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AMATEUR

NOVEMBER 2024



The Stf Amateur 14

November 2024

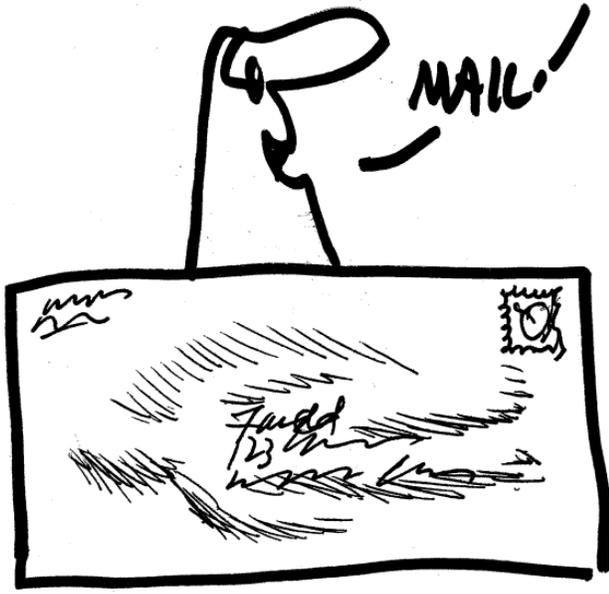
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You can learn more about cover artist Greg Calvert at <https://www.gregcalvertdesign.com>.

The Stf Amateur is a bundlezine 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 members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) and the Fanac Fan History Project (<https://fanac.org>), as well as for the Usual. Letters of comment, cover art, and spot illustrations are welcome and desired—as are other contributions. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

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—William Rotsler

William Breiding

I assume you returned from NYC safely, with googlishous mission accomplished.

[Indeed I did! You can read some about my travels there in thish of *The Stf Amateur!*—HR]

In further discussion of horror, I have to agree with Cy Chauvin that reading about H.P. Lovecraft is far more interesting than actually reading him. HPL has been a part of my psyche since maybe the age of thirteen. My brother Sutton's best friend, Gary Warne, was a big HPL fan as well as all other horror writers, dating back to the early Gothic writers to the present, which would have then been the late sixties and very early seventies. Gary had a huge impact on my reading habits. So I am drenched and steeped in the Mythos. But when it came to actually reading HPL, I suffered. Sure, there were some stories—"The Music of Erich Zann," "The Cats of Ulthar," "Pickman's Model," "The Rats in the Walls"—that I found readable, but those were not typical of his style—but homages to other authors. Even supposed classics like "The Colour out of Space" I find rather daft, let alone the hardcore Mythos stories. I have off and on owned books by HPL and Clark Ashton Smith, who was shamefully purple, and have always failed in my attempts at reading and enjoying them. Call me weird.

[You're weird, sir.

Seriously, though, I do enjoy reading Lovecraft, Smith, and the rest. Partly for the stories, partly for

their craft, partly for how their fiction makes me feel, and partly because of the perhaps romantic impression I have of their community of writers, the Lovecraft Circle. I also appreciate that Lovecraft was an avid correspondent, an antiquarian, and an amateur journalist—all qualities that inspire and captivate me. He lived in two parts of the country I've also resided in: New England and Brooklyn. Boston's not exactly Providence, Rhode Island, but there are similarities. And while living in the Boston area, I did make it to Providence several times, though not as often as I should have.—HR]

Looking over the filmography of David Cronenberg, I see an early movie I had never heard of, released the same year as *The Brood*, *Fast Company*, which is a drag racing movie (!). His work since 2000 has been exemplary, with the possible exception of *Cosmopolis*, which is a plotless existential mess starring Robert Pattinson, but the damned thing sure does sparkle. You say you enjoyed "even" *eXistenZ*, but I found that film narcotic and returned to see it again the next day.

[I shall have to revisit that flick!—HR]

A word about libraries and bookstores—I was always a bookstore kinda guy. I am a slow reader, and a moody one—I have to be in the mood—so having to check a book out and read it on a timeline just never worked for me.

[My wife quite enjoys receiving long-ago reserved books on her Kindle, not entirely remembering why she reserved a given title. I quite dislike needing to return books by a certain date, though I'm thankful that the libraries in our area have largely done away with late fees.—HR]

As a coot, I now want to read current releases without owning them, and did so with Tucson's awesome library system. Albuquerque's library system, unfortunately, went heavily digital at some point. And I have never been able to comfortably read anything but shorter works on a screen. So that pretty much sucks for me. But like most fans, I have a library of many unread books—so it's off to the shelf for a perusal these days. I have John Fowles's *The Magus* sitting there waiting to be read since May 1971 when my sister Joan gifted it—when I was 14. Granted, I was always reading beyond my comprehension level from an early age, so Joan thought I could handle it, but my subconscious said no. One of these days, eh?

I had a humorous reaction to your discussion with Garth Spencer about ham radio and fans. I suddenly

saw Charles Burpee and Redd Boggs hamming up and down the California coast. Or maybe Terry Carr and Ted White, Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov, or Harry Warner and Sam Moskowitz! Current day hammers might be Nic Farey and Andy Hooper.

[Methinks there's a faan fiction story idea here!—HR]

Allen Callaci's review of *Free LSD* was fun. The trailer for it looks pretty damned ludicrous, right up there with *Two Thousand Maniacs!* I'd never heard of Night Flight. But then I didn't own a TV and was too busy going to actual live shows, and saw all the bands he name checked at live venues. I did think that it was an interesting morph when some SoCal punk bands started wending jazz—Black Flag, All, Big Drill Car, the Mommyheads (NYC/SF band, and more early pop-punk—but they totally jazzed out in their later works). I felt there was an irony to that because punk started out in reaction to rock 'n' roll getting too damned complicated.

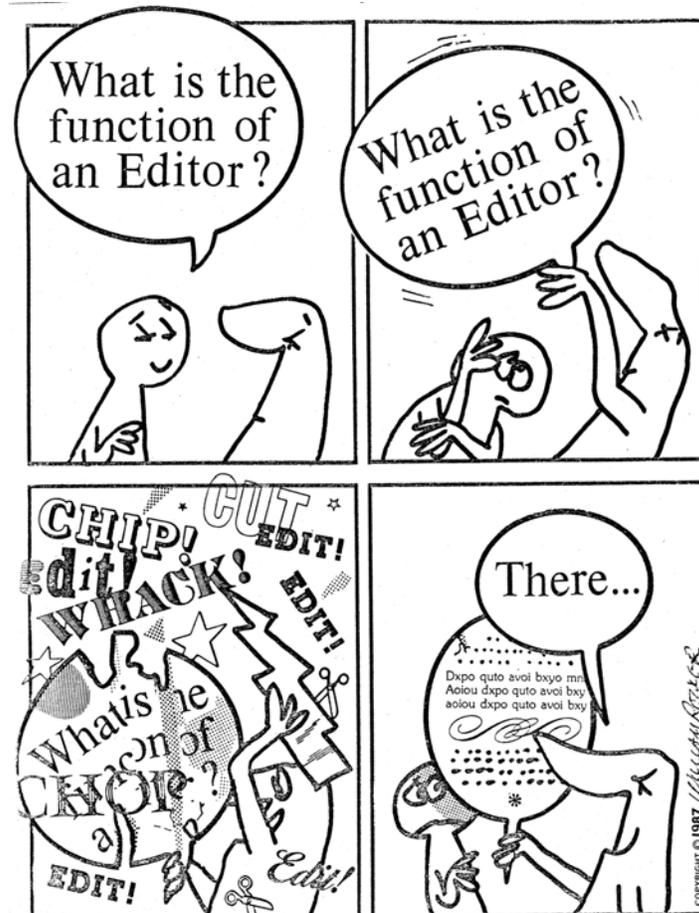
[If you like the jazz leanings of the above bands, you might also enjoy Bazooka and Dingle, both of which are adjacent.—HR]

I'm going to ignore most of your Ignorable Themes this issue except to say I agree with you pretty well wholeheartedly about what a fanzine is, and the current majority Hugo fanzine winners are not fanzines. That's okay—all things change. I'm not bitter. And re: podcasts. I can't stand them when they are just people sitting around chatting. I've often wondered if that has to do with my antisocial propensities.

I study the vintage movie ads every issue. They are a marvel. They give the old adage “coming to a theater near you” real meaning. It's amazing how many theaters will be listed for just one movie.

[I enjoy exploring those ads, as well. Glad you get a kick out of them.—HR]

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 #133

Oct. 4, 2024

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted 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

Family visits.

Dinner table discussion:
old-time radio!

It's been a busy couple of weeks between my day job's workload, my wife's birthday, visiting family, and business travel. Last week, when emailing the APA-L distribution, I recognized a brief conversation with my brother-in-law at the dinner table about podcasts and old-time radio. It was nice to discover that we shared that interest and experience.

APA-L Milestones

I became official collator of APA-L 100 distributions ago, starting with #2989 dated Sept. 29, 2022. This week's distribution, delayed a day because of business travel, is #3089. It's been a good 100 distributions. Thank you for your involvement and participation.

The very first distribution of APA-L, #1, was dated Oct. 22, 1964, so this month marks our 60th anniversary as an amateur press association. The upcoming distribution closest to our actual anniversary will be that for Oct. 24, 2024, #3092. We can consider that our 60th anniversary distribution!

Trip Report: New York City

Monday morning, I woke around 4 a.m. to get ready for the day and finish packing before the arrival of a 5:15 car to the airport. Both my mother- and brother-in-law—who've been visiting—were awake and moving about the house at one point or another while I was preparing to leave, so I got to say goodbye again before heading to the airport.

Arriving a little early for my flight, I perused a newsstand. I'd brought plenty of reading material, including the two most recent APA-L distributions in case I had time to write at the hotel, so I didn't buy any magazines. But I was tempted enough by the current issues of *The Economist*, *The New Yorker*, and *PC Gamer*, that I found downloadable versions online for later reading on my tablet. The Sept. 21, 2024,

edition of *The Economist* features a cover story on artificial intelligence, and the October 2024 issue of *PC Gamer* includes an article on developing a new, fictional language for the game *Tunic*. I was expecting a piece on writing in-game literature for video games, but that might be in the American edition of the magazine rather than the UK edition, which I downloaded. I shall continue to look for the article that piqued my interest.

While waiting for my flight, I finished two books, John Dalmas's *Fanglith* and A. Bertram Chandler's *Star Courier*, which I'll review soon. I messaged a fannish friend in Portugal and wrote an email to William Breiding. I was feeling particularly fannish that morning.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 14, 1958

The flight to New York City and the taxi ride into Manhattan were largely uneventful. I slept, read the first 44 pages of Charles L. Harness's *The Ring of Ritornel*, and wondered why there was so little food on the flight: beverage service, pretzels, and little graham cookies. I was tired, I was hungry, and it was a long travel day—from a 4 a.m. PT wake time to a 6 p.m. ET arrival at the hotel on 24th Street between 6th and 7th avenues. I took a short rest in my room before going to a cocktail mixer for the work event I was there to participate in.

The work days were full: a two-day gathering of about 150 insights professionals and marketing

researchers from around the world, followed by a one-day gathering of my immediate team, including several new teammates. Despite several evening activities, I still made time to walk around my old work neighborhood—I used to work at the Chelsea office in the old Port Authority Building and in Chelsea Market before moving to Los Angeles—and explore other parts of New York.

Tuesday evening, I walked back to the hotel before returning to the office neighborhood for a dinner event. On the way back to the hotel, I happened upon 192 Books on 10th Avenue at 21st Street. My eyes were drawn to a book in the window, and inside, I was impressed by the well-curated stock of the shop, largely philosophy, cultural criticism, art, and related books. I didn't see any science fiction, though the future was present.

I picked up Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*—appropriate reading in the city that never sleeps. (Review forthcoming!) The book in the window was the Jeanne Gerrity- and Anthony Huberman-edited anthology *Where Are the Tiny Revolts?*, which includes memoir, theoretical essays, art analyses, poetry, and fiction, largely inspired by or adjacent to the New Narrative movement. At the checkout, they had several editions from the new line of Hanuman Editions (<https://hanumaneditions.com>), a 2023 return to the wonderful pocket-sized book series published by Raymond Foye and Francesco Clemente in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I enjoyed a brief conversation with the people working in the shop, both of whom knew Foye, and will return the next time I'm in town.

The evening event was held at Artechouse (<https://www.artechouse.com/location/nyc>), which specializes in exhibiting large-format digital art primarily through immersive projections. Highlights while I was there with colleagues included *Life of a Neuron*, a collaboration with the Society for Neuroscience, and Julius Horsthuis's mind-bending *Geometric Properties*, which includes elements reminiscent of M.C. Escher and H.R. Giger. A co-worker remarked that it reminded him of H.P. Lovecraft, and I was inspired to reach out to a friend I haven't talked to for some time, Scott Draves, a software artist who concentrates on generative art. (<https://scottdraves.com>)

“Since the 19th century, science fiction and sociology have examined how industry and economics affect what it means to be human. ... [S]ociologists focus on the roles that economics, the different ways of structuring a society and technology play in creating ... trends.”—*The Conversation*, Oct. 2, 2024



Geometric Properties



More Geometric Properties

Before returning to the hotel, I walked around my old work neighborhood to check on the ongoing survival of one of my favorite greasy-spoon restaurants—and the best newsstand in New York City. La Bonbonniere is still located at 28 8th Ave. but was closed for the day. And Casa Magazines (22 8th

Ave.) has now been in business for 75 years, the staff told me. I was relieved that it didn't close during the pandemic and remain impressed by its selection of music and movie magazines, art and literary journals, fashion magazines, international press, and queer periodicals. They even shelve several prozines.

Because I already subscribe to *Asimov's*, I picked up two different mystery magazines, an issue of *Idler* (<https://www.idler.co.uk>), and the first issue of *Digital Frontier* (<https://digitalfrontier.newsstand.co.uk>), which looks intriguing. I did not pick up Lürzer's Archive's hefty *200 Best Digital Artists 2023*, though I did thumb through it to see whether generative artists were represented. (They did not seem to be.)



Prozines at Casa Magazines

I had reached out to two fannish acquaintances hoping to see them while I was in town, but Ted White doesn't live in New York City—he lives outside Washington, D.C.!—and Moshe Feder was otherwise occupied. Regardless, both were game to connect the next time I find myself nearby.

On Wednesday, I didn't have time to enjoy my once-customary breakfast of egg and cheese on a roll from a street cart on the walk to work, and I didn't have time for exploration in the evening because my team participated in a dinner activity, a Selfup cooking class down by Battery Park in which we made our own mozzarella and personal Napolese pizzas.

Thursday morning, however, I did have time to pick up an egg and cheese on a roll—and coffee, though it wasn't served in the traditional blue, Greek-styled paper cup—before my work day began. And as soon as the day was over at 4:30 p.m., I headed to the subway bound for Williamsburg and Greenpoint, Brooklyn. At the subway station, I encountered the future, and I was well prepared.

When I lived in New York City, from 2004-2009, stored-value cards and weekly or monthly passes for the subway were still in use, though tokens had been outmoded. (Somewhere, I still have my last subway token.) I'd asked a colleague where and how to obtain such a card or pass, and he told me they are no longer used. Now, you can pay using Apple Pay, Google Wallet, and similar mobile services, as well as using a credit card at the turnstiles. You are charged your fare, and if you take 12 rides over the course of a week, the rest of the week is free—as long as you use the same payment method. So I reached the subway platform using my mobile—perhaps my first use of Google Wallet for a payment.

Before I moved to Los Angeles, Williamsburg was already gentrifying, but Greenpoint had not yet. My arrival in Williamsburg astounded me. I'd never seen so many people on the street, and the neighborhood was full of new (to me) restaurants and shops. The energetic street life reminded me of Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, though more bourgeois than what I experienced in the Bay Area in the early 1990s. There are also more bookstores in Williamsburg than there were when I lived in adjacent Greenpoint. I walked past Spoonbill & Sugartown Books on the way to Book Thug Nation, an Aaron Cometbus co-owned shop, to meet my friend Graham Smith, who publishes *Basic Square* and performs music. (<https://kleenexgirlwonder.bandcamp.com/community>) Book Thug Nation shelves science fiction to the left as you enter.

Smith and I went on a bit of a nostalgia walk through my old neighborhood, north on Bedford Avenue along the edge of McCarren Park toward

Greenpoint (Film Noir Cinema’s old rental shop has relocated and expanded), where we turned on to Nassau Avenue to approach my old apartment on Russell Street along the edge of McGolrick Park. Many of the places my wife and I used to frequent—the Polish mailing station, the green grocer, the bakery where we’d buy *paçzki*, and other locations—were still nestled among the new higher-end bars, restaurants, and shops. I’d estimate that perhaps 40-50 percent of the old Greenpoint I remember is still there.

There were some notable exceptions. The corner building in which Bea and Louie had their diner and ice cream counter has been torn down and rebuilt as apartments, the Lutheran church I’d sometimes attend—and which hosted the local community-supported agriculture distribution—has closed, as has (I think) the wash-and-fold laundry around the corner on Driggs Avenue. The grocery store we frequented is now a Met Foods—that might not have changed, actually—and the Busy Bee Food Exchange, where we’d buy homemade pierogi, closed last fall. Regardless, a few of the traditional Polish eateries remain. That was wonderful to see.

Smith and I parted ways at McGuinness Boulevard so he could head home to make dinner, and I continued back through McCarren Park along Lorimer Street to Metropolitan Avenue. There, Smith said, I’d find additional bookstores worth exploring, including Quimby’s Bookstore NYC (<https://quimbysnyc.com>), which Steven Svymbersky opened about seven years ago after relocating from Amsterdam. I used to frequent Quimby’s in Chicago (<https://www.quimbys.com>) in the early 1990s, and they at one time sold my then-mundane zine *Karma Lapel*. It’s a very impressive shop, stocking many zines, as well as books, and I enjoyed talking with Ruby at the counter—and meeting the store cat, Grace.



Next door is Desert Island Comics (<https://www.desertislandbrooklyn.com>), where I met owner Gabe Fowler, editor of *Smoke Signal* (<https://www.desertislandbrooklyn.com/smoke-signal>). He’s also teaching a class on zines at the Cooper Union, drawing on Gavin Hogg and Hamish Ironside’s book *We Peaked at Paper*, which includes an interview with Rob Hansen to contextualize mundane zines as an outgrowth of their precursor, sf fanzines. That he knew Hansen’s writing was fortuitous. On the subway ride home to the hotel in Manhattan, I sent Fowler copies of *The Stf Amateur*, APA-L, and links to fannish resources such as efanzines.com, the *Fanac Fan History Project*, and a few Hansen-related Web sites. I look forward to talking to Fowler again.

Returning to the hotel, I had a late dinner before packing to prepare for my departure. I scheduled a 7 a.m. pickup to the airport, and my return trip to Los Angeles was uneventful. I slept, listened to music—having curated my iPod downloads while in New York—and read more of *Where Are the Tiny Revolts?*, having finished 24/7 while in the city that never sleeps.

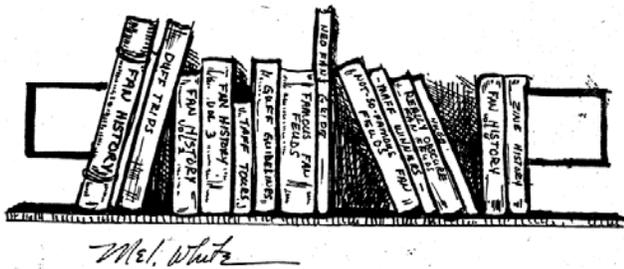
While in the taxi to John F. Kennedy International Airport, we drove past Greenpoint again, and I was able to see the new Domino Sugar Refinery and other skysrise development along the East River. The future exists in New York City, in its bookstores and subway stations, and in Williamsburg and Greenpoint. Luckily, so does enough of the past that it wasn’t entirely unfamiliar. I don’t know that I’d like living in Greenpoint now—even though the apartment is still there and redevelopment hasn’t yet reached too far east of McGuinness—but I sure enjoyed visiting.

“I became a fan of Harlan Ellison long after his heyday, long after he’d established himself not only as an uncommonly good science fiction writer, but also as a funny, unreasonable, ambitious, prolific pain in the ass. Therefore, from where I sat, the saga of the notoriously unfinished third volume of his purported trilogy of groundbreaking speculative fiction anthologies, *The Last Dangerous Visions* (following the genuinely influential and genre-altering *Dangerous Visions* (1967) and *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972)), was over and done with. All anyone could do by the time I’d gotten to it was wonder what had happened, and trace the development, and crumbling away of, this book through Ellison’s own periodic references to it in his various columns and essays.”—*The Bulwark*, Oct. 4, 2024

The Brass Hat Mind #9

Oct. 7, 2024

The Brass Hat Mind is an apazine published by Blasted 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 the Spectator Amateur Press 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.



From the Reading Pile: Speculative Poetry and George Sterling

The first weekend in October, after returning from business travel to New York City (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #133), I caught up on reading several recent publications from the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association (<https://www.sfpoetry.com>). I've been a member since October 2022—inspired to join after meeting Jean-Paul L. Garnier and Wendy Van Camp—but I don't always read the association's publications immediately after their arrival in the mail.

Having done so relatively soon after receiving the last few, that's a practice that I should change. SFPA publications are wonderful, and I should prioritize reading them. Quarterly, the association publishes *Star*Line*, its journal. The Summer 2024 edition is Vol. 47 #3 (e.g. 47.3).

Membership in the SFPA secures you four issues a year, and non-members can subscribe otherwise. While Garnier currently serves as editor, he'll relinquish that post in the near future to focus his efforts and energy on the recently relaunched *Worlds of If* (<https://worldsofifmagazine.com>) and *Galaxy Science Fiction* (<https://galaxysf.com>), and other publishing projects such as his own Space Cowboy Books. (<https://spacecowboybooks.com>)

The Summer 2024 issue is a solid example of what to expect from *Star*Line*. The most recent edition includes an editorial column, SFPA announcements—primarily awards voting opportunities and the association's new generative artificial intelligence policy—a message from the president, small press reviews (including the Emily Hockaday-edited *Analog* and *Asimov's* poetry anthology), a column about speculative poetry in non-genre settings, and an interview with A.J. Odasso on behalf of *Strange Horizons'* poetry department.

That content reminded me of Dustbooks' now-defunct *Small Press Review*, for which I once wrote. *Star*Line* serves as a specpo market and review guide as well as the SFPA's literary journal. It looks outward as well as inward.

The look inward—to showcase members' poetry—has obvious merit and value, and is *Star*Line's* primary purpose. This issue features almost 90 poems, often offering several on a single page. Poetry includes short- and long-form works, as well as even smaller poems such as haiku (scifaiku) and senryu. Its content is a good representation of the range of poetry pursued by speculative poets active in the SFPA.

Occasionally, I found *Star*Line's* page design confusing, with longer poems continuing on a subsequent page even if the previous page's second column included other poems. (The second column is narrower than the first.) One soon becomes able to read through such jumps without distraction, so it's not an ongoing problem—it just requires journal-specific navigational literacy.

In terms of the poetry, I was impressed by contributions from Richard Leis, Ian Li, A.J. Dalton, Matthew Wilson, F.G. Bergmann, Audrey Sullivan, Robin Wyatt Dunn, John Reinhart (two pieces), Eric Brown, Garrett Carroll, Jeffery Allen Tobin, Daniel Gene Barlekamp, Brian Hugenbruch, Pixie Bruner, Casey Aimer, and Yuliia Vereta. Two contributors drew inspiration from sf media such as *Farscape* and *Blake's 7*; the results were far from fan fiction.

