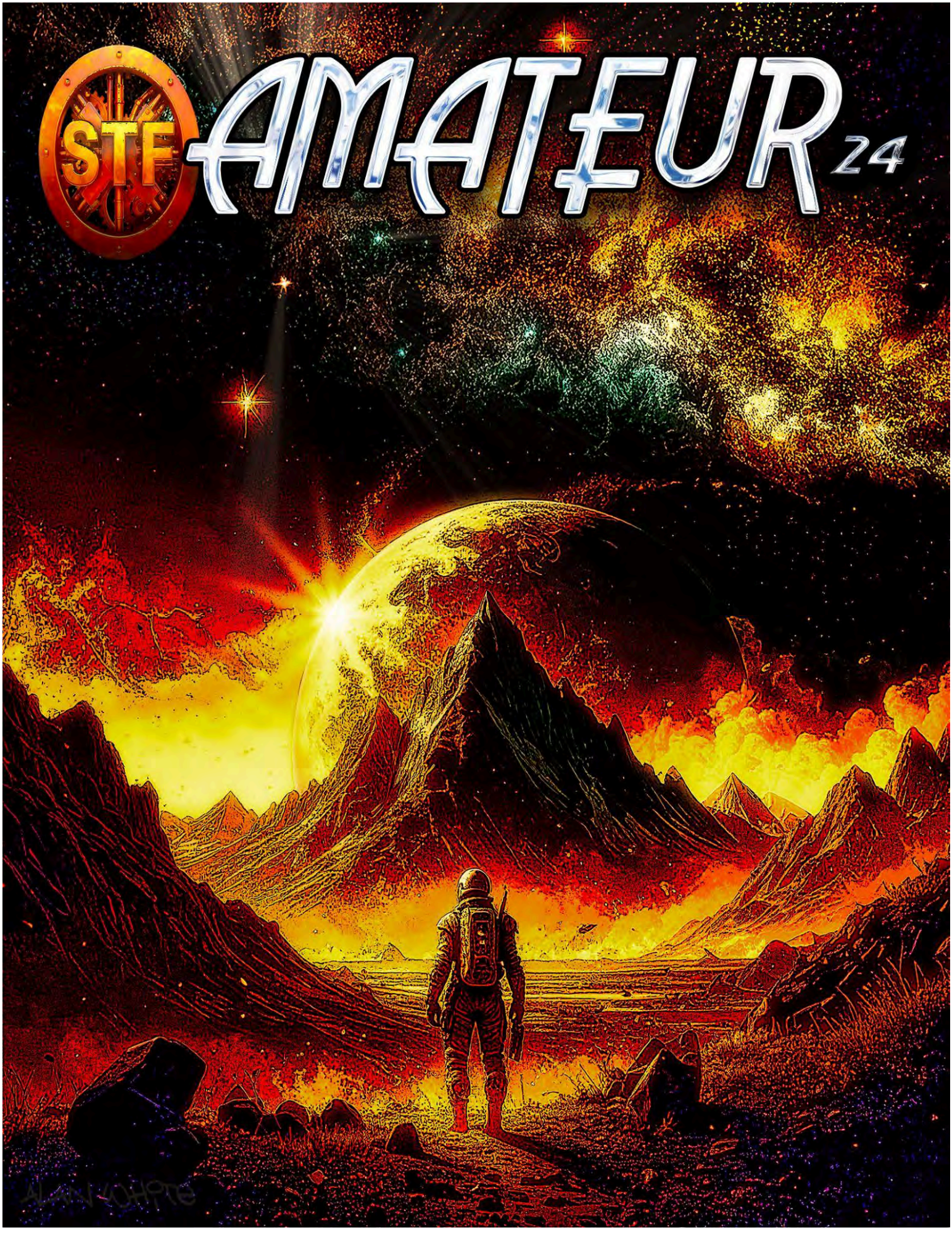
STF
AMATEUR 24

The Stf Amateur 24
September 2025

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You can learn more about cover artist Alan White at https://www.pixelmotel.com.

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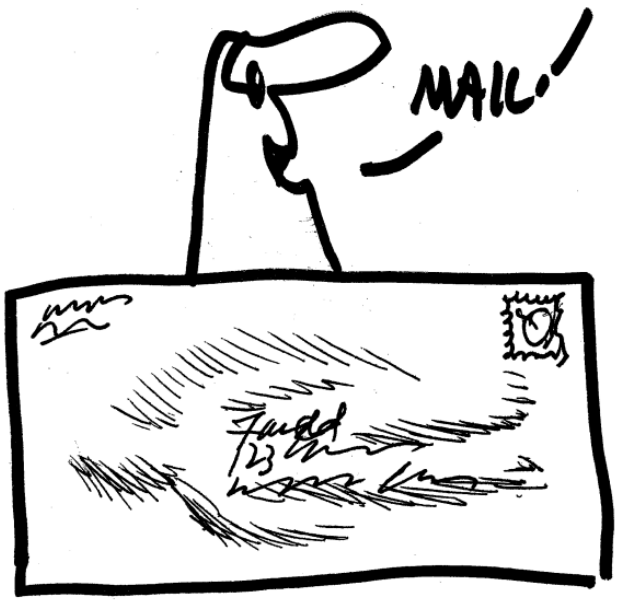


—William Rotsler

Joe Pearson
Thanks for the latest copy of *The Stf Amateur*.

It was a good read and of course, an excellent cover.

[For those of you keeping score at home, Pearson drew the cover to *The Stf Amateur* #23. On a napkin, no less!—HR]

There was a lot to enjoy and comment on, but my time has gotten really tight lately as I'm wrapping up a long development with my partners on a proposed animated feature, *Quest*, and am way behind on my workload. So I'll keep my comments short and reduced to just a few of the many your zine raises in my fevered brain.

[When you can, tell me more about this… *Quest*. —HR]

Locs: I always enjoy William Breiding's letters and thoughts and wish I had gotten to spend time with him in person. I know our paths must have crossed back in my active convention and fandom days in the '70s, but we really didn't connect until I started getting the run of his fanzine over the last few years. It would have been fun taking him on an urban LA hike for sure.

[The three of us should try to do that some day. And if you two are able to make it happen without me, that'd be cool, too!—HR]

Politics: As we've discussed, we're pretty much in sync on all of that. My semi-retirement has been really impacted by the need/duty to get "political" again and do art and protest physically the rampant and insipidly fascist cruelty and stupidity of Trump and his slaves. MAGA's massive ignorance and uncanny and proud stupidity is like a darkly funny Ron Goulart SF novel of a dystopian future in some ways. In other ways, MAGA's toxic and misogynistic Christofascism is uncannily reminiscent of Robert A. Heinlein's *Revolt in 2100* novel. It's deeply worrisome and enraging. Many thoughtful people are predicting an eventual civil war, which is highly fucked in itself. As history shows, no one "wins" in a civil war and the resultant collapse of a nation-state. But Americans cannot allow MAGA to create a permanent autocratic dictatorship in our country. That doesn't leave a lot of options as I see it.

Portugal: Lisa and I seriously considered moving there when we sold our Venice Beach compound in 2019, but in the end decided to stay close to family, friends, and work and moved a bit south to Long Beach. Which we love, but I regret not making the move to Europe every day now. Especially after six weeks last year in Portugal. Just sitting on the bluff looking across the river at Porto rising 350 feet up the hillside in layers of ancient buildings like something out of *The Lord of the Rings* as the sun sets made that epic trip worthwhile, but there was always something to see and experience there, every day we were in the country. Central Portugal around Evora has tons of standing stones and stone rings. I did a series of big pieces inspired by them.

[Where were you sitting near Porto when you had that view? I would go there! I also need to check out the Almendres Cromlech and other Megalithic monuments.—HR]

Kudos to you both for making this move, and I look forward to hearing and reading more about your big adventure. Maybe one day, we'll be back over there and can share a glass of Port wine.

[Our immigration is looking more and more likely to happen soon. Both of our visas have finally been approved, and now that my wife has returned from visiting family in Michigan, we'll pick our travel date and send our passports to the consulate. (I just printed out the visa approval emails.) It looks like we'll leave the Midwest in mid-October or shortly thereafter. We've been in Madison longer than we expected, and it's been a good several months on the work, family, friends, and fandom fronts.—HR]

Lloyd Penney
Thank you kindly for *The Stf Amateur* #23. It's been tough to find time for writing locs, but it is the day after my weekly day of work on the other side of Toronto, and I can offer a few comments.

