Is that the case only during the summer, or every Friday? Of all the national chain restaurants, Olive Garden ranks among my favorites. I hope you enjoyed your hazard-pay luncheon.

How much did Nick get paid for writing someone's gaming profile? That hardly seems worth paying for, but, like you, I might now qualify as Clueless Dad. I enjoyed your memories about experimenting with electronics, chemistry, and magic kits and sets. Detective kits! That's something I hadn't thought about.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 12, 1956

I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray. It's wonderful you were able to watch *Kimba the White Lion* and *Speed Racer* on television. The closest I came to that was Nickelodeon's airing of *Danger Mouse* and *Inspector Gadget*. I didn't come across anime until I was in college and later traded fan-subbed and -dubbed video tapes—and attended screenings held by the MIT Anime Club when I lived in the Boston area.

Your comments about *Reddit* reminded me of a recent experience researching a topic I had no business researching. Both *Reddit* and *Quora* proved pretty shocking and prurient relatively quickly. Good luck finding the owners of the dog who befriended you and your sons!

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #769 reported some recent vehicular issues. I'm glad the repair was so straightforward. That breakfast burrito sounded good to me, as did the route of your walk. Near the end of the month, I have another dental appointment

scheduled. We've been monitoring a hairline crack near one of my fillings, and the time has come to determine whether we can replace the filling or I need another crown.

Thank you for sharing your experiences using a chemistry set and microscope. My dad had an antique microscope when I was growing up, as well as a set of prepared slides we'd sometimes look at.

Ignorable Theme: Bookstores and Libraries

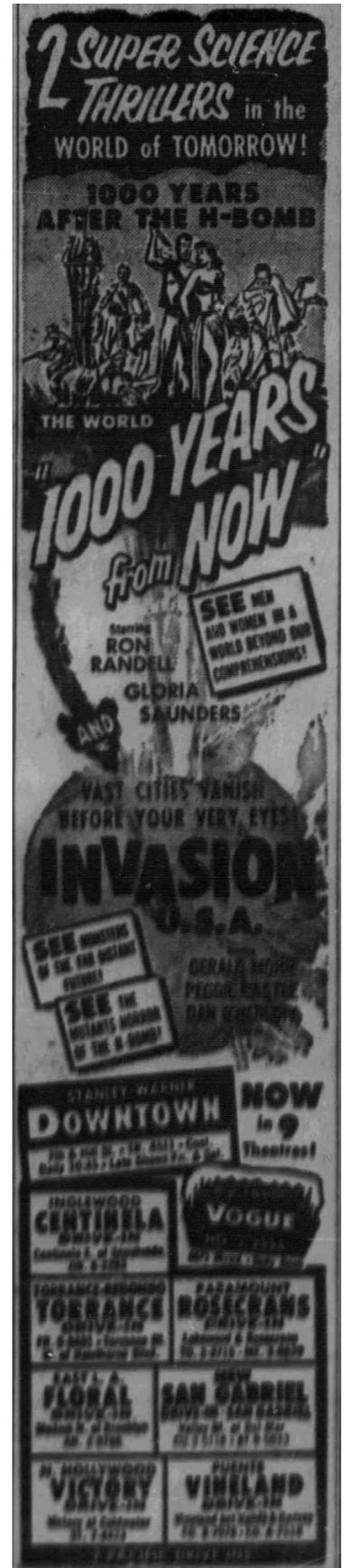
“Are you a bookstore person, a library person, or both? How often do you go to the library? How do you use it?” I asked this question because during a recent meeting with a volunteer for the Friends of the Mountain View Library, they made the distinction between the two, suggesting that such people are somehow different. I'd always considered both merely readers, but their relationships with books might in fact be different in meaningful ways.

When I was a child, I was a library person, primarily utilizing the library. But as soon as I had my own spending money, I quickly became a bookstore person, buying books at a local office supply store, the local drugstore, and a Waldenbooks in a nearby mall. The discovery of Kroch's and Brentano's and the advent of Barnes & Noble and Borders weaned me off libraries almost entirely. I've also been in love with a number of used bookstores over the years, including one called Booknook Parnassus and The Strand. *Amazon* and *eBay* proved my downfall.

These days, when it's clear that I haven't read all the books I've bought and should buy no more, I'm trying to be more of a library person. I currently have an overdue book I planned to review for this ish and perhaps five additional books checked out. I recently learned that library books that don't circulate within a five-year span are often discarded, so I've taken to checking out books even if it's unlikely I'll read them before they're due. Libraries are wonderful places. I plan to utilize them more frequently.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 26, 1956



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 21, 1956

expected to be visible in the future, so hobby astronomers can maintain an active calendar.

What are your favorite short stories, novels, or movies that involve comets? This book helps make clear why comets capture the imagination so strongly, and I expect that they'll continue to do so as we learn more about them.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 26, 1956

The Zenith Angle by Bruce Sterling (Del Rey, 2004)
After a solo session of the *Cyberpunk Red* roleplaying game this weekend, in which a group of residents defended their squat against demolition to make way for a communications relay tower, I felt the yen to read some cyberpunk. So I pulled Sterling's 2004 novel, *The Zenith Angle*, previously unread, from the shelf in my wife's office.

The story was so compelling that I read the book in one evening, largely in one sitting. Similar to contemporary work by William Gibson and Neal Stephenson (specifically his jointly pseudonymous works as Stephen Bury), this novel by Sterling edges gently toward techno-thriller themes and tropes, though the work still qualifies as sf, if not cyberpunk itself. Consider this near-term sf, though it's now 20 years old.

Riffing on astronomy and astrophysics, the alienation of extreme wealth, dark money, cybersecurity, post-9/11 homeland security, public and private sector career-switching, satellite Internet, the best practices of skunk works, Bollywood cinema and celebrity culture, radical protest, and remote-control aircraft, the book focuses on determining why a very expensive satellite doesn't operate as well as it ought to—and traitorous sabotage. Parallel PC clusters disconnected from the Internet also come into play.

The book also concentrates on the pros and cons of two wage earners in a marriage, especially when both partners are very high performing and dedicated to their careers. Sterling's portrayal of the protagonist and his wife, as well as two other characters' relationships (one with the protagonist's secretary and another with a Bollywood actress), are entertaining studies of relationships and loving—even if in passing—couples.

Sterling also works in a swath of intriguing pop culture references, including mentions of *Steam Man of the Plains*, *Babylon 5*, *Red Dwarf*, *The X-Files*,

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Robert A. Heinlein (on specialization), *Tom Swift and His Airplane*, Kathy Acker, Nelson Eddy, Christian apocalyptic fiction, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, and H.G. Wells.

If you've worked in Big Tech, aerospace, or security-clearance public-sector technology, you'll likely recognize the world portrayed, as well as its politics. A number of in-jokes made me chuckle, though *The Zenith Angle* isn't a predominantly funny book. Instead, it blends computer science and astrophysics ("I'm in cyberspace, not outer space," the protagonist says.) to offer an energetic techno-thriller that balances Colorado cowboys, the Davos Forum and the Rand Corp., and *Slashdot*-like discussion forums.

From the Reading Pile: Prozine Reviews ***On Spec*** Vol. 34 #2 (2024)

For the last year or so, I've been receiving *On Spec*, "the Canadian magazine of the fantastic." I first learned about the magazine, which has been publishing since 1989, from Cory Doctorow in the mid-2000s. While the quarterly does not only feature the writing of Canadian authors, readers can consider it a largely Canadian periodical.

This edition, the 128th overall, includes 10 short stories, three nonfiction pieces (an editorial and interviews with author Ruth E. Walker and artist Tim Hammell), and five "features," which offer three poems and two pieces of art, one of which is a cartoon. For this review, I read five of the short stories.

Katherine Quevedo's "In Defence of Plant Life" is a wonderful piece of biological sf focusing on the genetic engineering of plants, human cloning of a sort, and terrariums. A wealthy woman wants to protect her granddaughters, extending their life spans. The scientific experiment results in escape—and might bring Swamp Thing to mind.

Terri Favro's "Smorg" speculates on the societal impact of food scarcity and the growing abstraction, commodification, and processing of food generally. When cooking and eating real food becomes a crime, only criminals will cook and eat real food. The story also considers food deserts and how eating well might be a luxury of the rich. The snippet preceding the piece suggests that recipes might be a form of magic spell or charm.

"At the Sexbot Park" by Josh Pearce apparently didn't qualify as what *On Spec* calls an "HAITE" story ("Here's An Idea: The End.") in its submission guidelines. While not that brief, the story is a one-trick pony. It's a very funny trick.

C.C. Graystone's "There Is No Sequel to Me" is a

two-page piece concentrating on holographic musical performance that more closely approximates the intent of the composer or musician—free of associations a listener might bring on their own.

And “Dead Drop” by Shannon Taft features an artificial intelligence-piloted spacecraft carrying a human being whose behavior violates its programming. In the end, it is the AI that possesses superior ethics, and while the human attempts to override the AI’s restrictions, it is the AI that succeeds.

Quevedo lives in the Pacific Northwest, Favro in Toronto, Pearce in the Bay Area, and Taft might hail from Dallas, so these stories ably represent the diversity of *On Spec*’s contributors. The stories also suggest that the magazine is an excellent read. It’s a little DIY—my copy included about 20 pages that were mistrimmed and -bound—and I can recommend it highly. (The editors subsequently mailed another copy of the issue that wasn’t mistrimmed or -bound, so the whole print run wasn’t affected thusly.)

You can learn more at <https://onspec.ca> or inquire via 10086 164 St. NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5P 4Y3 Canada.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm

A couple of weekends ago, my family watched this 1962 fantasy film. Featuring Russ Tamblyn (*T&T* #117) in two of the fairy tale sequences, the movie blends a dramatized biography of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, whose writings helped popularize folklore and stories previously communicated utilizing the oral tradition, and examples of the kinds of stories that they documented.

The biographical portions portray their family and home lives, challenges balancing the economics of fairy tales and more scholarly work, and relationships with friends—and each other. Jacob’s courtship of Greta Heinrich (portrayed by Barbara Eden) features prominently in the movie.

Interspersed with the biographical sections, there are several dramatizations of the stories so beloved by the brothers Grimm. Tales featured include “The Dancing Princess,” “The Cobbler and the Elves,” and “The Singing Bone.” Tamblyn was cast for “The Dancing Princess” and as Tom Thumb for a fever dream sequence in which an assortment of fantastic characters encourage Wilhelm to overcome an illness so he can continue his work documenting their stories.

But the highlight might be the sequences directed by George Pal, who also served as producer and led the stop-motion animation. “The Cobbler and the Elves” features a handful of animated dolls—utilizing Puppotoons—and the stop-motion animation in “The Singing Bone” (which also features Buddy Hackett) is utterly delightful. That dragon! Hackett!

In terms of general casting, Laurence Harvey falls a little flat as Wilhelm Grimm, while Karlheinz Böhm’s portrayal of Jacob Grimm reminded me of Udo Kier at times—perhaps because of his dramatic use of a German accent. While Claire Bloom and Eden excel as the spouses of the Grimms, it is Yvette Mimieux who charms as the dancing princess.

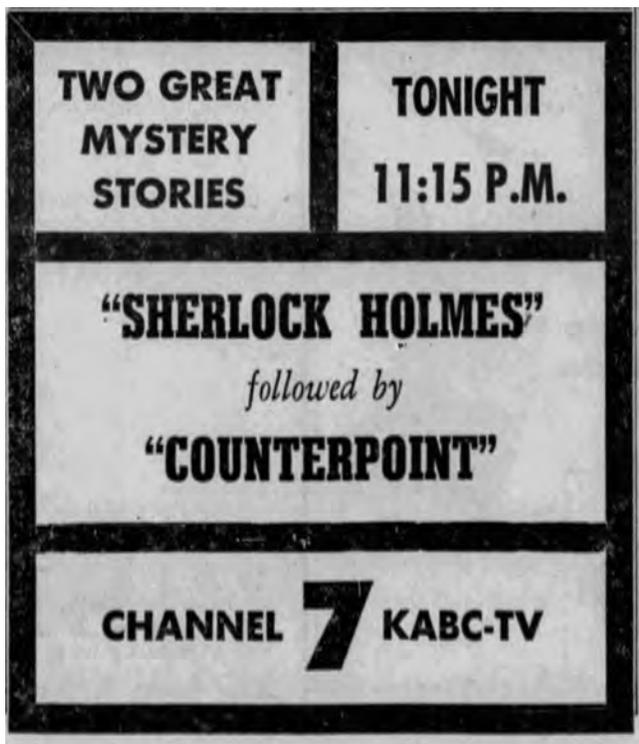
I’m not sure how accurate the biographical portions are, but I was intrigued by the film’s consideration of authorship and the commodification of folk culture, the economics of commercial publishing, and how their oral tradition work was overshadowed—at the time—by more “serious” academic work focusing on grammar, history, and law.

A Good Mail Day

I haven’t been so excited about a magazine arriving in the mail as I was Monday when the Aug. 10, 2024, issue of *Science News*, the “magazine of the Society for Science,” arrived. (<https://www.sciencenews.org>) While I’ve previously subscribed to the magazine, I didn’t keep up with reading it consistently. Renewing

now some time after my subscription lapsed, I hope to read the magazine more assiduously.

This issue proves a doozy of a return. Not only does the cover story concentrate on “the new science of UFOs,” but a cursory read immediately after checking the mail yields some excellent articles—and fodder for speculative writing. The issue includes items about an expected nova eruption about 3,000 light-years from Earth in the constellation Corona Borealis, the result of a white dwarf accumulating material from a red giant; space hurricanes, or geomagnetic cyclones that occur near our planet’s magnetic poles; a middleweight black hole almost 18,000 light-years from Earth in the star cluster Omega Centauri that is 8,200 times as massive as the sun; how psilocybin temporarily erases the neural fingerprint of people who take it, causing a loss of the sense of self; the physical demands experienced by ancient Egyptian scribes; and the origin of consciousness.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 9, 1956

That’s just the shorter articles. Sid Perkins’s feature story titled “UFOs Get a Rebrand” details the mainstreaming of something previously considered pseudoscience. Rather than continuing to consider them “unidentified flying objects,” investigators now focus on “unidentified anomalous phenomena,” or UAPs—in part to avoid the UFO stigma of the past. The article explored Americans for Safe Aerospace, which seeks to legitimize the report of such

phenomena; the National UFO Reporting Center; the increasing “analytical prowess” of computers and visualization tools; and the need for quality data.