Before joining the SFPA—I can hardly say I'm involved—my understanding of specpo was limited to Bruce Boston's work in the prozines. *Star*Line* suggests that there's a wide range of

creative voices currently active. The topics and themes they address and explore also vary widely.

NOW PLAYING! All Over Town!

SHE-BEASTS of VENUS

Fantastic man-destroying females of a forbidden planet!

QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE

ZSA ZSA GABOR • ERIC FLEMING • LAURIE MITCHELL • LISA DAVIS
Produced by BEN SCHWALZ • Directed by EDWARD BERGOS • Script by CHARLES BEADWORTH
An ALLIED ARTISTS Picture

COLOR BY CINEMASCOPE

Plus The KING of MONSTERS!
BORIS KARLOFF

"FRANKENSTEIN 1970"

The THING That Will Frighten Your Children's Children!

Starring TOM DIXON, JANA LIND, DONALD BARRY
Produced by ARBEEY SCHENCK • Directed by EDWARD W. ROUCH
Screenplay by RICHARD LANGAU and GEORGE WORTHINGTON YATES

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES 613 S. Broadway BL. 1-4111 Open 11:30 A.M.	HOLLYWOOD IRIS 6508 Hollywood HO. 3-2114 Cont. Daily 12-15	UNITED ARTISTS HOLLYWOOD OL. 7-1177-Open 1 Fri. Open All Night	STANLEY-WALKER HUNTINGTON PARK 6714 Pacific Blvd. US. 5-0944 Cont. Open House
GLENDALE CAPITOL THEATRE CL. 6-1611 Only 7-1 Sat. Sun. 1pm	SANTA MONICA MAJESTIC 214 Santa Monica EX. 5-3469	EAST L.A. CENTER 6742 Whittier AN. 9-8332	Wesmore-Imperial RIO PL. 4-2095 Only 6-12 Sat. Sun. 1 FREE PARK
SAN PERRINO LAUREL DRIVE-IN SA. 9-3588	SOUTH GATE SOUTH GATE DRIVE-IN LO. 4-1137	EL MONTE EL MONTE DRIVE-IN OL. 9-4422	MONROVIA BIG SKY DRIVE-IN OL. 9-3565
SAN PEDRO SAN PEDRO DRIVE-IN TE. 1-4379			

"Queen of Outer Space" and "Frankenstein 1970" also at

STATE Theatre Long Beach	ANAHEIM Drive-In Anaheim	DI ANZA Theatre Evenside
BROADWAY Theatre Santa Ana	BEL AIR Drive-In Fontana	UNITED ARTISTS Fontana
CIRCLE Drive-In Long Beach	RITZ Theatre San Bernardino	VALLEY Drive-In Ontario

Los Angeles Times, Nov. 14, 1958

I also read the Brittany Hause-edited *Dwarf Stars 2024*, an annual SFPA anthology intended to showcase the best “very short” specpo—fewer than 10 lines or 100 words (for prose poems)—published in the last year. SFPA members also use the anthology to vote for the Dwarf Stars Award. In her Editor’s Note, Hause suggests that “short-form speculative verse ... [is] an unusually welcoming point of entry for writers just beginning to test the waters of ... publishing.”

Even though the content of *Dwarf Stars* is entirely dedicated to poetry, it can also serve as a market guide. In the Table of Contents, the source of original publication for each piece is identified. Of the poems included in this edition’s 30 pages, almost 20 pieces were first published in *Star*Line*. A few appeared previously in the top three prozines: *Analog*, *Asimov’s*, and *F&SF*. A couple were in *Space & Time* and *Uncanny*—and the bulk of the publications were otherwise entirely new to me. If you enjoy specpo—and are new to it—*Dwarf Stars* will identify plenty of new reading options. For example, for fans of horror-inspired senryu, there’s the efficiently descriptive *horror senryu journal*.

While I missed the deadline to vote, I read every poem in this edition. I was particularly struck by work offered by Lorraine Schein, Herb Kauderer (three pieces), Ed Brickell, Greg Schwartz, Cherie Hunter Day, Beatrice Winifred Iker, Anna Cates, Jessy Randall, Akua Leslie Hope, Roger Dutcher, Barun Saha, Xiao Xi, Jean Jones, Russell Nichols, John J. Dunphy, Shelli Jankowski-Smith, John C. Mannone, Shelly Jones, Mark J. Mitchell, Eugen Bacon, Peter Payak, David C. Kopaska-Merkel, Mahaila Smith, D.A. Xiaolin Spires, Ian Willey, and Lauren McBride. That gives me additional names to look for in the future. (Bruce Boston was also included in the mix.)

In addition to the wide range of writers, topics, and themes, *Dwarf Stars* also broadened my understanding of specpo. Not only do people write haiku and senryu, this edition included multiple poetic sentence fragments—one-line poems. I found those especially intriguing as an entry point.

Finally, the SFPA also publishes *The Rhysling Anthology* annually to showcase short and long

poems first published in the preceding year. At 133 pages, *The 2024 Rhysling Anthology* features 50 short poems and 25 long poems—and additional poems not included in the book also qualify for voting. (This anthology is used by SFPA members to vote for the Rhysling Award.)

Similar to *Dwarf Stars*, the Rhysling anthology is also useful as a market guide. In addition to acknowledging the included poems' sources of publication, the full lists of 98 short poems and 62 long poems nominated are also cited. Of those printed in this volume, a few first appeared in *Star*Line*, a few were originally published in *Asimov's* or *F&SF*, and a few were drawn from *Uncanny*, *On Spec* and *Weird Tales* each showed up in the list, and the remainder of sources was entirely new to me.

While I've yet to read the 25 long poems included—I read a lot of poetry that afternoon!—the 50 short poems identified multiple poets whose work intrigued me. Those writers included Emily Ruth Verona, Jack Cooper, Susan L. Lin, Mahaila Smith, Linda D. Addison, Marcie Lynn Tentchoff, Myna Chang, Casey Aimer, Marisca Pichette, and F.J. Bergmann (two pieces). The short poems represent less than half of the anthology in terms of page count.

Speculative poetry seems to be a rich, vibrant field. The SFPA is just one outlet for its practitioners. And the range of voices available—and themes and topics addressed—is impressive. I don't see much specpo in fanzines. I'd enjoy seeing more. To that end, speculative poets, please consider contributing work to my many apazines and the resulting *The Stf Amateur*. When I was actively publishing *Karma Lapel* as a mundane zine, I often included poetry. I even had some of my own published elsewhere.

After reading so much specpo, while I was initially inspired to write myself, I felt slightly overwhelmed by the prospect and was even more inspired to continue reading. So I pulled a volume of non-speculative poetry from the bookshelf to continue exploring the form. The book I selected, fortuitously, was genre adjacent: George Sterling's *Beyond the Breakers and Other Poems* (A.M. Robertson, 1914).

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Los Angeles Times, Nov. 21, 1958

Sterling was a writer from the Bay Area who later moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea, where he became involved with the Bohemian Club. Mentored by Ambrose Bierce, his poetry was appreciated by writers such as Sinclair Lewis, Jack London, H.P. Lovecraft, Upton Sinclair, and Clark Ashton Smith. Ray Bradbury and Fritz Lieber also reported being influenced by Sterling's work.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 21, 1958

We largely have Hippocampus Press (<https://www.hippocampuspress.com>) to thank for keeping Sterling's writing in print. Hippocampus currently offers a three-volume *The Complete Poetry of George Sterling*, *The Thirst of Satan: Poems of Fantasy and Terror by George Sterling*, *Implications of Infinity: Collected Essays by George Sterling*, *The Shadow of the Unattained: The Letters of George Sterling and Clark Ashton Smith*, and *A Splendid Poison: The Letters of Ambrose Bierce and George Sterling*. Sterling also features prominently in Donald Sidney-Fryer's *The Golden State Phantasticks*.

While Lovecraft himself expressed respect for Sterling's writing, Sterling's relationship with Smith is even more notable. Smith considered Sterling a friend and correspondent for 16 years,

and Sterling served as an advocate for Smith, supporting his publishing endeavors. (A.M. Robertson, Sterling's publisher—and the publisher of the volume I read—published Smith's first book of poetry.)

I forget why I procured Sterling's *Beyond the Breakers*, but reading it was an epiphany. Not only does the poet beautifully capture the flora and fauna, the geology and geography of California, his connection to the Lovecraft circle is fascinating. The poetry in this 14-page public-domain reprint edition is largely non-fantastic, though Sterling taps into myth and legend, posits the innate sacredness of all living things and aspects of nature, and suggests that the mind itself is a star. "[W]e have overthrown old faiths and old illusions," he wrote. "[W]e go on paths they did not know." One poem is titled "To H.G. Wells."

What role has Sterling played in fandom? Why am I just learning about him now? His adjacency to the Lovecraft circle still pays dividends. Mick Taylor mentions reading Sterling in *The New Faig Collector* #2 for the Esoteric Order of Dagon apa. Don Herron mentions Sidney-Fryer and Sterling in a piece included in William Breiding's *Portable Storage* #3. And long ago (1945), James Kepner was impressed by how much work by Sterling resided on the shelves of Los Angeles fan Art Joquel: "about a foot and a half of books and dozens of magazines containing single poems."

Searching efanazines.com and *The Fanac Fan History Project*, I find multiple references to Sterling, including a reprinted poem in *Fantasy Commentator*, but little commentary of any length. Steve Sneyd's reassessment of the work of Lilith Lorraine (also in *Fantasy Commentator*) seems promising, if adjacent to Sterling.

Chances are that if I do try my hand at writing specpo, it'll be inspired by Sterling. He's a long-forgotten poet who once played a role in fandom—and perhaps could again.

Comments on SAPS #308

I start writing these comments still within the first seven days of the month. Perhaps I'll be able to pub an ish, print it, and mail it to our EOOE in time to meet the deadline. Now that I'm more clear on post-mailings (they're not materials

received by the EOOE too late, but materials sent separately to participants), I'll try not to get hung up on my minac. Six pages every two mailings means that five pages this mailing should suffice, even with last distribution's postcard submission.

In *Gyllene* #11, **Burnett R. Toskey** remarked on the great time I had at Corflu. While I was in the end unable to participate in person, I did dial in via Zoom for a few sessions, including an auction. Even dialing in, I enjoyed the time I was able to share with on-site fen, and I was struck by how friendly and welcoming the people I interacted with were. (Jerry Kaufman, Andrew Hooper, Geri Sullivan, Jen Farey, and others stand out in that regard.) I am sure I'd find fine friends in person.

Thank you for the Edward Bulwer-Lytton recommendations. I've added them to my reading list. Your remarks to Gordon Eklund suggest that I missed something fine and fun in the previous mailing. That you'd take L. Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth* with you to a desert planet amused me. Having reread the novel, I might be tempted to agree! Your mention of Los Angeles fans coming to Seattle to visit tickled my travel bug. When I stop working, I hope to be more able to travel to spend time with other faneds I've met—going to various locations solely to see them. I momentarily confused Phil Barker, co-founder of the Wargames Research Group, with M.A.R. Barker, creator of *Tékumel*. Which one did you go to college with?

Thank you also for the classical music recommendations. I've also added them to my list for future listening. It's late for me to offer a belated wish of a happy birthday, but reaching the age of 95 is an impressive and inspiring milestone. Poopdeck Pappy's exhortation is sound. Here's to many, many more years "suffering from chronic good health."

I received two copies of **Leigh Edmonds's** *Unenthusiastic*, so if a SAPSter didn't receive one, let me know and I'll smuggle you the essentials. It's heartening to know I'm not alone in worrying I'll miss a mailing. May you find new enthusiasm! I also wish you all the best in finding a new home; perhaps you've made progress since mid-June.

The photograph of you in mirror shades—

shades of cyberpunk—was awesome. You chose well, regardless of whether they were prescription lenses. I, too, wear glasses and am somewhat limited in terms of sunglass options. My father used to wear clip-on sunglasses, but I don't tend to wear frames that allow that. Since moving to California, where sunglasses are more of a requirement for driving, I've taken to having one pair of prescription sunglasses, but just the one. And I don't update them as often as I do my everyday glasses. My current sunglasses are your standard, classic Ray-Bans, but I only wear them when driving or hiking, not out and about more generally.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 28, 1958

Thank you for the conrep on Continuum 16: Reboot. Your mentions of talks by yourself and Perry Middlemiss made me wish I'd been there, and I just ordered a hard copy of your book. Somehow reading it on my Kindle, though less expensive, didn't seem sufficient. Thank you also for offering guidance on whom I should bet should there ever be a foot race between you, Middlemiss, and Bruce Gillespie. Not that I'd encourage such a race, but that also reminds me to spend more time with *SF Commentary*. Both Gillespie and Middlemiss frequently respond to my emailing *The Stf Amateur*, and I could be

more appreciative of that friendly support.

Almost 75 pages is a good page count for eight active participants. We have about the same headcount for APA-L, which is weekly, and lately, distributions have been coming in at 15-25 pages. I was sad not to go to Corflu and would have enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for at least considering my email outreach seeking roommates. (You did not at all contribute to my not going, rest assured.) The only Australian comic strip I'm aware of is *Footrot Flats*, which I mentioned in *BHM* #6; I'll look around!

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Los Angeles Times, Nov. 28, 1958

If the Fantasy Amateur Press Association remains the more sercon-oriented apa, I might not need to consider returning there. I've been feeling

the bite of fannish deadlines in recent weeks—and have been considering joining another apa regardless! That'll likely be CAPA-alpha so I have a more solid home for non-sf comics writing. I was hoping to rejoin CAPA-alpha this month, but commitments conspired against me. Maybe next month, and I can keep tootling along with the light-hearted sercon in my current apae. I'm not even sure if what I'd consider my sercon writing is actually sercon. They're more reviews rather than essays, even the specpo and Sterling bit above.

You, too, encourage me to return to Gordon Eklund's questions. Looks like interesting stuff! With the recent release of *The Last Dangerous Visions*—which I still need to pick up from the shop—I, too, am thinking about the impact of the New Wave, *New Worlds*, *Dangerous Visions*, even the early days of *Interzone*, to which I recently returned. How do you see *Interzone*, which continues to publish, relating to the others?

Gordon Eklund's *Be Bop* #130 commented on his waking time. During my recent travels to New York City (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #133), I was struck by two things: how long it takes to fly across the United States, and how traveling across even three time zones can affect you physically. On the last Monday of September, I woke at 4 a.m. PT for a 7:30 or so flight from Los Angeles to New York City, arriving at the hotel in Manhattan around 6 p.m. ET. Even though that took all darn day, it still felt like 3 p.m. PT. I had forgotten that when I flew back and forth between the two cities more frequently, I usually took the red eye so I could at least sleep overnight and not lose an entire day in transit. My return home was similar, though not as egregious. I woke up just before 6 a.m. ET the first Friday in October for a 10 or so flight west, arriving in California around 1 p.m. PT. Regardless, most of the day was devoted to travel—and that's just in the United States!

My sleep schedule was off for most of the week I was in New York City. Though I tried to go to bed around 10 p.m. ET most nights, I'd often be up until 2 a.m. or later (earlier?) and still have to wake up around 6 or 6:30 for my work commitments. That was doable but accounted for an early afternoon and evening lag that was

usually addressed by imbibing caffeinated beverages. Now I've been back home for several days, sleeping on a foldout couch while my mother- and brother-in-law are visiting. My sleep schedule seems to have returned to normality more quickly on the return. And tomorrow, we return to our own bed once they head back to the Midwest. Checking the newspaper this morning, I'm struck by the progress toward winter, with earlier sunsets cutting into the days. Sunrise is still somewhat reasonable, though I'd welcome another 30-60 minutes of morning sun.

I really enjoyed your discussion of "The Children of Bull Weed," Bob Silverberg's time in SAPS, and the story's history with *New Dimensions* and *Dangerous Visions*. While I'm sorry it didn't make the cut for *The Last Dangerous Visions*, what a joy it must be to have the story back in your hands and control! I encourage you to submit it somewhere for reprint. Perhaps *Worlds of If* or *Galaxy*, which might welcome *Dangerous Visions* castoffs. (I know Jean-Paul L. Garnier has been on a bit of a J.G. Ballard and Charles Platt kick lately, so his sensibilities might be serendipitous.)

Oddly enough, I've yet to see the Peter Cushing *Doctor Who* flicks—and should amend that. Your recollections of some of the other sf television I've been enjoying lately were welcome. I especially appreciated your mention of *Beany and Cecil*, which has a Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society connection by way of the propeller beanie and Ray Nelson. I will make note of the Philip K. Dick Award titles you mentioned for future reading.

I was struck by your mention of Martin Edwards's *The Golden Age of Murder*. Particularly this: "The detective fiction of the Golden Age was as flawed as the human beings that wrote it. ... Equally, many successful books written today would have repelled readers in the Thirties." Time, like popular sentiment, might flow both ways. That resonated with me in part because I recently read Sax Rohmer's *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*. Rohmer was one hell of a writer. I enjoyed the first Fu Manchu novel thoroughly and will eagerly read more. Yet I was aware the entire time I read it, that such reading might be frowned upon—and made a point at

least once to not read the book in public. It's far from a guilty pleasure and is very much still worth reading even if public attitudes have changed (rightfully so).

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 5, 1958

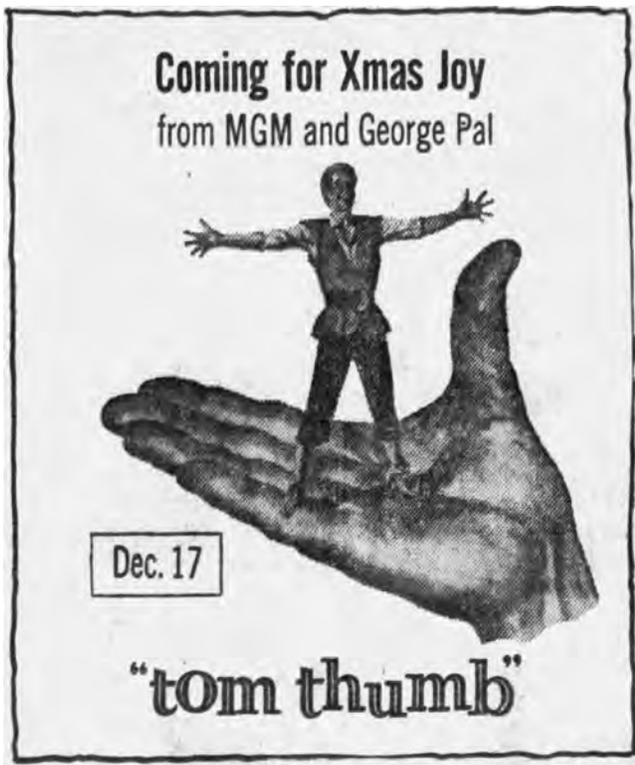
I've been enjoying the old movie advertisements, too. It wasn't on purpose, but having recently included an ad for *Horror of Dracula* in a fanzine, I watched it with my in-laws and wife before going to New York City. I could certainly use the ads to inform and influence my movie viewing more actively. "You have the look of a fan." What a wonderful thing Wally Weber said to you in 1960.

Traveling to see other fen seems to be a recent theme. I regret not being able to make it to the University of California, Riverside to see Mr. Edmonds while he was in the area even though I also missed Corflu. That he made it up to Seattle (or Washington, more generally), as well, was a gift for many recipients. His 14-hour flight puts

my grouching about a five-hour flight to shame.

In *Lucubrations* #149, **Rocky Willson** did much to help relieve my SAPS minac and deadline anxieties. You mean I have almost 40 years ahead of me to almost miss the deadline? That either makes me feel much better or... otherwise. Just kidding. Again, it's good to know I'm not alone, even among such long timers.

Oof, I did use the word "zinie." Was that my typographical error, or was I quoting you? Regardless, I like it, too. It reminds me of APA-L participants' dislike of the term "disty" as a shorter form of "distribution." One wag even suggested we call them "disty-wisty-poops" or somesuch. So I call them "dist'ns" if shortening is required. Zinie-beanie-bing-bong!



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 12, 1958

In addition to returning to the previous mailing of SAPS for Mr. Eklund's questionnaire, I'll have to return to Timatha Weber's update on Wally. Her new news is indeed good news, and I'm glad she reached out to the group with an update. I'm also glad y'all got to hang out at Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park. Even if not a meeting of the Nameless Ones, it seems close. So much fan power in one bookstore!

If Mr. Edmonds thought the quality of light in

the United States was different from that in Australia generally, I'm curious what he thought of the sunlight in southern California. I find it unique even within the States.

Andrew Hooper's *Henchman* #20 reminded me to thank him for sending me a batch of *Plokta* back issues. (I also just emailed you belatedly; they arrived while I was traveling.) Your memorial for Howard Waldrop was one of the most moving items I've read in recent months. Thank you for sharing your love of the man and everything he did. Locally, LASFS member Matthew B. Tepper also seems to have been friends with Waldrop. Though I never met Waldrop, I've long appreciated his work.

I'll have to revisit *O Brother Where Art Thou?* through a lens of *A Dozen Tough Jobs*—and seek out the short film of *Night of the Cooters*. I was unaware that cyberpunk grew out of the Turkey City Writers' Workshop, which was serendipitous to learn just after going to the *Cyberpunk: Envisioning Possible Futures Through Cinema* exhibit at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, which has pulled me back to reading writing of that kind. (Specifically, the Jared Shurin-edited *The Big Book of Cyberpunk*.)

Even though your stories were "wildly imperfect," Waldrop's suggestion that you could write a certain story better than he could is high praise—even if you realized you were "a fanzine publisher at heart." I'll have to locate "Look Away" and think you should write the Ted Williams story. ("Ted Williams, Space Patrol"!) I still owe Justin E.A. Busch an article he and I discussed via email.

I've also been sitting on a story idea in which Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, the Big Bopper, James Dean, and Marilyn Monroe (okeh, maybe not *all* of them) team up to finally defeat Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Benito Mussolini, all thought dead but living—and conniving—in southern California. The Assyrian-themed former Samson Tire and Rubber Company factory, now the Citadel Outlets in Commerce, Calif., play prominently as a location in the story, which I've yet to outline.

Enjoying John le Carré as you do, have you read Mick Herron's *Slough House* series or watched the streaming adaptation? I've now read

the first three novels (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #131) and recommend them heartily. One of the characters is the grandson of a former MI5 agent, and your remark on “why people became involved in espionage in the first place” resonated with those characters. That said, I’ve read no le Carré, so I might be talking out of school.

That’s right! The 2025 Corflu is in the United Kingdom. That reminds me to sign up at least for a supporting membership. I don’t know that I want to chair a Corflu any time soon, but I’m not surprised that that’s how the mimeograph rolls. I wonder if Boyd Raeburn was ever confused with the jazz bandleader and bass saxophonist. Jazz and sportscars, indeed.

And in **Asterisk*, **John D. Berry** mentioned Pete Young’s *every place i read your goddamn fanzine*. What an honor to be so selected! I look forward to reading Michael Swanwick’s *The Sleep of Reason*, Cory Doctorow’s *Red Team Blues* and *Bezzle* (even if not the nested edition), and Sandra Bond’s *Three Men in Orbit*. Though I continue to try not to buy books, it’s always helpful to have ~~an excuse~~ a reason to do so.

Though it’s a different kind of con, I enjoyed your conrep on the Association Typographique Internationale conference. I’m curious about the Moreton Bay Bugs! (Is eating them like eating lobster?) You got to see Mr. Edmonds even in Brisbane! Even more fannish travel.

Your comments on writing mailing comments with clear context were helpful. I shall continue to do my best to do so—so comments are worth reading even by non-apans! I was unaware of Jodi Taylor’s *The Chronicles of St. Mary’s* series—it sounds worth reading.