Fireflies… the last time I saw them was at a convention in a Detroit suburb, all over the property, wondrous to see. Yvonne remembers them some years ago when she was in Washington. Seems that we do not have them here, or they have successfully eluded me for many years.

[According to a 12-year-old post on *Reddit*, Ontario's fireflies are generally seen in June, but it might be difficult to predict the two weeks in which they are active. One Redditor recommended seeking them out in the rural areas of eastern Ontario. While I saw them in Monona, I don't generally see them near the Infernal Wilson. I do, however, see rabbits.—HR]

My loc… We did not go to Seattle, and as much as we would love nothing better than to go to the 2026 Worldcon in Anaheim, it's not happening. The number of Canadians in ICE detention has doubled to 120. Foreign Affairs in Ottawa continues to ask about our citizens' welfare and is usually met with ignorance and indifference. I have indeed seen *Space Command* with Jimmy Doohan. All I remember of the show is Jimmy as the station commander, standing quite heroically, and staring into eternity.

[As one should!—HR]

Snow Poster Township #22… We must remember that we have no neofans snapping at our heels when it comes to any fannish activity. When we are done, we are done. But in the meantime, keep on fannin', and get all you can get out of it. Yvonne and I reminisce about past fanac, but new adventures always await. We're not done just yet.

[In addition to "keep on fannin', and get all you can get out of it," I would add "put all you can into it," but that might be inherent in fannin'. I think you're right, though, that the buck might stop with us. Here's to those new adventures!—HR]

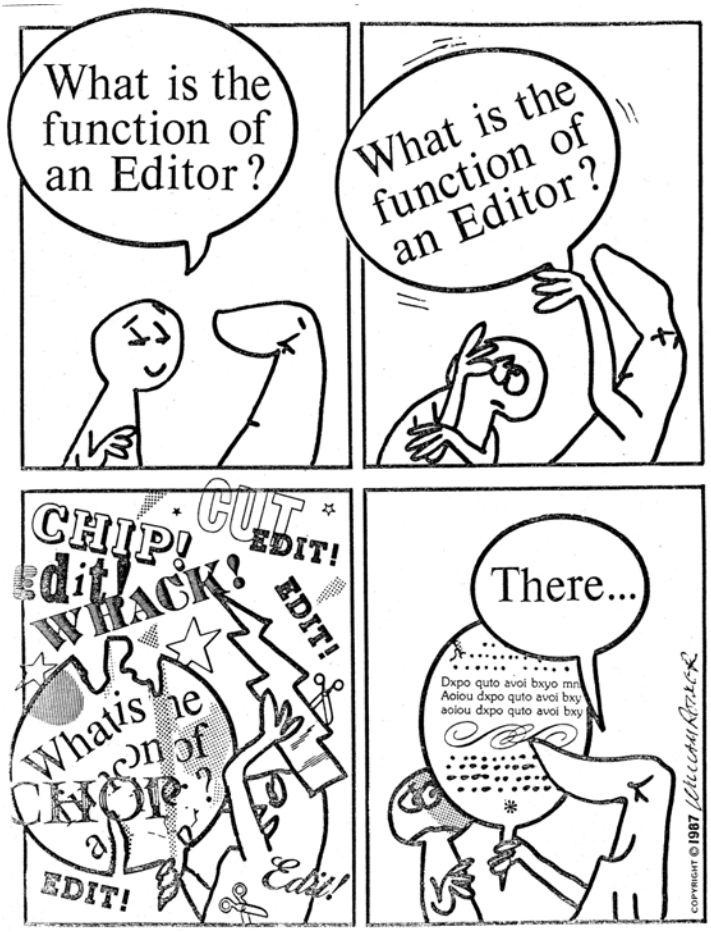
Telegraphs & Tar Pits #172… I have contributed to WOOF a couple of times in the past and was the OE when we ran the fanzine lounge at the Palais des congrès in Montréal. These days, time is at a premium for me. Fanzines, editing… so much for being retired.

Thanks for this, enjoy Wisconsin, and let us know more about your journey to the promised land of Portugal.

[I shall certainly do so. I can't promise that *The Stf Amateur* will continue in 2026—I have other ideas and plans for my fanac—but I still have three more issues of the *Amateur* to publish in 2025. I hope to publish at least two of those from an address in Portugal.—HR]

We also heard from: Perry Middlemiss and R-Laurraine Tutihasi

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.

Le Chimpanzé Arrogant #3

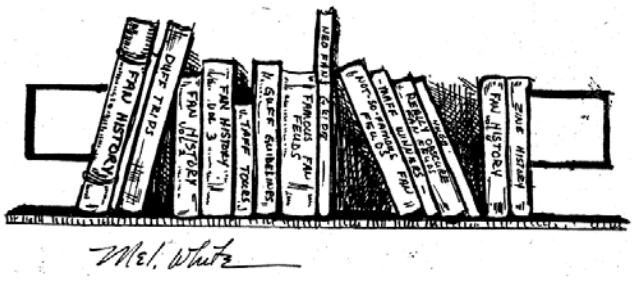
Aug. 1, 2025

Le Chimpanzé Arrogant is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; +1 718 755-9840 mobile; +1 323 916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to ANZAPA and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

An Update on my Whereabouts

When I shared time and table with fellow ANZAPAn Nigel Rowe in Chicago in early July (*Faculae & Filigree* #44), I might have remarked to him that I found ANZAPA slightly daunting as a new participant. In the previous issue of this apazine, I made it up to p. 240 of ANZAPA #343 in my mailing comments. The deadline for #344 fell on the day before we arrived in Madison, Wis., while my wife and I were still driving to the Midwest from California, so I needed to take a bye last mailing.

If you're interested in those adventures, I encourage you to read *The Stf Amateur* #20-23, specifically the "Natter: Preparing to Move" and "Trip Report: California to Wisconsin" items. (https://tinyurl.com/TheStfAmateur)



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Myth Lab: Theories of Plastic Love by Jack Skelley (Far West, 2024)

Jack Skelley, former music booker and co-producer of the reading and performance series at Beyond Baroque, a long-standing arts center in Venice, Calif.; former editor and publisher of *Barney: The Modern Stone Age Magazine*; and guitarist for the musical group Lawndale, has been experiencing a bit of a renaissance since his children went to college. After the publication of his mid-1980s novel *The Complete Fear of Kathy Acker*—previously published only in excerpts over almost four decades—by Semiotext(e) in 2023, Skelley's literary and performance presence has exploded, leading to multiple contributions to the *Los Angeles Review of Books* (https://lareviewofbooks.org/contributor/jack-skelley), a play based on his novel, an active schedule of readings, and this slim, 100-page volume. (A new Lawndale album released in 2022 preceded the more recent Skelley bounty.)

Seemingly a collection of seven short stories, this sf-adjacent book addresses topics such as gender fluidity, body modification, recreational drugs, social media, the uncanny valley, electronic dance music, pornography, evolution, and neurodiversity. It's a playful, energetic text, light on linear narrative and replete with cultural references and neologisms. At times, the book reminded me of the writing of William S. Burroughs, Robert Anton Wilson, Hakim Bey (Peter Lamborn Wilson), and Rudy Rucker.

Skelley's take on speculative biology, physiology, and sexuality is extremely inclusive and open minded. This collection concentrates less on the confessional aspects of his semiautobiographical novel *The Complete Fear of Kathy Acker*, choosing instead to explore the limits of human sexuality, gender issues and roles, and pharmaceutical culture. *Myth Lab* is a celebration of otherness.

It's not a traditional approach to science fiction. It might not even be science fiction. Regardless, I'll read absolutely anything that Skelley writes. His approach to art and cultural critique and commentary, literature, and music is refreshing. It's also wonderful to see him sharing the stage with so many creative women and young people. I can't wait to see what he does next.