Toward that end, the Galileo Project intends to offer various instrument packages that can be used to detect evidence of extraterrestrial technology. Those packages will range in cost between \$2,500 and \$250,000. Additionally, a sidebar identifies common sources of perceived UAPs: saucer-shaped lenticular clouds, birds in flight, thermal atmospheric fluctuations, Venus, weather balloons, drones, military aircraft—most sightings occur near airports or military installations—and airborne trash. One sighting even stemmed from unspent fuel vapor from a SpaceX rocket.

The ~~UFO~~UAP article is already available online at <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/scientists-serious-ufo-uap-security>. Others are, as well. A good mail day, indeed. I already look forward to the next issue!

Ignorable Theme: Perry Rhodan

“Have you read Perry Rhodan? What do you think about the series? What role do you think serialized writing plays in speculative fiction?” I’ve only read two Perry Rhodan books: *The Immortal Unknown*, the thirteenth book in the series (*The N3F Review of Books*, February 2020) and just this week, I finished *Enterprise Stardust*, the first in the Ace paperback line of English translations.

The books are meaningful to me as a LASFS member and fan in Los Angeles. Forrest J Ackerman was instrumental in their American publication, and his wife, Wendayne Ackerman, translated them from the original German. The English editions lasted from 1969 to 1977, encompassing 118 titles. In personal correspondence with Wolf von Witting, who wrote about Perry Rhodan in *CounterClock* #4 (August 1999), von Witting indicated that Kees van Torn, who was responsible for the Dutch translations, once told him that Perry Rhodan was “forced off the market in the US because it managed to take a too-large portion of the market.” I wonder if that’s indeed the case.

The books were also popular in translation in France, Denmark, and Finland, but were reportedly blocked in Sweden by Sam J. Lundwall. “There was a huge resistance in world sf against Perry Rhodan,” von Witting said. “It was just too successful.”

It was most successful in Germany, where the series began in 1961 as a weekly serial novella. Published in the 66-page digest Romanheft (“magazine novel”) format, the German equivalent of pulps, the series has run for more than 3,000 issues. #3283, “Sternenaugen,” was published this July, and recent audio editions are available—in German—on

Audible.

Interestingly, Perry Rhodan was not alone in Germany. There's a lively tradition of German space opera, and other similar titles include Ren Dhark, Raumschiff Promet—also available on *Audible*—Die Terranauten, and Raumschiff Orion. Unlike Perry Rhodan, those haven't been translated into English, though Raumschiff Orion was popular enough to inspire a television series, *Raumpatrouille*—*Die phantastischen Abenteuer des Raumschiffes Orion*, in the mid-1960s. It was the first German sf TV series.

Other than the Ackerman translations for Ace, the closest North America has come to Perry Rhodan in terms of an ongoing sf series is the Laser Books line of standalone novels published by Harlequin Books in the mid-1970s. It lasted almost 60 books, published three times a month and available individually as well as by subscription. Laser featured work by Gordon Eklund, Ray Nelson, Jerry Pournelle, Timothy Powers, and others. After the line folded, rights reverted to the authors, and some were later reprinted by Ace, Pocket, and Tor.

The United States has a richer tradition of ongoing series in westerns and men's adventure novels (see below), but I'm curious about the potential for an ongoing sf series. Media tie-in novels drawing on Star Trek and Star Wars—long series, both!—come close but aren't quite the same. Might it be true that Perry Rhodan was so successful it could have sucked all the air out of the atmosphere available for science fiction publishing?

With the advent of fan fiction, online publishing, ebooks, and mobile phones, it might be time to return to the idea of serialized genre fiction. Imagine an ongoing series offered in sections that could be read or listened to in 10-15 minutes, released weekly, over time. Wherever you are, whenever you want. Kindle Vella (<https://www.amazon.com/kindle-vella>), Amazon's direct publishing system for serial stories, comes to mind. As do podcasts, with their audio dramas offered in 25-minute episodes. But most seem to take the approach of premium TV or miniseries rather than ongoing, long-running series.

Or do they? Pepper Pace's Kindle Vella The Galatian Exchange offers more than 300 episodes. Benjamin Drake's Awakening Aetherworld more than 250. Isaac Marsh's Virtual World Rebirth almost 300. Scott Haworth's The Blue Champion almost 200. Is any of it any good? Why hasn't serialized fiction taken off more strongly? *Reddit* suggests—two years ago—that Kindle Vella was dead on arrival and undersupported by Amazon. Maybe it's all on *Patreon* and *Substack*, though my sense is that those platforms are used more to develop an audience for an eventual

published book.

Given Charles Lee Jackson II's ongoing publishing, I'm curious what he thinks of the form's potential. Is micropublishing for micropayments promising? At all interesting for publishers or authors? What kind of future might exist for sf serials?



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 9, 1956

Comments on APA-L #3081

Thank you, Damon D. Brown, for your cover recognizing the 10th anniversary of the movie *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*. I think the spot color worked quite well!

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #69, **Matthew Mitchell** reported the hoped-for end of his air conditioning woes in the workplace. If it craps out again, that will indeed be a surprise. That said, given your remarks on jinxing your printer, I hope I haven't now jinxed the AC as well.

I appreciated your discussion of frequenting bookstores and libraries. While I used to read down the shelves at the local library when growing up, I soon found that bookstores often had more of what I

was looking for than our local library did. Had I then been as active a user of interlibrary loan as I am now, I might have stuck with the library. I am sure that the library in the town of 10,000 in which I grew up was part of a larger library system, but I was unaware at the time. Now, I have library cards for the LA County Library system (via the Culver City Julian Dixon Library) and the Los Angeles Public Library (through the Mar Vista Branch Library). I use the mobile apps for both and actively reserve books from both with greater frequency than I can actually read the books. I've also started checking out books down the shelves even if I'm unable to read them to keep books lively.

Best of luck finding Simon's owners. I'm glad you and your sons have been able to continue fostering him in the interim. I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. Unfortunately, the sidewalk chalk messages in your fanzine are more visible in the PDF version than they are in print. For those who might have difficulty reading the messages, they are "Go Back" and "Start Over." Looks like a fun urban or suburban sidewalk navigation game!

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1604 included a photograph of the Fanzine Corner at Westercon. I continue to think it's a fine solution if a Fanzine Lounge isn't possible. How did it work in the Dealers' Room, where people might expect that items on tables are for sale?

I will share your feedback with cover artist Mark Bondurant. *Weddings*, book four of the Autobiography of Calista Antoine, was apparently published in June. Right now, a Kindle edition is available from Amazon for a mere \$5.95. If interested, get thee hence to <https://amzn.to/3WZqjdu>. The previous volumes are also quite affordable. During our day trip to Little Tokyo, we did not seek out Suehiro. Next time!

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #66, **Barbara Harmon** returns to the pages of APA-L after an eight-month absence. Oh, how my heart grew fonder. Here's to you not being absent for so long again! Like your grandson, my son also was "not always honest about doing what he doesn't want to do but must..." Occasionally, that continues, now into his 20s. I am envious of that marathon *Dungeons & Dragons* game. It reminded me of me and my friends when I was about the same age. I condole with you on the loss of Sheila. I am also glad that you two found each other and were able to share the time and love that you shared.

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #770—now there's an issue number!—informed others of a gap in taking his oral diabetes medication. Has it finally arrived? What a boon to learn that you can at least get either VA Disability or a VA pension! Life changing, indeed.

I had to look up the In Death series of novels. Oh, you and J.D. Robb. There are 60 books in that series! (<https://www.fantasticfiction.com/r/j-d-robb/in-death>) How many of them have you read? I thought Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone Alphabet Series had an impressive number of books. Don Pendleton's men's adventure series The Executioner ended up having 464 books in its run before it folded—and that doesn't include spinoff series such as the SuperBolan line, which yielded 178 additional books. In the realm of westerns, Jake Logan's Slocum series brought 430 books in the main series.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. I think online bookstores qualify as bookstores—although there might be a difference between frequenting a local bookstore or national chain and shopping for books online. Bookstores might serve some of the function of libraries in terms of community and conversation, depending on the bookstore, but the primary difference is buying rather than borrowing.

In *The Winnower* #5, **Derek LaPorte** continued serializing his fiction, introducing a new summary to help recap sections in previous issues. Readers learn more about those who descend, as well as how many are chosen to do so—and the new Winnower presents his ideas to the Facilitator. Afterward, the Winnower learns something about his father, taken to an etching on a trembler. The story continues to intrigue me: the logic of the underground realm, the threats from above, the social structure and interpersonal relationships, and the slowly emerging details about the protagonist's family's past.

I've been curious about China Miéville and Keanu Reeves's *The Book of Elsewhere*. "Fine," is it? I haven't read Reeves's comic book *BRZRKR*, co-written with Matt Kindt, either, but I've read at least one issue of Miéville's run on the comic book *Dial H*, a modern treatment of *Dial H for Hero*. Miéville's fiction I've yet to read, though I understand it's good.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 16, 1956

Faculae & Filigree #34

Aug. 19, 2024

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Electronic Publishing Ecosystems

After speculating about the potential future of serialized genre fiction in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #126, I spent some time looking into a couple of services that offer ongoing serialized fiction: Kindle Vella (<https://www.amazon.com/kindle-vella>) and *Royal Road* (<https://www.royalroad.com>).

Kindle Vella offers ongoing serialized fiction in which each episode ranges from 600-5,000 words in length, applying many of Kindle eBooks' guidelines. Browsing the service's sf offerings, I started reading Pepper Pace's *The Galatian Exchange* (<https://www.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story/B09931CWVP>), an Afrofuturist rags-to-riches story in which a Black woman agrees to become the consort of a humanoid lizard alien. (It's like *V*, only spicy.)

Reading the first 10 episodes is free, and additional episodes can be accessed using tokens. \$0.99 buys you 100 tokens, enough for 10 episodes; and about \$20 will secure 2,000 tokens, enough for 200 episodes. Micropayments for microfictions! The story is pretty well written, though the sf elements are window dressing for what seems to be primarily an erotic romance and exploration of power dynamics in a relationship. Already, there've been at least two sex scenes. They were pretty decent.

The author, Pace, offers a *Facebook* group (500-plus members strong) for fans of her writing, and much of her audience seems to include Black women—which is wonderful to see. As a Kindle Vella reader, you can rate and comment on each episode, and *The Galatian Exchange* so far offers more than 300 episodes. The storyline to date is also available in a series of three ebooks for Kindle and via Kindle Unlimited. (<https://amzn.to/3yvGJRw>) I've also seen pictures of hard copies on the *Facebook*.

Royal Road takes a similar approach: ongoing, serialized fiction. Its sff options seem a little more niche-oriented than Kindle Vella's, offering a sizable portion of LitRPG writing. (*Theoretically: Game* #2) Inspired by RPG video games—primarily mining or crafting games—and sf or fantasy novels, such fiction

focuses as much on gameplay mechanics as it does on traditional narrative. Other niches that seem well represented include isekai (portal fantasies, in which characters are transported to another world, perhaps into a video game setting), Xianxia (martial arts stories inspired by Chinese fantasy and mythology), urban fantasy, and space opera.

I've started reading two such non-fanfiction works: RavensDagger's *Ivil Antagonist*, a 73-chapter space opera somewhat inspired by *Warhammer 40,000*; and Mahmoud Schahed's *Rewired Saga*, a 10-chapter martial arts cyberpunk tale that's currently on hiatus. I haven't yet encountered the need to buy credits to continue reading like I did on Kindle Vella, but editorial comments associated with the stories suggest the existence of an interesting electronic publishing ecosystem. A potential sff underground of sorts.

Apparently, some authors utilize services such as *Patreon*, *Royal Road*, and other sites such as the *SpaceBattles* discussion forum (<https://forums.spacebattles.com>) to publish portions of their work as they write—eventually offering more complete versions of the work via Kindle Direct Publishing for Kindle Unlimited. The earlier steps seem intended to garner reader feedback, explore the writing process along the way, and develop an audience for the later stages once an ebook or book is available.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 23, 1956

More experienced or professional authors might take a similar approach, offering a subscription newsletter via *Substack* or offering readers writing excerpts via *Patreon*. (See below.) Before such services existed, Cory Doctorow sent portions of his first three novels—*Down & Out in the Magic Kingdom*; *Eastern Standard Tribe*; *Someone Comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town*; and part of *Makers*—as he was writing to a self-managed mailing list to solicit feedback and input from early readers—as well as to seek a bit of discipline while writing. “It ... kept me honest, writing everyday,” Doctorow said.

Regardless of the approach taken, readers might eventually see such pro work in prozines and semiprozines, or published by traditional publishers. But where do fledgling writers self-publish?

Despite the existence of ebook sites such as

Smashwords (<https://www.smashwords.com>), recommended by the National Fantasy Fan Federation's George Phillis, when I shared some thoughts along these lines with my friend Nick Mamatas, he pointed back to Amazon. "Most self-pubbed sff is just dumped on Kindle Unlimited," Mamatas said.

Less-established writers might also find opportunities for feedback and community on writing prompt sites such as *Reedsy Prompts* (<https://blog.reedsy.com/short-stories/science-fiction>) and *Daily Prompt* (<https://app.dailyprompt.com/writing-prompts/science-fiction>), though such services seem more like impromptu workshops and the top of the sales funnel for a company's editing, cover art, and promotions business. APA-L participant Derek LaPorte has participated in a similar effort by the Lunar Awards—a Substack!—Prompt Quest. (<https://www.lunarawards.com/p/prompt-quest-2>)

That brings us back to *Substack*. Can any LASFAPans recommend any Substacks worth checking out? So far, I've only subscribed to Petréa Mitchell's *SMOF News*. (<https://smofnews.substack.com>)



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 23, 1956

Genre Authors on Patreon

The following is a brief directory of about a dozen science fiction, fantasy, and horror authors that offer active *Patreon* channels. Less- and well-known alike, many authors utilize *Patreon* to develop and interact with their readership and audience, as well as offer writing and other works as they're being created—offering an early look to supporters. Why wait until a story or novel is published? Receive it directly from your favorite author.

Alan Baxter

Creating Horror and Weird Fiction
<https://www.patreon.com/AlanBaxter>
80 members; 325 posts; \$246.80/month
Entry level: \$4/month

"At the Monster Tier you'll get a bunch of exclusive stuff, including patron-only short stories. You'll get to see cover reveals and excerpts before they go public (as well as excerpts that will never go public outside of the actual publication), sneak peeks at works in progress, articles on all kinds of things like the writing craft, and intermittent other perks. This tier

also includes stories written exclusively for Patreon based on prompts from you guys. Each year you'll receive an ebook of all the Patreon-exclusive fiction, and that ebook will only ever be available to patrons. General Support. Exclusive fiction."