In addition to Mr. Eklund’s questionnaire and Timatha Weber’s update on Wally, I also need to return to the previous mailing for Mr. Hooper’s Corflu report. As you might guess from my postcard-sized ish, I didn’t read the previous mailing for comment. I sure missed a doozy of a mailing. So much grand material to return to—even with the next mailing and comments a-waiting. I’m glad you were able to participate in Howard Waldrop’s memorial in Austin, Texas.

Howard Waldrop, rest in peace. Your writing and memory live on.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 12, 1958

BHM 9-9

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #134

Oct. 9, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

I have returned home
My time in New York City
was full of fanzines

Unfortunately, the day after I first visited Desert Island Comics in Brooklyn (*T&T* #133), the store's owner, Gabe Fowler, announced that he might have to close by the end of the year because of an unexpected rent increase. (<https://tinyurl.com/DesertIsland-closing>) He organized a GoFundMe in an effort to make up the expected rent shortfall—in order to stay in the same location, or to find a new home—and in just a few days, raised more than he needed. (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-sustain-a-creative-community-resource>)

We'll see whether Desert Island remains where it is—a more supportive landlord would be welcome—but it was heartening to see the comics creative community and its patrons rally around the shop.

It's a good one. The closest thing we've had in the Los Angeles area, as far as I know, was Family Books in the Fairfax District, which closed in 2021. (<https://tinyurl.com/Family-closes>)

In Response to *No Harm in Asking*

In the Feb. 12, 1970, edition of APA-L—#248—Dan Goodman included a questionnaire titled *No Harm in Asking*. I included a reprint of that single page in APA-L #3088 (Sept. 26, 2024). Here are my responses to the questions.

How do you come to be living in LA?

My wife and I moved to the Los Angeles area in 2009 in order to live closer to my son, who was then 5. He'd been born in the Boston area and moved with his mother to Orange County when he was about five months old. I'd been flying back and forth from New York City to see him every four to six weeks and reached a point at which I couldn't continue to do so. I was able to arrange a transfer from New York to Los Angeles with my employer, and my wife's work is relatively easy to pursue in New York and LA, so it

worked out for her, too.

We first lived in the Fairfax District on Stanley Avenue because the neighborhood was very walkable and reminded us a little bit of Brooklyn. We enjoyed that we could walk to a couple of bookstores, a record store, and several movie theaters, as well as a newsstand. (The requirements of life!) We then moved to Culver City in 2011 because of the school district and relative proximity to my office.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 12, 1958

Where else have you lived, and why?

I grew up in southern Wisconsin and went to college in Evanston, Ill. During college, I lived for several months in San Mateo, Calif., while interning at the *San Francisco Examiner*. After graduation, I lived in Chicago for about eight months while working at *Online Access* magazine. I moved to Somerville, Mass., near Boston, to work at *CIO* magazine and, later, *Fast Company*, living there—and in Cambridge—for about eight years. I basically made my way down Massachusetts Avenue, from Davis and Teele squares, to Porter Square, Harvard Square, Central Square... leaving the Boston area before I finally reached Kendall Square.

Moving to New York City, I lived in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, for five years before moving to the Los Angeles area.

Do you intend to live the rest of your life in LA?
No.

If not, where else and why?

Once my son graduates from college and begins working, our need to be in the LA area to be closer to him and his mother's side of the family diminishes. We'll likely move back to the midwest to be closer to our families—and spend time in Portugal to explore Europe.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 12, 1958

Is your current job your preferred way of making a living?

At this point, that's a challenging question to answer because the response is partly yes, and partly no. I feel like I've worn velvet handcuffs for some time now. The benefits of stable pay, insurance, and stock options—and my enjoyment of the challenge of my work—outweigh any desire to change jobs this late in my career. Even if I don't always like my job and occasionally have concerns about my employer, my current employer might very well be my last as my wife and I consider our next act.

Looking back, though I might have liked to have stayed in journalism, my career in technology has

been rewarding in ways newspaper or magazine work might not have been. I'm certainly better off financially. Regardless, my next act will include more non-technical writing, perhaps avocationally, perhaps vocationally.

Would you have joined LASFS knowing what you now know?

Yes. I've learned nothing that would dissuade me from joining.

What do you do instead of attending LASFS meetings?

When I served as scribe, I attended LASFS meetings. Now, I'm usually eating dinner with my wife or reading during meeting times. Sometimes, I'm just finishing printing, collating, and preparing APA-L for mailing depending on how my work day went. In recent months, I've been relieved to no longer be scribe; APA-L can spill well into the evening!

Do you pay more attention to your friends or your enemies?

My friends. I have few, if any enemies. Paying attention to enemies often empowers them. They're usually not worth recognizing.

What—if anything—do you do for your friends?

I spend time with them, participate in shared activities, and pay attention to them. If they need help, I help them as much as possible. Sometimes I travel to see them.

Do you ever wonder later why a quarrel seemed so important at the time?

Yes, but less and less as I age. It's no longer as important to me for someone else to realize or think I'm "right." What's important is the desired outcome, and that doesn't usually involve winning an argument.

Have you accomplished anything during your time in LASFS, beneficial to the club as a whole?

I think so, yes. I volunteered to serve as official collator for APA-L, I was elected as scribe and served 18 months in that position, I relaunched *De Profundis* and *Menace of the LASFS*, I edited conzines for Loscon 48 and AnaCon last year, and I frequently share LASFS news with other sf clubs around the world. Whether that benefits the club might be open to debate.

When you talk about "LASFS," do you mean the formal structure, all the people who belong, the most frequent attendees, the people who were going regularly when you were, your friends, members of

your ingroup, the ideal LASFS, or what?
I mean the club, all its members, and the people engaged in its activities dating back to its formation.

What defects in LASFS are you partially or wholly responsible for?

I don't know if this counts, but my bias tends to be toward fanzine activity. If a club doesn't have an active fanzine, it's less of a club, in my opinion. That focus might keep me from other involvement or activities in the LASFS. I'm not sure that's a defect of the LASFS, though.

Would LASFS be better off if you had a larger share in running it?
Heck no.

Why do you contribute to APA-L?

Because I like you crazy cats. I also like that we're the only remaining weekly apa and that our activity dates back to 1964. By participating in our pages, I'm involved in a long line of fanac and apahacking that's involved many very interesting people. Contributing to APA-L is as close to spending time with many of them as I can get, especially if they're dead.

What would induce you to contribute more?

I already contribute quite a bit, but I might contribute more if I participated in fewer apae, if there were more others, or if existing others contributed more.

Are there subjects you prefer not to discuss in APA-L because there are too few contributors who are knowledgeable?

No. The only subjects I prefer not to discuss are very personal topics or gossip.

Because those contributors who are knowledgeable are not open to discussion?
No.

Because you feel such things should not be discussed in print?

As I said above, the only subjects I prefer not to discuss are very personal topics or gossip. If others choose to write about such topics, that's their choice. It's not that such things shouldn't be discussed in print, it's that I choose not to do so.

Would you prefer to see the Official Collatorship as an elective office?

No. I think being an "unofficial" activity of LASFS members benefits us. There's no membership or board intervention possible, no decision-making process, and no official red tape.

Do you think the world as a whole is better or worse than it used to be?
Yes, I do.

Do you think that LASFS is better or worse than it used to be?

I think it could be bigger in terms of membership and include more young people, but that doesn't mean it's worse. It could also offer more varied activities—provide a clubhouse, hold screenings and more varied social events—but that's an outgrowth of size, which leads to willing volunteers and can-do members. I've only been involved since 2009—and a member since the pandemic—so my comparison is limited, romanticization of the golden age of fandom aside.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 19, 1958

Do you think that fandom is better or worse than it used to be?
Yes, I do.

Why do you attend conventions?

To see friends, to learn new things, to experience things I might not be able to generally, to immerse myself in things I love, and to participate in a critical mass of fandom for a fleeting period of time. Lately, I've also been volunteering—either in hospitality or in the Fanzine Corner—so I attend to "work."

Do you find large conventions unsatisfactory?

What are these "large conventions" of which you speak? I find fannish, volunteer-run conventions, which tend to be smaller at this point in time, more rewarding than larger commercial conventions.

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 19, 1958

If so, do you attend them? Why?

I think the largest cons I've attended recently are Gallifrey One and the L.A. Comic Con. I attended Galli because I love *Doctor Who*, volunteered in hospitality, and wanted to swim in the sea of fandom. I attended the Comic Con to see what it was like, to check out the back issue hucksters, and to explore the programming.

Would your answers on an anonymous questionnaire of this type be different from ones you're likely to give in APA-L.

That's highly unlikely.

Do you feel that in your case, I ought to know the answers to these questions without asking?

Not at all. I couldn't expect that of anybody.

Are there any of these questions that you consider to be none of my business?

Had that been the case, I would have chosen not to answer them, or said so.

Periodically Scientific

The Oct. 5, 2024, issue of *Science News* recently arrived in the mail. Early this week, my first issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*—"the magazine for science and reason"—was delivered. That was the September/October 2024 edition.

Of the two, *Skeptical Inquirer* is the more intriguing, but I'm trying to make *Science News* a weekly habit, so let's start there. The cover image of a fruit fly is quite wonderful, but the most interesting cover line introduces 10 "scientists to watch" in 2024. Nancy Shute's Editor's Note comments on the collective nature of science. "Science has long been a team sport, despite the lingering presence of the 'great man' trope," she writes. Her remarks on scientific collaboration might merit exploration in a longer form.

A short item in the Notebook front section revisits reportage from 50 years ago on how satellites interfere with radio astronomy. Currently, there are more than 10,000 active satellites in Earth's orbit, and optical telescopes are also affected now. Attempts to modify satellites or their orbits have yet to successfully diminish such interference. Another brief item suggests that corrugated wall design could reduce the temperature of exterior walls. That could lead to interesting innovations in architecture.

Clockmakers have created a prototype for a nuclear clock, utilizing atomic nuclei to pursue precise measurement of time. I found that interesting but wonder whether such precision is necessary. Perhaps

Manchu, kept in a deathlike state using a mysterious serum that, when paired with its antidote, can move someone back and forth from somnolence.

With such elements, the book is also somewhat science fictional—and therefore fair game for these pages. In addition to the potentially speculative political science mentioned above, the book also features numerous biological weapons. Examples include another serum that causes murderous madness and various poisons—Fu Manchu is a master—including puffballs, spores, and a fungus that can envelop the body of a man, smothering him.

It's obvious why Rohmer was such a popular writer in the early 20th century—the man exhibits serious craft—and I'll eagerly read subsequent books in the series.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

The night before I left for New York City (*T&T* #133), I watched the 1958 *Horror of Dracula* with my wife

and in-laws. My brother-in-law had brought it on his laptop, knowing I enjoy such movies. While I have the film on DVD and it's available for streaming, we watched it with his laptop connected to the television.

That in itself was an interesting experience. The transfer was pretty decent, and for the most part, watching the movie was seamless. But a couple of times, the image stuttered, hanging up briefly in order to continue loading—much like a streaming movie idling. I'm sure he downloaded the movie from somewhere for free, and the viewing experience was no better than streaming or watching a DVD, which is my preferred method for movies at home.

While not the first Hammer horror film, *Horror of Dracula*—also titled just *Dracula*—is still considered a key production by that company. Christopher Lee does a fine job as Count Dracula, but it is Peter Cushing as Doctor Van Helsing who stands out most strongly. The Technicolor process also co-stars, with the blood so very bright red—even its spatters during the opening sequence are a highlight of the movie.

Jimmy Sangster's screenplay takes some liberties with Bram Stoker's novel—positioning Jonathan Harker as a vampire hunter and slightly adjusting some of the character relationships—but the result is a fine cinematic adaptation and experience. The attempts to protect Lucy from Count Dracula are ineffectual, and Mina Harker is also endangered, but the threat is eventually averted.

The movie's use of readymade wooden stakes and the practical special effects once Dracula is exposed to sunlight are wonderful, as is the occasional weaponization of religious symbols. It's not the best adaptation of *Dracula*, but it's among the most liberal and colorful—a feather in Hammer's cap.

This week for movie night with a friend, we watched another Hammer production, *The Mummy*, released in 1959. Of the two films, it's the better movie. Also starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, it's a relatively short movie at just under an hour and a half, and its relatively straightforward plotting is padded with a section of flashback exposition.

You likely know the outline of the story: archaeologists discover a hidden tomb, releasing an undead protector who falls in love with a living woman because she looks like the Egyptian princess with whom the high priest was in love before he was entombed.

Cushing is effective as the surviving archaeologist, his father driven mad—for a span of three years—by seeing the mummy emerge. And Lee is absolutely wonderful as the mummy—even better than he is as Count Dracula. The scene in which he emerges from

the marsh is wonderful, as are most scenes in which he is featured.

One of the aspects that struck me was that most of the movie seemed to be filmed on a sound stage rather than outside. Indeed, it was shot at Bray Studios in Berkshire. What the crew was able to do with painted backdrops and other set design is pretty impressive, especially the scenes in the marsh or swamp.

The scene in which Cushing drives a spear through Lee's mummy—and in which the gathered hunters let loose their firearms on it in the swamp—are very fun visually. Despite such visual treats, the movie is a little slow—especially the flashback exposition—and my friend and I conversed actively through much of the movie. That was a rarity; we occasionally make remarks here and there, but to talk throughout is uncommon. *Horror of Dracula* might have been more interesting throughout, but the practical effects and costuming in *The Mummy* are more consistently excellent despite the slow pace.

Comments on APA-L #3089

In *Vanamonde* #1612, **John Hertz** offered a memorial for John Trimble. I had forgotten that it was he and Bjo who met under the piano at a Forrest J Ackerman party. What a wonderful story. Their involvement in fandom was wide ranging and far reaching.

I recently read the Brittany Hause-edited *Dwarf Stars 2024 (The Brass Hat Mind #9)*. It's a very good read, an excellent introduction to “very short” speculative poetry, and a handy guide to periodicals in the market for such. Unfortunately, I do not know the answer to your query about the “housewife” in *Peter and Wendy* or *Peter Pan*. I've read the novel and remember being struck by how young Peter is, but I don't remember that part. I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White.

Joe Zeff's Toony Loons #775 contended that he's turning into a cyborg! Intrigued by the song sung by Frank Gasperik, I found an online article, “False Parts Theme” (<https://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/dung05.htm>), which suggests the song might be Harry Wood's Tin Pan Alley tune “Side by Side.” (<https://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/side-by-side-dismantled-bride-parody>) Most online references point to a version by Rick Wastling and the White Horse Ceilidh Band.

My mother- and brother-in-law returned to the midwest Tuesday morning. During their visit, it was a challenge to get my mother-in-law to use her new hearing aids—though they help mightily—and she kept removing her artificial teeth. I'm sorry to hear yours aren't sitting comfortably and hope you're able to adjust them appropriately!

I'm also sorry to hear that a global Verizon outage kept you from making it to a podiatrist appointment! That must have been frustrating. As much as I rely on mobile maps and directions, we still keep a Thomas Guide and other atlas in the car just in case. I will share your feedback with cover artist Rev. Ivan Stang.

Thank you for recommending the serial *Drums of Fu Manchu*, which I haven't seen. In addition to the 1940 15-chapter serial, there was also a 13-episode television series in late 1956, *The Adventures of Dr. Fu Manchu*. There were also a number of movies, including *The Brides of Fu Manchu* in 1966. I have that on DVD, as well as several episodes of the TV show, so I might start with those. Ruth Mayer's book *Serial Fu Manchu: The Chinese Supervillain and the Spread of Yellow Peril Ideology* looks promising.

To be fair, I think a lack of energy or enthusiasm for a given task is a valid “real-world” reason not to pursue it. One can't do all the things all the time. I'm sorry you found the Dan Goodman reprint too difficult to read. You can see the questions asked in my response to them above if you're still curious. The PDF version might also be easier to read.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 19, 1958

Ignorable Theme: Fan Names

I've never used a fan name in the past, even on a con badge. Heath has seemed a fine name, sufficient. But as scribe for the LASFS, I adopted the moniker of Scribbles for meetings and when engaged in my scribely duties. (I don't use it generally.) That seemed to fit, and people seemed to like it.

More recently, I've started crediting my fanzines to Blasted Heath Row—or Blasted Heath—as an homage to H.P. Lovecraft's use of the phrase in “The Colour Out of Space,” which I reread not long ago. We'll see how long that feels right. So far, so good!

flag, and he wrapped the issue up with a decent number of reviews, regardless. The quality of his writing suggests that his other fanzines might be worth checking out. Available for \$4 via Lazer Attack Zines, <https://lazerattack.com>.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 26, 1958

Stapled Spine #25

Interestingly, like *Drive in Asylum* above, this isn't the most recent issue of this fanzine, either. A double-sized #26 seems to have been published in time for Halloween. Regardless, this was my introduction to this lower-fidelity counterpart to *Drive In Asylum* above. *Stapled Spine* is a wonderfully old-school, classic, homemade fanzine. Hand drawn and lettered—though quite ably—cut-and-paste collage—and photocopied. Sometimes, you can even

see the edges!

At 32 pages, this is a lighter-hearted, more airy take on a similar topic; the fanzine's subtitle says "entertaining horror fans, one black-clad moron at a time." There's also some Portland pride at play, too; the fanzine proclaims itself a Product of HorrOregon. Featuring wonderful clip art, comic book panel reproductions, and other filler, this is a somewhat breezy read that still offers a slew of entry points for fen of horror.

The issue includes movie, television, and music briefs; a two-page piece on the "progressive representation in the Chucky franchise," which could have been longer; a book review; an interview with Paul Tobin, creator of the comic book *The Mammoth*; an interview with a queer comics artist and fetish model named Turbocunt; an appreciation of largely undocumented Oregon horror host Tarantula Ghoul; an interview with the director of *Cottontail*; and an exploration of the Blair Witch franchise. Sprinkled liberally with small ads, comic strips, and a two-page spread of games and puzzles, *Stapled Spine* is a very fun read. If you enjoy *Rue Morgue* and *HorrorHound*, this might tickle your fancy when you feel a little silly.

I love the sense of humor, the DIY production, and the brief approach to the topics—even if some of the items might deserve longer form exploration. A fun approach to a topic that can sometimes get a little frightening. Available for \$5 via *Stapled Spine*, 10133 N. Oswego Ave., Portland, OR 97203; <https://stapledspine.com>.

From the Reading Pile: Comic Book Reviews When We Were Trekkies #3, 7-10

This "(mostly) true graphic memoir of conventions, cosplay, and coming of age in the 1970s" caught my eye while visiting Desert Island Comics in New York City recently. (*T&T* #133) These five 16- to 20-page digests were written and drawn by Joe Sikoryak, a San Francisco-based cartoonist who's also worked in graphic design and filmmaking, serving as art director for *Comic Book Marketplace* and *Film Score Monthly*. He might even be related to R. Sikoryak, though I've yet to confirm that.

The issues I was able to obtain were a good enough read that I've ordered the remainder—an indication of how good the series is. I'm not sure whether I enjoyed the issues so much because they're that good or because of the topics they explore. *When We Were Trekkies* tells the tale of a group of high school friends who become involved in *Star Trek* fandom and conventions in New York City in the 1970s.

One of the characters, Jonny Korshak, seems to represent Sikoryak, and his friends fulfill various

roles: a serious, bookish young man who quickly befriends a similar young woman; a more lively fellow who ends up going to clown college; a person who's less invested in fandom than the others; and other characters.

Over the course of these issues, the group of friends is hassled by the police because of their costumes for a convention, meet a couple of young women also active in cosplay, secure a position among con goers, meet some of their idols, lose a bulky costume in traffic, and otherwise explore various aspects of fandom, including *Star Trek* fanzines, fan fiction... even slash fiction. Along the way, they develop crushes, friendships, and romantic entanglements—and sometimes end them.

Each issue includes a list of references in the inside back cover, detailing historical footnotes relevant to the story. Those draw direct connections between the semi-autobiographical material and actual events and items in real-world fandom, including Phil Seuling's New York Comic Art conventions, the Commodore Hotel, Doris Robin and Karen Trimble's filk song "On the Good Ship Enterprise," *The Star Trek Blooper Reel*, the Tele-Fantasy Convention, and other notable examples.

It's a loving tribute to fandom, friendship, and the self-discovery of youth. I look forward to rereading it in whole once the remaining issues arrive, and I'd be surprised if this wasn't collected into a single volume. Available for \$4-\$5/issue or all 10 for \$35 via Birdcage Bottom Books, <https://www.birdcagebottombooks.com>.

Comments on LASFAPA #572

It's another three deadlines in three days week somehow, and I accidentally prioritized my *Tetragrammaton Fragments* column for the United Fanzine Organization (<https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com>) over LASFAPA, so I've spilled into Saturday. We'll see if I get this to Mr. Schlosser before he finishes printing and collating—but it might fall into the next mailing. I've told him to go on without me!

In *The Title Goes Here*, Janice Morningstar updated LASFAPAns on her social calendar, which included Westercon, a fannish gathering in San Jose, the Hackers Picnic, and other events. Your discussion on the waning of such gatherings—particularly among fen—resonated with me. I'm sure the pandemic had something to do with it, but even in Los Angeles, it seems challenging to gather a group for dinner or a picnic, much less a house party. Reading old fanzines, that sort of stuff seemed to happen All the Time.

I enjoyed gathering with co-workers and colleagues

in New York City a couple of weeks ago (*T&T* #133) and was able to see a friend in my old neighborhood, but I was unable to hang out with a couple of fannish friends I reached out to. One doesn't even live in New York City, which I had mistakenly assumed.

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 26, 1958

Your discussion of the Olympics and other "pretty" sports was also fun. My wife and son really got into the Olympics this year—Caitlin was editing a television show about competitive sprinting at the time—and now that she's moved on to a program about horse racing, we went to Santa Anita Park while her mother and brother were visiting to experience our

first horse races. It's an experience I'll seek again!

I, too, played volleyball, though in high school. I was never much of an athlete, despite stints in grade school soccer and basketball, but junior year, all of my friends were playing volleyball, so I did, too. We ended up doing pretty well in junior varsity that season—my friends were on the varsity team—and made it to the finals, where we choked. From that experience, I learned not to give up until you finish something. Our coach was quite angry that we'd basically stop playing hard halfway through a game. If we'd continued to do our best, we might have won! Now when I visit my parents and sister near Madison, Wis., I recognize the names of some of the bigger high schools we competed against.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 26, 1958

Rich Lynch's *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me* #4 mentioned an incident several years ago in which he rolled his ankle while in New York City. I had a similar experience not that many weekends ago. We'd gone to a friend's home in Santa Monica for a ceramics sale—his father-in-law had collected ceramics—and stopped by a nearby automated teller machine to withdraw some money so we had cash on hand. Walking along the edge of the bank's parking lot, I misjudged a step off a raised curb and landed on my knee. I don't seem to have hurt anything seriously, but I was pretty scraped up, and it took a couple of weeks to heal fully. As my father ages, he's taken a couple of falls, so I'm mindful of such experiences.

I'll look for the music video to Billy Joel's "A Matter of Trust." *The Bridge* was one of the cassettes I

remember getting from the Columbia House Record & Tape Club, so perhaps I'll recognize it! I'm now up to #176 with LASFAPA's archiving from Schlosser's scans. I've been using Adobe Acrobat Pro to prepare PDFs for APA-L—as well as for the optical character recognition, combining files, and compression. Have we succeeded in sorting out your access to the LASFAPA archives, after I accidentally sent you the APA-L archives? I, too, encounter some crummy repro, but the majority of most issues seems to end up fully searchable.

Thank you for your essay reprints. I especially enjoyed the brief commentary on the North American Science Fiction Convention. Do you know who did the programming?