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Shark Attack 3: Megalodon

In late July, my wife and I went to Aftershock Classic Arcade, one of several "barcades"—pubs equipped with many video game and pinball machines—in Madison for a *Schlock & Awe* event. (There are two barcades within walking distance of the Infernal Wilson, our furnished apartment on Wilson Street.) Aftershock is a new host venue for the event, which featured comedians Cody Lemke, Sasha Rosser, and Will Isenberg. A former data scientist, Rosser is the 2025 winner of Madison's Funniest Comic Competition at Comedy on State and was voted "Best Comedian" in *Madison Magazine*'s "Best of Madison."

Schlock & Awe pairs groups of presumably good

comedians with the screening of a "bad" movie, much like *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and *RiffTrax*. To celebrate Discovery's Shark Week (https://www.discovery.com/shark-week/shark-week-2025-kicks-off-july-20), this event's movie selection was the 2002 Nu Image direct-to-video flick *Shark Attack 3: Megalodon*.

—William Rotsler

Pretty much a knockoff of *Jaws*—as most shark movies are—*Shark Attack 3* is borderline science fiction because the animal on the attack is reputedly extinct and exhibits exceptional intelligence. The megalodon lived roughly 3.5 million years ago. The movie is more notable, however, because it stars John Barrowman. It was Barrowman's second feature-length film, and he went on to play Captain Jack Harkness in *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood*. Apparently, he's not proud of the movie, but it did help pay for a house. Maybe the down payment.

After discovering a large tooth embedded in a damaged underwater cable, Barrowman's character posts a photograph on the Internet seeking help identifying what kind of creature it came from. The depiction of what Web browsers and the Internet look like—and how they work—is pretty humorous. A marine biologist—played by an actress who portrayed a different character in the first *Shark Attack*—encounters the protagonist's request for assistance and travels to Mexico to search for a shark she believes to be a megalodon.

A shark that's not very large if it is a megalodon begins to terrorize the beaches, killing a drunk, amorous couple after they go down a waterslide and a man playing Frisbee with his dog. That scene is particularly grisly. Barrowman's character teams up with the biologist to tag and track the shark, eventually confronting it before meeting its mother.

The parent, a much larger megalodon, offers several opportunities for some relatively bad computer-generated imagery. Not only is a miniature submarine larger on the inside than it is on the outside, but the size of the megalodon varies as it eats people, a jet ski, and a boat. (The shark remains the same size on screen while the scale of what it consumes varies.)

Mostly following the trajectory of *Jaws*—including an employer who declines to close the beaches—the movie isn't very good, though it was enjoyable. How were the comedians? They were fun. Not only should you watch movies like this with other people, but they practically beg for conversation and wisecracking throughout. The comedians were pretty raunchy, which was appropriate for the audience and setting, but they were funny. I would go to another *Schlock & Awe* event.

More importantly, Aftershock might offer the first microcinema I've encountered since moving to Madison. Screenings are held in a lounge adjacent to the bar and arcade, and there's adequate seating, including tables if patrons want to eat during the movie. Earlier in July, Aftershock hosted a film noir double feature of *Mildred Pierce* and *Sunset Boulevard*. In June, they screened *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Psycho*. I'll definitely return.

Comments on ANZAPA #344-345

I started writing these mailing comments about four weeks before the deadline for the forthcoming distribution. Because I didn't make it all of the way through the mailing (#343) last ish, I'll prioritize ANZAPAzines on which I didn't comment last time, in an attempt to spread the love and participate more fully. I've probably missed responses to *Le Chimpanzé Arrogant* #2 in ANZAPA #344, so I'll also troll for egoboo, searching the PDF for references to my name,

in order to respond in a somewhat timely fashion. I apologize for missing a mailing so soon after joining.

ANZAPA #344

Official Bloody Editor David Grigg, I'd like to update my details in the Membership of ANZAPA roster. I hereby inform you, other ANZAPAns, and all and sundry of a Change of Address. My mailing address is forthwith Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725. All other contact information remains the same.

In *Quoz* #100, **Claire Brialey** and **Mark Plummer** sent their greetings. Hello to you, too! Nothing is wrong with you; I'm just an overactive apahack who's already experienced one bout of burnout that led to a decade of gafiation. I've been able to manage my fanac more successfully since my return during the pandemic, but there are days on which I ask myself whether I might participate in Too Many Apae. (The answer, of course, is perhaps, but it seems to be working okeh enough for now.)

I agree with you that the term "mundane" has pejorative connotations. I've chosen to use it in fannish contexts to disambiguate between fannish and non-fannish fanzines (though "zines" might be sufficient) and apae. Like you, I don't really like the term "non-fannish." It's been a while since I was active in the American Amateur Press Association (https://www.aapainfo.org) and National Amateur Press Association (https://amateurpress.org), but I don't remember them referring to fannish apae, well, at all. They are their own pocket universes.

Generally, mundane—for lack of a better term, and to use a perhaps gauche fannish term—apae participants consider their self-publishing activities amateur journalism—and themselves amateur writers, editors, printers, and publishers. During my time with the AAPA and NAPA, participants seemed to focus on several things: creative writing, letterpress printing, and documenting ajay activity and history. There were people who were really into the letterpress aspect and people who were really into the time binding. The writing was ~~occasionally crummy~~usually fair to middling, except in periodicals such as *The National Amateur* and *The Fossil*, the publication of the Fossils, the "historians of amateur journalism." (https://the fossils.org) There, the writing tended to be more polished. The Fossils didn't, at the time, necessarily focus on fannish apae.

In addition to my ajay contributions to the bundles, I also volunteered with NAPA's Bureau of Critics, writing a column for *The National Amateur* titled "Posted at All Avenues: The Critic's Report" that effectively reviewed other participants' items. Those reviews were very much along the lines of the zine reviews in my long-defunct reviewzine *Karma Lapel*, as well as fanzine reviews. However, given the amateur printing aspect of ajay activities, more attention was given to the resulting physical items as objects.

On the topic of university archives, the way I think about it is this: In a perfect world, fanzine collectors could pass along their fanzine collections to other fanzine collectors as they age and the need arises, for as long as there are younger fanzine collectors with adequate interest and storage available to accept such collections. As fanzine fen continue to age, as organized fandom (clubs, cons, and fanzines) continues to diminish in size and perceived importance, and as fandom continues to move online, there will be fewer such fen able and willing to house those collections as time goes on.

Chicago Tribune, June 17, 1955

So I focus on institutional archives. Unless there continues to be an ongoing group of private collectors younger than those divesting their collections, I fear that the increasingly predominant alternatives will be the secondary market such as eBay and traditional auctions (which redistribute materials to private collectors but involve a commercial aspect I'd like to avoid) or the Garbage and Recycling.

Right now, we're lucky—at least in the United States—to have at least two major institutions with sizable fannish holdings: The University of Iowa and the University of California, Riverside. There are also others: DePaul University; California State University, Dominguez Hills; Bowling Green State University; Michigan State University; Barnard College; Duke University; and the University of Arizona.

While I understand the concerns about funding and dedicated staff, I appreciate that institutional archives make their holdings accessible to the public, which private collectors generally do not. They catalog their collections and offer finding aids to better enable research, which private collectors generally do not. And when they're able to obtain the rights necessary to digitize items in their collections, they do so—while private collectors generally do not. (Digitization might decrease the resale value of the items in their collections.)

If one has faith in the ongoing existence of educational institutions and the value they place on special collections and public access to archives, institutional archives are a good option. I think they're better than merely being the least worst option. Given the ongoing aging of actifen and the shrinking of organized fandom—which includes fanzine fandom—I have less faith in private collectors. I'm curious what Leigh Edmonds, an active user of such archives, has to say on the topic.

Chicago Tribune, June 17, 1955

Speaking of **Leigh Edmonds,** his *Panic Stations!* #1 included a query about which apae I participate in. I currently contribute to APA-L, LASFAPA, eAPA, Ever & Anon (a successor to Alarums & Excursions), APA-V, N'APA (yep; I'm a Neffer), SAPS, and ANZAPA. What is that… eight apae? Eight apae. I'm a multiapan but far from an omniapan. I'd like to return to participating in ERBAPA and CAPA-alpha but don't want to overextend myself and burn out again. That way lies gafiation. In the past, in addition to AAPA and NAPA, I've also participated in FAPA, though only briefly, and Slanapa, which was great fun. Some day I'll participate in the Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA, if they'll have me.