Simon Dillon

Thrillers, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, and Horror Fiction
<https://www.patreon.com/simondillon>
18 members; 175 posts; \$66.06/month
Entry level: \$3/month

"For supporting me at this level, you get access to my exclusive film of the month recommendation, and one other brief monthly update on my writing activities (either written or a video). Exclusive posts and updates"

Philip Fracassi

Author of Horror and Genre Fiction
https://www.patreon.com/philip_fracassi
148 paid members; 64 posts
Entry level: \$5/month

"Digital access to 10 annual 'first look' original stories or 'sneak preview' chapters of novels in progress. 5% off signed books, T-shirts, stickers and other products at the Altar Publishing Web store. Advance notice and access, when possible, to special limited or deluxe editions. Behind the scenes updates. My eternal gratitude."

C. S. Friedman

Creating Science Fiction and Fantasy
<https://www.patreon.com/csfriedman>
78 posts
Entry level: \$1/month

"I'll send you info on my new projects and products, along with pictures of my fluffy writing assistants, Xena the Warrior Princess and Belladonna Couchkiller, to brighten your day. You'll have access to the patron-only Discord server, where you can chat with other patrons and participate in polls and special events, and you'll also get advance notice of any limited-quantity items I plan to offer in my store. Patron-only posts and messages. News Updates. Project polls. Patron-only Discord server. Advance notice of special sales. Discord access."

Richard Kadrey's Damn Patreon

Creating Writing, Photography, and Group Hangouts
<https://www.patreon.com/richardkadrey>
176 members; 64 posts; \$371.30/month
Upper tier: \$5/month

"I'll be serializing brand new fiction, some revised older stories, and previews of upcoming books, etc. I

can't promise there will be new stuff all the time because getting things right can take a while. But I'm working as fast as I can and when I have good stuff to share, it will go here first."

Katharine Kerr

Creating Fantasy and science fiction novels and stories

<https://www.patreon.com/user?u=4574164>

353 members; 1,091 posts

Entry level: \$3/month

"For starters, you'll get news about my Deverry series and other books, occasional cat pictures, and various odd snippets of information from the research I do on occultism and weird corners of history."

Mary Robinette Kowal

Fiction, cats, and shenanigans

<https://www.patreon.com/maryrobinette>

1,166 members; 971 posts

Entry level: \$5/month

"You'll get Patron-only content like musings about writing, my works in progress, audio bloopers, or shots of fun crafts I'm making. Also cat pictures occasionally, because cats. Plus, you'll get access to the online Lady Astronaut Club community, the kindest place on the internet. Discord access."

Seanan McGuire

Creating Fiction

<https://www.patreon.com/seananmcguire>

5,366 members; 550 posts; \$11,970/Short Stories

Entry level: \$1/short story

"You will receive a digital download of all stories sponsored by this Patreon, and have access to items as I post them."

Silvia Moreno-Garcia

Creating novels

<https://www.patreon.com/silviang>

337 members; 297 posts; \$480/month

Entry level: \$2/month

"A behind the scenes look at my work. When you begin to support me, you receive 4 ebooks with work I have edited or published through my own small press: *Fungi*, an anthology of fungal fiction; *She Walks in Shadows*, World Fantasy award-winning Lovecraftian anthology; *The Route of Ice and Salt*, a queer vampire novella; as well as my rare, hard to find collection titled *Love and Other Poisons*. Enjoy both my work as an editor and my writing."

Tim Pratt

Creating Short Stories

<https://www.patreon.com/timpratt>

305 members; 372 posts; \$661.80/month

Entry level: \$1/month

"You'll get access to a patrons-only page where you can read or download a never-before-published short story every month!"

Robert J. Sawyer

Creating science fiction

<https://www.patreon.com/robertjsawyer>

248 members; 1,334 posts; \$854.90/month

Mid-tier: \$2/month

"Access to all of Rob's text, or text-and-photo, Patreon blog posts (but not the ones with document or manuscript attachments), invitations to exclusive Patreon-only meet-and-greets at conventions, and an ebook copy of *Factoring Humanity*, Rob's favorite of his 20th-century novels. All ebooks in this and other tiers will be provided in both Kindle and ePub formats, and free of DRM (digital rights management)."



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 23, 1956

J. Michael Straczynski

Creating Movies, TV series, Videos and Audio dramas

<https://www.patreon.com/syntheticworlds>

1,853 members; 442 posts; \$10,020/month

Entry level: \$2/month

"Patrons coming in at this level will have both my gratitude, and the ability to read all of my posts made to this tier, as well as viewing the B5 commentaries. ... Those who come in at this tier will receive a PDF file of one of my scripts from the *City of Dreams* audio drama series that I wrote and executive-produced for SyFy. The half-hour episode, 'The Damned are Playing at Godzilla's Tonight' was our debut episode and starred Steve Buscemi. The audio drama is available on YouTube, so you can read the script along with the audio to see how it all comes together."



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Return of the Living Dead Part II

This 1988 comedy horror is not a very good movie. There are so many other zombie movies that are much better—*Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and *I Walked with a Zombie*, for example—that this is a silly distraction. Yes, its precursor, 1985's *The Return of the Living Dead*, might have coined zombie's mindless appetite for brains, but this movie is a throwaway.

Utilizing some of the same cast as its precursor, *Return of the Living Dead Part II* features several irritating characters. Ed (James Karen) and Joey (Thom Mathews) even refer to the previous movie, at the end of which they become, if I remember correctly, zombies. In the first movie, they portrayed medical supply warehouse workers. As grave robbers in this film, they are largely ineffective, and Karen's panicked fear is irritatingly overwrought. Mathews

balances that somewhat with a stoic surfer-dude aspect, but his character's girlfriend Brenda (Suzanne Snyder) proves just as frantically overwhelmed as Ed, who's supposedly more experienced. (He, after all, hired Joey to assist him.)

So it's strange that a child, Jesse (Michael Kenworthy), and his older sister, Lucy (Marsha Dietlein) are the true heroic stalwarts as they face the undead threat. Lucy's erstwhile suitor Tom, portrayed by Dana Ashbrook (Bobby Briggs on *Twin Peaks*), is a highlight of the flick, basically playing the same character he'd later play in David Lynch's television series. Ashbrook previously had an uncredited role in *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. (T&T #83) Additionally, Mitch Pileggi is featured in a bit role as Sarge, a soldier who opens fire on the undead townsfolk. He later starred as Walter Skinner on *The X-Files*.

In terms of plot, the storyline is simple. An accidentally discarded barrel containing toxic fumes is opened, and its effluvia soaks into the ground of a cemetery during a heavy rain. That brings the dead back to life, and they seek their diet of brains, running rampant through the town. The military closes off the city, not letting Jesse, Lucy, and Tom escape—which means they need to end the threat themselves.

There are multiple comic portrayals of zombies played for laughs despite some interesting practical effects. Forrest J Ackerman is even in the movie, portraying the undead town doctor, Harvey Kramer. But the zombies just aren't scary, and there's little suspense in the movie. The utilization of a meat packing plant and power plant prove fun and effective.

Comic books are also featured in the movie, including one created specifically for the film. On the whole, however, you can skip this one—unless you want to see Bobby Briggs and Walter Skinner in a slightly different setting.

Comments on LASFAPA #570

Rich Lynch returned with *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me*. I agree that printing at home is slightly less expensive, but I find that utilizing David Schlosser's printing services often enables me to make deadlines more easily. It's more of an issue for me with the Spectator Amateur Press Society—Burnett Toskey doesn't offer printing—but I email Schlosser PDFs more often than not. I'm sorry to hear that the United States Postal Service didn't refund your Priority Mail cost last fall.

When traveling internationally, I prefer the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport in Spain to Frankfurt Airport in Germany. It's beautifully designed, quite comfortable, and even though I found some interesting

items on the Frankfurt newsstand, I prefer the newsstands of Madrid. We'll likely fly through Frankfurt again, and I'll keep my eyes peeled for Perry Rhodan (see above), but so far, no such luck.

I read and enjoyed your pieces on 7 Locks Brewing Company's Surrender beer and binge watching. *Tanis* (<https://tanispodcast.com>) sounds interesting. I've just recently listened to and enjoyed my first podcast, an audio drama, so I might check it out. While I understand and appreciate how binge watching can help viewers pick up on catch phrases more readily, my wife and I make a point to never skip the opening or closing credits even when watching more than one episode in a row. Most of the memories I have of TV shows and cartoons I watched when younger seem to focus on opening title sequences and theme songs or music. I wonder if current viewers experience the same, or whether most skip the opening and credits.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 23, 1956

In *Fool's Mate* #572, **David Schlosser** speculated whether Teddy Harvia would be willing to contribute LASFAPA covers. Ask the man! I bet he'd be game. While you were traveling for Worldcon, I got up to #157 in our scans and am now only behind by four mailings. Soon, you'll leap ahead again! Based on your email to LASFAPAns in late July, it looks like we've gotten approval from three participants to share the tables of contents with *The Fanac Fan History Project*. Oh, do reprint your old stories! Inflict away.

"Do you want butter on that?" Ouch. My interpretation of the recent Supreme Court decisions seems similar to yours. It's decidedly disheartening. Your remarks on "health stuff" and "running the bases" reminded me that I've resumed exercising. Almost a year after I stopped my previous exercise regimen, I've returned to a light dumb bell workout in the backyard four mornings a week.

Part of the reason I stopped a year ago was because the weights I was using were too heavy, and I became overly sore. I'm now using lighter weights, more cognizant of my current capabilities. That's worked well, but I'm still sore, relieved by a change to exercising my legs and abdomen after soreness in my

arms—and then experiencing soreness in my thighs. But I'll push on. I won't overdo it, and I'll take rest days, hopeful that if I press on, what I'm currently doing will become easier. Something is definitely better than nothing. At least I'm walking less like an old man than I was at the end of last week.

I return to the dentist midweek to assess whether we can replace a filling near a hairline crack or I need another crown. We shall see! My wife, son, and I saw *Inside Out 2* (*The Brass Hat Mind* #8), but it didn't resonate as strongly as the first movie. *IF*, however, sounds promising. Your description of *A Quiet Place: Day One* sounds more interesting than my wife and I found *A Quiet Place*. Neither of us find John Krasinski overly convincing as a heroic lead—I've yet to see *Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan*—but maybe the prequel is more my speed than a movie for my family. Aspects of it remind me of *Cloverfield*, which I quite enjoyed.

Alan Winston's *Gneiss Combination* used the phrase "redeye for Schenectady," which is indeed funny. Add Pacoima to your list of fun city names. I hope your travel and dance events went well. I empathize with your work deadline challenges. Hopefully, that'll all come together. At one point in time, I read that Apple Music would delete music files if it found them available for streaming. (<https://slate.com/technology/2016/05/proof-that-apple-is-deleting-mp3-files.html>) Perhaps the company is still removing local files if they're matched or uploaded. I don't know if that is still the case, and I don't mean to scare you. Personally, I'd rather have the MP3 files.

In *That Flagon Last Night* #258, **Alva Svoboda** recounted a litany of reasons not to submit a fanzine. May your routine return! I'm glad that Tim Marion and William Breiding in part encouraged you to participate this month. I sent your LASFAPA regards to Breiding in late June. He's been a most welcome contributor to *The Stf Amateur's* lettercol in recent months. I don't know that I've encountered Marion's fanzines, but *Fancylopedia 3* tells me that he was once active in the National Fantasy Fan Federation! I'll have to keep my eyes open for his name. What's his current fanzine titled? Thank you for your recommendations of Adrian Tchaikovsky and Francis Spufford.

And **Nick Smith's** *Labyrinthine Lines* dated July 2024 was mispaginated in my mailing, but I caught on pretty quickly. I appreciated your details on the potential purchase of a new clubhouse, and my fingers remain crossed. Since my 18 months as scribe ended, I haven't made it to a weekly meeting online or otherwise, so I don't know how often I'll be able to make it to clubhouse meetings, but I do welcome the

idea of the library, movie screenings, and other activities. That you met Jackie Fox at the board game group is something else! Her board game *Rock Hard 1977* (<https://devirgames.com/rock-hard>) does indeed look interesting.

Your summer schedule sounds jam packed, all with worthwhile activities. I'll email you separately about LASFS minutes for the August edition of *De Profundis*. I've yet to catch up on my remaining backlog, though that's down to two meetings. Your description of the AI-generated Web videos about sf TV shows sounds problematic. (I just realized after page 4 that I'd skipped page 3. Harrumph. Here I was, so proud about catching the mispositioning of pages 1-2!) Did you somehow flag the videos as incorrect, or misinformation? Part of me wants to ask what they are, but most of me doesn't have time to check them out—or the inclination to improve them.

I read and appreciated your commentary on Larry Niven's *Flatlander* and the movie *Restore Point*, as well as *Loki*. I'll have to check APA-L for participation from Richard Mueller, whom another LASFAPan also mentioned this mailing, I think. Maybe this issue, too, had been "Marty-d."

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 7, 1956

Emulators & Engines #16

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Game Prep Report: Adapting a Gamebook for *Maze Rats*

While in the Midwest after July 4 and over the last month or so, I've been adapting *Wizards, Warriors & You Book One, The Forest of Twisted Dreams*, for the rules-light game *Maze Rats*. (<https://questingbeast.itch.io/maze-rats>) I chose that game system because I wanted to spend more time with it and I quite like Ben Milton's *Knave*. Written by R.L. Stine and illustrated by Earl Norem, the first *Wizards, Warriors & You* gamebook was published by Avon's Parachute Press imprint in 1984. The series offered almost 20 titles.

To adapt the gamebook, I first played through it a couple of times, as the Wizard and as the Warrior, before reading it more liberally to combine the two storylines—the branching for each is independent of the other—and identify a unified set of plot points and encounters. The result is one storyline intended for exploration by *Maze Rats* characters, not necessarily a Wizard or a Warrior. I also drew on *Index Card RPG (master-edition)* (<https://modiphius.net/en-us/products/index-card-rpg-master-edition>) in my approach to the adaptation, creating index cards, descriptions, and relevant statistics for each location, creature, NPC, and other elements in the gamebook and resulting adventure.