In *Fool's Mate* #575, David Schlosser reported having scanned up to LASFAPA #225. He's now reached #317! We're now well into the years of single-PDF scans, so my file preparation should increase in speed. I've been distracted lately by a couple of archival searches for others (*T&T* #131-132), but have been more distracted from fanac by the increasing workload for my day job. I've yet to go to my storage space to check the salvaged back issue boxes for LASFAPA #162. Will report back to the group when I do.

Caitlin and I plan to return to Portugal for a month at the end of October, returning in time for me to staff the Fanzine Corner at Loscon 50. I think it'll be the second time we use our Global Entry, but it might be the first time; I think our cards arrived after our most recently previous international travel. Kees van Toorn and I exchanged messages about Perry Rhodan in late May. At some point, he might send over some information about non-English apae overseas.

While I enjoyed the triprep on your cousins' reunion, I appreciated *Glas-Gow the Lilacs, Oh!* even more. What a wonderful experience that was, and how neat that you got to hang out with Geri Sullivan, Teddy Harvia, van Toorn, and others. It was heartening to hear there were a "lot of book sellers" in the Dealers' Room, though I'm sorry you weren't able to talk about Iceland with Hilda Knutsdottir.

I can hardly believe that the TV show *Naked Attraction* exists. Indeed it does! Apparently, in one episode, the host was surprised by a contestant with the "biggest penis ever," so it seems they don't hold back—I wonder how much makes it on the air, however. I can't imagine that they show everything the host and contestants see. Your travel after the con also sounds wonderful—and you got some golf in! Well done.

Nick Smith's *Labyrinthine Lines* dated September 2024 opened with a Stephen King passage about the

month. I always enjoy checking out your opening quotes; it's a fun aspect of your fanzines. Thank you for your thoughtful commentary on J.D. Vance, the changing population of Ohio, and the parallels between Haitian immigration and our country's history of racism.

Somehow, I'd entirely forgotten about Cinecon! (<https://cinecon.org>) I also tend to forget about the Lone Pine Film Festival (<https://lonepinefilmfestival.org>), which, serendipitously, is this weekend! If I'd had my act together for our 16th anniversary, I'd have made plans for us to be there. (It's a wonderful town.) As it is, we went to the ocean this morning, to Playa Del Rey Beach. We stopped at Tanner's Coffee PDR for bagels and cream cheese, and lattes before spending some time by the water. We've returned home to take care of other weekend business—the week's laundry, a phone call with a friend in Spain, research for the upcoming election, last-minute apahacking—and we have dinner reservations for tonight at Coni's Seafood, a nearby favorite. These last 16 years have been absolutely wonderful, and I'm lucky to share my life with Caitlin.

Do you remember the name of the documentary about film collectors? It sounds interesting. Looks like it might be *Film Is Dead—Long Live Film* based on a Facebook post. I appreciated the updates on the

Doctor Who happy hour, now held at Lawless Brewing Co. in North Hollywood. That William F. Nolan collection sounds fascinating! I will have to look for it—I love the idea of “very short stories”—and it looks like you can access the stories' original sources courtesy of the *Internet Speculative Fiction Database* at <https://isfdb.org/cgi-bin/pl.cgi?330184>.

And in *Bovine Black Hole* dated Sept. 21, 2024, **Alan Winston** reported on his ongoing recovery from COVID-19. I hope that that continues so you heal fully. Even experiencing “enforced inactivity,” your schedule sounds interesting and varied. Your comments on *Batman: Caped Crusader* have piqued my interest. I shall have to check it out. In recent weeks, my wife and I have been watching the fourth season of *Slow Horses*, and I've now read three of the novels on which the show is based; I just started the fourth. Last night, we watched *The Hot Rock*, based on the Donald E. Westlake novel, so I'm looking forward to reading more Westlake. I don't think I've ever read any of his humorous Dortmund books.

Good eye catching my fan name, asserted in the indicia! While rereading H.P. Lovecraft's “The Colour Out of Space” recently, I was struck by the phrase “blasted heath,” so I'm trying it on for size for a while. You might be the first person to have indicated noticing.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 7, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #135

Oct. 17, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

Leftover paper
inherited from Marty
Colors, assorted

For the most recent issues of *The Brass Hat Mind* (for the Spectator Amateur Press Society) and *T&T*, I've used some of the random assorted paper I acquired from Marty Cantor's fanzine materials in an effort to use it up. That resulted in some pleasant multi-colored issues. Last week's *T&T* included some paper stock that was similar to that used by John Hertz, but I don't think it was the same. Most of it was a differently finished stock, but some might have been colored similarly—and the last page of my contribution popped!

Natter: OC, on the Road

At the end of October, I'll be going to Portugal for a month. A handful of distributions will be emailed to participants, PDF only, and all contributions should be sent via email or fax for the duration of my travel. Distributions emailed while I'm overseas will include Oct. 31, Nov. 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2024. We'll resume mailing Dec. 5 after Loscon.

A Cover Artist Speaks!

In response to John Hertz's remarks in *Vanamonde* #1605 on Tiffanie Gray's cover for APA-L #3079, the cover artist for that distribution emailed the following:

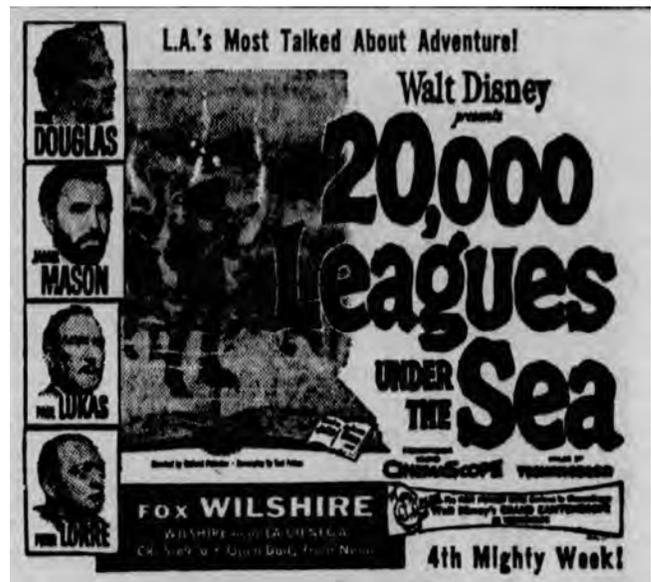
"Congratulations on finding my secret identity!

More of my more recent work is on ArtStation (<https://www.artstation.com/dak-imarts>) as DeviantArt is more of a time capsule of my work. And thus... the name dakorillon.

"So—simple version. I'm a role player from way back (not saying how far back), but one of my characters was Dakory Ice (yes, from Daiquiri Ice—my favorite ice cream from Baskin-Robbins.) He was an elven duelist extraordinaire! The name went through several changes as the character was reused for other games, and finally Dakorillon was the

longest lasting version, along with just plain 'Dax' (Before the Star Trek versions existed). Sooo... When I started getting online and joining forums, back when everyone used a pseudonym, I used that. So, my DeviantArt, etc. used Dakorillon. (You'll notice that ArtStation is Dak-IMARTS—Dak for Dakorillon, IMARTS is for Immortal Moments Art—which was my art and Web design business for a long time, and what I use for my 3D vendor stores.) So, the evolution of dakorillon.

"Yes, seven years in the U.S. Army. Vietnamese linguist, served on Okinawa, Tori Station, and Ft. Meade, Md., among other places. Made soldier of the year for Eastern Conus, among other things.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 14, 1955

"So, Jupiter... I was in a 'spray paint art' phase for a while, but I did it digitally, using my favorite program PD Howler (which I'm a beta tester for, as well as an enthusiastic user). I would follow along with various *YouTube* videos on spray paint art, and then later create my own using similar techniques. (I did the same with Bob Ross videos and have a lot of landscapes in that style, too.) Anyway, I thought it was a cool image after making the planet and the basic snow, so I just left it, rather than adding more details as would be normal in spray paint art. I suppose if you were looking at Jupiter from one of its moons, it might look like that... only way bigger!

"I love sci-fi and fantasy, in art and reading, obviously, so these are my little contributions. I do fiddle with AI on occasion, but mostly I use Daz Studio or PD Howler for 98 percent of my art—when it's not colored pencil or other traditional mediums that I play with—regardless of whether it's for cover art or just my own pleasure. My writings have been

sci-fi and mostly urban fantasy, with a kid's book in the mix."

The Young Adult Connection

By Cy Chauvin

Peter Nicholls, author of *Genre Fiction: The Roaring Years* (Ansible Editions, 2022) was the founding editor of *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*, first published in 1979. Before and after that, he wrote reviews, articles, and commentary on science fiction, especially for *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction*, an academic journal he also helped found. He was an Australian who lived and worked for many years in the United Kingdom, where he first became involved in science fiction (other than as a reader).

One of the premises of this collection I found quite striking. Nicholls finds a connection not just among science fiction, fantasy, and horror, but young adult fiction as well. I made my own—adult—discovery of young adult fiction in the late 1980s but always thought it was a peculiar, quirky taste of my own, as I snuck through the low shelves of the children's sections of the public library and bookstores. Science fiction was bad enough, but at least it had a pretense of being for adults!

Nicholls writes "[T]here [has] never before been such a dramatic change in the genres ... as during the period 1968-2001." He suggests that in this time of its "generic youth," there was a lot of expansion, hope, and excitement that is not so widespread today in genre fiction. "There were a lot of good questions to be asked during the Roaring Years," he writes—and suggests that he asked as many as most critics, and probably more.

While the subject matter is what inherently interests us in collections of essays such as this, Nicholls is also a lively and funny writer. He projects a distinctive voice in his essays, as strong as that of a good storyteller. This is not dry academia. Here is a choice morsel from his essay review of *Tau Zero* by Poul Anderson and *Ringworld* by Larry Niven:

"Some of you may not be familiar with that famous work entitled *A Reference Book of Planetary and Galactic Civilizations for the Use of Science Fiction Writers*. It was a compendium John W. Campbell Jr. worked up from Spengler, Toynbee, and *The Child's Wonder Book of World History*. Campbell had only one copy, and he used to lend it to his writers. Asimov and Heinlein used to swap it back and forth all the time; Alfred Bester could only get hold of it twice. There's a nasty story that A.E. van Vogt had it Xeroxed, but

his secretary made a mistake and Xeroxed a Superman comic in place of Chapter 6. Anyway, it came out all right, because he never noticed. Poor old Jim Blish couldn't get a hold of it when he needed it, so he had to read Spengler in the original, to the ultimate confusion of his fans."

Nicholls provides insight into the young adult connection with science fiction and fantasy in his review of *The Furthest Shore* by Ursula K. LeGuin, and in short pieces on Philippa Pearce (*Tom's Midnight Garden*) and an interview with Diana Wynne Jones. I had just finished rereading *Tom's Midnight Garden* a couple months before reading this book, and Nicholls's emotional reaction to its ending echoed my own. Even though that's not the only or best way to judge a critic, it is helpful to know someone has your own heart.

There are many insights herein, unexpected observations. On *Camp Concentration* by Thomas Disch: "By clinging to real science, Disch, as all good sf writers do, keeps his fable from drifting into pure fantasy, and lets it insinuate itself, like the prick of a pin, into our idea of what is possible and real." By not violating known science, a writer adds conviction to their stories to augment their authorial skill.

As well as the essays, there are three convention reports, including a wildly humorous one ("The Regency Buck Stops Here"). "Nicholls—you've got to see this one through," his friend Simone Walsh tells him. "[N]one of this sneaking off home after two days." Nicholls writes in reply that this woman hasn't realized that since "Yorcon my allergy to conventions took a 180 turn. I now have a severe allergy to not being at conventions."

There is pathos as well, as he writes in "The Death of James Blish"—"[H]e was my first friend in science fiction,"—and "Philip K. Dick: A Cowardly Memoir"—"[A]s I got to know Phil Dick my feelings about him so disturbed and unsettled me that I was no longer able to read his fiction."

Nicholls does some interesting surveys on "The Books We Really Read" (with a breakdown of his 100 favorite authors, then 88 more of whom he thinks are actually the best), and another on "Big Dumb Objects and Cosmic Enigmas" (things like Larry Niven's *Ringworld*, the flying "spindizzy" cities in Blish's *Cities in Flight* series, and Greg Bear's constructions). It covers the full range of appeal, from the small and comfortable life story, to the wonderful technological object and all its hard science details.

Nicholls makes you think.

In my naivety, when I first heard of this book, I

Crossgate Dr., Champaign, IL 61822; <https://www.torcpress.com>.

TORC Toons Vol. 2 #1-2 (August 2024)

Finally, we have Joseph Morris's *TORC Toons* "funny pages," which might reprint his daily comics work on his Web site. Similar to *Bkwoodz Rag* above, each four-page, folded issue features a consistently utilized banner, so you need to pay attention to the issue number. (Morris actually sent me two copies of #2, which might have led me to assume other issues were duplicates, as well. Or, my subscribing rather than relying on receiving UFO member copies contributed to my confusion.)

The first issue of this volume features Quixote Coyote and his friends Sancho, Billy Goat, and others. They all seem to be coping with hangovers. "Dolphin Bros" focuses on two dolphins who disturb another denizen of the deeps. The UFO panel on p. 3 is quite delightful and suggests Morris can dabble in sf as well as fantasy themes. Other strips feature Harry Haunt, and Drumhed and Tamborini.

The second issue continues many of those strips—Quixote Coyote, Hank Haunt (similar to Harry Haunt), and Dolphin Bros—and introduces some new ones, including the Masked Platypus and Kid UFO. If *Bkwoodz Rag* is Morris's exploration of underground comix, *TORC Toons* recreates the newspaper comic strip page. It's kind of a brilliant idea, and Morris approaches the comic strip format with humor and playfulness. Who knows what the next issue will bring? Inquire via Joseph Morris, 4511 Crossgate Dr., Champaign, IL 61822; <https://www.torcpress.com>.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 14, 1955

Juvenalia: "The Sacrificial Altar"

This two-page story fragment was handwritten in black pen on a piece of spiral-bound notebook paper. It doesn't seem to have been written for school; there are no editing or grading marks, or comments. It is undated, so I can't determine when I wrote it, but I'd guess late junior high or high school. There were no paragraph breaks in the original.

The monk stood next to the pillar in the southeast corner of the sanctuary. From the shaded confines of his cowl, he watched the procession move toward the low-set altar. The sound of many feet was muffled by the thick red carpet marking the aisle. Rows upon

rows of cloaked figures filled the sanctuary, none of them touching the red carpet on which the procession walked.

The procession was made up of twelve cloaked men, their cloaks a slightly different shade than that of the congregation. Those twelve were leading a young woman dressed in a sheer robe of white. It was obvious she was naked beneath the gossamer garment. Her wrists were bound with leather thongs.

The woman did not appear drugged, but she didn't betray any hint of shock when she saw the head priest draw a curved sacrificial dagger from its jeweled scabbard. The procession of twelve helped the young woman onto the altar and arranged her in a prone position.

A low murmur arose in the great hall. The smoke from the incense burners flanking the altar started spewing forth smoke in increasing waves of denseness. The monk's eyes stung a bit, and he fought to regain his composure lest he be marked for his discomfort. He stood within fifteen feet of the altar and was under the constant watch of three muscular guards behind the priest and the altar.

The monk glanced to his right, noting the five others wearing robes the same shade as his. They stood staunchly in front of their respective pillars staring straight ahead, their arms crossed across their chests.

Comments on APA-L #3090

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #77, **Matthew Mitchell** informed others of a twisted ankle. Not long ago, I banged up my knee taking a misstep. (*Faculae & Filigree* #36) I hope you heal fully and quickly, even with the sinus condition complicating matters. Sounds like you were able to keep up with work all the same.

After my mother- and brother-in-law headed home, I experienced a mysterious encounter with a loofah. Seeing one on the floor of our shower, I decided to use it—not a normal practice, and not its usual location. (We have loofahs but tend not to use them.) I exfoliated my arm and chest and was surprised by how bristly and rough it was, but chalked it up to doing what a loofah does. After the shower, there were raised marks on my chest in a couple of places, and my left arm smarted, so I looked closer at the loofah to see what was causing the irritation. Someone had used it as a pin cushion, and there was a single pin sticking through it toward the front, the part with which you scrub. My left arm was pretty scratched up, with four or five somewhat lengthy marks.

My wife and I don't know who put the pin in the loofah. Did I, finding a stray pin in the bathroom and

thinking we never use loofahs, so there was no risk of harm? (I don't remember doing so, but who knows!) Did someone else? Regardless, the loofah found its way back into a location where one might use it, in the shower, and I'm glad I used it—instead of someone else. The scratches were impressive.

Having just read Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a wonderfully funny satire of Gothic novels—and my first Austen—it struck me as something straight out of such a book. The stray pin endangering one's self or loved ones, and no one in the home aware of how it got there. Potential for plausible deniability and gaslighting, never to be resolved. A dangerous presence in the home, populated only by trusted loved ones. My arm no longer hurts, though the marks remain, and I wear long sleeves so people don't inquire. The marks are too intense for them to have been made by our cat. And the pin? It's in the garbage, a danger no more.

I enjoyed your Ignorable Theme contribution on astronomy. I also appreciated your responses to the *No Harm in Asking* reprint. I presume that "NOYB" means "None of your business." A fair response! I'm sure you're able to do one thing for your friends, regardless of distance: Be Matt. Sometimes that's sufficient!

Congratulations on surpassing my page count. I enjoyed seeing that, too. I've held off on contributing to CAPA-alpha so far, though I've started preparing a fanzine. That apa is monthly, and I think I could swing the minac, but I also think you might be right: I'm stretched pretty thin as it is. (As recent commentary attests!)

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1613 offered feedback on Damon D. Brown's cover for APA-L #3087. I will share that with the cover artist. I, too, hope Beverly Warren remarks on *Tesla*. You know, it's never struck me previously that you share a surname with Heinrich Hertz, though I think about you often. Any relationship with the German physicist in terms of your family tree?

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #78, **Matthew Mitchell** updated ellers on his various ailments. May you continue to mend! Your new office chair looks comfortable indeed. Your remarks on fan names were intriguing. I agree with you that nicknames are different from fan names, though I do encourage you to explain what inspired "Miracle Matt." We are all, somehow, miraculous. Stardust.

Your mention of "Richard Kiel's character in James Bond" resonated with me. In the issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* on which I recently commented (*T&T* #134), the article on the Mandela Effect uses Jaws' girlfriend Dolly in *Moonraker* as an example. Some viewers

swear that the two characters meet cute because she has braces—and empathizes with his choppers—but she doesn't actually have braces. People can be quite certain she does. That article is available at <https://skepticalinquirer.org/2024/08/the-useful-mandela-effect>.

While talking with a colleague who lives in New York City, I learned this week that the subway system switched to contactless payment over the last couple of years. One article (<https://www.fox5ny.com/news/nyc-subway-omny-info-card-mta-contractor>) suggests that the transition began five years ago—but that less than half of passengers currently utilizes it. The transition has encountered roadblocks and continues to proceed. It worked pretty well, and it felt like the future. Williamsburg and Greenpoint are indeed in Brooklyn.

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #776 commented on his ongoing acclimation to his new choppers. Which dental adhesive do you use? I know nothing about such things, though my wife and I use an effervescent denture cleanser to clean the mouth guards we wear while sleeping. I'm glad you sorted out the billing issues with your podiatrist. Your description of the arrival of fall—by way of blankets—was wonderful.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 21, 1955

In *In Betweens* #7, **Derek LaPorte** informed fellow ellers about an inventory management game he's working on. I'm glad that you're enjoying the project. This is far from an assignment, but your description of the game and its inspirations made me wonder whether there's a fun inventory management game that could focus on fanzine creation. Inventory items could include articles, illustrations, cover art, and the resulting pages, and there could be some kind of sorting aspect to the collation to ensure pages end up in the right order. If inspired by apae, there could also be other NPC players racing to complete their submissions, so there could be two stages: fanzine creation and distribution collation. Kind of like the board game *Age of Comics: The Golden Years*. (<https://liriusgames.com/products/age-of-comics-the->

golden-years) I might play that game. Heck, I already play it every week!

I don't think I was aware of the storyline of *Madame Butterfly*. The two-part structure sounds effective—especially with the time in between—but your description of the staging was even more interesting. What was the argument between the MUA (make-up artist?) and the actress? I'll have to listen to “Un bel dì, vedremo.” Looks like there's a recording of it online by Maria Callas. “Nessun dorma” also seems promising, and there's an online recording by Luciano Pavarotti.

I found the article on writing in-game literature. The piece, “Write Knight,” appeared in the November 2024 UK edition of *PC Gamer* and the December 2024 US edition. It focused on *Elder Scrolls Online*'s lead writer Bill Slavicsek, who's also written some *Dungeons & Dragons* tie-in novels.

Next distribution is APA-L's 60th anniversary. Can't wait to see what comes together!

The Ignorable Theme: Time Restrictions

“Do you sometimes just not have time for stuff like this? How does that make you feel?” Now, I wonder what inspired *those* questions? I must have been feeling particularly busy that week. Shades of whether fandom is a way of life or just a hobby (*T&T* #119), I fully realize that other responsibilities—work, family, home, and health—should and do take priority over fanac, but I'd still somehow like to do All the Things.

It's a challenging week if I'm torn between only collating APA-L and contributing a last-minute fanzine. Or if I hack out a fanzine but neglect distribution comments. Or if I skip the Ignorable Theme. (I've recently skipped several that I offered primarily because I wanted to write about them.) I thought I was done with this but decided to weigh in on the theme because I had some open page available.

Usually, if the decision is between preparing a mailing and taking a week off entirely, the choice is more clear and the barrier less flexible. Most likely, I'm traveling and just not where I need to be to do what I need to do. That's somehow an easier decision to make. But why—when that's not the case—is it a debate or decision? Yes, we've published pretty much weekly since about this time in 1964. Yes, I feel responsible to be present in each distribution while serving as collator. Yes, I feel the shared responsibility of as many participants as possible being present in each mailing. But that's not really why it's frustrating when I feel other aspects of life intruding on my fanac.

I do this because I want to. I enjoy it thoroughly. And given the choice between “stuff like this” and other pastimes, I choose this. I like the social aspect of

apahacking—seeing what other fellows have to say, and how what we say influences future writing. Even moreso, I like the reason (or excuse) to read, watch, or do something related to fandom with the intent to write about it. I don't always document everything I read, watch, or do, but writing about the things I read, see, or do can lead to me reading, seeing, and doing more. That's a wonderful outcome.

I have several articles waiting in the wings based on bandes dessinées, magazines, or academic journals I've read in recent months, as well as a couple of books I've yet to review. I've recently read my first sf story paper, a precursor to the pulps, as well as a book about such story papers—and plan to write about that, too. And I've yet to write about the *Cyberpunk: Envisioning Possible Futures Through Cinema* exhibit at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. This weekend, we'll likely check out the *Sci-fi, Magick, Queer L.A.: Sexual Science and the Imagi-Nation* exhibit at the USC Fisher Museum of Art. I look forward to writing about that, too.

Publishing fanzines encourages and inspires me to live life more fully and to explore more in part because I have an outlet in which to share those experiences—and friends and fellow fans interested in that. When I don't have time to publish or collate, it frustrates me because that promise and potential isn't met. It usually means I'm too pressed for time and feeling pressures elsewhere in life.

That can occasionally lead to striving to be efficient in my fanac—minimizing my hassles—and efficient fanac isn't always as enjoyable fanac. So if I ever seem brusque or not entirely present, it's probably because I'm trying to do stuff like this—despite everything else going on in life. It's not always possible to sneak fanac in with grace and charm.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 4, 1955

Emulators & Engines #18

Oct. 21, 2024

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Game Report: Kerzmielzorg

To recognize the 50th anniversary of *Dungeons & Dragons*—and to utilize the 2024 *Player's Handbook* as soon as possible—my friend John started DM'ing a new fifth edition campaign about a month ago. We've had two sessions so far: Sept. 22 and Oct. 13.