Fanac and fandom suits me because what I like to do for fun is read, write, play roleplaying games, and watch movies and television. In addition to sf, fantasy, and—to a lesser extent—horror, I also enjoy reading comic books, mysteries, espionage novels, thrillers, westerns, men's adventure series, juvenile series, and other pulpish stuff. My fanac goads me to do more of the things I love, with purpose, deadlines, and people to share it with. I also like to backpack, camp, and hike, though I do less of that since I stopped volunteering with the Scouts. (Scouting for adults is effectively a fandom.) And I love local history. That leads to quite a bit of Stomping Around.

There aren't as many drive-in movie theaters as there used to be, for sure. When I got married in 2008, we encouraged friends and family to join us for a screening at the Warwick Drive-In in New York. (https://www.warwickdrivein.com) In Wisconsin, there are at least 10 still operating. (https://www.travelwisconsin.com/things-to-do/entertainment-attractions/drive-in-movie-theatres) The Highway 18 Outdoor Theater isn't far from where I grew up, but I don't remember going there. The Studio Drive-In (https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/4229) in Culver City, Calif., didn't survive long enough for me to see it. It closed in 1993 and was torn down in 1998; we didn't move to the Los Angeles area until 2009. Go to 'em if you've got 'em. (We visited one in Door County recently.)

In *Summer of the Seventeenth Frank (& Earnest)*, **Jack R. Herman** offered greetings, which I appreciate. **Eric Lindsay**'s *Kingdom of the Bland* contended that "Six apas seems more than sufficient, without adding another (often large) one like ANZAPA." That might be true, but I can't really experience ANZAPA without… experiencing ANZAPA, can I? The apa's growth since the pandemic and its shift to PDF distribution is a notable development to check out. Besides, you lot are interesting! (And I've never been to Australia or New Zealand.)

Murray Moore's *Moz* #49 bade me welcome, which I accept with gratitude. In *Mathom* Vol. 5 #1, **Mark Nelson** also expressed interest in learning more about Australian microfiche fanzines. This has to be the right group to know about such things. Later in that ish, he asked how I find the time to participate in so many apae. I read and write pretty quickly, and I derive a great bit of pleasure from stuff like this, so I prioritize it. As I plan to stop working soon—more

going on strike than retiring—I find that I prioritize it more as I become less interested in professional work.

Thank you, **John Newman**, for the greeting and welcome in *As The World Burns* #2. In *Debussy* #36, **Bob and Margaret Riep** also welcomed me. I look forward to reading more of your fanzines! I'm already enjoying ANZAPA, even if I'm just trolling for months-old egoboo for these comments. **Nigel Rowe**'s *Is This Leicester Square?* #19 offered greetings, which I return. I enjoyed hanging out with you in Chicago. We should do that again!

Somewhere in there, I almost missed **Gerald Smith**'s *The Erotic Wombat* #36. I'd like to learn more about the erratic and short-lived apae Zapa and Silly Point. In *Sonoran Cat Down Under* #21, **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** sent her greetings and informed me of *The City and the City* TV miniseries—four episodes—that aired on BBC 2 in the United Kingdom in 2018. I shall seek that out! *JustWatch* suggests it's streaming on BritBox and Prime Video, which is good news indeed.

And **Sally Yeoland**'s *Les Chattes Parties* #198 shared additional details about ANZAPA's shift toward PDF distribution during the pandemic, as well as her concerns about the privacy and security of online fanzines. I'm glad you came along for the ride and that the apa was able to find a way to evolve without physical printing and mailing in a way that satisfied participants' concerns.

ANZAPA #345

In the Official Organ, David Grigg indicated that ANZAPA's membership is full. With this distribution pushing 600 pages, that's probably a Good Thing. While I haven't updated *Blue Moon Special*, the apae directory I compile, since last year, ANZAPA might be the only apae not accepting new members currently. Feather, meet cap!

In *And So It Goes* #64, **Garry P. Dalrymple** offered a brief list of books read during the month preceding a daily diary and a handful of other thematic sections. The repeated use of "Read April 1 to 99, verdict a ABCD Plus Minus" suggests that you didn't actually keep track of when you read the books—or what you thought of them. That's okeh. I would welcome additional commentary on the books rather than just a list. (Which I got—at the end of the ish. The repeated use might have been because you hadn't finished the books yet!)

The bag of envelopes and cards you found is indeed mysterious. Given available time, I might consider bringing it to the attention of the local post office or postmaster. *The Skeptic* (https://www.skeptics.com.au/magazine) sounds like *Skeptical Inquirer* (https://skepticalinquirer.org) in the United States. Do you ever reprint what you contribute to that periodical in your apazine? Inquiring minds want to know.

Your "Zombie Apocalypse Survival Hunt" item inspired me to think about the possible impact of the ongoing abstraction and digitization of money. When the Lights Go Out, there will be no millionaires or billionaires any more. They won't be able to access their money, either, unless they maintain a stash of cash. Even in that case, will cash continue to have value?

Chicago Tribune, June 24, 1955

I'm curious about your Green Bin-day night excursions. In the US, we call that dumpster diving, though the practice might involve neither dumpsters nor diving. Tell me more. Based on your item counts and references to plastic bottles and aluminum cans, I gather that you're collecting recyclables. At first, I thought Telstra and Magellan Fin might be satellites you see while looking at the sun for sunspots, but now I think they're stocks or financial investments. Red triangles spotted on the sun? Now, there's a story. How do you count sunspots? As a newcomer to ANZAPA, gaining new forms of literacy reading your apazines is kind of a kick.

John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* is a book I

should read. (And now have—*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #171) I'll also prioritize watching *Village of the Damned* (1960 and 1995) and *Children of the Damned*. The closest I'd come to reading Wyndham's novel was his 1937 story "The Perfect Creature;" Ira Levin's novel *The Stepford Wives*, which focuses on the mothers rather than the offspring; and Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers*. (*T&T* #113) Neither of the latter two is Wyndham. In another fanzine in May 2024, I wrote, "I should probably read John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* soon." It might be a good time to explore Wyndham!

I would be interested in your list of speculative fiction writers in New South Wales. Before I left Los Angeles, I undertook a similar effort for the forthcoming *The Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*. Every community of sufficient size should create such a list. A haiku or senryu inspired by April 19's entry:

> One dead lady rat,
> now helping the bananas
> grow, not her kittens

I was wondering whether Brenda's Book Bunker was a used book store or a Little Free Library (https://littlefreelibrary.org), so I looked it up. It's a Street Library! (https://streetlibrary.org.au/library/brendas-book-bunker) It seems to be a solid source of reading material.

This is a photograph of the Little Free Library nearest our furnished apartment—which I now consider the Infernal Wilson (see below) because it's on Wilson Street. I know the titles on the spines are small, but can you spot any books of interest? Which, if any, would you take? Which one do you think I claimed?

Thank you for reviewing some of the books you've read at the end of thish. I was wondering whether you'd get around to doing so. I scanned but did not read your election and polling place report and research. Both seem to be worthy endeavors!

Garry P. Dalrymple's *And So It Goes* #65 inspired another rodent-related haiku or senryu:

> Rats seeking refuge
> are coming into my place
> to escape the cats.

While I haven't read Robert Harris's novel *Conclave*, I watched the movie with my wife and parents in early July. My mother and father had read the book, and I enjoyed the movie's religious-political drama and portrayal of composite bishops. I was surprised that the source material was fiction.

Even though this is my first time reading your apazine, I'm inspired by your physical activity, your mindful frugality, and what seem to be rich social connections through your dog, multiple friends, frequent hairdresser appointments, telephone conversations, the book club, and the astronomy club. I am a little perplexed by the idiosyncratic record-keeping aspect of *And So It Goes* but will probably get used to it. (Don't change on my account.) Despite some challenges scanning for the Good Stuff, there's still plenty of Good Stuff.

Now, what is Yellow Bin Night Day? Wait… in Australia, green bins are for yard and food waste (that's what they are in the US, but I'd interpreted your dumpster diving as seeking recyclables—what you call refundables), and yellow bins are recycling? What do you reclaim from green bins? Ew.