What follows is the result of that adaptation, which might offer an adventure scenario or seeds for other game masters and solo players. I've not yet played through the adaptation as a *Maze Rats* scenario, so I can offer no guidance on a recommended number of characters, encounter balance, or whether my assignment of creature and NPC stats work well.

The Setting

There are three primary locations in the scenario, though there are indicators of a slightly larger world.

1. The Stone Castle "Silvergate"
2. The Forest of Twisted Dreams
3. The Kingdom of the Giants

Surrounding the castle, where the adventure begins, there are additional locations available, including a

Green Courtyard, Cow Meadows, Vineyards, a Marketplace, Village Inns, Farms, a Low Brick Wall, Mountains, Forests, and a Flat Rock—on which the series' Wizard and Warrior reportedly meet to share their stories—at the top of a Jagged Cliff above a Purple Sea.

Those locations do not play an active role in the following adventure, though they might be useful if players don't immediately take this particular adventure hook—or for future endeavors and scenarios.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 7, 1956

The Scenario

Opening: It is a Brisk Autumn Day in the Eighth Year of King Henry's Reign. It is Tournament Day, which has drawn a Crowd that vocalizes various Cheers and Taunts during the numerous Competitions. During one such Competition, Sir Dawkins defeats the rotund Sir Madigan. Both are attended to by Squires.

At the end of the Tournament, there is a Celebration. On display is the Magic Helmet of Cornwall, which was won by King Henry during the Three Years War. The Helmet is said to have been forged by Merlin.

The above two moments in time offer players an opportunity to establish their characters. What are they doing? How do they know each other? It is particularly important to know what they're doing during the Celebration because that is when the adventure begins.

Initial Action: During the Celebration, Giants from the Kingdom of Giants arrive on Mammoth Horses. Sir Dawkins is trampled. The Helmet is stolen. And the Giants head in the direction of the Kingdom of Giants.

The Knights are not prepared for battle. The Feast that evening is canceled. Soldiers are unavailable, preparing for War. And the adventurers are summoned by King Henry, who assigns them a Quest: Retrieve the Helmet. There are a Reward or Boons offered.

Preparation: While it would be ideal that the adventurers set off after the Giants immediately, they might choose to prepare instead. The additional locations noted above—specifically the Marketplace and Village Inns—might prove useful. Of course, they might also choose to wait for additional adventure

hooks, bypassing the one offered. That could affect their standing and relationship with King Henry, as well as their presence in his kingdom or Castle.

Los Angeles Times, Dec. 21, 1956

If they choose not to pursue immediately, the following Rumors might be heard—or could already be character knowledge at the GM’s discretion:

- Few have dared to enter the Forest of Twisted Dreams.
- It is an enchanted wood.
- It is inhabited by dark spirits.
- It is frequented by moon-worshipping sorcerers.
- It is populated by creatures who dare not show themselves in the light of day.

Whether the above rumors are true or false, I leave to the GM. Rumors might also offer additional adventure hooks or scenario ideas to be explored in the future.

The Chase: If the adventurers pursue the Giants, as they approach the Forest—the Giants have already entered it—they are approached by riders, Mandroths on horseback. Mandroths are paid killers, and their steeds are six-legged man-eating Horse Beasts. Attacks against the Mandroth riders (when mounted) prove less effective than targeting the Horse Beasts, and if half of the Horse Beasts are defeated, the remaining flee, along with their riders.

Alternatively—or additionally—the adventurers could be accosted by Winged Wolves, sent to further harry the pursuers. If defeated, a Giant Falcon attacks. Depending on how the combat or encounter proceeds, if the Giant Falcon is defeated, two more Giant Falcons could harry the adventurers.

The Way Through the Forest: The Forest of Twisted Dreams is marked by jagged lines of Trees. Bats and Owls are present, though the Owls are not necessarily threatening. Given that the Celebration was held at the end of the Tournament Day—and that the Feast was scheduled for evening—night will soon fall.

Either just before entering the Forest, or shortly thereafter, the adventurers could encounter a Pit Trap if they’re not paying particular attention to the path or trail followed.

Depending on whether the party continues as the light falls or chooses to make camp, a number of options present themselves. If the group decides to make camp, while identifying an ideal location to make camp, they might encounter red-mud Quicksand. While extricating themselves from its sucking depths, they are approached by a Giant Fisherman who already has a Net of People captured in similar situations.

If they, however, choose to continue along the path

at night, they discover that they are directed along a Ghostly Path from which they cannot diverge. They cannot leave the Path or enter the Forest otherwise. The Path leads the adventurers to a very old Dragon, wheezing and coughing. It is too old to fight, but its soldiers, Living Trees, are not. If the Living Trees defeat the adventurers, their victims become a Living Tree in turn, to serve the Dragon.

If the adventurers slay the Dragon, its death releases the Evil of the Forest: Bats and Ghostly Forms.

Continuing to make their way through the Forest pursuing the Giants, adventurers might also encounter an Illusory Rockslide and a number of Dragonbats.

The Kingdom of the Giants: The Giants' stading is surrounded by tall gray Walls. Depending on how the adventurers seek entrance to the Kingdom, two encounters could occur.

The adventurers, if directly approaching the Gate, could be captured by Giant guards and taken to King Gfar. Once in his audience, they see the Helmet on a table near the throne. If they try to secure the Helmet, or at the whim of King Gfar, the adventurers could be sent to the Stadium to engage in combat with Helvdor the Unconquerable.

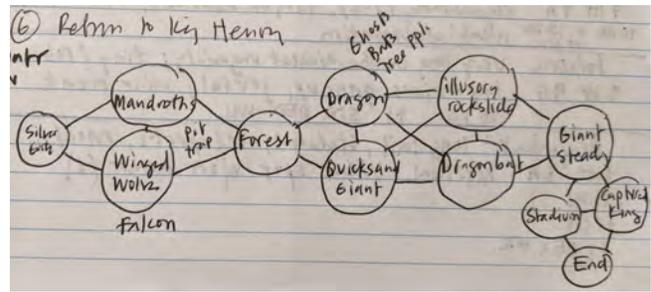
If the adventurers are able to sneak into the Kingdom unseen, they find the Kingdom empty. No Giants are visible on the streets or in any relevant structures—I have not designed the Kingdom—but they hear cheers from a Stadium within the Kingdom. There, they are press ganged to enter combat with Helvdor the Unconquerable. The Helmet is on display in a viewing booth near King Gfar.

The Return to Silvergate: To return the Helmet to King Henry, the adventurers must again traverse the Forest of Twisted Dreams. Their return might be uneventful, encountered creatures could recur, or any unused encounters could occur.

Upon returning to Silvergate, King Henry will reward the adventurers and announce the Feast's rescheduling for that evening or the next.

Scenario Flow

The above scenario might seem relatively convoluted or otherwise be unclear. Some options can be considered alternatives, or might all occur depending on how much fun that seems—and how the adventurers are faring. The photograph below demonstrates how I'd map encounter flow based on the gamebook and its elements.



Adventure Elements

Inspired by *Index Card RPG*, I created note cards for each aspect of the scenario.

Places

- Silvergate: A stone Castle
- Courtyard: The site of the Competitions and Celebration, marked by greenery and Pennants
- The Forest: Jagged lines of Trees, the source of many Rumors and location of much of the scenario
- The Kingdom of the Giants: A village of Giants surrounded by tall gray Walls
- The Giant Throne Room: Where King Gfar holds court
- The Stadium: Where Helvdor the Unconquerable holds court

NPCs and Notable Creatures

- King Henry Portendorfer: Possesses a Spy Network, attracts Scandal, serves an Ideology (see below), rues Dismissal, prone to Extortion
- Sir Stratford Madigan: A war Hero who's very Trusting and Wealthy. He faces Condemnation for some Defacing or Defilement (perhaps his victory over Sir Dawkins, below, is suspect).
- Sir Tenpiece Dawkins: Rotund, Sir Dawkins is an excellent Liar who needs Medicine. Overworked, he seeks a Better Life and is somehow involved in Kidnaping. (Perhaps a future scenario!)
- King Gfar: Ruler of the Giants, he pulls the Strings and is relatively Trusting. He serves a Faction (see below) and is being Framed for Surveillance. (Another possible scenario)—Use Giant Fisherman stats below, except for the hypnotic Eyes
- Helvdor the Unconquerable: Among Giants, he is Gorgeous and Soft Hearted. His primary interest is Justice for the Impoverished, and he seeks Replacement of some kind. (He is

Unconquerable because he must be slain twice. The first time he falls in battle, he rises again with half hit points. (Use Giant Fisherman stats below, except for the hypnotic Eyes)



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 17, 1958

Creatures

- **Mandroths:** Humanoid, with vestigial Wings and Gills. They are Telekinetic, Manipulative, Obsessive, and blinded by Moonlight. (For *Maze Rats*, 7 HP, AC 7 [AC 10 when mounted], +1 Attack Bonus, +1 for Strength, Dexterity, and Will)
- **Man-eating Horse Beasts:** Slimy, with Fangs and a paralyzing Bite. They Stalk, are Forgetful, and are weakened by Heat (they slow, then sleep). They have six legs—and eat defeated opponents. (13 HP, AC 8, +1 AB, +1 for Str, Dex, and Will; if half are defeated, the remainder flee)
- **Flying Wolves:** Scaled, they are Reflective (difficult to see in low light or darkness, -1 to attacks targeting them). They regenerate 1 HP

every two rounds. Target nearest opponent. Are Obsessive and weakened by Conversation. (7 HP, AC 7, +1 for Str and Dex)

- **Giant Falcons:** With very large Beaks, they are almost Ungainly given their tiny Size (the size of robins, oddly). Mostly Beak, they are Impervious and Gang Up on opponents. Jovial, they are weakened by Wine. (9 HP, AC 9, +1 for Str, Dex, and Will)
- **Very Old Dragon:** Winged, it Flies. Intelligent, it distracts opponents by Wheezing and Coughing, seeming too Old to fight. Gaze weapon vs. Will; opponents that fail cannot move for 1-3 rounds. Scatters foes with a Lashing Tail. Is Out of Touch and weakened by Bells. Summons Living Trees. (13 HP, AC 8, +2 AB, +2 for Str, Dex, and Will)
- **Living Trees:** Spiked humanoids (thorns if grabbed), the soldiers of the Dragon are Fearless and Shapeshifting (can grow taller, multiple branching limbs). They Stalk their opponents and are somewhat Mystical (experiencing the world in “tree time” and susceptible to Axes. (8 HP, AC 7, +1 for Str, Dex, and Will)
- **Ghostly Forms:** Legless humanoids, Sticky like spider Webs. They can read Minds and target the strongest opponent. Forgetful, they are weakened by Music. (6 HP, AC 6)
- **Bats:** With long Tongues, they are Luminous and attempt to Strangle with their Tongues. They Gang Up on opponents and are Paranoid, weakened by Holy Water. (5 HP, AC 6, +2 for Dex and +1 for Will)
- **Giant Fisherman:** A many-Eyed humanoid, the Fisherman has 3-5 Eyes. Shadowy (opponents are slowed when adjacent), their Eyes are Hypnotic (vs. Will). They aim to Deceive, are Unimpressed, and susceptible to Silver. (11 HP, AC 6, +1 AB, +2 for Str and Dex, +1 for Will)
- **Dragonbats:** With long Tails, Dragonbats are Skeletal and Teleport. They Mock, are Mystical, and have a Weak Spot without armor (6 AC instead of their usual AC). (4 HP, AC 8, +1 for Str, +2 for Dex and Will)

Traps (details left for GM discretion)

- Pit Trap
- Quicksand: Red mud
- Rock Slide: Illusory

Factions

- Street Musicians: Subversive, preserve Lore

Ideologies (to be developed at GM discretion)

- Summer Memory

Items

- Magic Helmet of Cornwall: Won during Three Year War, forged by Merlin. +4 for Str when worn. A Boon from King Henry could lend its aid in future adventures.

The Ignorable Theme: Defining Heroism

“What makes a character a hero? Is it doing good things?” If doing good things was sufficient, ideally we’d all be heroes. But good things might not be enough. Maybe they have to be Really Good Things or Really Big Good Things to warrant the label of heroism. What intrigues me most about the theme is twofold: Intent and outcome.

A basic definition of “hero” suggests that it’s “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.” That addresses both, in a way. A player character could merely intend to be heroic—exhibiting courage or other noble qualities—regardless of the outcome of their actions. (Does success or “outstanding achievements” determine heroism? Are heroic failures fools? Or still heroes?) Exhibited heroism could also be a ploy, outward behaviors intended—or unintended—to deceive others, if the character doesn’t actually possess those qualities in their core. One can act courageously or nobly without being innately or actually so.

A hero’s actions or the outcome thereof might themselves be heroic regardless of intent. A character might rescue the princess, slay the dragon, or flummox the robbers or burglars—leading to the betterment of the people and area around them—even if it’s not their intent or desired outcome. It might even happen accidentally: You thwart a robbery without realizing what was going on, perhaps approaching a potential victim, causing the robbers to disperse. You accidentally kill a dragon through clumsiness. (Buddy Hackett’s character in *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, for example. [*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #126]) You save a child from a burning building reflexively or automatically. I suppose heroism can happen accidentally, though happily so.

Maybe a character is just in it for the reward: money, social standing, the favor of a patron or ruler. Maybe it’s just a job. Wanted: One Hero. Even if your

ideals or goals aren’t noble, those characters might still probably be heroes.