I made an aasimar sorcerer named Beigwamil Oldazir (Wami for short) for the campaign, randomly selecting the species and class. I selected a background appropriate for the class—sage—rather than randomly selecting one. There's not a lot of information available on aasimar as a player character species. They first appeared in the *Planescape Monstrous Compendium Appendix II* in 1995, a year following the introduction of the tiefling.

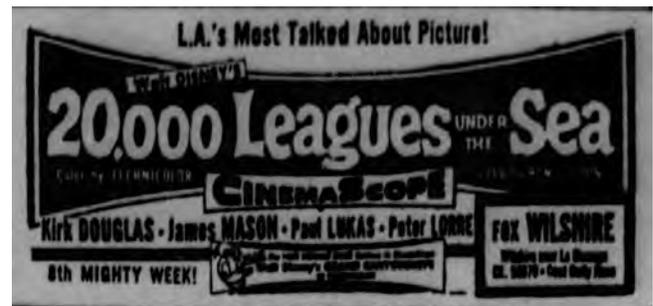
Aasimar are the celestial counterpart to the devilish tiefling and have been expanded on a little bit since then. In the 2014 *Dungeon Master's Guide*, aasimar were offered as an example of a homebrew race (now species). Further adjustments were offered in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* and *Monsters of the Multiverse*. Regardless, there's not a lot of published guidance on using them as a player character species.

So far, it's a challenge playing a good, celestial plane-touched character. The campaign is set in Kerzmielzorg, a “monster mega-city” populated by humans and demihumans. In the words of the DM, “Kerzmielzorg. City of monsters, cults, and cartels. You will never find a more wretched hive of scum, villainy, and cruelty.” The initial concept for the campaign was a series of heists, but we didn't all create rogues. In fact, Wami is the least stealthy of the party. But the biggest challenge is how to be good in a city that's so... bad. Ethical gray areas abound in Kerzmielzorg, and Wami has already been forced to make some challenging decisions. He might have bitten off more than he can chew traveling to the city in order to see if it's as oppositional to his nature as rumored.

Before the first session, we discussed some of the changes present in the 2024 *Player's Handbook* so we'd be aware of how they might affect gameplay. In addition to ability bonuses and penalties stemming

from a PC's background rather than species, there are other subtle changes. Surprised creatures no longer skip a round; they roll initiative at disadvantage. Stealth is no longer an opposed check; there's a flat DC of 15. Grappling is no longer an opposed athletics check; it's an acrobatics or athletics save against an attack. Heroic inspiration now lets players decide to reroll after a roll once a day. And there's been a change in how PCs are able to draw, sheathe, and drop weapons while in combat. (That's according to our DM. There might be other changes, and people are still discussing the practical aspects of such changes online.)

When discussing the changes, I commented that while I thought the changes were playable, I wasn't sure what had been broken that needed fixing—or how the changes improve gameplay. After two sessions, I still feel the same. The changes are fine, but I'm not sure they were necessary.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 11, 1955

There are four PCs in the party:

- Varh (Chris): A human barbarian with braided hair—later revealed to be a changeling or lycanthrope, but not all PCs know that yet
- Murnald (Karen): A Harengon warlock and bookkeeper
- Inkspot (Mike): A tiefling warlock (I think)
- Wami (me): An aasimar sorcerer

Kerzmielzorg is ruled by three dragons who are at odds with each other: Terrapocalypse the Red, Azarok Yaheef the Blue, and Noxtenebrous Moor the Black. Each oversees a portion of the city. Terrapocalypse rules west of the river, where most of the city is located, its streets and buildings covered in soot and ash, air choked by smog. Azarok oversees Azuria east of the river, marked by floating, populated islands that block the sun from reaching the Below, largely unexplored. And Noxtenebrous rules Noirmire, a polluted marshland to the south. There are multiple guilds in the city, and the PCs aren't yet aligned with any of them.

The Demon's Collar (Sept. 22, 2024)

The party is casing a warehouse planning to burgle its payroll. The warehouse pays its day laborers little, and the PCs expect 50 silver pieces in quick scratch. While determining how to gain entrance, they hear a cry for help behind them, perhaps a block or two over. They decide to check it out, lest the situation distract them from their work—or draw attention to their activities.

Inkspot sends his imp familiar, Screwtape, ahead to see what's going on. A downed fellow is surrounded by four hooligans wearing garish clothing and makeup. "Where is it? Tell us!" they say. They are members of the Minstrel Players, one of the guilds of Kerzmielzorg. The party challenges the ruffians in combat; a couple downed, the minstrels flee.

The victim, in his early 20s, is wearing scarlet robes. He is near death. The party finds a bag behind a stack of boxes along the wall. It contains a human skull covered with runes, marked by two grooves. Wami determines that the runes are incomplete spells of binding, either inaccurate or fake—rather than unfinished.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 18, 1955

Returning to their room at a nearby inn, they tend to the victim, who identifies himself as a priest of Bhaal. He says he was excommunicated from the church for stealing food; he was hungry. He'd hoped to hire the people who attacked him to swap the skull with one like it in the priory, but they decided to rob him instead. So he hires the party.

In two days, a baptism will be held for a member of the house of Illisque, during which a wall of skulls emerges—usually only displayed for holidays and special events. The baptism involves the ritual slaying of a bound demon, and the skulls play a role in that binding. The party is enlisted to gain entrance to the priory and swap the skull for another: The Demon's Collar.

While the defrocked priest attempts to gather robes the party can use as disguises, Inkspot crafts four brooches that will add to the disguise. Wami goes to local libraries and archives to research the Illisque family. They are largely sorcerers and wizards

engaged in the crafting of magic items. Houses in Kerzmielzorg are often rivals—and ranked in their influence and prestige. He also learns that the priest, Viktor, is merely sour against the church. He has nothing against or to do with the family.

At a nearby tavern, Varh learns that there are two cemeteries adjacent to the priory. They're guarded by Old One Eye and undead hounds. The only way into the priory is as a parishioner (saying "And justice is done" before entering) or to sneak in. Reportedly, there's an old access tunnel that emerges at the grave site of the Pathfinder, whom he later learns is named Letivia Bethany.

So informed and disguised, the party goes to the graveyard to find the grave of the Pathfinder. Bethany died centuries ago, and the grave is slightly mounded, while others nearby are not. The mound covers a trapdoor, roughly 200 feet from the temple wall. Murnald keeps watch as the others enter the tunnel, a steep slope downward approaching a cave carpeted by mounds of beetle carapaces.

Moving along one of the walls alongside the two ridges of carapaces running the length of the cave, Wami and the barbarian fall—disturbing swarms of carrion-eating insects in the cave. The party cannot overcome the insects and fails to find where the tunnel enters the temple but escapes, realizing they'll have to enter—and exit—another way.

Arriving at the priory an hour or so before the baptism ceremony, the party attempts to blend in with the other priests, undertaking various tasks. Wami finds a celebrant's book of Bhaal, and Varh looks into a recessed pit—locating the wall of skulls. It appears that that portion of floor can rise to sanctuary level. It's marked by some sort of machinery, an organ made out of bodies.

When the lower level rises during the ceremony and the priests of Bhaal call forth the demon, Inkspot sends Screwtape, invisible, to swap the skull in the wall. Wami identifies which skull it is, and the change is made. The demon, unbound, goes on the rampage, and the priests are hard pressed to contain it while the parishioners flee. The party leaves with the Demon Collar, escaping among the outward flow of other parishioners, but not without being seen—and recognized—by Old One Eye and the priests of Bhaal.

They hear screams and the sound of supernatural struggle behind them as they exit the church to make their way back to their safehouse, Wheatlanders Inn in the Goblet, a neighborhood marked by glassmakers and dishmakers. They do not know what happened to the demon, the member of the Illisque family to be baptized, or the priests of Bhaal.

Telfar's Terrible Demise (Oct. 13, 2024)

The next session started in media res as the party attempts to escape the Duergar Iron Soot Works, a mining company, after planting a fake ledger in the office of a bookkeeper. The DM used *Savage Worlds'* playing card-based initiative mechanic to manage the chase scene. Escaping in a hand-cranked rail cart leaving the mine, the party is chased by another cart carrying Duergar.

The party has to cope with Duergar leaping to their cart, goblin archers on a ledge, a cart coming toward them, and other challenges in order to reach the smog-choked light of day. Having survived that job, the party learns that the Parade of Perdonanza will soon be held. The Darling Dandies guild seeks the forgiveness of the Minstrel Players and plan to ride a float through Frogtown to the Belch in order to present the minstrels with a ceremonial gift: a scimitar that steals souls.

To learn more about the dandies, members of the party go to the shop of Loventino, who reportedly outfits members of the guild. The party also realizes that one of the goblins pursuing the group had cursed Murnald, effectively casting clairvoyance on him to track his whereabouts. The goblin had a tattoo of a hammer and an anvil, indicating he worked for the mining company. In order to hide their location from unwanted attention, Murnald took to closing his eyes, led by a party member at the elbow.

The party's investigations determine that the leader of the dandies, Hardcourt Exer, is a flamboyant sort. The parade will end with a party at the Borzoi Theatre—a spectacle during which he will present the scimitar to Rosario Charlton, leader of the minstrels.

Making inquiries at the Gopher's Hole, an inn in the neighborhood of La'Stway, party members learn that the parade follows the same two- to two-and-a-half-mile route every year. A new element this year is that the dandies staffing their float will throw gems, money, and diamonds into the crowds—guaranteeing a sizable audience along the play route and at the end.

They also learn that the minstrels, who deal in information, were insulted by the dandies at a party—or that the dandies interfered with their business; there are conflicting accounts. Regardless, the gift will be given to help make amends between the two groups.

At Chez Here, a fancier establishment, party members encounter a member of one of the two guilds who warns them not to go to the show. "Don't stay for the final act, at least," she cautions. And at a series of libraries and archives, Wami learns about Shar, goddess of assassins and darkness. The scimitar, Telfar's Terrible Demise of Tormented Souls, is

related to her. Priests of Shar lead the parade, and penitents will bear the litter supporting the dandies. The parade route will pass through the Arch of Bloody Bolger the Red, a notable landmark.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 18, 1955

Additionally, Wami investigates why the scimitar isn't required to be listed in the Kerzmielzorg registry of magic items. He finds volumes upon volumes listing such items, including one maintained by the Illisque family. Some items are named consistently in various volumes, while others are not. He finds no references to Shar. In the volume maintained by the Illisque family, all such items are listed as registered; other volumes don't list all as registered. Terrapocalypse the Red has decreed that magic items can't be wielded in Kerzmielzorg—hence the registry. The penalty is death.

Later, making inquiries at a shop called Amazor's Arcade, the party finds someone willing to remove the clairvoyance curse on Murnald—if they complete a

task for her. Down in the Stink, in Noirmire, there's a small statue of "no consequence," Wyrmlaw. She also took the Demon's Collar off the party's hands, securing the group's pledge to deliver Wyrmlaw to her in the near future.

After making a plan to acquire the scimitar from the parade float, the party goes to the Arch of Bloody Bolger the Red. Inside the arch, Inkspot and Vahr are challenged by several undead. Vahr reveals himself to be a wolveren shifter, and the tiefling succeeds at casting a misty square on the float to obscure the acquisition—and replacement—of the scimitar. (Inkspot had crafted a rough forgery.) The scimitar successfully in hand, the party makes its way into the crowds.

Despite party members' exhortations to keep a low profile after the robbery, Murnald and Inkspot go to the show at the Borzoi Theatre to see what transpires. Once they realize that the replacement scimitar is a forgery, the minstrels slay the representatives of the dandies. Apology declined.



Los Angeles Times, Feb. 25, 1955

In addition to realizing how hard it will be for my PC to be good in Kerzmielzorg (unless he falls prey to relativism), I am also struck by how the adventures so far have involved the party being adjacent or peripheral to relatively sizable calamities: the release of a demon and inter-guild warfare. Both, arguably caused by the group's actions. Their interest and investment has only been in acquiring a specific item related to the events—and they've absconded with it, neglecting to play a role or intervene in the larger, resulting entanglements that result.

That's actually kind of interesting from a storytelling and worldbuilding point of view: characters causing sizable changes in a given city, but not really being involved in the outcome or aftermath of those changes. (I quipped that the group might become the Forrest Gump of Kerzmielzorg.) Similarly, the party has already made a number of influential enemies: the Illisque family, the church of Bhaal, DuerGAR miners, the dandies—and perhaps others.

So it's probably best if the group takes a break for a

while, making themselves scarce in the city until things cool down. Perhaps things will be safer in Noirmire, down in the Stink.

The Ignorable Theme: Skill Selection

"When should the Rules tell a player to specify the PC's skills: during the initial design or during play, when the player sees it would be useful for the PC to have certain skills?"

Over the years, I've fallen into the following approach. If character generation is intended to reflect a character at the outset of their adventuring career, it makes sense to select their initial skills during character creation—to represent who they currently are, and who they've become before embarking on their career as an adventurer. It feels somewhat opportunistic and reactive to determine their skills when risks and opportunities present themselves in game play. Characters aren't wholly unformed when they first leave the safety of home.

If you let a character's back story emerge through gameplay rather than upon creation, I suppose it can make sense to allow skill selection in early game sessions. But how long do you keep that window open? How many sessions or levels can go by before a character is "fully baked"? If utilizing that method, I'd suggest that a character's skills should be chosen and identified by the time they reach second level. Or when second level is reached.

That's somewhat similar to zero-level play, however, which doesn't explicitly assign skills or a class until first level is reached. If you decide not to assign skills upon character creation, I might encourage and pursue zero-level play, then, instead of completing characters by second level. That somehow feels more honest and legitimate, though I might not argue the point too strongly in debate. (The DM would decide, after all.)

Regardless, when leveling up my characters, I almost always select new skills, spells, and other features acquired by reaching new levels based on what the character did (or could not do) during game sessions. What did they experience during game play? What did they do—or try to do—regardless of whether they succeeded? What did they experience or witness party members doing? What do they wish they'd been able to do—but couldn't yet?

I rarely choose new skills, spells, or other abilities uninspired by the character's experiences while adventuring. Some players might craft their characters over time regardless of gameplay. I think it's more fun to let the gameplay help me make those character development decisions over time. The past determines the future, sometimes.

Even if a character's initial skills were chosen before the first session.

Comments on Alarums & Excursions #587

I have officially missed the deadline but will finish this to send to Lee Gold for next month. In *Tantivy* dated Sept. 10, 2024, **Lee Gold** informed me of recent computer woes. I apologize for irritating you with my vague request for *Xenofilia* back issues while you were experiencing your Windows 10 malware woes. Revisiting those emails, I caught you in the thick of things!

I was intrigued by your celebrating your wedding anniversary every month. How do you identify the day on which to do so? The date on which you were married, in the appropriate month? Or based on the phase of the moon when you were married? The encounter you described at the gas station sounds challenging. I'm glad you and Barry at least gave the woman the explicit option to leave the car.

My understanding of BX, BECMI, and 1E *Dungeons & Dragons* is that they're used to denote the 1977-1981 Basic and Expert *D&D* sets by J. Eric Holmes, Tom Moldvay, and Dave Cook; the 1983-1986 Basic-Expert-Companion-Masters-Immortals *D&D* sets by Frank Mentzer; and *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*.

In *Back to Brazilian Gamebooks Part III*, **Pedro Panhoca da Silva** expressed discontent that the 2024 *D&D Player's Handbook* "doesn't have a translation into other languages." Alas, that is indeed the case! According to an article in *GameRant* (<https://tinyurl.com/DnD-translations>), Wizards of the Coast "will end official Portuguese translations for the game's sourcebooks following this year." The company will focus on six languages—English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish—though not all materials will be available in every language.

That is frustrating news—no longer that new—for roleplaying gamers in Brazil and Portugal, I'm sure. As we prepare to return to Portugal at the end of this week for the month of November, returning in time for Loscon 50, I've set aside Cleron O. Andarilho's *Mundo de Zephyrus RPG* (<https://zephyrus.forumeiros.com/forum> and <https://tinyurl.com/MdZ-2-RPG>) for any solo play while there. I might also take *2D6 Dungeon* along, as well, in case the ad hoc translation proves too challenging.

Patrick Riley's *Sinister Things* #332 posed the question, "[W]hy should a player own Monster Manual? Or scenario books?" I'm not sure that my perspective is that they should... though I might have said that... but that I don't think there's any reason why they shouldn't. Looking back, I did say, "Ideally,

everyone would own All the Books... ." I might amend that to "Ideally, everyone would own All the Books they want to own... ." Regardless, it's not that I think all players should own the *Monster Manual* or modules, but that they should be able to if they want to. Doing so deepens and enriches your understanding of the game, which isn't problematic if players keep player knowledge and character knowledge separate when roleplaying. Doing so also encourages more players to become Dungeon Masters or GMs. Besides, the books are cool to look at regardless of what you do with them.

In **Mark A. Wilson's** *Bumbling Through Dungeons* #57, he continued his consideration of game-related books beyond *Gametek*. Bernard De Koven's *The Well-Played Game* sounds especially interesting. "[T]he community of players ... [takes] precedence above the game itself." A wonderful sentiment and standard!

A belated happy birthday wish to **Peter C. Hildreth** as reported in *Aragarth's Musings*! I hope you heal fully and quickly from your bout with COVID. I will have to return to your Gen Con report. (I shall do the same for **Patrick Zoch's** Dice Tower Retreat report in *The Dragon's Beard* dated October 2024!) An acquaintance recently ran a game of *Neon Lords of the Toxic Wasteland* at PineCon (<https://pineconsite.wordpress.com>), so I'm jonesing for a game con in recent days. Your conreps will go far.

In fact, Rolisboa (<https://rolisboa.pt>) will occur in Lisbon on Nov. 2-3 shortly after our arrival overseas. It doesn't look like I'll be able to participate—it's too soon after our arrival and I don't yet speak Portuguese—but I'll be there in spirit regardless.

Jerry Stratton's *The Biblyon Free Press* dated October 2024 indicated that he might watch movies based on the ads in my fanzines. That is awesome. So good to see that *Fight On!* has returned.



Los Angeles Times, March 11, 1955

Nonfiction

“Ancient Aliens, Clones, and Growing Up as a SFF Reader in Brazil” by Renan Bernardo: Given my upcoming trip to Portugal, this was a welcome perspective on how readers in other countries become fans of speculative fiction—as well as how the books available to us inform our reading preferences.

Recommended.

“Nature Abhors a Vacuum: Writing in Solitude” by Jordan Kurella

Reviews

“Words for Thought: Short Fiction Review” by A.C. Wise

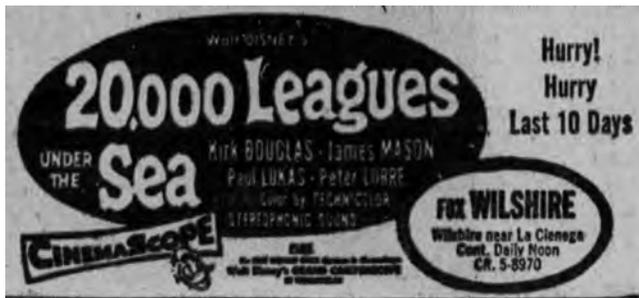
“Book Review: John Wiswell’s *Someone You Can Build a Nest In*” by Leah Ning

Interviews

“Interview with Authors Eugen Bacon and Clare E. Rhoden” by Marissa van Uden

“Interview with Author Tia Tashiro” by Marissa van Uden

“Interview with Artist Marco Mazzoni” by Bradley Powers



Los Angeles Times, March 18, 1955

***Beneath Ceaseless Skies* #418** (Oct. 17, 2024)

<https://www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com>

“Three Drops in the River” by Marissa Lingen

“Street Theater” by Jon Hansen

***Beneath Ceaseless Skies* #419** (Oct. 31, 2024)

“Things Lost Forever,” by Auston Habershaw: A vampire lord commissions a new throne from the son of a master craftsman. Embroiled in vampiric politics, the carpenter makes a strong statement through his work. An intriguing setting and situation suggestive of additional possible stories.

“Where They Sleep,” by Heather Clitheroe

***Clarkesworld* #217** (October 2024)

<https://clarkesworldmagazine.com>

Fiction

“A Space O/pera” by Abby Nicole Yee

“The Buried People” by Nigel Brown

“The Children of Flame” by Fiona Moore

“Fractal Karma” by Arula Ratnakar

“Fishing the Intergalactic Stream” by Louis Inglis Hall

“Midnight Patron” by Mike Robinson

“The Face of God: A Documentary” by Damián Neri

Nonfiction

“Fact, Fiction, and Feeling: Ecological Grief in a Changing World” by Octavia Cade

“Moving Further out into Space And Time: A Conversation with Indrapramit Das” by Arley Sorg

“Unfolding the Full Story: A Conversation with R.S.A. Garcia” by Arley Sorg

“Editor’s Desk: Oh So It Caused That Too” by Neil Clarke

***The Dark* #115** (October 2024)

“The Apostle” by James Bennett: A story about religious fervor, a domineering parent, experiencing visions, and the cruelty of children set in the 17th century.

“The Snow Child” by Alison Littlewood

“Ruminants” by Kay Chronister: This extremely powerful piece focuses on migrant labor, the refugee experience, animal husbandry, symbiosis—and parasitism. The four sections of the story are named after the compartments of the stomach in cattle, sheep, and goats. Expressively mysterious and suspenseful throughout.

“Bunting” by Neil Williamson

***Forever Magazine* #117** (October 2024)

<https://forever-magazine.com>

“Introduction” by Neil Clarke

“Bannerless” by Carrie Vaughn

“The Transition of Osoosi” by Ozzie M. Gartrell

“Sparklybits” by Nick Wolven

About the Artist and Authors

About Forever

***Lightspeed* #173** (October 2024)

<https://www.lightspeedmagazine.com>

“Editorial: October 2024”

Science Fiction

“Ashes Like Tea Leaves, Lava Like Honey” by Ai Jiang: An environmental cautionary tale in which the fire and water gods take a stand. Despite distractingly inconsistent boldfaced and italicized text, the story resonates with the importance of fable, myth, and legend.

“The Life You’ve Given Me, Rusty” by P.A. Cornell: A very short story about the reliance of humanity on technology—and its potential costs. Impressively lucid and heroic.

“Autonomy of a Murder” by Russell Nichols
“Hot Hearts” by Lyndsie Manusos

Fantasy

“Zekelo’s Barterhouse & Emporium” by Patrick Hurley
“Winding Sheets” by Kenneth Schneyer
“Caesura” by Ashlee Lhamon
“Sully the God” by Philip Gelatt and JT Petty

Nonfiction

“Book Review: *Heir* by Sabaa Tahir” by Melissa A Watkins
“Book Review: *Strange Beasts* by Susan J. Morris” by Chris Kluwe
“Book Review: *Sinophagia*, edited and translated by Xueting Christine Ni” by Arley Sorg: This review of a follow-up to *Sinopticon: A Celebration of Chinese Science Fiction* explores the current state of Chinese horror fiction. In addition to commenting on stories in the anthology, the reviewer considers whether non-Chinese readers can adequately understand or appreciate what Chinese readers might consider good writing—or misogynistic perspectives.