I'm sorry to hear about the death of your mother, or its anniversary. My parents are both 82 and still relatively healthy, but I do worry about their aging. The primary reason we left Los Angeles to move to Wisconsin before relocating to Portugal was to spend more time with them—and my sister—before we left the US. After an initial spurt of seeing them several times a week—which seemed like a bit much; it's difficult to explore a new city if you spend most weekends with your parents—I missed seeing them in mid-July, though we talk every couple of days. Time will hopefully bring a balance. Another rodent-related haiku or senryu:

> Table banana,
> there last night, not this morning.
> Rats are the culprit.

The Skeptic has ceased publication? The Tim you mention must be Tim Mendham. The Web site is still

active, but I'm saddened that the periodical is folding immediately upon my learning about it. So it goes. One must support the pursuits they love, so the pursuit continues. "Electric Pangolin" is an evocative phrase—suitable for a fanzine title—and, apparently, such creatures might exist. (https://www.animalsaroundtheglobe.com/scientists-identified-an-electric-pangolin-in-mojave-desert-2-330250) I say might because there aren't many articles online about the discovery, and one on MSN was later removed but still shows up in search results. Later in thish, you also express skepticism.

"Strange Dreams" is also an evocative phrase suitable for a fanzine title. Mixing it up a bit, another haiku or senryu:

> It is Dog O'Clock.
> I make myself a nuisance:
> Little red sports car.

In closing, I enjoyed your review of *Conclave*—and the notes from the Sydney City Skywatchers (https://www.sydneycityskywatchers.org.au) meeting.

In *MOZ* #50, **Murray Moore** memorialized Fran Skene, who died in mid-2024. I appreciated your personal recollections about Skene, with whom I never interacted—though I know several Canadian fen who were quite close to her. I enjoyed your Corflu report, especially the brief discussion of the *The War of the Worlds* walk in Woking. I need to spend more time with Jules Verne and H.G. Wells.

John Newman's *As the World Burns* #3 included admittedly hesitant writing about books he's recently read—which I enjoyed heartily. Your comment to Claire Brialey about time bending was thought provoking. You asked whether ANZAPA slows down or speeds up one's thinking. It might do both! If apae are a form of slow media—they afford us the opportunity to say more less often rather than less more often, as one does on social media—they might sharpen our thinking because of the additional focus we're able to bring to bear. We might still feel the dopamine rush brought on by egoboo, but there's less instant gratification.

Thank you for your kind remarks on my attempt at the ANZAPA MC Challenge. Keeping track of whom I've responded to—and perhaps alternating every other mailing, while trolling for egoboo—might make mailing comments manageable.

I agree with you that late-stage capitalism might not lead to a near-term end of capitalism, but I definitely think the United States is going through some growing pains. I'm not the first person to use the phrase. Apparently, the concept of late-stage capitalism (or late capitalism) was introduced by a German social scientist, Werner Sombart, in 1925. Already, late-stage capitalism has lasted 100 years! Quite a long run of intensified wealth inequality, exploitation of labor, commodification, environmental damage, and excessive corporate influence. How's that going for us?

I've yet to turn my attention to *Babylon 5*, but it remains on the list. I enjoyed reading "On Settlement Road," especially the then and now photographs. Where my parents live south of Madison is still somewhat undeveloped, with farmland adjacent to new housing developments. It looks and feels rural while driving there, until you encounter the neighborhood areas. Even in their neighborhood, area wildlife remains present, including cranes and herons. The frogs on the ponds nearby have been especially wonderful this summer, particularly at night.

Chicago Tribune, July 1, 1955

In *Tas-Mania* #1, **Michael O'Brien** returned to ANZAPA. Based on your introduction, even if you aren't a founding member of ANZAPA, it sounds like you might as well have been. Regardless, kudos to you for addressing the scuttlebutt. I am glad that the removal of your cataracts has allowed you to return to reading actively. You've been reading some interesting books—and prozines—recently.

Roman Orszanski's *Sparrowgrass & Battle-Twigs* #98 featured a wonderful cover depicting a large-scale metal sculpture—too large to be wire. I'm glad you were able to make the trip to the United Kingdom despite the many challenges. I was intrigued by your mention of *The Steam-Driven Flugelhorn*—your own fanzine!—but according to a 1990 issue of *Thyme*, it seems to be no longer active. Do you still produce a fanzine on audio cassette, or have you moved entirely to podcasts?

Speculative Insight (https://www.speculativeinsight.com) intrigued me—and reminded me of the programming at WisCon. (*T&* #165) This year's Hugo

packet suggests that the best fanwriting is currently published in fanzines and email newsletters, as well as on blogs and Web sites. Print, print-on-demand, and PDF fanzines are definitely in the minority these days. I enjoyed your Corflu report. I also enjoyed your Eastercon report! I hope you returned home to find your credit card issue all sorted.

In *You Really Know You're Home When You Find a Wombat in Your Bed* #217, **Cath Ortlieb** updated ANZAPAns on the excision of her ganglion. I hope you heal fully and quickly. My father fell somewhat recently, injuring his hand. He had to get six or seven stitches each in two places—and had to elevate his hand, as well. My mother was a diligent observer and ensured he didn't use that hand too much while it healed. I hope your infected foot also heals fully and quickly.

Chicago Tribune, July 1, 1955

Marc Ortlieb's *Turning Rope into Knot* dated June 5, 2025, considered the word game Doublets as exemplified in *The Lewis Carroll Picture Book*. In the United States, I think they're called word ladders, but there are also other names.

Since leaving Los Angeles, I've been trying to do the Jumble, as published by PennyPress (https://www.pennydellpuzzles.com/products/variety/jumble) and in the newspaper, on a daily basis, though I'm not yet entirely disciplined. I find that I can usually get the solution merely by considering the accompanying cartoon. I then try to solve the individual word puzzles—five or six letters per word—to get the letters required for the solution. I'm getting better at it but sometimes still need to return to a puzzle the next day for a word I might have missed previously.

The syndicated *Jumble* (https://tribunecontentagency.com/premium-content/games-puzzles/jumble/jumble-game) is currently written by David L. Hoyt and drawn by Jeff Knurek. Knurek is the third person to draw the puzzle. Jumble first appeared in 1954, created by Martin Naydel, who drew for comic books such as *All-Star Comics*, *All-American Western*, *All-Flash*, and *The Fox and the Crow*. Henri Arnold and Bob Lee succeeded Naydel in 1962, and Knurek has drawn *Jumble* since 2008.

A resident of Indiana, Knurek also developed the *Boggle BrainBuster* syndicated daily puzzle with Hoyt—and has been a member of the National Cartoonists Society since 2013. As much as I enjoy doing the Jumble, I also find Knurek's artwork delightful. It's appropriately old-fashioned and not as cloyingly cute as that of, say, Bob Weber Jr.'s *Slylock Fox*, a Sunday funnies staple, or New Zealand cartoonist Kim Casali's *Love Is…*—which is also charming.

In *From the Threshold* dated June 6, 2025, **Ann Poore** shared a photograph of the cutest wood heater ever. Why, I do believe you're right! I was surprised that your home hasn't had a heater for the last five years. However did you manage? Living in southern California for the last 14 years, we didn't have air conditioning until installing it shortly before we sold the house. (We did, however, have heat.) Our house was located five miles from the ocean and did okeh just with ceiling and floor fans most summers; there were maybe a few days a year during which AC would have been welcome—but home buyers seem to desire AC more strongly these days.

In a nearby Airbnb while selling the house and now in the Infernal Wilson in Madison, we had—and have—AC. I've been thankful for it, though sometimes—if you sit on the couch just so—being in the direct draft can be a wee bit chilly. Certainly, during the winters of Wisconsin, heat will be necessary. We hope to be in Portugal by then. Our home there has central heat and air—a heat pump—as well as a Franklin stove-like fireplace, which we use to heat the kitchen and first floor.

I hope that your experience with the kidney stone wasn't too problematic, and that you heal fully and quickly. Wow, I can only imagine how wonderful Tolkon '81 must have been. What kind of harp music

do you play? No harp was involved, but not long ago, my wife and I went to a performance by the Willy Street Chamber Players (http://www.willystreetchamberplayers.org). They played Dorothy Rudd Moore's Modes for String Quartet and Johannes Brahms's Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115, accompanied by J.J. Koh.