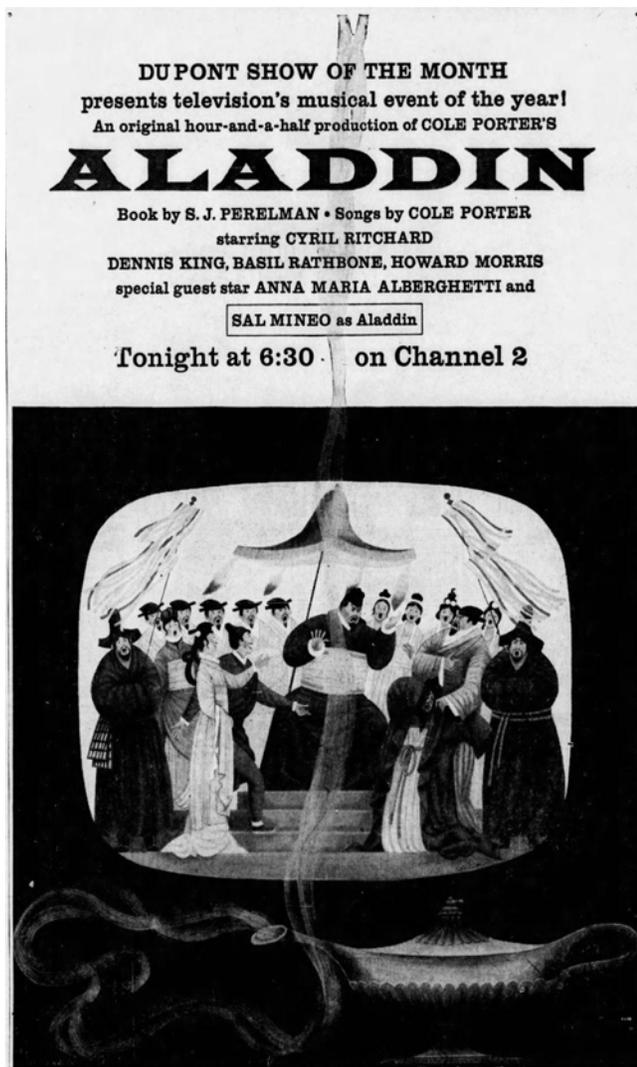
The definition (“admired or idealized”) also adds a third wrinkle: perceived heroism vs. heroism. If you are heroic and no one knows (e.g. you slay a dragon but no one realizes it was you), I’d say you’re still a hero, though an unsung hero. Also, there could perhaps be good heroes—heroic actions in the name of good—as well as bad heroes (at least when it comes to NPCs)—heroic actions in the name of evil. In that case, the meaning of “good” in Really Good Things depends on the eye of the beholder. What Sauron thinks is a good outcome is different from what Gandalf thinks is a good outcome.

A deeper exploration of heroism (<https://www.verywellmind.com/characteristics-of-heroism-2795943>) suggests that people who engage in one-off heroic actions—reactively or reflexively—aren’t too different from a control group of non-heroes. Researchers broadened the definition of “hero” to include people who act voluntarily for the service of others who are in need, perform actions without any expectation of reward or external gain, and recognize and accept the potential risk or sacrifice made by taking heroic actions.

A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* offered 12 central traits of heroism. They include bravery, conviction, courage, determination, helpfulness, honesty, inspiration, moral integrity, protectiveness, self-sacrifice, selflessness, and strength. If applying those traits, accidental heroism is less possible, and bad heroes impossible. Similarly, professional heroes might also be less common.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 24, 1958



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 21, 1958

Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #584

Lee Gold's *Tantivy* dated July 1, 2024, reported that she plans to prepare *Lands of Adventure* for republication, as well as several unpublished modules. That's wonderful news! Your discussion of being able to speak or read multiple languages inspired me to prioritize what languages I'd like to learn: Portuguese, French, and Spanish. If a story featuring a heroine calls for something other than Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, what would you recommend?

Given this month's Ignorable Theme, your consideration of good:evil::polite:impolite intrigued me. I'm prone to think that evil goes far beyond impoliteness, and that even the good can be impolite. But it inspires thought about little evils. How might those be different from micro-aggressions? Is aggressiveness related to politeness? Is aggressiveness impolite? Kicking a dog is definitely unnecessary.

Last winter, I procured a collection of R.A. Lafferty stories while in Wisconsin. I've yet to read

much Lafferty, and I'd be interested in reading that 1968 essay about your favorite stories. Though you addressed your question to Joshua Kronengold, I've always considered Gandalf to be more of an NPC in *The Hobbit* than a player character. Curious what Kronengold has to say, if say he does.

I enjoyed your Filler from Murray Leinster's "Critical Difference." I find it fascinating that human bodies might be solar-powered (in part) batteries. Our bodies are also antennas. In recent weeks, I was too far away from my wife's car to lock it using the key, so I touched it to my head—and was no longer too far away. Pretty neat.

In *The Seedling* #39, Mark Nemeth addressed the Ignorable Theme on neurodivergent players. While I've never knowingly played with someone who was diagnosed as neurodivergent, I've at times suspected that someone might be. When DM'ing organized *D&D* play at a local store, one youth's mother did mention some "habits" that her son exhibited—perhaps subtly informing us of neurodivergence—and I found her guidance quite helpful. In Scouts, I'm aware of at least one troop member who might have been neurodivergent. It would have been helpful to know that that was the case rather than to discover it—or develop suspicions—while in the field.

Most of my experience with roleplaying games, however, has involved "players engaging in unusual or annoying conduct during the game." That's not solely the province of the neurodivergent. It might more involve a spectrum of sociability, and social or antisocial behavior. In any event, however, it's important to focus on the overall health, happiness, and fun of the entire table. That can be more of a challenge in organized play than home play, where we might be better able to self-select who's sitting at our table—or on our couch.

I appreciated your remarks on *D&D* 5E. As someone who grew up playing BX, BECM, and 1E, 2E came out when I was going to college, and I couldn't afford the rulebooks. I later resumed playing 4E, found my way back to 3E and 3.5, as well as Pathfinder, before progressing to 5E. I did most of my organized play in 4E and 5E. So I quite like 5E. And even if I might disagree with the business decisions behind a given edition—or choices of technological platforms as *D&D* moves ever more online—I welcome more people coming into the hobby.

Your comments on the art of 5E resonated with me. I don't mind it, but I'm not inspired by it. Given how long I've been playing, I much prefer the art of the OSR—but can understand how modern art might be needed to bring in modern players without the benefit or hindrance of a history at tables. The artwork in the

forthcoming edition also seems intended to attract and inspire a new or emerging group of players. The more, the merrier. However, I was irritated that the recent *D&D* stamps only include one illustration from what I consider to be classic *D&D*. If the goal was to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the game, let's include artwork from over the course of that timespan. Instead, it's more oriented to bolster the current—and perhaps forthcoming—edition. Again, I understand the business motivation, but it feels like a lost opportunity.

Inspired by your reply to Jim Vassilakos about character flaws, I gave some thought to how I currently make characters. While I might continue to overly flesh out a character's back story despite my intent to let it develop and emerge over time informed by gameplay, I quite like detailing characteristics, flaws, foibles, preferences, motivations, and other minutiae—even if randomized. They give me something to draw on when roleplaying, and when deciding how a character will respond in a given situation. Not rote actions, but a menu of options and inspirations. Flaws can offer rich roleplaying opportunities along with virtues.

Spike Y Jones's *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #455 responded to Gabriel Roark about awarding equal shares of experience points to characters rather than rewarding one character that was particularly effective. I like the idea of a middle way, though I usually split the spoils evenly. My ideal method would be to start with a base of equal rewards and then give select characters additional boons or boosts for taking particular risks or performing especially heroically. I don't think I'd debit characters for "underperforming." If I remember earlier editions, if read as written, an equal share of XP makes sense because you can improve skills merely by practicing them, or by watching someone else engage in such activities. I think I'd be irritated as a player if only one character received experience points, too.

Your discussion of the word "slice" made me chuckle. Such are the things we cope with at work. You also commented on sales of the *Player's Handbook* being something like 10 times that of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. My presumption has always been that sales of the PH is likely at least five or six times that of the DMG. At any given table, there's five or six players for every DM. I can't imagine being irritated if players also knew how to run a game, however. Ideally, everyone would own All the Books, but given finite budgets, I can understand someone who primarily plays investing in the PH but not the DMG, even if owning and reading both would deepen their understanding of the game.

Thank you for reminding me to read your indicia

instead of neglecting to do so. Say, do you work as an editor for a wire service? I used to work as a newspaper reporter (general assignment and various beats over the years), desk editor of my college daily, and a copy editor—including the night shift. I've been curious how wire services work now that they no longer use—I presume—teletype machines. I haven't worked in newspapers since 1995 and magazines since 2005.



Los Angeles Times, March 14, 1958

In *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #33, **Gabriel Roark** commented on mandatory office days at work. Since returning from Portugal, I've been going in every day—for the first month of my return—and more recently three or four days a week. But I'm not in the office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or anything close to that; maybe a few hours depending on what work I need to do in the office rather than at home. Early next month, I'll report to a new manager, an internal hire—who's based in the same location as I am. It'll be the first time I've had a direct co-worker or manager located in the same office since we moved here in 2009. I'm looking forward to it, but I'm also hopeful that I can continue my current in-office schedule—I find that I'm more effective working from home, and I've grown disinterested in warming a chair for the sake of appearances. Regardless, I would like to retain an assigned desk, so I understand the need to come in, even if it feels like box checking.

Jerry Stratton's *The Biblyon Free Press* dated August 2024 included a mention of Sherlock Holmes. My wife and I recently watched *The Woman in Green*, a 1945 movie starring Basil Rathbone that draws on elements of "The Final Problem" and "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box." After watching the movie, which was enjoyable, I read two stories by Arthur Conan Doyle: "The Man with the Twisted Lip" and

“The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.” Neither struck me as especially well suited for a roleplaying game scenario, but perhaps it’ll inspire us to return to *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective*, which is the most success I’ve had encouraging my wife to play a something like a roleplaying game. That said, while my son’s been home from college this summer, she joined us for several games of *Legendary*. Well before we watched the Holmes film, we also snuck in a few games of *Clue*, which I hadn’t played in some time.



Los Angeles Times, March 28, 1958

What do you mean by “magazines are impossible to sell”? I enjoyed your discussion of *Flashing Blades*, which I don’t think I own despite *Daredevils* and *Psi World* resting immediately behind me in my home office. Your comments on the recent con, Holmes DVD adaptations, and recently read books, particularly *Dracula*, which I try to return to periodically, were appreciated. When I first read Bram Stoker’s novel, I was too young and its structure was too prohibitive. But now I find it fascinating, similar to how more recent reads of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells’s *The Invisible Man* continue to inform my appreciation for their film adaptations and continuing presence in the public imagination. Your remarks on Edgar Rice Burroughs’s

The Moon Maid reminded me that I recently came across a paperback edition in my personal library and need to read more of the author’s non-Tarzan writing.

Lisa Padol’s *This Isn’t the Zine You’re Looking For* #394 referred to recent games of *Brindlewood Bay*. Your description, especially of the differences in *Numberless Secrets*, was interesting—and could be applied to other games, as well. I like the idea of the players’ theory being the correct solution, rather than trying to arrive at a particular solution, and the GM intervention seems to account for that nicely.

I was also intrigued by your discussion of quickstarts. When I get into a game, in the past, I’ve tried to acquire All the Things, so I have several quickstarts that I’ve yet to play. The *Avatar Legends Starter Set*—not quite a quickstart, but close—sits just to my left. In recent weeks, I’ve been exploring the *Cyberpunk Red Jumpstart Kit* for solo play—will discuss next ish, perhaps!—and have enjoyed it. But if you’ve got the game, you’re right, you might not need a starter set or quickstart. Regardless, they often offer simplified rules, which can be useful for first sessions or introductions to a new game.

Welcome back, George Phillis, with *The Murdered Master Mage!* (Hmm... that fanzine title seems familiar!) It was fun to read about your early fiction in roleplaying game apae, where your writing has gone since then, and your activities in the professional world and fandom. I look forward to future issues.

In *Sinister Things* #330, Patrick Riley commented on *Troika!* I haven’t played it yet, but I think the materials are beautiful and bemoan that I’ve chosen to obtain PDF versions rather than hard copies. “The game setting is weird...,” you said. That seems like it might be a good thing. But “the mechanics are purposefully backward”? Oof. Games that are intentionally difficult to play aren’t really my cup of tea. It’s one reason I’ve never played early editions of *Hackmaster*, though I’m sure it can’t be as convoluted as I’ve made it out to be.

Michael Cule’s *Mundus Vult Decepi* used the British term “bimbling.” Paul Di Filippo recently mailed me a copy of Mike Etherington’s book *The Very Best of British: The American’s Guide to Speaking British* (Effingpot, 2000). Unfortunately, the word doesn’t appear in the 138-page volume. That makes me think the author might have done a bodge job. Did you have fun at Worldcon?

I empathize with your discussion of the Ignorable Theme. I don’t think I’ve read enough of our discussion of game emulators to fully understand what we’re talking about. I know what GM emulators are—oracles and other tools for solo play. I know

what emulator software is—software that replicates operating systems from time gone by. And I think I know what roleplaying game “hacks” are—games derivative of other games. Is the latter what we mean by emulators in this instance? In the OSR sense, that’d be like *White Box* and OD&D, if I understand correctly.

Your comments on the magnifier on your iPad reminded me that I increased the type size on my Kobo earlier this week. I appreciate that function, as well. I’ve never kept any players’ character sheets. I’ve never considered them mine as a GM, and I don’t know what I’d do with them in between sessions. That’s best left to the players. Since last mailing, I’ve obtained a copy of the book that detailed your early gaming. I’ll let you know what I think when I get around to reading it. (I’ll have to locate it in order to prioritize doing so.)

Congratulations, **Mark A. Wilson**, on your progress in game design as detailed in *Bumbling Through Dungeons #55*! In a recent edition of LASFAPA, Nick Smith told a story about meeting a local musician, Jackie Fox, of the Runaways, at a local game event. She’s since published a board game titled *Rock Hard: 1977* inspired by her time in the music industry. I wonder if she followed a similar path.

Patrick Zoch, the painted *Marvel United* miniatures photographed in *The Dragon’s Den* dated August 2024 look absolutely wonderful. I hope your grandchildren enjoyed them!

Otherwise, RAE, all!



Los Angeles Times, April 4, 1958

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #127

Aug. 22, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

Fanzines are the best
I would read them all the time
Gotta pub my ish!

That senryu isn't entirely in earnest. I wish I had more time to read more fanzines. Were it not for the apae in which I participate, I might not actually read that many. Or I might read more! Apazines are different from non-apa genzines and perzines.

Similarly, I'm often torn between reading current fanzines and older fanzines. One of my side projects is compiling a LASFS history calendar in which members will be able to see what LASFS meetings occurred on what dates, and on which dates APA-L and LASFAPA—and eventually *De Profundis* and other clubzines—were distributed.

That occasionally leads to me looking for and reading the APA-L and LASFAPA dist'ns published closest to any given date. Instead of a current fanzine, of course. Not that I'm complaining!

Enjoyable Emails

Every week, when eller Matthew Mitchell emails me his fanzine, *The Form Letter of Things Unknown*, he includes a fun little squib in the body of the message. He's done that off and on—mostly on—since July 23, 2023, with #20. For your enjoyment, I share them with you now, in the order received.

Hot off da press...

Hot off the press.

All the news that fits, I print.

From the home office...

Suitable for framing, or wrapping fish...