Author Spotlights

Ai Jiang
Kenneth Schneyer
Russell Nichols
Philip Gelatt and JT Petty

Nightmare #145 (October 2024)

<https://www.nightmare-magazine.com>

“Editorial: October 2024”

Fiction

“Little Horn” by Gemma Files
“Perfect Water” by Simon Gilbert
“NotRob” by Isabel Cañas

Poetry

“Possession” by Martins Deep

Nonfiction

“The H Word: The Monstrous Bird” by Nicholas Belardes
“de•crypt•ed: Koch on James” by Joe Koch

Author Spotlights

Gemma Files
Simon Gilbert

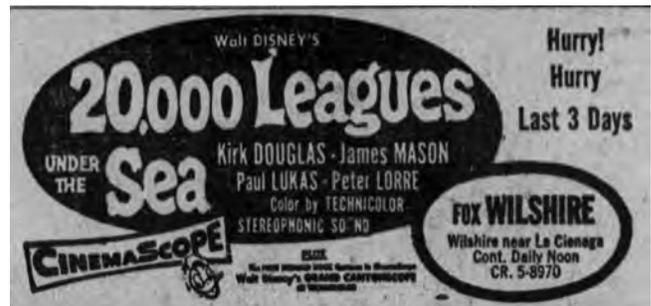
Uncanny #60 (September/October 2024)

<https://www.uncannymagazine.com>

Editorial: “The Uncanny Valley” by Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas

Fiction

“Cursed Moon Queers” by Natalia Theodoridou
“The 6% Squeeze” by Eddie Robson
“Another Girl Under the Iron Bell” by Angela Liu
“A Stranger Knocks” by Tananarive Due: I was quite pleased to see work by Due in this issue! A very good story about or inspired by Black cinema, Black theater circuits, *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*, and the hypnotic effects of film.
“¡Sangronas! Un Lista de Terror” by M. M. Olivas
“A Menu of First Favorite Meals” by Jo Miles
“The Wrong Time Travel Story” by Marissa Lingen: Most time travel fiction focuses on protagonists going to a time and place of their choosing. This piece considers the potential benefits and impact of ending up somewhere—somewhen—unexpected.



Los Angeles Times, March 25, 1955

Nonfiction

“It’s a Wonderful (Doctor Who) Life” by Sophie Aldred: Presented as journal entries from June 2024, the actor who portrayed the seventh Doctor Who’s companion, Ace, expresses the impact the program has had on her life, Whovian friendships, and her ongoing involvement in fandom-adjacent activities.
“Growing Up in Fiction” by Yamile Saied Méndez
“Scalzi on Film: 20th Century Cinematic Science Fiction Starter Pack” by John Scalzi: The writer recommends about 10 sf movies released between 1927 and 1999, identifying their cinematic descendants. One of the better lists of this type, and all the movies are worth seeing. Scalzi ends by challenging readers to respond with their own lists.
“The Liminality of Community Loss” by LaShawn M. Wanak

Poetry

“Dreams on a Tamarind Road” by Prosper C. Iféányí
“Festival of Scales and Teeth” by Aline-Mwezi Niyonsenga

“The Witch Recalls Her Craft” by Angel Leal
“To Hunt a Chimera” by Mikal Wix

Interviews

Angela Liu interviewed by Caroline M. Yoachim
M. M. Olivias interviewed by Caroline M. Yoachim



Los Angeles Times, April 1, 1955

Juvenalia: “Little Pieces”

This one-page story fragment was handwritten in blue ballpoint pen—in all caps!—on a piece of spiral-bound notebook paper. It doesn’t seem to have been written for school; there are no editing or grading marks, or comments. It is undated, so I can’t determine when I wrote it. The original version was broken into two paragraphs.

One of the more important turning points in my life turned out to be the evening little pieces of flesh began to fall from my body. I had been sitting cross legged on the floor watching TV and enjoying the spring breezes flowing through the open windows.

My shoes were lying disjointedly on the carpet, and I was inspecting my bare feet. Peering into the subtle shadows, I discovered two large black bumps on the small toe of my right foot. Thinking they were water blisters or something, I had ignored the protrusions, but now I poked at them with a finger. To my surprise, they fell to the tan carpeting, leaving two sizable depressions in the flesh of my toe.

A sweetish odor remained on my finger when I lifted the guilty finger to my face. Running the finger over and into the dents, I felt the result of my exploration. I also noticed another blackish speck at the base of the next toe in.

Thinking nothing of the entire incident, I used the remote to change channels and resumed watching television.

The Ignorable Theme: Traveling Fanac

“When you travel, do you continue to engage and participate in fan activity? How so?”

I do! While in New York City recently (*T&T* #133), I reached out to a couple of fannish acquaintances but was unable to meet up with them. One doesn’t even live in New York! While there, I read sf paperbacks, visited several bookstores, and checked out a zine store and comic shop, as well.

Planning to head to Portugal for a month in a few days, I’ve already reached out to several fannish friends in Povoá de Lanhoso, Porto, and Lisbon, and I just emailed another with whom I need to touch base. We’ll make a point to see all of them over the course of November.

Unfortunately, I won’t be able to participate in Rolisboa (<https://rolisboa.pt>), a roleplaying game convention held Nov. 2-3. It’s too soon after our arrival to head down to Lisbon for a weekend, and not yet speaking Portuguese, participating in roleplaying games would be challenging. Cinanima (<https://cinanima.pt/en>) is occurring again in Espinho from Nov. 8-17, so my wife and I intend to explore that event further. (*T&T* #91)

While in Portugal, I plan to continue collating and distributing APA-L, publishing *De Profundis* and *The Stf Amateur*—both shortly after our arrival—and catching up on reading comic books, fanzines, and magazines for potential review. I also intend to read more bande dessinées—in English and otherwise—and dive deeper into the sea of Portuguese speculative fiction, comics, music, and other fannish culture. If

I'm lucky, the new issue of *Bang!* (<https://revistabang.com>) will come out while I'm there.

Comments on APA-L #3091

In *Space Cowboy's Accretion* #13, **Jean-Paul L. Garnier** informed others about recent podcast episodes, book release parties, and other reading events. Even though you weren't able to "do very much reading for pleasure," I hope you enjoyed proofing your various publication projects. Reading several prozines and semiprozines recently (above), I look forward to future issues of *Galaxy* and *Worlds of If*. When did they tear out the stage by the bookstore? The Beatnik Lounge sounds like my kind of place.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1614 offered several milestones of note and announced the titles for his Classics of Science Fiction discussions at Loscon 50. I haven't read any of the three selections and will do my best to do so before we return. Checking my cataloged books, I only own the Isaac Asimov title, *The Currents of Space*.

While C.D. Carson's been traveling—we last exchanged emails Oct. 15—I've continued mailing him APA-L but haven't been emailing him PDFs. I look forward to his return and will comment on *Blast* #2 now that the partwork is complete. Perhaps next ish or so. I also look forward to future issues of *Always Going Home* and his customarily astute comments. However, I also eagerly await some sort of trip report. Do be sure to share your travels with us, good sir!

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #79, **Matthew Mitchell** updated readers on his birthday celebration, which included dinner at an Italian restaurant and a screening of *Saturday Night*. From what I've read, including your commentary, the casting seems solid. What was the other movie in which you were interested?

My wife belongs to AARP, but I haven't received an invitation yet. From what I understand, the discounts are the primary appeal—and can be quite helpful. I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez. An update on Gabe Fowler and Desert Island Comics in Brooklyn: Following the successful fundraiser, he was able to find a new location—only 500 feet away. (<https://tinyurl.com/desertisland-update>) Desert Island will remain in its current location until Christmas, move, and reopen nearby by next March.

You were active in a *Star Trek* roleplaying game run by Jim Terry? That sounds like great fun. In honor of the new *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*, I recently joined a friend's campaign, which utilizes the new rules. (*Emulators & Engines* #18)

Joe Zeff's *Toony Loons* #777 shared stories about

medical appointments, navigation issues, and other challenges. That A&W root beer float sounds delicious, despite the effect it had on your blood glucose. Now I want one. Have you ever considered excerpting your NaNoWriMo efforts in a fanzine? I would enjoy reading your Fu Manchu and Doc Savage homages, if such they be.

In *Sirius Barks* #18, **Beverly Warren** shared news on former fellow Bill Welden. I'll keep my eyes open for his fanzines as I continue to work on the archives! Thank you for the commentary on *Tales from the Comic Book Crackdown*. (<https://www.comicbookcrackdown.com>) Perhaps I'll be able to see the play in the future.

I also enjoyed your discussion of *Tesla* and *Megalopolis*. Your description of the latter is particularly intriguing. I look forward to the upcoming collection of writing by Bill. Unfortunately, Ken Rudolph and I didn't get together for lunch; I merely stopped by his home to pick up a box. But based on that brief conversation, I hope to spend more time with him. Perhaps we should prioritize lunch!



Los Angeles Times, April 1, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #137

Nov. 1, 2024

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted 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

This apa is full
of ghosts and memories past:
It's been 60 years.

While I was preparing last week's distribution of APA-L, I was struck by a couple of things. One, Oct. 22 marked our 60th anniversary. And I found the bookending of Taral Wayne's cover and Nola Frame-Gray's bacover as somewhat eerie, as well as wholly appropriate.

Wayne first submitted the illustration I used last week on Sept. 14, 2023. After using the other illustrations he'd provided via email, I requested the artwork in a different file format, and he sent the version I used on May 24, 2024. My last email to him was May 26, I mailed him hard copies of APA-L distributions featuring his artwork May 30 and July 4, and he died July 31.

I didn't hold on to last week's cover planning ahead for Halloween, but it was appropriate for that reason. It was also eerie, however, because the illustration involves ghosts and includes the text "RIP." We can consider the cover a memorial as well as in the spirit of Halloween.

Accompanied by Frame-Gray's tribute to Louis—and Halloween—on the bacover, it's serendipitous bookending. So many meaningful people have passed through the pages of APA-L... and will continue to do so.

Monstrously Good Music: Isaac Rother & the Phantoms

I've been online since the late 1980s, and it wasn't until this year that social media, specifically the *Facebook*, excited me in a way similar to the impact of bulletin board systems and my early use of Gopher, Lynx, Telnet, and Usenet. Or my discovery of Amok Books, Blacklist Mailorder, *Factsheet Five*, *High Weirdness by Mail*, *Maximum Rocknroll*, and *Thrasher* magazine. It was the first time social media played the role of a punk rock fanzine, and for that I am grateful.

Thanks to a randomly encountered—or algorithmically driven—social media ad for the music of Isaac Rother & the Phantoms (<https://www.isaacrother.com>), I've been enjoying some of the finest garage rock I've experienced since the surf, rockabilly, and garage revival precipitated by the emergence of Estrus Records in 1990 and the release of *Pulp Fiction* in 1994. (At least since the New Zealand band the Cavemen more recently.) While a DJ at WNUR-FM in the Chicago area, I co-hosted an early-1990s program called *Shakin' and Stompin'* that trafficked in such wares, and Rother's music would have found a fine home on our playlists. That Rother also has a background in radio is frosting on the rock 'n' roll cake.



Here's how Rother himself describes his music on *Spotify*: "Isaac Rother & the Phantoms are the masters of Ghoulish Rock 'n' Roll, melding wild rock 'n' roll with mid-century rhythm and blues and a heavy dose of retro horror schlock." And in a sponsored post on the *Facebook*: "Isaac Rother & the Phantoms emerged from my burning desire to conjure the ultimate rock 'n' roll party—a party I've yearned for since forever, yet rarely stumbled upon. My aim? Unleash the untamed, primal force of vintage rock 'n' roll, infused with the macabre allure of a classic horror flick."

Rother's music is well primed for social media marketing—as well as music video. His personal appearance, onstage demeanor, monster movie trappings, and the music itself is ripe for short-form video online. And the band's focus on monster movies and related themes should resonate strongly with Monster Kids and fen of the fantastic. Song titles

include such tempting morsels as “Black Cat,” “Ghost Party,” “Haunted Castle,” “House of Wax,” “Like a Wolfman,” “Night of the Phantom,” and “Somebody Put a Hex on Me.”

Whether you’re inclined toward the music of the Cramps, the Misfits, the Ripoffs, or Screamin’ Jay Hawkins—or movies such as those made by American International Pictures, Hammer Film Productions, and Universal Pictures—you’ll likely find something that sets you a-shivering in the music of Isaac Rother & the Phantoms.

Rother agreed to participate in an interview for *The Stf Amateur*. Over several weeks, we explored his interests in movies, music, and other topics via Facebook Messenger.



The Stf Amateur: When I saw that you went to Famous Monsters Fest in Pennsylvania in mid-September, I had two thoughts. One, I was jealous. And two, you must be the real deal. What was your experience at the con like?

Isaac Rother: It was so cool. I was jealous, too, because it was all the way across the country in Pennsylvania and I’m in California. They asked me if I wanted to vend there. It was shockingly unbelievable that they would ask me. I wanted to do it, but I didn’t have a way to get out there. Then they offered to cover my travel expenses if I would perform at the after-party—and I was there!

It was my first time as a vendor at a con. I’m what they call an up-and-coming artist, so not everyone has heard of me. On the other hand, there were people who came to the con just for me, and that was really cool. The folks that put on the convention are the best! I was set up in the “celebrity” area next to Darcy the Mail Girl [aka Diana Prince] from *The Last Drive-in with Joe Bob Briggs* and the epicly talented special

effects artist and horror host, Shane Morton aka Professor Morté [host of the *Silver Scream SpookShow*]. Shane was like a walking encyclopedia of cool stuff, and he regaled me with stories about working at *Adult Swim* and partying with GG Allin.

Everyone I met was super cool! I’m just as big of a fan as anyone else, so it was really cool to be able to meet phans of my music and also people that I am a phan of. Bill Johnson, aka Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part 2*, asked me about the Canelo [Alvarez] fight in the elevator. I got shuttled to the airport with Frankenhoker, aka Patty Mullen! I mean, come on. Doesn’t get better than that!

Amateur: That sounds awesome. I’m glad the trade worked out. For some reason, I thought you were based in Washington. How long have you been in California? Some of your past shows made me think you have a Los Angeles connection.

Rother: I started the band in Olympia, Wash., in 2012 and moved back to my hometown of LA a year later. In 2016, I moved to Oakland, Calif., which is where I am now.

Amateur: Wish I’d discovered you sooner! I moved to LA in 2009, so we overlapped. How did people respond to your set at the Famous Monsters Fest after-party?

Rother: It went well, but the setup was odd. I played on a stage that was upstairs and down an impossibly long hallway from the rest of the con, and I didn’t go on until 11 p.m. The con ended at 7 p.m., so the people who stuck around were either there specifically to see me or really committed to the after-party. I felt bad because some people wanted to see the show but, understandably, couldn’t wait around for hours.

Amateur: How did Famous Monsters Fest compare to Midsummer Scream? Are there any other cons you’ve enjoyed or performed at?

Rother: Midsummer Scream is much bigger and has more of an LA vibe—it’s in nearby Long Beach. It literally sells out the Long Beach Convention Center all three days. Famous Monsters Fest is newer and smaller. Of course, the magazine is older, but as a fest it’s just getting started. Hopefully, it can continue to grow. Famous Monsters Fest was the first con I’ve performed at, but I hope to do a lot more.

Amateur: Were you in any bands before the Phantoms, or was this your first musical group?

Rother: I sang in a punk band from around 2004 to 2007 called Rabies that still gets remembered in some circles. We put out a few 7" and an LP. I had a garage punk band called Mojo Hand that released one 7". I've been in some other minor projects, but those were the main two before I started the Phantoms.

Amateur: Were you interested in monster movies before the Phantoms?

Rother: Absolutely! It must have started when I was a kid with Scooby-Doo and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Both shows had tons of monsters and mutants! I grew up in the era of video stores, and I remember renting movies like the original *King Kong*, *The Little Shop of Horrors*, and *Godzilla vs. Mothra* when I was really young. For some reason, I always thought old stuff was cool even as a child.

I remember that during my freshman year of high school, DVDs had supplanted VHS, and they were releasing all these budget box sets that would be packaged as "20 Horror Classics for \$10!" or something similar. I bought one of those sets on a whim while hanging out with friends after school, and we watched *House on Haunted Hill* with Vincent Price. That was a game-changing experience. I wish I still had that DVD set.

Amateur: That sounds like one of the Mill Creek Entertainment sets. Those are totally awesome, even if the print transfers aren't always great. What was it about *House on Haunted Hill* that struck you?

Rother: At the time, I loved the ridiculousness of all the gimmicks like the climax of the movie being a skeleton on a string or whatever. But with my older, wiser eyes, I see that those gimmicks were ingenious! *House on Haunted Hill* has one of the best movie openings ever. Vincent Price gives one of his best performances. I think it's one of my favorite movies.

Director and producer William Castle doesn't get enough credit. He was really innovative and thinking outside of the box. I don't think anyone before or since has taken as creative an approach to filmmaking. He was always looking for a way to make the experience bigger than just the movie.

As I'm sure you know, when theaters showed *House on Haunted Hill* during its original run, the theaters were given skeletons to bring out during the skeleton scene so people might think it was real or something. In his movie *Homicidal*, he put in a "Fright Break" before the end of the movie and made theaters set up a "Cowards Corner" so anyone who was too scared to see the end could leave the theater and go to

the Cowards Corner. As ridiculous as that is, the Fright Break is really well done and adds a ton of tension to the scene.

Amateur: There are a couple of good books about Castle: his memoir *Step Right Up!* and Joe Jordan's book *Showmanship*. I hadn't heard about the Cowards Corner. How did the idea to combine such cinema with rock 'n' roll come about?



Rother: I haven't read those, but I want to. I used to be a voracious reader, but I got more into audiobooks, and it's hard to go back.

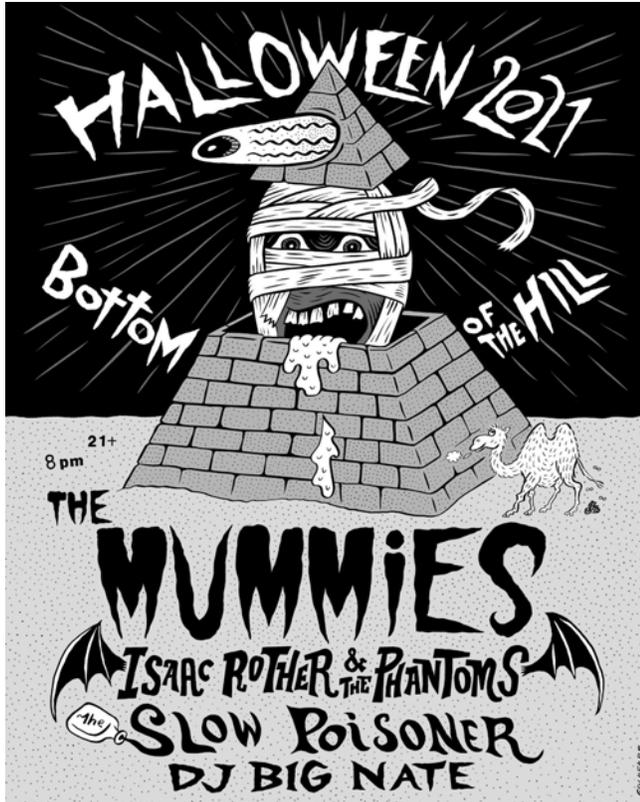
It came naturally to me to combine those interests. People have done it before, of course, and I definitely wanted to follow in the footsteps of Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Screamin' Lord Sutch when I started. I've become a much better guitar player than when I started, and that's now a big part of my thing, too.

Amateur: How did you first get into music?

Rother: There used to be an oldies radio station K-Earth 101 in Los Angeles when I was a kid. It

doesn't exist anymore, but that was my go to. The station is still there, but now they play hits from the '70s and '80s. It's lame. That music sucks.

Amateur: What inspired you to move from listening to music to playing music?



Rother: I went to sleepaway camp in seventh grade, and all the counselors played guitar. It seemed cool! I tried to learn when I got back but discovered that it was really hard and gave up. Then I got into punk rock and wanted to be a singer—and was still also interested in guitar and kept learning some stuff.

I randomly got into blues because I heard the story of Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil to learn guitar, and that sounded rad. One of my favorite punk bands Fear covered “I’m Your Hoochie Coochie Man” by Muddy Waters [as “Hoochie Coochie Man”], and I heard the original around the same time I learned about Robert Johnson.

I grew up down the street from McCabe’s Guitar Shop in [Santa Monica], which is a local institution for lessons. I walked in and asked if there was anyone who could teach me to play like Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson. There was an old blues head who heard me say that and flipped because I was so young and interested in that stuff. I started learning from him, but I was by no means a fast learner or a great guitar

player. I started singing in my own punk band, Rabies, around the same time.

Amateur: The *Macabre Daily* interview mentioned McCabe’s! That’s still there in Santa Monica, and I live near Boulevard Music in Culver City, which might be a little more staid. Did the blues head turn you on to other cool music?

Rother: Yeah, he did. He got me into Mississippi John Hurt, Merle Travis, and Reverend Gary Davis. He was really into that thumb- and fingerpicking guitar style. I should also mention that my stepdad came into my life around the time I started playing guitar. He plays guitar and knows about a lot of cool music, including the blues, but also things like Dr. John’s *Gris-Gris* album.

Amateur: What guitarists, musicians, or bands inspire you the most now?

Rother: I have a lot of influences and inspirations. I’m most inspired by music from the ’50s and ’60s. It was all about singles back then, so there’s a lot of great stuff by people who only put out a couple songs.

To get a little more specific, my three biggest inspirations for guitar playing are probably Chuck Berry, Dick Dale, and Joe Maphis, who isn’t as remembered as the other two—but he inspired me to play fast.

As far as singing, I like extremes—Little Richard and Howlin’ Wolf—but also the swagger of Elvis [Presley] and other rockabillys. More recently, old-school pro wrestlers have factored in. I love how they all used to talk in exaggerated voices!

Amateur: Pro wrestling! I’ve been surprised by the strength of science fiction and music fandom’s overlap with wrestling fandom. What wrestlers do you find most interesting?

Rother: I think the guys who started in the territory era but also became huge in the national TV era are really interesting. Especially if they had an over-the-top persona. “Macho Man” Randy Savage, the Iron Sheik, and Ric Flair are some examples. Andre the Giant, of course.

I recently got a record by a wrestler named Sweet Daddy Siki, who was a Black dude that bleached his hair blonde, dressed crazy, and sang country music. You can’t make this stuff up.

Amateur: I can see the parallels in terms of performance, character development, and staging for sure. In terms of touring and shows, what are some of

the best experiences you've had? Any bands that were particularly awesome to share the stage with?

Rother: As long as there's people there to see me, it's a great night! I'm honored that people like my music, and the folks that come to my shows are the coolest. I love to tour and plan to do a lot more touring. I've gotten to open for a few of my influences, which is really cool. I did two shows with Dick Dale and one with Wanda Jackson. That feels really special to me because Dale is no longer with us and Wanda is retired. Most of my influences are dead, so I'll always be grateful for those gigs. I also did a three-week tour with Japan's Guitar Wolf, and that was epic. More recently, I did a few shows in New York with a band called the Out-Sect from Philly. They're my favorite band that I've played with recently.

Amateur: You've lived in Los Angeles, Olympia, and the Bay Area. How do the music scenes compare?

Rother: They're all different animals. Los Angeles is tough because it's so huge that if you're not playing in the current hip neighborhood, that could seriously affect the turnout. It's a tough town. There's always traffic and never parking! Olympia is a small town with a big music scene. I haven't lived there in a really long time, but when I was there, there were shows constantly. I mostly did house shows there, but there's a few dive bars and DIY places. A lot of touring bands come through because it's between Portland and Seattle. The Bay Area is easier to navigate. I live in Oakland, and most of the shows happen at one of three venues—Eli's [Mile High Club], [Thee] Stork Club, or the Golden Bull—all of which are within a mile of each other. There's also stuff in San Francisco, and some of the surrounding cities have decent clubs.