Bob and Margaret Riep's *Debussy* #37 shared frustrating news about the cancellation of Continuum 17 Horizons. I'm glad you still decided to go to Melbourne. In mid-July, my wife and I had tickets to see Laura Jane Grace perform at the Sylvee; a friend of mine was playing drums with them. Unfortunately, Grace had to stop their tour because of some relatively dramatic domestic challenges. My friend went home to his family and didn't come to Madison—where I'd recommended a vegan restaurant near the venue and a couple of record stores for his perusal. Because I bought the tickets through Ticketmaster, getting a refund wasn't likely—the headline act still performed—so I listed the tickets for sale. Both tickets sold, so I was only out a portion of what I'd paid.

It was great fun to see the photograph of the group gathered for the ANZAPA lunch. Now I can put some faces to the names!

Your mention of Fred Hoyle's *The Black Cloud* intrigues me. I'll have to return to Mark Nelson's review. Is the Galaxy Bookshop the same as the one located upstairs at Abbey's Bookshop in Sydney? I just signed up for their newsletter to get a sense of books published in Australia.

In *Is This Leicester Square?* #20, **Nigel Rowe** expressed frustration following his return from the United Kingdom. My wife and I are relatively careful about what we post on social media, and when we participate in protests, we leave our identification and mobile phones at home. I'll have to figure out what to do with my mobile once we're in Portugal and planning to return to the United States. Removing apps—if the phone isn't bricked like yours was—might not be a bad idea.

I enjoyed your Corflu report, as well as the photograph of Leigh Edmonds's Jamie Reid-inspired Faan Award. All of your discussion about names brought the XTC song "Making Plans for Nigel" to mind. The Primus cover is also pretty good. Similarly, your comments on Chicago fandom reminded me of our dinner conversation. We shall—if my wife and I end up moving there—have to make the city a capital of fandom yet again. After all, *Filmfax* is (was?) based in Evanston, Ill., you used to work at The Stars Our Destination (which I visited only once or twice while a university student), *Cinefantastique* was based in Forest Park, and Capricon and Windycon continue to this day. (Alas, neither con offers supporting memberships.) I mean, heck, *The Comet* was published by the Chicago chapter of the Science Correspondence Club. There was even a Chicago chapter of the Science Fiction League, which birthed the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

Chicago Tribune, July 1, 1955

You know, following our dinner, I wondered whether you had gone to the 1994 Underground Press

Conference—while I participated in the 1995 instance. We might not have been at the same event! (I like to think that we were, regardless.) That would explain our disagreement on whether Mike Gunderloy was at the UPC. I know that in 1995, R. Seth Friedman, then editor of *Factsheet Five*, participated. Gunderloy totally could have gone in 1994. A couple of highlights organizing Marty Cantor's fanzine collection after his death included discovering that Gunderloy participated in the Spectator Amateur Press Society in the 1980s and that Garth Spencer served as *Factsheet Five*'s Canadian correspondent in its early days. The Factsheet Five Archive Project offers a brief consideration of Gunderloy's days as an sf apahack (https://f5archive.org/the-many-zines-of-mike-gunderloy) but doesn't include his SAPSzine *Tentativity* in its list of apazines.

While living in Chicago's Lake View neighborhood and working in River North in 1995-1996, I organized at least one Chicago Zine Potlatch in order to gather area zine publishers. If I remember right, we met at a coffee shop on Irving Park Road just west of the Ravenswood line. The more recent Chicago Zine Fest (https://www.chicagozinefest.org) is a much bigger deal than my little get-togethers ever were.

Alison Scott's *Antipodean Bestiary* #14 satisfied minac and commented on Corflu and Eastercon. Thank you for publishing the photograph of participants. I like to think that the phrase "great showing" is the collective noun for a group of ANZAPAns. A pride of lions, a school of fish… a great showing of ANZAPAns. How mean are the streets of Walthamstow?

Oysterband! I haven't thought of that musical group for years. When I was the folk show producer for WNUR-FM in the mid-1990s, we played them often on the radio. A haiku or senryu:

> We don't have a cat.
> The cat that we do not have
> sprawls out on the couch.

Congratulations on the marriage of your daughter!

In *Sonoran Cat Down Under* #22, **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** asserted that there were Star Wars TV shows before the advent of streaming media. That's true, if you discount live-action programs. Prior to streaming, there were only animated series such as *Droids*, *Ewoks*, and *The Clone Wars*; and the *Star Wars Holiday Special*. Incidentally, *Droids* and *Ewoks* was produced by the animation studio that produced the holiday special's animation. I dislike coming off as Mr. Correcty—that is not my intent—but I enjoyed the opportunity to check my memory and poke around a little.

What fun that you weren't initially aware that what you enjoyed reading was science fiction—but that you recognized the library stickers. I am grateful for such stickers. At our new local library, near my parents home, they not only utilize such stickers—though also labeled with text—they carry *Asimov's Science Fiction*.

Are there recent Star Trek fanzines? I'm only aware of the magazine *Star Trek Explorer*, which shut down in December 2024. Luckily, there are still active *Doctor Who* fanzines. The Doctor Who Appreciation Society's (http://www.dwasonline.uk) *Celestial Toyroom* recently went "hybrid." And in Wisconsin alone, there are two *Doctor Who* clubs that publish clubzines: Northeastern Wisconsin Friends of the Doctor (*Tales of Rassilon*) and the Milwaukee Time Lords (*The Relative Times*). In mid-July, I mailed membership dues for both. I hope that your cataract surgery went well—and that your cat has calmed down a little.

Jean Weber's *Jeanzine* 2025-2 shared diary entries

from a 23-day small ship expedition in the South Pacific. What a wonderful experience that must have been. I got a kick out of your references to the rock 'n' roll sea and am envious that you've toured Easter Island. Your photographs are glorious. Definitely a highlight of the distribution.

In *Les Chattes Parties* #199, **Sally Yeoland** recognized the birthday of Andrew Yeoland, who's a month younger than my sister, who's a few years older than I am. I am relieved that your housing concerns have been resolved. I enjoyed reading about the history of your nursing home, even though the street address certainly sounds complicated. Geez, between the incident at the food court and the home invasion reported in *And So It Goes* #65, it seems that knife fights are all the rage in Australia. In regards to machetes, are there no valid reasons for buying or owning one—say, for cutting underbrush? Certainly, in an urban, residential, or retail area, there's no real reason to carry one. I support the registration of all gun ownership and think that owning semiautomatic or automatic weapons is questionable.

I didn't realize I liked baseball until I saw *Twilight*. That's a joke, but that baseball scene in the forest is a doozy. My wife and I also enjoyed *True Blood*, though I've read no books by Charlaine Harris. We wandered away from the show in the midst of or after Season 3, if I remember correctly. Thank you for memorializing Race Mathews and Damien Broderick.

Now to troll for egoboo (i.e. search for mentions of my name) to fill in the gaps. In *The All Electric Anzapazine* #7, **Derrick Ashby** made a clever joke about my name. I don't mind such humor, but my sister Sydney Kingsford Smith might take offense if you make a similar crack about her name.

Your contention that some ANZAPAns—including yourself—might not consider themselves sf fen is a valid point to make. That's okeh. I meant no offense suggesting you might be a fan. We're all just people, and if we're lucky, folks often graduate from being fellow fen to just being friends. Similarly, fanzines over time trend towards focusing on life rather than sf, fandom, or fanac anyhoo. I'm certainly no authority, but adjacency is entirely acceptable!

Claire Brialey and **Mark Plummer**'s *Quoz* #101 expressed surprise about Gardner Francis Fox. So far this year, according to Goodreads, I've now read 52 books—my target for 2025. That's not bad for mid-July. We'll see if I reach 100. Ooh! I forgot about my ANZAPA Bingo card.

Wisconsin is currently a staging post for Portugal. We're living in a furnished apartment in Madison at least until the end of August—and a nearby Airbnb after that—and own a house overseas. We moved here to be closer to my parents and sister. After we immigrate and claim residence in Portugal, we'll have to spend eight to 10 months a year in that country to qualify for citizenship over the next five years. (Or 10, if they change the citizenship requirements.) At some point, we'll secure a more permanent home in the United States, most likely in the Chicago area, where we have many friends— which bodes well for spending more time with Nigel Rowe.