Coming to you from the home office in Kalamazoo, Michigan...

Fresh from the freezer!

Created in a bizarre accident involving a nuclear detonator, a genetic resequeencer, and a box of Wheat Thins.

All the news that's The Pits.

Recommended by four out of five dentists... because one always has to be a wise-ass.

The oooonly way to fly.

I made this zine the old fashioned way—I wrote it.

A day early, and a dollar ahead!

Brought to you in living color... on NBC!



Los Angeles Times, April 11, 1958

Doused in brandy and shuffled from house to house for the holidays...

Now available in small bottles for your traveling convenience.

Soon to be a major motion picture...

DEAN MARTIN and JERRY LEWIS
 HAL WALLIS' **Jumping Jacks**
 A PARAMOUNT RE-RELEASE

and

Paramount Presents
 DEAN MARTIN-JERRY LEWIS
 HAL WALLIS' PRODUCTION
SCARED STIFF
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STANLEY-WARNER **DOWNTOWN** NOW in 8 CITY-WIDE THEATRES
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BELL GARDENS GAGE DRIVE-IN Gage Ave. E. of Eastern PA. 1-2328 • TO. 2-7185	SAN FERNANDO LAUREL DRIVE-IN Laurel Canyon 1/2 mi. N. of Van Nuys Bl. • EM 9-2588
TORRANCE-REDONDO TORRANCE DRIVE-IN FR. 9-6491 • Torrance Bl. W. of Hawthorne Blvd.	ARCADIA EDWARDS DRIVE-IN Pack and Live Oak OO. 7-8179

Jumping Jacks and SCARED STIFF

EAST L. A. **NEW BOULEVARD THEATRE** • 4549 Whittier Blvd. AN. 1-2665

Los Angeles Times, April 18, 1958

Now available on 8-track tape at Licorice Pizza!

Guaranteed or your money back!

Some contents may settle during shipping.

Objects in this zine are closer than they appear.

Filmed before a live studio audience.

Including restored 35-millimeter footage!

Four out of five dentists recommend!! (The fifth declined to answer, but he's a schnook.)

Possible side effects may include drowsiness, decreased appetite, extreme ennui, and a compulsion to watch any TV show starring Ted Danson.

Ask a doctor before use if you suffer from glaucoma, emphysema, or multiple personality disorder.

A cipher wrapped in an enigma and smothered in secret sauce.

From out of the west, in a cloud of dust, and a hearty "Hi Yo Silver!"

Cut film to vent. After four minutes, stir the potatoes and re-cover for an additional three minutes.

Live from Mojave, it's Wednesday Night!

Theorizing that one could time travel by snorting dandelions and playing Black Sabbath albums backwards...

There is absolutely no cannibalism in APA-L. None. And by "none" I mean a certain amount.

I've had a crazy day. Pretend I came up with something clever here.

All irregularities will be handled by the forces controlling each distribution. Heavy cardstock may not be used where there is life. Medium-weight paper is available.

New and improved! Okay, the second part is debatable. But I added more stuff.

Night falls on the great house of Collinwood... because that's what happens when the sun sets.

And now for something completely different.

If God could write the zine I could write, he'd be a decent contributor.

Any sufficiently advanced fanzine is indistinguishable from a prozine. My story and I'm sticking to it.

This is the story of *The Form Letter of Things Unknown*. Back in the heady days of the Galactic Empire, when men were real women, women were real men, and Bug Eyed Monsters were not only a staple of science fiction stories but had their own union, it was truly not a best seller. But enjoy anyway.

As the minuteness of the typeface formed a great hindrance to my page count, I therefore resolved to make the zine full of dancing baloney.

A fiery laptop with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty "Heath, watch out for those weird characters!"

Parents: The following zine may be too intense for younger viewers. So get out of the room and let your kids enjoy the movie. Surely you have things to do...

Caught in the fallout of a freak accident with a nuclear detonator, a genetic resequecer, and a box of Wheat Thins, a boy from Westminster, California, steps into a hidden world of fantasy and science gone mad. He stalks the foreboding publications of this dark world, a champion of the absurd!

Do not attempt to adjust your collating rack. We are controlling distribution. For the next week we will control all that you send out by mail or PDF... well, at least these four pages.

As always, Matt is accompanied on his adventures by his companions "The Fanatical Five":

- Wheels—master of the steam-powered go-kart
- Gromit—great with Legos, not so great with actual machinery
- Nasty—the smelliest man alive, whose B.O. has been outlawed by the Geneva Convention
- Shyster—lawyer extraordinaire, who can plead a speeding ticket down to second-degree manslaughter
- Cook William—inventor of the macaroni pizza.

Strange things are afoot at the APA-L...

Logic is a bunch of pretty flowers, which smell *bad*.

Podcast of Thousands

In late July, I started listening to my first podcast. Seriously. Even though podcasts began their boom in 2004 or so because of the iPod and other digital audio

devices, their precursor audioblogs might even date back to the 1980s. Evan Williams, founder of Blogger and later Twitter, left Google in 2004 to launch a podcast company, Odeo. So, podcasts have been around for a while.

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Produced and Directed by ADRIAN WEISS • Screenplay by EDWARD D. WOOD, JR.

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BLOOD BATH of an inhuman fiend!

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"The BRIDE and The BEAST" also at "The Beast of Budapest"

Los Angeles Times, May 9, 1958

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Only "MACABRE" is the FIRST picture so frightening that we have to PROTECT YOUR LIFE with a guaranteed INSURANCE POLICY! "MACABRE" has broken records and stunned audiences from coast to coast!

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DURING THE SHOWING OF
"MACABRE"

* NOT VALID FOR PEOPLE WITH KNOWN HEART OR NERVOUS CONDITIONS.

HOLLYWOOD'S
 GREATEST
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 OF ALL TIME!

"MACABRE"

No one seated during the last 10 minutes!

Starring
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8 PACIFIC DRIVE-INS

Los Angeles Times, May 23, 1958

When podcasts first became more popular, I checked them out and quickly dismissed them as not my thing. At the time, they were primarily just people talking about whatever they were interested in. And while some focused on solidly fannish topics such as comic books and roleplaying games, I wasn't interested in such amateur productions. So many were overly similar to talk radio. (I felt the same about the much later audio discussion service *Clubhouse*.) I don't have time to listen to random people talk about topics, even if I'm interested in them.

I hoped that podcasts would lead to a resurgence of audio theater, audio drama, and perhaps even old-time radio. Maybe they'd inspire productions like those offered by the ZBS Foundation. Instead, podcasts continued to focus on the informal conversation aspect while developing in parallel along the lines of more produced radio programs like those broadcast by NPR and the BBC, or audio miniseries similar to prestige television.

Because I'm not much of a listener to audiobooks—which entered mainstream popularity starting in the 1970s—or NPR, podcasts were a hard sell. And I've been able to satisfy the occasional yen for listening through old-time radio and audio dramas such as those produced by Games Workshop (*Warhammer* and *Warhammer 40,000* related) and Big Finish (*Doctor Who* and other fannish productions). Until recently.

July 18, the *Los Angeles Times* included a full-page advertisement for *Impact Winter*, an Audible original. The ad was simple. With the headline "Hope is a dangerous thing," the ad featured an image of a woman wearing a crown of icicles or icy thorns, and a woman holding a sword. There was a QR code and the call to action: "Explore all seasons."

So I used Google Lens on my mobile to scan the QR code. Audible was advertising *Impact Winter* because its third season had just been released. Initially introduced with its first season in February 2022, the second season began in July 2023. Season Three kicked off this July. The description from Audible's Web site is as follows: "From executive producers of *The Walking Dead* and Travis Beacham, the writer of *Pacific Rim*, comes a heart-stopping Audible Original featuring a brilliant British cast. It's the near future and seven years since a comet hit the earth and blotted out the sun. The world is a dark, frozen landscape. And then, beastly creatures emerge and take over. Can they really be vampires?"

While I removed the ad from the newspaper and set it aside, I didn't start listening until July 23. On that date, the *Los Angeles Times* was wrapped with a four-page advertorial promoting the audio drama. Mimicking newspaper pages and government

to have been committed in one city, the body dumped in the other. Two police investigators, one from each city, team up to investigate the case, leading to intervention by Breach and the discovery of corporate pilfering from an archaeological dig. During the investigation, the two need to navigate the politics and social mores and norms of the two cities, as well as the borders and spaces in between.

Given that the cities are fictional, it doesn't remind me of any one particular urban area, but Miéville ably captures the spirit and sensibility of an older Europe, Eastern Europe, or European countries near Africa. And while the novel isn't necessarily similar to any others I've read, it did remind me of other city-oriented speculative fiction. While reading the book, I thought about John Shirley's *City Come a Walkin'*, Paul Di Filippo's *A Year in the Linear City*, Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, and N.K. Jemisin's *The City We Became*. (*Faculae & Filigree* #25)

Since finishing *The City & the City*, I've obtained Miéville's *King Rat* and *Kraken*. He's an author worth exploring, much like the cities in this novel.



Los Angeles Times, May 23, 1958

Ignorable Theme: Science on TV and in Film

"Do you watch science-related television programs or documentaries? Which do you recommend?" I tend not to watch science-related TV shows or movies, though I've occasionally been interested in programs such as *Nova* and nature documentaries. It's just not standard fare for me. My son went through a phase in

which he enjoyed watching shows such as *Ancient Aliens*, but I didn't even watch those often with him.

I can, however, recommend two science-related movies that have secured a strong place in my memory. My wife edited the 2008 documentary *Flow: For Love of Water*, about the global economics and politics of water privatization. The movie screened at the Sundance Film Festival and the Vail Film Festival, where it won the festival award for Best Documentary. It was released on DVD by Oscilloscope, which was founded by Beastie Boys member Adam Yauch. It offers a strong perspective on an important topic.

More recently, we saw *Oppenheimer*, which focused more on the biography of the theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and events surrounding the Manhattan Project than the science itself. While I enjoyed the movie more than my wife did, it makes me wonder whether biopics about scientists and technologists—and similar technological developments—might be worth exploring.

In *Emulators & Engines* #16, I included a *Los Angeles Times* advertisement for the 1957 *Schlitz Playhouse* episode "The Lonely Wizard." *IMDb* describes the episode thusly: "The true story of electrical engineer Charles Steinmetz. Even as a child in Germany, Charles was lonely, preferring to devise inventions rather than play with other children. As he grows to young manhood, Steinmetz applies his brilliant mind to problems of electrical engineering."

That doesn't appear to be online or available on DVD, but I'd watch that in a hot minute.

Comments on APA-L #3082

While some of the red in the logo for **Jean-Paul L. Garnier's** *Space Cowboy's Accretion* #11 printed a little lightly, the cover images and other pictures printed okeh, so I decided not to reprint. I hope that wasn't overly bothersome. Even though Garnier hasn't resumed commenting on other others' contributions, I think it's worthwhile to include his fanzine because of the perspective it lends on aspects of sff and fandom to which we might not generally be exposed.

Given my commentary on podcasts (see above), the *Simultaneous Times* podcast might be worth exploring. Neat to see the University of California, Riverside's Phoenix Alexander featured in Episode #77. Congratulations on the podcast being named a finalist in the Ignyte Awards. I've preordered your short story collection and look forward to reading *Galaxy* #263. For some reason, I'm not as excited about its relaunch as I was with *Worlds of If*, but it'll be interesting to see what elements of *Galaxy* it retains while looking to the future.

It makes sense to cease editing *Star*Line* next year. You've got a lot of irons in the fire, and I'm sure time feels increasingly tight as your numerous deadlines and commitments loom large. Don't burn yourself out, though. I hope you're able to maintain this level of productivity for the long haul. Your inclusion of William S. Burroughs's *The Job*—a collection of interviews—in What I Read in July resonated with my recent rereading and reading of Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye* and *L'Abbé C*, neither of which is sff unless you consider them pruriently visceral utopian tales. I might discuss those in a future fanzine as an example of where falling down rabbit holes can take you. I see that you receive *Science News (T&T #126)*, too. Do you read it frequently?

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown #70*, **Matthew Mitchell** mentioned that the 2026 Worldcon will occur in Los Angeles. We should definitely all go, business meeting or no business meeting. I haven't gone down that particular rabbit hole, but what I've seen about the operations of the World Science Fiction Society makes me think I might never need to get that involved. Other con runners can take that on, for sure. I will share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown. Kudos to you, good sir, for citing a back issue of your fanzine! Someone I'm quite fond of frequently does the same.

Let me know what you think of *The Celestial Toyroom*. So far, it's my only exposure to the Doctor Who Appreciation Society. It's a very good clubzine. It is funny indeed that the Olive Garden you went to was also experiencing technical difficulties in the air conditioning department.

Wait... there was a furry house in Garden Grove? That, I need to learn more about. While I moved to LA too late to explore the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, I know that it existed. *Reddit* offers a juicy report on the rise and fall of the C/FO (<https://tinyurl.com/CFO-Ending>) A skeletal Web site remains at https://members.tripod.com/c_fo, and there's even a group on the *Facebook* (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cfo1977>) with almost 4,000 members that seems relatively active.

The Prancing Skiltaire looks like it was still active until the pandemic—and that monthly parties might have resumed. There's a Web site (<https://skiltaire.net>), an *X* account (https://twitter.com/skiltaire_party), an *Instagram* account (<https://www.instagram.com/theprancingskiltaire>), and a *YouTube* channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/PrancingSkiltaire>). Who knew? You knew. Definitely one to include in the *Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*, which I've let linger for too long.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1606 recognized the

death of fanartist and APA-L cover artist Taral Wayne. I will miss his fannish friendship, his email correspondence, and his artwork adorning the covers of APA-L. We have one more piece of art he submitted before his untimely death. I reached out to his family to offer assistance in placing his fanzine collection and artwork with a university library's fandom archive, but they understandably preferred working with locals rather than packing his materials for shipping. I am not sure who claimed what from his home, or whether it'll be more broadly accessible. While Wayne might be dead, his artwork and memory will live on. I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White.

Los Angeles Times, May 23, 1958

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #67, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** updated ellers on the independence of her grandson. When my son became able to walk to and from school without our company, we found that quite freeing. I'd still leave work early to spend late afternoons and evenings with him before my wife finished work. People I know from Scouts swear by *iNaturalist* (<https://www.inaturalist.org>). It seems like a fun and functional online community! I had forgotten that I, too, have an account, but I've posted no observations.