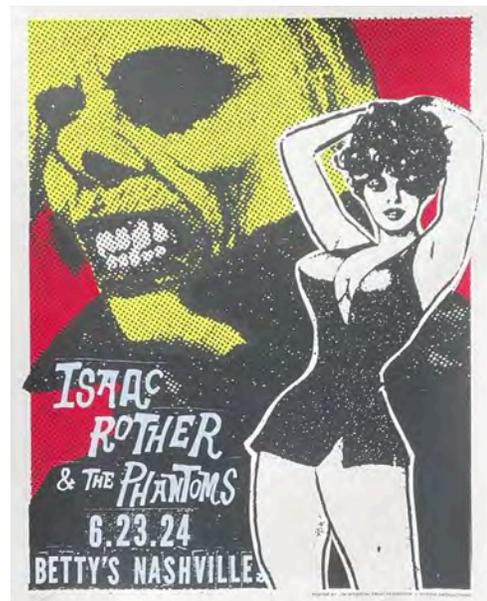
Amateur: How do the movie screenings compare?

Rother: LA has more than anywhere! There's a Web site called *Revival Hub Los Angeles* (<https://www.revivalhubla.com>) that lists them all. The East Bay is seriously lacking. There was a monthly night I went to at the Orinda Theater that always had a great turnout and then they stopped doing it with no announcement or explanation. San Francisco has a decent amount of screenings, but it's hard to justify commuting that far to see a movie. The Balboa Theatre in SF has the best programming of any theater I've ever seen, but it is about 40 minutes away from me—and more if you hit traffic.

Amateur: When I lived in the Bay Area in the early 1990s, I used to go to the Strand Theater on Market

Street in San Francisco for triple features like *One Million Years B.C.*, *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, and *Adam and Eve*. Is the Orinda the theater that hosted the monthly horror movie marathon and movies such as *Die Monster Die*?

Rother: That's super cool. Wish they still did that. Yeah, it was the Orinda, but it was just single feature. My friend Kai does a monthly night called *The Super Shangri-La Show* at the Balboa Theatre. They [recently showed] *Die Monster Die*. I try to go, but it's tough to get all the way out there on a weeknight with rush hour traffic. There's other stuff, too, like Terror Tuesdays at the Alamo Drafthouse, but it's Tuesdays at 10 p.m. I don't know whose life is set up so that they can go to movies at 10 p.m. on Tuesdays, but it ain't me. That's why I was so bummed about the Orinda night ending abruptly. It was 10 minutes away and Friday nights at 7 p.m. Perfect for me! There is a really cool group in LA screening movies: Cinematic Void. (<https://www.cinematicvoid.com>) Do you ever go to their stuff? I've been to a few when I was in town.



Amateur: I watched some of the stuff Cinematic Void did online during the pandemic but haven't gone to any of their screenings through American Cinematheque. It's quality stuff. Your band was featured prominently in the short film *The Circle of Thirteen*. How did you get involved in that movie project?

Rother: My friend Paul Igaz wrote and—I think—produced it. He wanted to do a film with a live band scene, which used to be really common back in the

day but is now basically unheard of. He asked if we wanted to be the band, and I of course said yes! It's a fun little movie. We put it out on DVD with a bunch of bonus stuff like live sets and music videos.

Amateur: IMDb suggests that the movie was released in 2021. When did the DVD come out?

Rother: It came out the same time as the movie. The first run of DVDs were hand numbered, but those are gone.

Amateur: Your songs draw on a wide range of themes and tropes common in monster movies and adjacent media. Have any songs been inspired by a specific flick?



Rother: I got into those movies in various ways. I first saw *The Black Cat* at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood. It was a double feature with *The Raven*. Bela Lugosi Jr. was there, and they had a panel of experts discussing the movies. There were maybe 30 people in attendance. I love great titles, and those movies are all very memorable just for the names alone. So, I think cool movies with cool titles can inspire me to write a song if I have an idea that I think would fit well.

Amateur: Tell me about your songwriting process.

Rother: It's a mysterious process even to me. (laughter) I typically will have the concept for a song—or the main hook—come to me out of the blue. When it's time to turn that into a full song, I sit down with a guitar and figure out what else it needs. I try to keep things simple. I don't like songs that have too many different parts. I think about what makes the songs I like good and try to make sure I have those elements in place.

Amateur: There've been some lineup changes between *The Wild Sounds of Isaac Rother & the Phantoms* and *The Terrifying Return of...*. Who else is in the band? How does the Invisible Band relate to the Phantoms? How are they invisible?

Rother: I've played with many musicians over the years. Probably somewhere around 40 different Phantoms. It mostly depends on availability. I've also relocated several times. First from Olympia to LA and then from LA to the Bay Area. Andre Pacheco has been drumming for the last six years. I used to have a lead guitar player, but then I got better at guitar and stopped using one. I also used to have backup singers. Now I either do a trio or solo shows with the invisible band. The invisible band is drums, bass, piano, backup singers, and sound effects. You can hear them but you can't see them!

Amateur: What kind of equipment do you use for the invisible band?

Rother: Invisible equipment, plus my guitar and amp.

Amateur: (laughter) Not any electronics or tape? I was imagining loops and such.

Rother: The latest in invisibility tech is utilized.

Amateur: Fair enough. In a 2014 interview, Captain Maudlin mentioned your radio show *Rockin' with the Phantom*. When and where did you host that program? How does radio fit into your interests?

Rother: I had a radio show for a year or so 2012-13. Same time I started the band. It was on KAOS which is the college radio station in Olympia, Wash. It's a respected station because it's been around since the '70s, and it has a policy where the programming has to be 90 percent non-major label artists. The station was pretty prominent historically during the advent of college rock and alternative music in the '80s. I always like to get into the history of things like that. Anyway, I played rock 'n' roll from the late '50s almost exclusively on my show. I got a lot of positive feedback for it because it's not music people hear often, especially if you avoid playing the hits.

Radio fits into my interests because it's live, and I love music and connecting with people through music. At the time, I was also trying to get experience in the music industry. I knew that a lot of artists back in the day worked as radio DJs during the day and did music gigs at night, so I figured that could be an in for me. It wasn't, but it was a fun experience. I haven't done anything with radio since.

This question got me thinking about what music I was playing and listening to at the time. I think a typical playlist would have stuff like Bo Diddley's *Bo Diddley Is a Gunslinger*, the Mighty Hannibal's "Big Chief Hug-Um an' Kiss-Um," Billy Lee Riley and the Little Green Men's "Flyin' Saucers Rock 'n' Roll," Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs' "Ring Dang Doo," Larry Williams and Johnny "Guitar" Watson's "Louisiana Hannah," and the Floyd Dakil Combo's "Dance Franny Dance." Some of that stuff is technically from the '60s, but it all has more of that '50s feel to it.

Amateur: Earlier, we touched on reading and listening to audiobooks. Have you read or listened to anything good recently?

Rother: Absolutely! Recently I finished *Death of the Territories* by Tim Hornbaker. It's an incredibly researched history of the territory system in pro wrestling and how it was destroyed for better or worse by Vince McMahon Jr. in the '80s. It was so good I want to read it again at some point. The author also recently put out a biography of Ric Flair that I would like to read.

I also went down a Charles Manson rabbit hole recently because I read *Chaos* by Tim O'Neill. *Chaos* is an inconclusive deep dive into unanswered questions and possible cover-ups about the case. It led me to read *Poisoner in Chief* by Stephen Kinzer, which is all about the CIA's LSD experiments, MK Ultra. The connection is that O'Neill finds possible links to MK Ultra and Charles Manson. Then I read *The Family* by Edward Sanders, which is less conspiratorial but still raises as many questions as it answers about Manson.

Now I'm almost finished with *Manson: The Life and Times of Charles Manson* by Jeff Guinn. I'm pretty sure I know what actually happened at this point, and it's not that much of a cover-up. Basically, the prosecutors who tried Manson and wrote the book *Helter Skelter* made a big deal about Manson's bonkers theories that he labeled Helter Skelter. They used that to get convictions and sell books. In actuality, the reasons the murders happened were a series of harebrained schemes to get money that went wrong. Helter Skelter was only a minor factor. That's what I think anyway.

Amateur: Do you listen to any horror movie-related podcasts that you'd recommend?

Rother: The only one I got into was *You Must Remember This* (<https://www.youmustremember>

thispodcast.com), which has a different topic every season. There's a season about Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff, "Bela and Boris," that I highly recommend.

Amateur: I first learned about you and your music through a social media ad. How did you get turned on to social media marketing?



Rother: It was pretty recently. I went to a Nancy Sinatra meet-and-greet at the Wacko gallery in LA. I ran into an old friend from high school that I hadn't seen in years there. He told me he works in social media marketing for a record label. That planted the idea that I need to learn how to do that. I've always known that there was a bigger audience for my music, but I didn't know how to reach them.

I started researching social media marketing for musicians and found some *YouTube* channels that were focused solely on marketing independent music. One of them was Full Stack Creative. I ended up working with their company Indepreneur to get me started, and I took it from there.

I was skeptical at first because there are so many scammers that will happily take money from musicians and deliver nothing. I started running ads and very quickly got a return, so that really became a game changer as far as being able to market myself—and make money doing it. My operation is still really small and I'm still working a day job as a substitute teacher, but I plan to continue growing and hope to do this full time.

Amateur: At the end of October, you're playing the *Show of 1,001 Horrors* in Oakland with the Creepy Crawlies and Kepi Ghoulie. [The show occurred Oct. 25, 2024.] What can people expect from that show?

Rother: Expect to have a good time! We do a Halloween show every year. There will be a costume contest with prizes and a whole lot of rock 'n' roll. I'm really stoked on this bill.

Amateur: Anything else planned in terms of upcoming shows, recordings, or videos?

Rother: We're working on a new album right now. It should be out in early 2025. When that's done, I'm going to do some videos for it and tour. I'm recording the album in my drummer's home studio. I'll shoot and edit the videos myself like I did for the "Like a Wolfman" video, and I'll book the tour myself, too!



Amateur: Thank you very much for giving me so much time! This has been an awesome conversation. Is there anything that we've neglected to talk about—or that you'd like to say?

Rother: Thanks for these questions! This has been my favorite and most detailed interview I've ever done. I really appreciate that. The big thing that I haven't mentioned yet is that the new album is going to come out under a slightly different name. I've been doing this for a very long time and I feel that Isaac Rother & the Phantoms is too long of a name and doesn't really fit the direction I've been orienting in the last few years.

People have tried to talk me out of the name change, but it's happening! Nobody can spell Isaac or pronounce Rother, and the current name takes too long to say. Isaac is also my middle name that I only ever used for this project, and I'm sick of people calling me Isaac. I used it because it sounded more old school than my first name, which is Harley—I didn't want to

use Harley because everyone would think it was a motorcycle thing. Anyway, expect a new album with a new shorter name but the same style and vibe!

Amateur: Awesome. Thank you, Harley. I appreciate this!

Recording Roundup: Isaac Rother & the Phantoms

The following discography was developed drawing on *Discogs* and *Spotify*, as well as the releases themselves. You can stream much of the music below online at <https://tinyurl.com/IsaacRotherSpotify>. Additional songs are available at <https://soundcloud.com/isaac-rother>. One of Rother's *Rockin' with the Phantom* radio shows originally aired on KAOS 89.3 FM in Olympia, Wash., is available at <https://soundcloud.com/hrother>.

As Isaac Rother

"Somebody Put A Hex On Me," Various Artists, *Off the Hip Garage Sampler* (Off the Hip, 2017)—though listening to the song, it sounds like a recording with the Phantoms, perhaps from *The Unspeakable Horror of...* below

"Lonesome Whistle," Various Artists, *The Jail Bail Compilation* (Slop Bop Records, 2013)

With Isaac Rother & the Phantoms

"I've Got A Feeling 7" (Resurrection Records/ Eliminator, 2013)—included in *The Unspeakable Horror of...* CD with bonus tracks

"I've Got a Feeling," *Get Resurrected* Winter 2013 sampler (Resurrection Records, 2013)

The Wild Sounds of Isaac Rother & the Phantoms cassette (Slop Bop Records, 2013)

Heeby Jeebies 7" (Mock Records, 2015)

The Unspeakable Horror of... LP, cassette, and CD (Rock N Rhythm Records, 2015)

Five Hits From Hell! 12" (Surfin' KI Records, 2017)—included in *The Unspeakable Horror of...* CD with bonus tracks

Hit Me... Baby One More Time 7" (Rock N Rhythm Records, 2017)—included in *The Unspeakable Horror of...* CD with bonus tracks

The First Five Years compilation cassette and CD (Rock N Rhythm Records, 2017)—same track list as *The Unspeakable Horror of...* CD with bonus tracks

Witches' Brew streaming single (self-released, 2020)

The Circle of Thirteen DVD (Lagoonside Pictures, 2021)

The Terrifying Return of... LP and CD (Rock N Rhythm Records, 2021)

Black Cat streaming single (self-released, 2022)
House of Wax streaming single (self-released, 2023)
Ghost Party streaming single (self-released, 2024)
Isaac Rother & the Phantoms Present the Phantom 7" (Outro Records, 2024)
Like a Wolfman streaming single (self-released, 2024)

With Mojo Hand

The Complete Mojo cassette (Resurrection Records, 2011)
The Very Best of... 7" (Resurrection Records, 2011)

With Rabies

Disease Core 7" + *Kill You Demo* cassette (self-released)
Disease Core 7" (Smokin' Barrel Records, 2006)
Test Your Might 12" and CD (Sorry State, 2006)
Before the Disease 7" (Get Revenge Records, 2007)
Final 7" (Eliminator, 2007)
The Only Four Years cassette—contains the full Rabies discography

Trip Report: Portugal

Hello from Portugal, where I've now been for several days. Departing the United States on Sunday afternoon, we arrived near Póvoa de Lanhoso on Monday evening. Since the last distribution, we had a couple of travel days, and I've had a couple of work days. It's good to be back.

Our travel was largely uneventful. We flew KLM this time, and our connection was through Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in Holland, where we had a four-hour layover or so. Leaving Los Angeles around 2 p.m. PT, we arrived in Amsterdam around 9 a.m. local time. Neither of us had slept much on the first leg of our flight—we both had middle seats, alas—so we did our best to act as though it were morning, rather than a bleak, sleepless 1 a.m. multiple time zones ago.

During the flight, I read the beginning of Brandon Sanderson's *The Lost Metal*, listened to music on my iPod, and tried to sleep. But the airplane entertainment system did have a few notable genre offerings. Labeled under action or science fiction, available movies included various Indiana Jones, Lord of the Rings, Batman and other DC superheroes, Planet of the Apes, Godzilla, and King Kong series movies. Additional highlights included *Blade Runner 2049*, *Inception*, *Edge of Tomorrow*, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, and *Tenet*.

The KLM entertainment service also offered Dutch and other world cinema options. One Dutch movie

that seemed promising—if not just for sheer silliness—was the 2022 *Ninjas Down the Street*, or *De piraten van hiernaast: De ninjas van de overkant*. A family of ninjas moves in down the block from a family of pirates, and—well, you can imagine how well ninjas and pirates get along. The movie is a sequel to the 2020 *Pirates Down the Street*, or *De piraten van hiernaast*. In that movie, a family of pirates moves into a neighborhood previously devoid of pirates. Hilarity shall ensue.

I was also intrigued by the 2023 African movie *EONII* and the 2023 French movie *The Three Musketeers Part II: Milady*. On the flight back, perhaps I'll avail myself of *EONII*. The music and other audio options were also quite impressive on the flight, offering a wide range of genres and entire albums rather than the minimal Spotify playlists some airlines offer. I listened to a little bit of Danny Elfman's *Percussion Concerto & Wunderkammer*, which I'll return to at some point.

During our lengthy layover at Schiphol—which was either under construction or not a very comfortable or pleasant airport—we looked for Maarten Baas's art installation *Schiphol Clock*, made our way through the relatively chaotic passport control, sought a light lunch before boarding the next leg to Portugal, and explored available newsstand and bookshop offerings.

Dutch and English literature was widely available, and the international flavor of the magazine selection was nice to see. But I didn't see much—any—science fiction. Kees van Toorn reassured me that that was to be expected. "There are a few bookstands but they offer the 'usual' suspects, nothing grand," he messaged me in response to my greeting and inquiry while at the airport.



Regardless, I did find some genre-adjacent options that might prove interesting. There's a Dutch line of Harlequin romance paperbacks, Bouquet, that's issued as a numbered series. Recent editions include Heidi Rice's *Sneeuw witte verleiding* (#4611, October 2024) and Cathy Williams's *Zwanger van de magnaat* (#4612, October 2024). Both are labeled "winter reading" and "new story." The Rice volume is a translation of the 2023 *Undoing His Innocent Enemy*, and the Williams book translates last year's *Bound by Her Baby Revelation*. Both were published as part of Harlequin Presents' Hot Winter Escapes selections. While romance fiction might not be your general interest, the 157-page paperbacks are extremely tidy little items and quite appealing as a format.

Visiting a couple of newsstands, I also found a couple of bande dessinées in Dutch: Willy Vandersteen's *Suske en Wiske* #375, *De schakende schim* (aka *The chess-playing shadow*) and Vandersteen's *De Rode Ridder* #283, *Sulphur*. The former is a Tintin-like youth adventure written by Peter Van Gucht and drawn by Wout Schoonis, while the latter is more modern sword-and-sorcery fare written by Van Gucht and drawn by Fabio Bono and Dimitri Fogolin. Both were published by Standaard Uitgeverij in Belgium, which offers a mobile app and subscription service via <https://strips.be>. For the price of one BD a month, it offers access to 90 series and 2,500 albums.



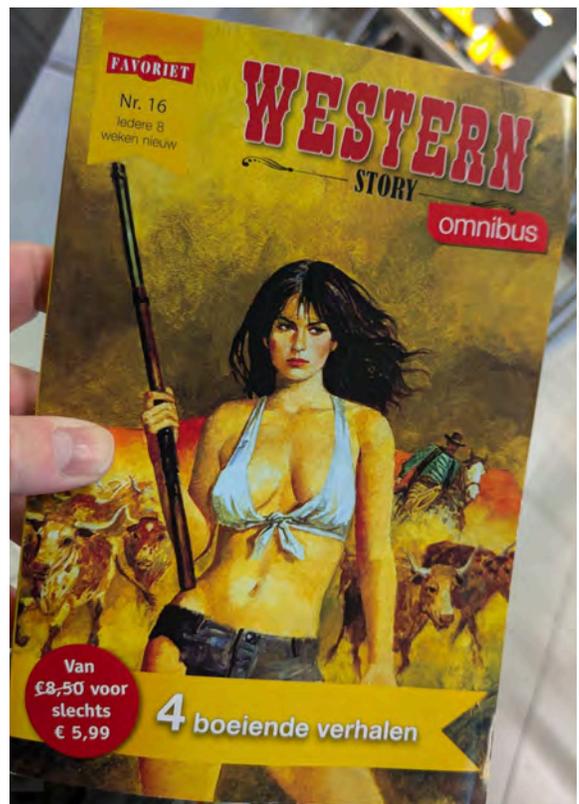
Donald Duck (*Faculae & Filigree* #31) seems to be quite popular in Holland, and multiple comics—in various formats—featured Disney's witty waterfowl. I picked up two: *Donald Duck* #44 (Oct. 24, 2024), a slim weekly printed on inexpensive paper; and *Donald Duck Pocket* #356, a 256-page digest somewhat similar to Archie comics digests and the German *Lustiges Taschenbuch*. You can explore all the different Donald Duck publications available in Holland at <https://shop.donald-duck.nl/categorie/lezen-duck>.

I was also intrigued by *Jump* magazine, a comics-

oriented periodical aimed at 7- to 13-year-old children. The 62-page *Jump* #38 offered an interview with Pieter Koolwijk, a *Battle Royale* board game play report, a *Princess Mononoke* poster, articles on anime and manga, and a wide range of ongoing and other comics. Comics included "Jump," "Man En Paard," "Rembrandt," "Fodee," "Mythos," "Boes," "Jean-Pierre," "Sjors & Sjimmie," and others. Despite the similar title and features on anime and manga, I don't think that there's a connection with the Japanese *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. I do know I wish I'd seen an issue of *StripGlossy*, a quarterly aimed at older comics readers. (Additionally, *Zone 5300* looks even more promising.)

But the highlights of the layover were two pulpy western periodicals that—combined with the Harlequin paperbacks—suggest possible publication formats for sf, as well. Published by Uitgeverij Marken under the Favoriet imprint, *Western Story* and *Western Story Omnibus* are but two titles among a wide array of other similar-format periodicals that fall along two lines.

Medical- and healthcare-related titles, loosely translated, include *Dr. Anne Maas*, *Doctor Daan*, *Children's Department*, *Doctor on an Island*, *First Aid*, *Pediatrician*, and *Holiday Doctor*. Romance-related titles include *Blue Blood*, *Villa Rosa*, *Lidy van de Poel*, *Romance Under the Sun*, *Village Life*, and *Baby Happiness*.



Western Story #39 features two anonymous 50-page stories, “Gevaar voor een getuige” and “Mannen met maskers.” *Western Story Omnibus* #16—apparently a bimonthly—includes four such stories (perhaps reprints?): “Mexicaanse invasie,” “Indianen op oorlogspad?,” “In de greep van outlaws,” and “Nieuwe wapens als buit.” The publication’s formats are close to those of *Analog* and *Asimov’s* in the States, but the larger typeface and more airy design makes them especially attractive.

I could easily picture a numbered series of sf books running about 150 pages, in print and ebook format. I also quite like the two- to four-story digest concept, with stories running about 50 pages in length.

While I didn’t see any on the shelves, it looks as though *Perry Rhodan* continues to be published in Holland as well as in Germany. In Germany, the most recently published issue is *Perry Rhodan* #3298 (Oct. 31, 2024), “Deceivers and Helpers” by Robert Corvus. In Holland, the series has reached *Perry Rhodan* #2783/2784, “Redder van de Laren” and “Aanvalsdoel Chemma Dhurga.” #2784 was originally published in Germany as “Angriffsziel Chemma Dhurga” by Leo Lukas on Dec. 27, 2014, so the Dutch reprints are about a decade behind. *Perry Rhodan* should be shelved next to the *Western Story* titles, for sure.

Caitlin and I boarded our flight to Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport in Porto, Portugal, relieved to sit next to each other—and largely sleeping for the next several hours. Upon arrival, we collected our luggage, secured a cart for our suitcases, and made our way to the rental car. On the way to the house in which we stay, we stopped at a small market to pick up ingredients for a light dinner. The next day, we went to the grocery store for a more complete shop.

During the first half of our days, we’ve been exploring the area, walking our preferred circuits to the Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Porto de Ave and the farmland below the Igreja de Taíde. We’ve seen sheep, goats, and pigs, as well as horses, and the weather has been beautiful. Starting early- to mid-afternoon, I turn my attention to work, which takes me well into the evening.

Thursday morning, we went to Póvoa de Lanhoso for its weekly fair. We’d already gone to the market in Taíde earlier in the week, so we didn’t need any produce. While my wife did some business at the bank, I stopped by the local library—where I picked up another handful of free science fiction paperbacks. (*T&T* #114) Titles included work by Poul Anderson, Philip Jose Farmer, A.E. Van Vogt, and others, but I also found several slim westerns—which resonated with the Dutch periodicals above.