In *The Eighteenth Frank Amendment, in Earnest*, **Jack R. Herman** expressed interest in *Dungeons & Dragons*' Appendix N. It's well worth exploring, and there have been a couple of good books written about the roleplaying game's literary foundations—even if you tend not to like sword and sorcery. Thank you for clarifying the difference between a headwind and a tailwind. I don't know much about boating. At least I used the word "behind" to indicate my intent.

Chicago Tribune, July 8, 1955

You're right. My interest in baseball this season has already waned. Briefly, I was interested in professional wrestling (*The Brass Hat Mind* #12), though even that interest was minimal and short lived. *WAHF-Full Tracks over America*, you say? Faunch. (If you locate any copies, online or otherwise, I'd be interested in reading that.)

Kim Huett's *Gaston J. Feeblehare* #42 included another clever joke about my name, citing the radio program *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*. Thank you for bringing that—and Gardner Francis Fox's Lady from L.U.S.T. series—to my attention! The latter is available from the Gardner Francis Fox Library. (https://www.gardnerfrancisfoxlibrary.com/epub/lady-from-lust-bundle)

In *Kingdom of the Bland* dated June 6, 2025, **Eric**

Lindsay deemed Blasted an unduly formal title. I'm glad you appreciate the movie advertisements. And **Mark Nelson**'s *Mathom* Vol 5 #2 inquired about the page count of the other apae in which I'm active. Let me do a quick check of the most recent editions I have easily accessible to me:

- APA-L #3123 (July 17, 2025): 17 pages
- LASFAPA #582 (July 2025): 37
- eAPA #255 (July 2025): 34
- Ever & Anon #2 (August 2025): 151
- APA-V #69 (May 2025): 47
- N'APA #277 (July 2025): 122
- SAPS #311 (April 2025): 65
- ANZAPA #345 (July 2025): 566

How far back would we have to go for me to be the fifth new but not returning member? How many previously active members have returned since the shift to PDF distribution during the pandemic? What were mailing page counts like before the move to PDF?

Kurt Gödel's interview for US citizenship gives me hope for my upcoming immigration to Portugal and eventual request for citizenship. It's got to go more smoothly.

Chicago Tribune, July 15, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #173

Aug. 6, 2025

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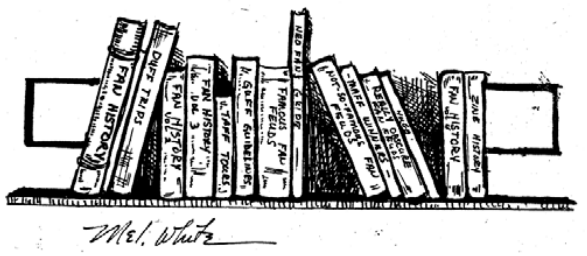
On Our Patron Saints

(In which I conclude writing biographical sketches of the remaining patron saints of the LASFS whom I neglected to profile while working through the list in previous issues of this apazine)

Rob "Gizmo" Powell currently serves on the board of directors for the LASFS. Previously a vice president of the LASFS, he is now in charge of the physical plant and storage, and is often on hand when the board and club members access con equipment in storage or otherwise work with the club's physical belongings. I've long considered him the fellow with the keys—he's got a sizable key ring—and if you need chairs or tables for an event, Gizmo's the guy to call. He received the Evans-Freehafer Award in recognition of service to the club in 2009 and 2018.

During LASFS meetings, Powell occasionally comments on space exploration, astronomy, and other aspects of science and technology. In 2010, he assisted with the installation of new lighting at the LASFS clubhouse. His photographs documenting the move out of the LASFS clubhouse in 2017 are worth seeing. Powell is considered an honorary member of the Tucson Mob, an informal group of furries and other fen in southern Arizona. He served on the staff of ConFurence 7 and 8 in 1996-1997.

Working professionally as an agile tester, software development engineer in test, and quality assurance engineer, Powell has worked at companies such as AAA, Medtronic, mGage, Odesus Inc., and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He also volunteers with the Burbank Fire Corps as a member of the Community Emergency Response Team.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Inhumans and Other Stories ed. by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (MIT Press, 2024)

I've had my eye on the Joshua Glenn-edited Radium Age series of proto-sf from 1900-1935 since it launched in 2022. Though I've acquired several of the series' titles—and plan to interview Glenn at some point—this is the first book from the series I've actually read. It's a wonderful anthology—and helps affirm that the Radium Age series might be one of the most important sf series currently published. (The British Library's Tales of the Weird series might be another.)

This book collects a "selection of Bengali science fiction," including a novel and three short stories: Hemendrakumar Roy's 1935 novel *The Inhumans*, Jagadananda Ray's 1895 "Voyage to Venus," Nanigopal Majumdar's 1931 "The Mystery of the Giant," and Manoranjan Bhattacharya's 1931 "The Martian Purana." Glenn contributes a Series Foreword contextualizing the book in the series and asserting the series' intent, and editor Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay's introduction considers the importance of the selections, as well challenges posed by their translation—this is the first time the novel has been published in English.

I was surprised that there's a history of Bengali sf dating back so far, though the region's colonial history offers at least one reason for the genre's proliferation and popularity. Such stories were published in a number of magazines, including *Randhanu*, *Rangmashal*, *Mouchak*, *Bharati*, and *Sandesh*. Those literary magazines weren't necessarily sf magazines, though they published sf, fantasy, and "myth-fiction," as well as translations of Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Jules Verne. (That might itself be a form of literary colonialism. John Reider's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* might be a thought- provoking resource.)

Roy's *The Inhumans* is a relatively straightforward "lost race" adventure story that takes some liberties with the form. A Bengali large-game hunter travels to a forbidden mountain—Juju Mountain—in the Congolese jungles of Africa in search of sport. He

encounters a human woman raised by gorillas before falling into a crevice. When the hunter regains consciousness, he finds himself in a subterranean world.

That world is populated by an advanced—or degenerate—form of Bengali, the offspring of an expedition long thought lost. They are able to manipulate their physical forms and roll about in barrels for transport. One of them, a scientist, plans to develop a race of superhumans—hoping to use the hunter as a subject—and the protagonist meets a young woman, perhaps falling in love. Even though much of the humor might be lost on me given the writing's era and country of origin, the novel is very funny, as well as adventurous.

Ray's "Voyage to Venus," the oldest of the works included, was originally published in *Bharati*. An amateur scientist falls asleep while visiting with a friend, waking on the dark side of Venus. There, he encounters his friend, who had also been transported to the planet. They meet savage Venusians, travel to the other side of the planet and climb a mountain before plunging into a sea. Another group of Venusians pulls them from the water, and they eventually return home.

"The Mystery of the Giant," written by Majumdar, first appeared in *Ramdhanu*. The story focuses on a scientist whose body changes radically after he consumes a potion. And Bhattacharya's "The Martian Purana"—perhaps an example of the myth-fiction mentioned above—combines aspects of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* with sf elements.

Of the works collected, *The Inhumans* is clearly the marquee text. Even so, "The Martian Purana" offers an opportunity to explore a hybrid literary form that does something other than don the clothing of a colonist's writing. That's not to say that that's all *The Inhumans* does—its parody is critical and pointed—but the incorporation of Hindu epics proves quite interesting.

In addition to the series' books focusing on longer and shorter works of proto-sf, I hope that this anthology leads to further exploration of writing from other countries in which English is not the primary language. I'm curious what forms sf takes when it develops more independently of colonial forces.

Another series of potential interest is Routledge's Studies in Global Genre Fiction (https://www.routledge.com/Studies-in-Global-Genre-Fiction/book-series/SGGF), which has so far included books on sf in South and Southwest Asia, and North Africa; Nigeria; and the Nordic countries—as well as other titles.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Black Rainbow

Last weekend, after seeing family and running errands, I watched this 1989 horror/mystery movie starring Rosanna Arquette, Jason Robards Jr., and Tom Hulce. Largely filmed in North and South Carolina, the film tells the story of a father-daughter duo on tour to showcase the young woman's abilities as a medium and clairvoyant. She is able to help audience members contact and communicate with dead relatives.

When her stage act—which is much more than an entertaining performance—begins to foresee events that have yet to come, contacting people who are not yet dead, she draws the attention of a hired killer enlisted by a wealthy industrialist to quell labor unrest. His employer doesn't want to be identified.