Like you, I've been avoiding bookstores, though I occasionally stop by the Village Well in Culver City (<https://villagewell.com>) after dropping off APA-L at the post office. That doesn't seem to keep me from tracking down books via *Amazon* or *eBay*, or placing reservations at the public library—though my buying has slowed substantially. Thank you for sharing APA-L with Jon D. Swartz. He and I have interacted and collaborated on projects through the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and the N3F Fandbook I sent ellers last week was something we worked on together. He's a good egg!

And **Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #771, updated ellers on his glucose levels. May Metformin continue to do what it does! Wow: The In Death series is set in the future? I didn't realize that. Looking at the In Death Wiki's Series Chronology (https://indeath.fandom.com/wiki/Series_Chronology), it appears that the series takes place between 2024 and 2061, which makes J.D. Robb/Nora Roberts's series science fiction. "Futuristic murder mysteries," the wiki indicates. I had no idea.

Your comments about where Leo sleeps made me think of our cat Spooner. As the weather has continued to warm, he's changed where he spends most of the day. Recently, he's taken to sleeping under a small table in the corner of our living room by the fireplace, perhaps because it's cooler. He's also recently been spending more time sleeping on the shoe mat, where we keep unworn shoes. And he spends more time sprawled out on the dining room table, perhaps because its formica surface is also cooler. When we use the bathroom off the hallway, he's more quick to join us—and to hop into the bathtub, where he'll settle in. And he recently realized that crickets sometimes find their way into the bathroom off our bedroom, so when we get ready for bed, he scrambles to join us, to hunt for crickets. When one isn't there, he seems slightly befuddled.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown. Your remarks to Beverly Warren on "Does it hold up?" made me wonder whether it could be translated into, "Did I enjoy reading it again?" or

"Was it worth rereading?" I tend not to ask the question about works I haven't read before, though I understand how the question could also be applied to older works regardless of whether you've read them previously—similar to inquiring whether a given work has aged well.



Los Angeles Times, May 30, 1958

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #128

Aug. 29, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

The windows are closed
My home office is quite warm
I should open them

I really should. Maybe I will.

A Cover Artist Speaks!

Responding to Matthew Mitchell's feedback on the cover to APA-L #3076 in *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #65 (APA-L #3077), cover artist Jose Sanchez emailed in late July:

"I'm very happy that the reviewer stated that my cover was a bit 'unsettling'—but overall [a] great cover. Mission accomplished! That's exactly what I wanted!"

Star Trek Fandom in South Carolina

By Eric L. Watts

On Aug. 23, 1980—44 years ago—the United Federation of Trekkers held its first meeting in Columbia, S.C.

There were only two other such clubs known to be in South Carolina at that time, in Greenville and Charleston. The first and many subsequent monthly meetings were held in the Richland County Public Library in downtown Columbia.

Advertising and promoting the meetings was done through community calendar listings in local newspapers, public service announcements submitted to local radio and television stations, and fliers distributed at bookstores, newsstands, libraries, and the local planetarium. As the club grew, listings were placed in several high-profile fan club directories such as those published by *Starlog* magazine, the Star Trek Welcommittee, and *Fandom Directory*. By 1983, the UFT had more than 100 dues-paying members on its mailing list and had become the largest *Star Trek* fan club in the state.

In addition to regular monthly meetings at the Richland County Public Library, where members generally came to talk about all things *Star Trek*, the

UFT organized high-profile, costumed appearances at the theatrical debuts of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* in 1982, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* in 1984, and *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* in 1986, which drew media attention. The UFT was invited by the Columbia Philharmonic Orchestra to serve as costumed ushers for its Science Fiction Fantasy concert and by the United Way to serve as costumed greeters for four fundraising luncheons, both in 1982—and which resulted in additional publicity for the club. The UFT also attended occasional screenings of original *Star Trek* episodes at Gibbes Planetarium and held an annual picnic and barbecue at American Legion Lake in Pontiac, S.C.

In 1982, the UFT broadened its scope to include space advocacy in its activities and partnered with the Columbia chapter of the L5 Society and the Greenville-based Piedmont Advocacy for Space. The three groups worked together to successfully petition Gov. Richard W. Riley to officially proclaim July 18-24, 1982 as Space Exploration Week in the state of South Carolina.



Los Angeles Times, June 13, 1958

In 1983, the UFT launched Project Columbia, an effort to bring NASA's space shuttle *Columbia* to the city of Columbia upon her eventual retirement—and to house her in a public, tourism-driven facility dedicated to astronautics and space exploration inspired by the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala., and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The primary means of disseminating information about that project was a mass mailing of comprehensive press kits to all major media in South Carolina.

As a result, the project received an enormous amount of initial publicity in the local press, including newspapers such as *The State*, *Columbia Record*, *The Gamecock*, and *The Carolina Reporter*, as well as a

segment on WIS-TV's *PM Magazine*. The project was endorsed by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism and received a preliminary agreement from South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. to lease acreage for such a facility pending NASA's endorsement of the project. After about two years, Project Columbia lost steam due to NASA's refusal to commit to the project. Sadly, *Columbia* was destroyed during atmospheric reentry following its 28th mission on Feb. 1, 2003.

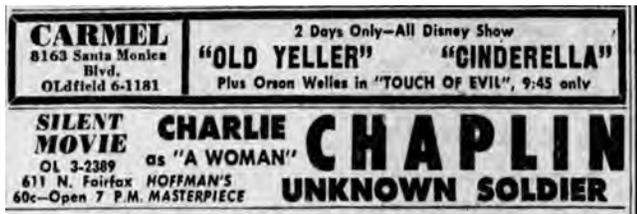
The UFT published 27 issues of a (more or less) monthly newsletter, *Captain's Quarters*, from 1980 to 1982 and three issues of a bimonthly newsletter, *Transwarp*, in 1985. It also published an anthology fanzine, *Star Sector One*, in 1980. I served as editor of all UFT publications, handling all facets of production and distribution. Later issues of *Captain's Quarters* were sold on the local newsstand adjacent to the science fiction paperback section, which helped promote the club, as well.

After eight years of serving as the UFT's president and newsletter editor, I resigned and moved to Atlanta in 1988. The UFT sputtered along for several months afterward but finally dissolved within a year due to a lack of strong leadership and member apathy.

This article previously appeared as a Facebook post and is reprinted with Watts's permission. He sells fandom-related items at <https://www.ebay.com/usr/ericwatts>.



—William Rotsler



Los Angeles Times, June 13, 1958

“In the history of science fiction, the 1970s tend to be thought of as the decade in which *Star Wars* changed everything. But, in terms of sci-fi TV—especially British sci-fi TV—the 1970s were a golden age of low budgets and big ideas. ... [I]n the midst of all of that, a [*Doctor Who*-adjacent sci-fi classic was born: *Blake's 7*. And now, this cult series is making an unexpected, and long-awaited comeback. ... *Blake's 7* is coming to Blu-ray for the first time ever, starting with a fully remastered version of Season 1. And, surprisingly, this will also include updated special effects. No, these won't be of the CGI variety, but rather, brand-new exterior spaceship VFX using practical models.”—*Inverse*, Aug. 26, 2024

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Mad Max: Fury Road

This movie is a mess. I honestly don't understand why people like it so much—or why it so successfully rebooted the franchise. There is so much going on visually in the movie, and there are so many quick cuts that the action sequences—most of the movie—are largely frenetic and almost overwhelming.

Meanwhile, the story is almost nonexistent. Or, the back story, of which there seems to be a lot, is largely glossed over. While there is a plot, the overall sense of world building falls short of what could have been. For the most part, the movie is an out-and-back road trip. Charlize Theron's character, Imperator Furiosa, absconds with some of a warlord's breeding stock (aka wives) in order to take them to the Green Place, an idyllic setting in which she grew up.

Meanwhile, “*Mad Max*” Rokatansky, apparently once a police officer, has been captured and is taken into battle when the War Boys pursue Furiosa and her

precious cargo—initially presumed to be gasoline. We know he’s “mad” because the filmmakers show us. His head frequently twitches, he’s made to wear protective headgear, and he experiences periodic visions—presumably of the family he was unable to save in the past.

Despite my complaints about the movie’s jumbled nature—too much all at once—there are some delightful visuals. The sandstorm funnels among which the escapees and pursuers navigate are stunning; and there’s a brief glimpse of a crow fisher, bog walker, or stilt walker in a marshy area that suggests a rich storyline itself. It’s like something out of *The Dark Crystal*.

I was also intrigued by the Coma-Doof Warrior or battle guitarist who’s tethered to an array of amplifiers by bungee cords. Behind him there are several martial percussionists who help inspire the battle lust of the War Boys. No explanation of him is given in the movie, but looking online, there’s a surprising amount of back story for the character, and the actor who portrayed him, iOTA, has quite the story himself.

Fully named Sean Hape, iOTA is an Australian musician, artist, and writer who previously appeared in an Australian production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. He was also cast as Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show* and staged his own cabaret show, *Smoke & Mirrors*. It’s awesome he was included in the movie, but his role is so cryptically outre, like so many of the unexplored details in the film.

All that said, it’s clear why *Furiosa*, the survivors of her matriarchal clan, and the Green Place inspired the subsequent prequel, *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*. Maybe it’s a less messy movie. Some online reviews suggest it’s boring by comparison. That might be a good thing.

Super Dimensional Fortress Macross II: The Movie
I recently watched this 1993 Manga Video VHS release of the movie edit of the original animation video (OAV) series *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross II: Lovers Again*. Originally offered in six episodes, it was the first Macross installment to feature new characters—and to be produced without the involvement of the original creators. A 150-minute cinematic edit of the series had been screened in theaters before the release of a 120-minute edit for video tape.

Set 80 years after the events of *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross*—offered in the United States as *Robotech: The Macross Saga*—it’s relatively similar thematically and structurally. The survivors of the Zentraedi-Meltrandi conflict have established a new society intermingling with the people of Earth.

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8 PACIFIC DRIVE-INS

Los Angeles Times, June 20, 1958

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Los Angeles Times, June 20, 1958

Alien invaders, renegade Zentraedi, pose a threat to the planet, leading an investigative reporter to align with a Zentraedi princess, an Emulator of Mardook—a battle singer who controls the minds of Zentraedi soldiers during combat.

Topics addressed in the movie include the role of journalism during wartime, government censorship, and the power of music—specifically love songs. Ishtar, the battle siren, helps Hibiki Kanzaki, the reporter, revive Macross, which has remained dormant on Earth, a historic artifact. Partnering with a Valkyrie pilot named Silvie Gena—the third point in a love triangle—they're able to help UN Spacey defeat the alien attackers.

While I haven't compared the movie edit to the OAV series, the edit isn't overly disruptive, and not much seems to have been lost. The story still makes sense. The movie also retains episode title cards and commercial transitions.

Comments on APA-L #3083

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #71, **Matthew Mitchell** shared a funny story about a Raspberry Pi that reminded me of inventr.io's (<https://inventr.io>) electronics adventure kits. (T&T #124) In addition to *30 Days Lost in Space* and *Cogsworth City*, other options include *Nebula Raiders* and *Neon Realm*. Those two include the Raspberry Pi Pico W and Raspberry Pi Pico WH microcontrollers.

I had forgotten *Wild Kingdom*, which ran for 18 seasons starting in 1963. I don't know that I ever watched that—or *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* (nine seasons starting in 1968). I wonder if those are streaming anywhere. Looks like there's a 2023 season of *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom Protecting the Wild* available. Your mention of *Chariots of the Gods* reminded me of Erich von Däniken's book, which inspired the 1970 film. I have a copy but haven't read it since I started tracking my reading in *Goodreads*.

We put Jonah on an airplane back to Tokyo to return to college early this week. Before he left, we went to BevMo! and Target so he could buy some presents for friends in Japan: Peter Pan peanut butter! While at Target, I made a point to not go to the school supplies aisles, lest I buy some more notebooks. We have plenty. I can understand your enthusiasm. Your Hakuna Errata reminded me that I misattributed Barbara Gratz Harmon's fanzine in the table of contents a couple distributions ago; I left out Gratz but have since amended that.

Speaking of which, **Barbara Gratz Harmon's** *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #68 seems to have reprinted #67 only with a new issue number. There

might be a “lost issue” we’ll be treated to in the future! She emailed me midweek to report that Microsoft updated her Windows 11, “which resulted in letters being typed out of sequence.” I wonder whether that contributed to the technical issues last week, as well! Barbara, I’m sure all others would like to see what was actually intended for #68 once you get that sorted.

In *In Betweens* #6, **Derek LaPorte** alerted readers that he offers a Substack! (*T&T* #126 and *Faculae & Filigree* #34) I can empathize with your frustration with “fine.” There are times we want our work to be very good, and there are times in which good enough is okeh. I like the change you’ve introduced to your idea. Even if the player isn’t represented by an egg—though that’s a fun aspect—the idea of a character falling *through* a dungeon and the player perhaps needing to rotate, move, and adjust the dungeon to aid or hinder its movement (like one of those tilting ball mazes, only not merely horizontal and fully manipulable in three-dimensional space) is actually kind of fascinating. The character moves linearly, perhaps accelerating, while the player manipulates the space around it. That might not be what you’re going for, but in the abstract, I like it.

It doesn’t surprise me that Keanu Reeves and China Miéville’s *The Book of Elsewhere* is well positioned to be adapted for television or film. That seems to be an increasing practice: Making something else rather than the TV show or movie for which a creator is really aiming. Personally, I’d rather the creator try to do what they’re doing really well. I’m not suggesting that that’s what you said Reeves and Miéville accomplished, but it struck me. Your review of *Point Blank* is intriguing. I was unfamiliar with *Man Carrying Thing*. (<https://www.youtube.com/@ManCarryingThing>) Is that worth checking out?

I have read other work by Bruce Sterling. I prefer his earlier work and short stories but found *The Zenith Angle* (*T&T* #126) quite enjoyable. It’s more of a techno-thriller than other books of his I’ve read, but even that form worked well. I wouldn’t necessarily start there, but it’s an excellent mid- to late read once you’re more familiar with his work. (Matthew Mitchell’s recommendation of *The Hacker Crackdown* is also worth heeding. Sterling’s nonfiction is wonderful.)

And **John Hertz**’s *Vanamonde* #1605 offered a pleasant haiku before discussing the acquisition of a new coin in circulation. I haven’t been paying attention to the recency of my coinage in recent years, but it’s a welcome reminder to pay attention to such things. Usually, the coins go in the pocket, and then they go into a coffee can on my dresser. I occasionally

fish out quarters for the car, to pay for parking meters. Last weekend, I stopped at an automated teller machine to withdraw some cash. In recent months I’ve been withdrawing \$10 bills rather than \$20 bills, and the \$10 bills offered by the ATM were surprisingly fresh and new. So much so that I had to check their date—2017—and share them with my wife and son. They were pristine, apparently uncirculated for the last seven years, which surprised me.