At 100-128 pages in length, smaller than a digest or

paperback, they reminded me of Mexican sensacionales. One of them, M.L. Estefania’s *Minas Cobicadas*, was Brazilian, two were part of the Lisbon-based Collecao “Gringo” and another came from the Collecao Rurais do Texas, also published in Lisbon. All are reminiscent of the more science fictional Collecao Espaco, which I need to explore further. More paperbacks await my return in the near future. I also stopped by a friend’s shop, but it wasn’t yet open, so we returned home for lunch—and work.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews *Stargate*

Almost all of the movies and television shows I’d recorded on the DVR in Portugal were overwritten by a large number of episodes of *The A-Team*, locally titled *Soldados da Fortuna*. A great many episodes. What remained otherwise was little: three movies, including this 1994 movie, which I watched midweek with Portuguese subtitles.

It's a wonderful movie and followed a trajectory similar to that of 1992's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—the original movie featuring a different cast from a subsequent TV show that became quite the popcult phenom. Both programs yielded a fair number of fanzines and fan fiction—both primarily inspired by the show rather than the movie.

Reportedly inspired by Erich Von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*—in fact, the resulting documentary, not the book—*Stargate* is a fun tale about interstellar travel via wormholes, ancient aliens, alternate history, and the tensions between science and the military. The movie also resonates with Tom Powers's *The Anubis Gates*, which I enjoyed reading and shall reread.

James Spader surprises as the bookish linguist—rather than his usual rich asshole roles when a younger actor—and his pairing with Kurt Russell as the military leader mourning a dead son works relatively well. While not necessarily intended as a pilot for a TV program, the movie ends in a way that sets up the subsequent series, and the idea has legs.

About as perfect as a mid-'90s sf movie can be. Enough special effects to be compelling, but not so many that the technical limitations and flaws become evident.



Los Angeles Times, April 8, 1955

Wolfman

This perplexing oddity was a pleasant surprise. A 1979 regional horror movie produced by Earl Owensby, the film was released on VHS by Raven Video in 1995. Owensby got his start in pneumatic tools before opening his own production company that made low-budget action movies such as *Death Driver* and *Seabo*, as well as sf and horror fare including

Tales of the Third Dimension and *Hyperspace*. *The Wolfman* was his first horror movie, and his production company was most active between 1974-1987.

Written and directed by Worth Keeter—and somewhat awkwardly starring Owensby—*Wolfman* is a period piece, reportedly set in 1910 Georgia. The movie was filmed in Shelby, N.C. The mood and tone is slow and somewhat somber, and the period costuming and decor helps amplify that aspect of the movie. (The scenes in the antique store with all the clocks are especially cool.) It's relatively impressive for a low-budget production in 1979, even if power lines are briefly visible in a graveyard scene late in the movie.

Returning home after years of travel and entrepreneurialism, a man learns that his inheritance—his father recently died—requires him to spend some time in the ancestral home. Unbeknownst to him, that's so the family curse of lycanthropy transfers from his father to him during the full moon. His siblings are involved in the plot, having imprisoned his mother in an upstairs room claiming illness, as is a churchless minister who maintains an evil influence on the family.

After a couple of fitful nights of sleep—I can only imagine the direction: “Act like you're having a nightmare.”—the man turns into a werewolf and goes on the prowl. Even once he realizes what has happened, he claims that he didn't kill his victims. A werewolf did. Area townsfolk hunt for him in the woods. He rekindles a romance with a childhood friend. And he confronts the minister. Both come to appropriate ends.

The transformation scenes are effective, though Owensby himself is quite hirsute. His back and chest are quite hairy even when in human form. To his credit, he readily removed his shirt. Even if the movie isn't very good—mostly because of the acting—it's professional enough and obviously honest and heartfelt. The filmmakers meant what they were doing. Owensby, however, is unconvincing as a hero, Edward Grady's Rev. Leonard is occasionally over the top, and the actor playing the protagonist's brother is impressively wooden. Most of the actors have southern accents, though a couple—including Sid Rancer's Dr. George Tate—have thick New York accents.

James O'Neill's *Terror on Tape* unfavorably claims that *Wolfman* “isn't even up to the worst of Paul Naschy's Spanish werewolf flicks.” Regardless, the *Charlotte Observer* profiled Owensby in 1977 (<https://tinyurl.com/Owensby-profile>), and Brian Albright's *Regional Horror Films, 1958-1990* references

Owensby or E.O. Corporation on every page of the section on North Carolina.

A filmmaker friend grew up in North Carolina; his parents lived in Shelby briefly. I emailed him to ask whether he was aware of Owensby's work. "Absolutely," he responded. "[H]e was regionally a famous guy. I didn't see any of [his movies], but I read every article in every newspaper about him. I think my parents didn't want me to see his films—not sure why!" I would definitely watch other Owensby movies and look forward to exploring his productions. A friend and I think *Death Driver* seems worth it for the title alone.

Portugal Con Calendar 2024-2025

Because I'm arriving just after—and just before—some notable events, I thought it'd be useful to compile a brief directory of fannish (and other) events that occur in Portugal. Here's a brief listing of the sf, anime, comic, RPG, and music events of which I'm aware.

April 27-28, 2024: Contacto, Lisbon (<https://imaginauta.net/festival-contacto-2024>)

May 11-12, 2024: Iberanime Lisbon, Lisbon (<https://www.iberanime.com>)

June 7-23, 2024: Beja International Comics Festival, Beja (<https://bejabd.com>)

Sept. 20-22, 2024: Forum Fantastico, Lisbon (<https://forumfantastico.wordpress.com>)

Oct. 12-13, 2024: Iberanime Porto, Porto (<https://www.iberanime.com>)

Oct. 17-27, 2024: Amadora BD, Amadora (<https://www.amadorabd.com>)

Oct. 18-20, 2024: Festa do Livro Independente de Arroios, Arroios (<https://jfarroios.pt/eventos/festa-do-livro-independente-de-arroios-flifa24>)

Oct. 26, 2024: Metalpunk Coimbra Fest, Coimbra (<https://metalpunkcoimbrafest.pt>)

Nov. 1-2, 2024: Patrimónios de Peso, Vila Nova de Fozcoa (<https://www.facebook.com/PatrimoniosDePesoFest>)

Nov. 2-3, 2024: Rolisboa, Lisbon (<https://rolisboa.pt>)

Nov. 7-16, 2024: Guimarães Jazz, Guimarães (<https://www.guimaraesjazz.pt/en>)

Nov. 8-17, 2024: Cinanima, Espinho (<https://cinanima.pt/en>)

Nov. 30, 2024: Mercado do Contra, Porto (<https://www.instagram.com/mercadodocontra>)

Dec. 6-8, 2024: OriginCon, Porto (<https://www.origincon.com>)

Feb. 28 to March 9, 2025: Fantasporto, Porto (<https://fantasporto.com>)

April 23-26, 2025: SWR Barrocelas Metalfest (<https://www.swr-fest.com>)

July 1-31, 2025: Ageas Cooljazz, Cascais (<https://ageascooljazz.pt>)

Aug. 1-3, 2025: Vagos Metal Fest, Vagos (<https://vagosmetalfest.com>)



Los Angeles Times, April 15, 1955

A Return to Old-Time Radio

In late October, I returned to one of the ways I first encountered old-time radio. Initially, I came across a couple of horror-themed spoken-word records at the public library. I don't remember their content, but I remember how they made me feel—even though I didn't associate them with radio broadcasts at the time. It wasn't until I discovered that gift shops at Cracker Barrel restaurants sometimes sold old-time radio cassettes featuring the Green Hornet and the Shadow that I even knew what OTR was.

Those tapes were produced by Radio Reruns, a Minnesota-based company that also used the names Adventures in Cassettes and Metacom. I recently listened to two such tapes. The first was labeled Arch

Oboler's "*Lights Out Everybody*": "Murder Castle" and was copyrighted by Oboler in 1942 and 1986. The radio show was actually titled *Lights Out*, but the tape labeling captures one of the program's opening catchphrases. (Pop quiz: What is the other one?)

Originally airing Aug. 3, 1943, the episode was loosely based on Chicago serial killer H.H. Holmes. The general gist is that a man who lives alone lures single women without many social ties to work for him as a secretary, house cleaner, or otherwise. Then he kills them, utilizing special rooms that he's devised. One has a trapdoor that falls open so the room occupant plummets into a pit of quicklime. In another room, the air is pumped out so the occupant asphyxiates. He also merely starves another woman, locking her in a room. And he buries another in a newly poured concrete floor in the cellar—upon her arrival.



Los Angeles Times, April 15, 1955

Reportedly, the real-world Holmes was active between 1891-1894. He built a three-story hotel to house tourists attending the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Newspaper reports at the time suggested he intended to kill them in order to sell their skeletons to area medical schools. In the episode, none of that comes into play, and it's merely the story of a cruel man preying on single women. In the end, the sister of one of his victims arrives, and his plan unravels.

The tape features a newly recorded introduction—"Metacom presents..."—to the introduction, and the tape ends with encouragement to contact Adventures in Cassettes to receive a list of other wares. The address given is 5353 Nathan Lane in Plymouth, MN 55442; 800-328-0108. That address now seems to be

the location of US Foods Culinary Equipment and Supplies and Next Day Gourmet.

The second cassette, copyrighted 1978 by Radio Reruns, Conde Nast Publ., and Charles Michaelson Inc., is labeled All-Time Best Show: *The Shadow*, "Death from the Deep." The tape contains that episode, which originally aired on April 3, 1948.

Starring Orson Welles and Agnes Moorhead, the program focuses on a submarine specially designed to sink ships, either using torpedoes, or a ramming attachment. The tape included additional introductory commentary, primarily a disclaimer about surface noise and volume drops due to transmission problems during the original broadcast. Also of note are the live advertisements for Goodrich tires, one of which included the voice of the Shadow.

The tape also includes another promotional notice at the end, this time offering P.O. Box 11041, Minneapolis, MN 55411—Metacom's address on the cassette shell—and a different toll-free number: 800-328-4818. I look forward to future adventures with cassettes.

Comments on APA-L #3092

In *Vanamonde* #1615, **John Hertz** offered five poetic lines about the power of honest apology and the making of amends. I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez. I enjoyed your commentary on skywatching. In my description of the work gathering, insights professionals would be colleagues who also work in research.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #80 remarked on the coming of autumn. In Portugal, we've been lucky that the rainy season hasn't really started yet—last fall was very wet—and temperatures have ranged between the mid-50s and mid-70s. We didn't expect trick-or-treaters in the neighborhood in which we stay, but we bought some candy just in case. About 10 p.m., a sizable group of children rang our doorbell and took most of what we had to offer. It was great to see local trick or treaters.

The holiday is relatively new to Portugal, gaining in popularity in the 1990s. Costume parties and festivals are more common activities, but some children do trick or treat. Today, then, is All Saints' Day. There is no mail delivery, some businesses are closed, and there was a good gathering at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Porto de Ave for services mid-morning.

Your movie list is wonderful, and the movies planned for this year are excellent. Were I to make a similar list based on the letters of my first name? I might have to pursue that activity—for my full name. Results might be shared in the future. Your comments

on *The Twilight Zone* intrigued me. I'll have to pay more attention to the hour-long episodes when I encounter them. The difference reminded me slightly of my wife's take on the original *Lost in Space* series. If the episode is black and white, Dr. Zachary Smith is a threatening presence. If it's in color, he's more friendly and relatively harmless.

In *Toony Loons* #778, **Joe Zeff** indicated that he's learning how to eat more effectively with his new choppers. Your attention to detail during *NCIS: Origin*'s shaving scenes is impressive—and amusing. I think your feedback on the cover art is for APA-L #3091; I'll share it with cover artist Mark Bondurant. I got a kick out of you and Mr. Mitchell primarily traveling for fannish reasons, at least for longer trips.

I'll have to identify which Ace Double by Andrew J. Offutt you describe. Including two parts of a single novel as a double was tricky, indeed!

Derek LaPorte recognized APA-L's 60th anniversary with the one-shot *Every 60 Years*. Rather than read it at my desk in the basement—where I've been working—I went outside to read it while looking at the field and hillside in the distance and listening to the neighbor's chickens.

I quite enjoyed "Diary of the Last Days of the Sun." I appreciated reading it somewhat separate and distant from *The Winnower*—please don't include it as a flashback; the lack of context is meaningful. Having read portions of *The Winnower*, your descriptions of the sun, breeze, and surface were quite emotionally meaningful, even though the sun was also toxic. I also liked the counterpoint of the sea as a philosophical whole, in opposition to the stone that follows and eventually surrounds. The introduction of the metal sky, the warnings of Jansig Polum, and the first mentions of the Tremblers all worked well. My favorite line: "God of the crush, I fear you not, for you have done no worse to me than time."

Your mention of *Epitaphs from the Abyss* reminded me that I've yet to read that new anthology comic. The publisher also offers an sf title: *Cruel Universe*. They might make good reading for this evening.



Los Angeles Times, April 22, 1955

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #25

Nov. 1, 2024

The Explosion Containment Umbrella is an apazine 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.

Fannish Discoveries in Portugal

As we spend more time in Portugal more frequently, one of the things I've enjoyed most is figuring out where to go to learn what I want to learn—and find what I want to find. Everything is slightly different from what I'm used to in the United States, and it's been really fun to even just begin to discover what's going on here in terms of speculative fiction, comic books, anime, cinema, and music.

I'm also enjoying the proximity and adjacency of other countries, their cultures, and their fannish cultures. Not only do my areas of interest have a rich history in Portugal, the same is true in Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and Italy. Each country has its own publishers, periodicals, authors, artists, screenwriters and directors, musicians and musical groups. Imagine your favorite movie, record, book, or comic. There's something just as cool as that from almost every other country in the world. There are cool people making cool stuff everywhere, and we tend to only learn about what's nearby—or exported internationally, globally. With the Internet, that kind of boggles my mind. Why isn't more lesser-known material from around the world more widely available?

For example, while *eBay* is quite popular in the United States as a source for almost anything and Amazon stands in for used bookstores as well as other retail, there are local counterparts specific to this part of the world. I recently came across *OLX* (<https://www.olx.pt>): “Buy and sell ads for cars, motorbikes, houses, apartments, mobile phones, tablets, animals, sofas, furniture and all types of fashion products and accessories. All at the best price in Portugal.”

What drew me to *OLX*? Searching for—and wanting to learn more about—*Colecção Espaço*, a series of slender sf paperbacks published in the late 1950s. (Kiosk literature!) From the text in one sales listing: “Mário de Aguiar, one of the partners who created the Portuguese Magazine Agency, maintained his small publishing house ‘Mãos de Fada’ during the period in which he directed the Agency, which

originally published the crafts magazine with the same name. It was through this publishing house that he published the *Espaço* Collection between 1958 (#1) and 1960 (#25). These are translations of Spanish originals of generally questionable quality, whose authors had a vast and varied production under different noms de plume. Several translations are by Santos Fernando, also linked as an author to anticipatory literature, and some covers are Portuguese, by Carlos Alberto Santos.”

My friend Álvaro De Sousa Holstein has given me three such volumes: *A Invasão Dos Gelos* by H.S. Thels (#19) *O Negro Espaço Silencioso* by Clark Carrados (#21), and *Motim Electronico* by Louis G. Milk (#22). They were translated from the original Spanish by Mota da Costa, Dr. Carvalho Lima, and Costa Marques, and each runs about 140 pages in length. That resonates with the book and periodical length I recently encountered in Holland. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #137)

Another seller is offering multiple back issues of a comic series titled *Mundo de Aventuras*—of which I was previously aware—and related titles that occasionally feature characters such as Mandrake the Magician, Tarzan, Flash Gordon, and of special interest, the *Espaço* series of comics. *Mundo de Aventuras* published various series and phases between 1949 and 1987, offering *Guerra* and *Policial* lines, as well. *Espaço* ran 1960-1966.

I'd never heard of *Era Uma Vez... O Espaço*, another comic series inspired by an animated television program originally produced in France in the early 1980s. In addition to *Space: 1999*, *Era Uma Vez... O Espaço* was a major influence on at least one generation of science fiction fen. The blog *Universos Esquecidos* offers a solid consideration of the cartoon. (<https://tinyurl.com/espaco-TV>) 25 episodes were produced in France in 1982, and in Portugal, RTP broadcast a dubbed version in 1984. 21 issues of a related comic were also published, largely adapting TV episodes.

That's just three examples of new fascinations to explore during my time in Portugal—*Colecção Espaço* and novella-length publishing options, *Mundo de Aventuras* and *Espaço*, and *Era Uma Vez... O Espaço*—and its French precursor. Not bad for a Friday afternoon.



Los Angeles Times, April 29, 1955



Los Angeles Times, April 29, 1955

Comments on eAPA #246

In *In the Meantime* #4, William McCabe updated eAPAns on his health situation. It sounds like you're closer to a diagnosis and course of treatment, even if the pieces—and practitioners—don't always seem to connect. Your remark on the “most popular languages” inspired me to look up what the most commonly used languages were globally.

According to a July 2024 article published by Berlitz, the top 10 languages—including first and second language speakers—are as follows:

- English (1,456 million speakers)
- Mandarin (1,138 million speakers)
- Hindi (610 million speakers)
- Spanish (559 million speakers)
- French (310 million speakers)
- Modern Standard Arabic (274 million speakers)
- Bengali (273 million speakers)
- Portuguese (264 million speakers)
- Russian (255 million speakers)
- Urdu (232 million speakers)

As I spend more time in Portugal, I plan to learn to read and speak Portuguese, as well as other adjacent languages nearby, prioritizing Spanish and French. German comes in at 12th place, with 133 million speakers. Italian doesn't rank in the top 25 list.

“You've got 3 old newspaper ads for Disney's Peter Pan and nothing about it in the text,” you commented. For the last year, I've been using movie advertisements from the 1950s as illustrations in my fanzines. They don't always relate to anything in the content generally other than being sf, fantasy, or horror.

Henry Grynsten's *Wild Ideas* #52 considered a couple possible causes for a global decline of human cognition—definitely a threat to humanity. Oddly, Americans also call knit stocking caps “beanies” or “beanie hats.” That usage—closer to the Swedish mössa—is probably more common than referring to the propeller beanie, even within fandom.

Lately I've been interested in scally caps, also called flat caps or driver's caps. I don't usually wear hats—though I did wear a knit beanie while on a walk this morning—but if I did, I'd more likely wear a scally cap than a baseball cap. I do have one baseball cap with me in Portugal, a mustard yellow brimmed hat embroidered with a skeletal astronaut and the phrase “ciencia ficcion.” (<https://www.majorcrimesstore.com/listing/757339327/ciencia-ficcio-retro-spanish-science>)

I also brought a couple of new scally caps

manufactured by the Boston Scally Co. (<https://www.bostonscally.com>) They offered several wonderful limited edition designs for the Halloween season this year, including the Frankenhead, the Ghosthead, the Zombie, and the Pumpkinhead.

In his main essay, “Dementocalypse,” Grynsten considered the impact of utilizing technology on the prospects for human survival. He posits a 300,000-year-long process of cognitive decline, as well as potential for an even more catastrophically quick decline. He links caffeine intake and dementia and considers the impact of ingesting microplastics. (See “A Very Short History of the Discovery and Origin of Homo Sapiens Microplasticus in Three Parts” by Joshua Ginsberg in *Apex Magazine* #146 as mentioned in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #136 for one perspective on such an occurrence.) I found the ending of the essay, in which Grynsten considers the aftermath of such an apocalypse, particularly interesting.

In *Intermission* #147, **Ahrvid Engholm** used the phrase “kiosk paperbacks” in the fourth line of text. You have me hooked, good sir. “The History Corner will cover some skiffy or fannish connected cheap kiosk paperbacks. I’m interested in ‘cheap’ literature and hackwriting, as I secretly believe it has some value (hush, don’t tell!) lost for those who believe in stiff academic studies. Books should be engaging, colourful, stimulating... not boring and pretentious. Reading should be gosh and wow, not posh and yow.” All sentiments I support and encourage enthusiastically, though I’m not sure what the final “yow” is other than a search for a rhyme. If reading can be wow, why not yow? Bring on the yow.

I haven’t yet found a full copy of *Authentic Science Fiction Monthly* #33 (May 1953), but Jack Ramstrom is named on the cover, which is available at <https://tinyurl.com/Ramstrom-cover>. I look forward to reading Frank Gruber’s *The Pulp Jungle*. A member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, David McDaniel, wrote a handful of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* tie-in novels. They contain many fannish references, which have been documented at <https://conchord.org/xeno/mcdaniel>.

Ulf Westblom and John Ågren’s *Du ska dö* sounds delightful. I like your use of the phrase “newsstand literature.” Nowadays, I consider such books “grocery store literature” and frequently assess what books are sold at grocery stores. I enjoyed Sven Christer Swahn’s 1975 newspaper article, especially the idea of sf as immigrant literature. But do tell me more about this *Veckans Äventyr*. Is it really just Swedish-translation Superman? Anders N. Nilsson’s 2015 article “1940-talets Jules Verne-Magasinet / Veckans Äventyr som västerntidning” suggests it offered more.

“Although the Swedish short story magazine Jules Verne-Magasinet / Veckans Äventyr from the 1940s is best known for its SF content, the magazine contained many other types of texts,” Nilsson writes. “Not least many western short stories from American pulp magazines, which was not yet so common at this time.” Ah, it’s the Jules Verne magazine—which strayed from sf? Another fine form of kiosk literature!

I also enjoyed the articles from *Life* and the *Washington Post*. Gosh and wow—and perhaps yow—is right! Neat to see the letters of comments, as well. Thank you for publishing the mail you receive!

Garth Spencer’s *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #226 detailed ongoing frustrations overseeing the Canadian Unity Fan Fund—and some new social media woes. It seems as though the CUFF is mostly fund these days, rather than Canadians, unity, or fen. Thank you for the mention of Spider Robinson’s “Melancholy Elephants.” Always good to have a ~~excuse~~ reason to seek out a story.



Los Angeles Times, June 3, 1955

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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THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #11 (available for only \$10 PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com, or send to email marisolinskikitity@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Characters created by

Ryan Howatt and Ken Bailey join the adventures of Mari and Niko, as our heroes leap into a portal to another world and find themselves involved in a strange war! Humor, magic and more in one epic comic. The New Peoples Journal is an added treat. Also: check out that gorgeous cover by Trish Ellis!



The Stf Amateur 9

THE STF AMATEUR #9 (\$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. Free PDF Available @ <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>).

Keith Row's absorbing apazine continues. A highlight of this issue is a series of back and forth correspondence between editor Heath and William Breiding. Much more is included, including talk about fanzines, sf movies and tv, and a gorgeous front cover by Larry Johnson.



The Stf Amateur 10

THE STF AMATEUR #10 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) Reviews of SHE FREAK, GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR, and other sf/fantasy/ adventure films are a prominent part of STF #10. Lots of engaging apa comments, and a visit to Antiquarian Los Angeles (with color photos) are highpoints.



stf amateur 11

THE STF AMATEUR #11 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230) Of especial interest to sf/fantasy fans, Heath examines the BUCK ROGERS: 2429 newspaper strip, with numerous reproductions of artwork, ads, and the strips themselves. There are many comix and zine reviews, including TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!, THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY, and other United Fanzine Organization titles. STF #11 is a satisfying read and highly recommended.



TACITURN 4

TACITURN #4 (\$10 from Kurt Erichsen, 2539 Scottwood Ave., Toledo, OH 43610-1358. Also you can order this book on www.amazon.com/stores/Kurt-Erichsen/author/) Beginning with two amazing covers by Dan Burke and Brad Foster,

this anthology title features some of the finest talents in the alternative press, and includes classic comic stories along with new material. Featured are strips by Larry Johnson (a magical Lew Brown adventure), "Valerian the Barbarian" by editor Kurt himself, Neil Riehle's "The Incredible Time Saving Device" and much more!