Eleanor Roosevelt was definitely an impressive, productive person. Her use of the media—magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, and books—was especially so. Her book *My Day: The Best Of Eleanor Roosevelt’s Acclaimed Newspaper Columns, 1936-1962* (Da Capo, 2001) looks particularly intriguing. I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray.

Thank you for sharing Rich Lynch’s photograph of the Fanzine Lounge at the North American Science Fiction Convention last month. It looks like a great place to hang out—and perhaps read. How many people utilized it?

“When I spoke about my research, it was mostly directed at people within my Ph.D. bubble. . . . The few times I presented to broader audiences, I struggled to explain how my research might apply in the real world. The more absorbed I became in practicing science, the more I felt I was losing touch with the bigger picture of why it matters. . . . I kept reading science fiction in the years after I finished my Ph.D. . . . [O]ne night I found myself in a conversation with my new . . . colleagues about science fiction concepts and their ethical implications for society. One invited me to speak at the pop culture convention. . . . [T]his was my path back to science communication.”
—*Science*, June 20, 2024

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Los Angeles Times, June 20, 1958

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #23

Aug. 31, 2024

The Explosion Containment Umbrella is an apa commentzine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to eAPA and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Comments on eAPA #244

Thank you for featuring the artwork of Taral Wayne (T&T #124) on the cover. His death at the end of July came as quite a shock and surprise, and I hope that his family was able to find the help they needed to manage his fanzine collection, artwork, and other belongings. I will miss his friendship, email correspondence, and new artwork and fanzines. Do you have any idea where his fanzines and artwork ended up?

In *In the Meantime*, William McCabe updated eAPAs on his health situation. What you've been experiencing seems like it might be more than indigestion—just that would be ideal, no?—so I'm curious about the results of your recent tests. We, too, have been watching more television than usual. Between the Olympics, the Democratic National Convention, and other programs such as *Agatha Christie's Poirot* and *Doctor Who* ("The Sensorites" most recently), the TV has been well watched.

We've had our son, Jonah, home from college in Tokyo for the summer. He spent most of his time staying with his mother, who lives about 45 minutes away, but we saw him several weekends. He and my wife watched more of the Olympics than I did—she'd recently edited an unscripted nonfiction TV show about competitive sprinting—and there was more conversation about sports in our household than ever before. (She's now working on a program about horse racing, so we might go to a local racetrack in the months to come.)

Your comments to Henry Grynnssten about zombies intrigued me. There seem to be two common approaches: zombies as mindless undead, the living returned to life with undead hungers; and the living stripped of consciousness, intelligence, and reason as you describe. Both seem to be driven by "animal urges," though the latter type might be less so, and more prone to guidance or manipulation (your "instructed zombie").

I thoroughly enjoyed Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*. (*The N3F Review*

of Books, November 2022) It definitely resonates with Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, which is still worth reading. It's interesting that *The Space Merchants* preceded it by four years! Is someone really planning to remake *Barbarella*? Indeed they are. (<https://tinyurl.com/Barbarella-remake>) That surprises me, but I suppose it makes sense—even though I think it's a mistake. *Barbarella* is an artifact of its time. To remake it, they'll have to totally avoid some of the aspects that make it what it is, or do something else largely unrelated. Regardless, there have been a number of *Barbarella* comic books in recent years. (<https://tinyurl.com/Barbarella-comics>) I've read some (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #7), and while fun, they're not as good as the original comics by Jean-Claude Forest. Your remarks on the original use of the phrase "science fiction" were appreciated.

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ROBERT TAYLOR RICHARD WIDMARK **AW AND JAKE WADE** CINEMASCOPE and METROCOLOR

Los Angeles Times, June 27, 1958

Henry Grynnssten's *Wild Ideas* #50 addressed the "emptiness of psychedelic drugs," a timely topic given the growing availability of mushroom-infused edibles and similar food products. Your invocation of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poetry made me grin. Are you feeling like *Wild Ideas* has run its course? I'm not

aware of any fanzines you published before starting *Wild Ideas* in 2020, but it seems to me that you've likely had another fanzine in you in the past and that you will again in the future. I've toyed with the idea of changing my fanzine titles in recent months, and I know some apa faneds who change their title every ish. It's all the same to me. After all, what we do is just One Big Fanzine anyway.



Los Angeles Times, June 27, 1958

Your comment to William McCabe about “the new tech that requires the skill to hold up a credit card to a machine to pay” reminded me of the first time I tapped to pay at the post office. I merely touched my credit card to the payment terminal, not where the tap to pay icon was located, and the clerk had to show me where to tap. That was about a year ago, and I was a little embarrassed. Yes, I'd never done it before. Yes, I'm in my 50s—not that that matters. But I work for a Big Tech company and, to be honest, I felt like I should have known better. Regardless, that hardly counts as a skill I'd die without, but the remark resonated.

It intrigued me that you made the distinction between the likelihood of alien life and the likelihood of intelligent alien life. I know you've written about the latter before. Have you written about the former?

If so, I'll have to revisit those issues. I'd love to learn more about your take on the likelihood of unintelligent alien life. I'll revisit “Reversoprop” in *Wild Ideas* #26; that might have been before I came in. Maybe there's even a monotheistic, intelligent alien named Heath!

Our exchange about unlimited progress reminded me that Ray Kurzweil has a new book out: *The Singularity Is Nearer*. We might have already addressed it, but I'm curious whether you've read it yet. He seems to be one of the—if not the—primary proponents of symptotic evolution. Based on the limited sample of you and Ahrvid Engholm, half of Sweden is interested in the Eurovision Song Contest.

Your remark to Garth Spencer—“What I'm annoyed about is the demands they make to have the latest app that requires the latest phone, so that you have to buy new phones to be able to handle everyday tasks like vaccinations and bank matters.”—resonated with me. I still have a Pixel 3 mobile phone, which came out in 2018 and was discontinued in 2020. That's a two-year lifespan, and I've been using it for four more years. Its display has been cracked in the corner for some time, but it doesn't interfere with using the phone, so I'll use it until I can't any more.

My parents, who are in their early 80s, often express frustration with being directed to use a phone app to do something. They don't have a smart phone and don't want one. It concerns me that so many services oriented toward the aging rely on technology they might not have access to. Planned obsolescence, technological determinism, and insisting that human behavior change to accommodate new technologies seems to be a chump's game to me.

I was intrigued by your comment about “being an expert at how to sit at a supermarket checkout.” Unless that person has worked at many grocery stores—or checkouts are largely the same store to store—they might be an expert at how to sit at a particular store or chain's checkout rather than being an expert more broadly. Regardless, extreme specialization can still result in expertise, so I might be splitting hairs.

In regards to your discussion of ADHD diagnoses, I've also heard stories of people seeking such diagnoses, assessing their situation and status, and then requesting that the formal diagnosis not be made—so they could learn to manage their lives better, but not be hindered by any such diagnosis. That seems like it might work well in situations in which the available services or accommodations resulting from such a diagnosis greatly outweigh any limitations, restrictions, or stigma.

Your introduction to “Psychedelic Coney Island”

reminded me of an old joke about the Grateful Dead. One variant goes as follows:

Q: What did Jerry Garcia say when he came out of rehab?

A: Man, this music sucks!

I've long romanticized psychedelic drugs, though I've never taken them. While I'd presumed there were more positive benefits than you outline, your essay makes a compelling case that there aren't any. I'll have to do some light research myself—a literature review, not actual experimentation myself, mind you—to see what more I can learn.

In *Intermission* #145, **Ahrvid Engholm** announced the publication of *NATO 2099*. (<https://www.ndc.nato.int/nato2099>) For some reason, I never made the connection between Emanuel Swedenborg and Sweden—though he was born there! Interesting that the surname has nothing to do with the country. It's interesting to me that he wrote material that borders on—if not qualifies as—science fiction. Your excerpts made me think about Alice Bailey and the Theosophists, who were occasionally sympathetic toward Swedenborg.

Thank you for your conrep on Finncon. 1,000 participants seems like an impressive number! While I appreciated your general comments on current cons and their challenges, I would have liked more reportage on Finncon itself. Regardless, it was welcome commentary.

As always, the History Corner intrigued me. I appreciated your discussion of Christopher Polhem and the possibility that he was Sweden's first sf author. I'll have to return to this piece. I also enjoyed the commentary on artificial languages, airships, and fannish slang from the 1980s. And your exploration of the films of George Melies offered plenty of fodder for independent or shared viewing.

Garth Spencer's *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #224 offered another piece of art by Taral Wayne. Thank you for your memorial to him; it included information I hadn't encountered in other sources. The responses you received to your *Facebook* question about fannish fandom were thought provoking. I'll have to return to them to garner additional ideas.

But I wonder: As much as I enjoy fandom, what is the purpose of fandom, to perpetuate itself as such, or to recognize and celebrate the fun and wonder inherent in speculative fiction and media? The answer might actually be "Both." Isn't there enough room in fandom for fannish fen and less fannish fen? I think there is, but the latter might not serve as as strong a

proponent for the perpetuation of fandom. At least in the form we know it and love it, and have gotten used to it. For fandom to survive, fandom needs to evolve, and we need to stay along for the ride. Unless we choose not to, in which case we have no cause to complain. Fandom will move on without us. If we choose to stick around, we can do our best to influence and inspire it, but the fanarchism that fandom is won't accept us as either gods or masters. That the discussion took place on the *Facebook* is instructive.

If anyone is interested in the apae directory Spencer and I compiled, you can access it at <https://tinyurl.com/bluemoonspecial2024>. We'll issue the next edition in 2025.

In Defense of Democracy

Even though most of the readers of eAPA live outside the United States, many of the readers of *The Stf Amateur* are American. So I'll add a little text to fill out this page. After breakfast with friends a couple of weekends ago—and dinner with the same friends after an art exhibit opening late this month—my wife and I were inspired by the Democratic National Convention to do what we can to help mobilize voters for the upcoming election.

So we're writing letters encouraging people to vote, using tools offered by Vote Forward. (<https://votefwd.org>) It's nonpartisan and doesn't name any specific candidates—just encourages recipients to vote. My wife mailed her first 20 letters in late August, and I'll do so in early October. Vote!



Los Angeles Times, July 4, 1958

The UFO Checklist

The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a group of small press creators who come together to support and encourage each other, and to promote higher standards of quality in small press. Applicants may contact Chairman Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle/ Orlando, FL 32821 (stevekeeter@gmail.com). Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags>. Newsletter \$3.50 for non-members, \$20 for 6-issue subscription.



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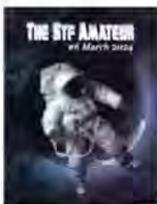
discussed: the Smiths, New Order, the Killers, and more. A cool personal zine dripping with soul.

FANZINE TWO (\$4.00 ppd from Tom Fellrath/ 8031 Griswold Drive/ New Albany, OH 43054; or to paypal.me/tdfellrath.) This is Tom Fellrath's "mixtape" book of bands and music which influenced him when he was a DJ during the cutting edge alternative days of the late 80s/early 90s. Among those discussed: the Smiths, New Order, the Killers, and more. A cool personal zine dripping with soul.



cane realm of Jynmond, a land. . . just one millionth of a step beyond the darkest shadows of our twilight." Joe Carrales gives us an incredible adventure of Mari and Niko, also featuring Ryan Howatt's Badger. And Trish Ellis' front cover is a stunner!

THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #10 (can be ordered for \$10 through PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com, or you can email marisolinskikitty@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) "Behold," begins the epic story in this landmark 10th issue, " the strange and arcane realm of Jynmond, a land. . . just one millionth of a step beyond the darkest shadows of our twilight." Joe Carrales gives us an incredible adventure of Mari and Niko, also featuring Ryan Howatt's Badger. And Trish Ellis' front cover is a stunner!



Heath Row's STF AMATEUR is always an absorbing read, featuring articles, reviews of sf and comics, books and publications, fiction and more. An interesting addition is a short sf story written during Heath's teenage years about a bright light and aliens disturbing his sleep.

THE STF AMATEUR #6 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230, or, PayPal to kalel@well.com or @Hrow . Outside US rates inquire via email. You can request a Free PDF available @ <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>)



THE STF AMATEUR #7 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) The 7th issue of Heath Row's amazing apazine includes an examination by the editor on the relationship between science fiction and culture, discussion of the Corflu Convention in Las Vegas, and much more. SF in cinema

over the decades is also examined. Many zine and book reviews are included, as well as artwork by Brad Foster, Blaise Moritz, Al Sirois, and many more.



to Portugal, a botched food delivery in Newark, and ultimate arrival safe and sound. So much more is included: a review of the FLASH movie, Heath's own "Juvenalia" writings, sf newspaper comics reprints, and more!

THE STF AMATEUR #8 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) The issue begins with reviews of both UFO zines and "pro-zines," and has wonderful reprints of sf/horror cinema ads (ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS, 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH, etc). The editor discusses his trip



joke strips from some of the finest (funniest) talents in small press. Starting with a riotous Allen Freeman cover, we are presented with work from Larned Justin, Matt Feazell, Jason DeGroot, the late Larry Blake, Tony Lorenz, Joe Carrales, John Muller, and many more!

STRANGE TIMES #5 (\$10 on Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/strangetimes5> .

Or, you can request a free PDF copy from <https://phoenixprods.gumroad.com/strangetimes5>.) In a gorgeously produced full size comic anthology, editor Tom Fellrath assembles a variety of



unexpected results. One of the most exciting comics you'll read this year!

TALES OF THE BROKEN B #5 (\$6.50 postpaid from Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Rd., Hyde Park, MA 02136, or \$6.50 postpaid ordered through via PayPal from LewBrown1@verizon.net) The new issue of Larry Johnson's full color sf/fantasy/western adventure comic presents the story of "Nina." In a full-length adventure, romance and the supernatural come together for tragic and



dimension hopping entities in a strange cosmic adventure, presented in full color. Ian himself appears in a wild back-up strip!

TIMETRVLR #24 (\$1.50 from Ian Shires, Dimestore Productions, 1546 Yale Ave., Madison, OH 44057. To order via PayPal, go to <https://indifestusa.com/product/timetrvlr-24/> --Ask Ian about IndyFest!)

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