In addition to the portrayal of seances held on the stages of churches and rented halls, *Black Rainbow*

concentrates on the challenging relationship between Arquette's medium character and her alcoholic father, portrayed by Robards. It also focuses on her developing relationship with a skeptical newspaper reporter. The sense of familial isolation, codependence, and control might be the most interesting aspect of the movie.

Also of interest, however, is that the movie could have inspired one of my wife's favorite novels: Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black*. Mantel reviewed *Black Rainbow* for *The Spectator* in 1990 (https://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/11th-august-1990/32/cinema), later turning her hand more seriously to fiction. *Beyond Black*—which also focuses on a psychic—was published in 2005.

The main narrative of the movie is bookended by a couple of scenes in which the reporter—years later—tracks down the medium to better ascertain what really happened. Those scenes, while potential padding to lengthen the runtime, might offer the most eerily fantastic elements of the film. Did he actually track her down? Is she really still alive? The final scene, in which the reporter returns again, is especially atmospheric and creepy, much like the kudzu featured in the bookends.

Also watched this week: *Foundation* S1E10, "The Leap;" *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* S1E6, "Udûn;" *Resident Alien* S3E4, "Avian Flu," and S3E5, "Lovebird;" *Star Trek: Discovery* S3E9, "Terra Firma—Part 1"

Chicago Tribune, July 15, 1955

Comments on APA-L

In late July, fellow eller Joe Zeff emailed me suggesting that the death of Tom Lehrer (https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/27/entertainment/tom-lehrer-death) be mentioned at an upcoming meeting of the LASFS. I passed that recommendation on to Matthew Mitchell and Nick Smith. Smith responded: "Yes, his passing will be announced this week."

Perhaps in response to my mailing comments on APA-L #3122 in *T&T* #171, John Hertz sent me the second page of *Vanamonde* #1645. Thank you! I would have taken Harry Golden's remark as a compliment, as well. I also appreciate that you reprinted your Classics of SF book discussion commentary on Murray Leinster's "The Ethical Equations" and Andre Norton's *Star Man's Son*.

Faculae & Filigree #45

Aug. 8, 2025

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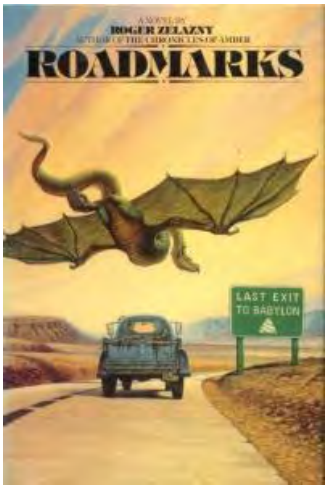
From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Roadmarks by Roger Zelazny (Ballantine, 1979)



As my wife and I use the local libraries, I'm making it a practice to frequently check out books from the sf section every time we visit, in order to keep such books—and authors—in active circulation. So far, I've been pretty aggressive doing so, checking out a handful of titles every couple of weeks, and I might reach the point at which I'm unable to read everything I check out before it's due. For now, though, I'm doing my darndest. Even if I don't read or finish a book, checking it out serves a purpose.

This novel by Roger Zelazny is one heck of a book, and I'm glad I pulled it from the shelf. It's a very fun and interesting portrayal of time travel: time as a network of highways, with travelers able to go forward as well as back in time—sometimes with more than one incarnation of a character on the road at a given time. If a traveler changes what happens in a given timeline, that might create a new on-ramp to the highway, leading to the potential for new creatures or characters to also find their way to the road. At times, the book reminded me of Walter Jon Williams's *Hardwired* (*Snow Poster Township* #18) crossed with Philip José Farmer's Riverworld series, only with a highway as the river—and without as many historical figures. (There are some, but they play a minimal role.)

The character Red Dorakeen is an effective protagonist (other Dorakeen books would have been welcome), and over the course of the story, he attracts a number of supporters and friends while trying to determine who's put a bounty on his head—and why. A former lover and fellow traveler who'd lost her zest for life comes into play, as does Dorakeen's son—not knowing who his father is.

There's a number of assassins, some more skilled than others—including an alien battle robot with suppressed memories that seeks a life of peace and quiet repose—and self-aware personal computers or artificial intelligence agents that can be plugged into vehicles. It's almost as though citizens band radio were embodied by *Young Lady's Illustrated Primer: a Propædeutic Enchiridion* from Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*. Those characters are named after Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

The book also features a Tyrannosaurus, dragons, and what might be the dreams of dragons. Chapters are numbered in an innovative way, alternating "One" and "Two" to signify which timeline or group of characters is being focused on. In 2021, *Deadline* reported that George R.R. Martin and Kalinda Vazquez were developing a television adaptation for HBO Films, but those efforts seem to have stalled.

Roadmarks is an excellent book and a fine example of what might be considered science fantasy.

From the Reading Pile: Fanzine Reviews

Juvenatrix #270-273 (May-August 2025)

Editor Renato Rosatti, currently based in São Paulo, Brazil, has been publishing this horror and science fiction fanzine for 35 years—producing almost 6,000 pages to date. I've been receiving *Juvenatrix* via email since late last year and just recently started using Google Translate to translate each PDF issue into English so I can read it rather than skim it. I wish I'd done so sooner and plan to continue the practice on an ongoing basis. (I might even do the same for Perry Rhodan!) While Portugal has an active comics and roleplaying game culture—and sf fandom—there aren't many fanzines in Portugal, so one's attention might occasionally turn toward Brazil.

The issues addressed in this review range from nine to 20 pages in length; three of the four include 18-20 pages. They follow a relatively similar structure, combining photographs of heavy metal concerts in Brazil, occasional news about new Brazilian Portuguese comic book and book releases, reviews of horror and sf movies, serialized fiction, and genre-oriented comic art. Because the metal coverage is relegated to a handful of photos—other than a memorial to Ozzy Osbourne in #273—if you aren't interested in heavy metal, it doesn't detract from other content. (I am curious, however, whether Rosatti has included more music-oriented material in the past; record and show reviews, and interviews would

complement the other writing quite well.)

Movies reviewed in these issues include *Night Slaves*; *Beginning of the End*; *Rattlers*; *A Cold Night's Death*; *The Aftermath* (which features Forrest J Ackerman); *The Cat Creature*; *Killdozer*; *Phantom Ship*; *The Evil*; *The Devil's Partner*; *Sisters of Death*; *Destination Inner Space*; *The Cape Canaveral Monsters*; *Project Moon Base*; *Caltiki, the Immortal Monster*; *The Alligator People*; *The Man Who Lived Again*; and *The Forest*—all likely candidates for a screening at the Infernal Wilson. Additional reviews are reprinted from back issues of *Juvenatrix*, as well as a fanzine titled *Astaroth*.

Each review features cover or poster artwork, and a selection of stills from the movie. Multiple TV movies are included among those reviewed. Rosatti comments on the cast, plotline, production, and themes of the films, as well as whether they're available in Brazil—either online, subtitled in Brazilian Portuguese, dubbed, or aired on TV. For local genre fen, it's a helpful resource to track down such fare in one's primary language.

Chicago Tribune, July 22, 1955

Caio Alexandre Bezarias's serialized story, "The Guardians of the Black and Silver Shields" ("Os guardiões dos escudos negros e de prata"), appears in three of the four issues. #270 features the fifth part of the 17th episode, so we're pretty far along in the story. The serial's content is similar to the rest of *Juvenatrix*, featuring a headbanging protagonist and a horror-sf narrative. Each installment is about a page or two in length, and the fiction offers a welcome balance to the pacing of the fanzine. The portion published in #270 is especially cool.

Also of note is the artwork of Angelo Junior, which is absolutely fantastic. Featuring older and newer pieces, the art depicts sf, fantasy, and horror themes, and the longer-form comics in #272-273 are excellent. It's no surprise that the artist publishes his own comics. (https://clubedeautores.com.br/livros/autores/angelo-junior) The recently released *AlmanaHQue Nona Arte* #5 is a horror special.

It's heartening to know that this form of genre film fandom—and fanzine—is alive and well in Brazil. *Juvenatrix* is an energetic, reliable fanzine that readers of *Drive In Asylum*, *Stapled Spine* (both reviewed in *Faculae & Filigree* #36), *Misfit Cinema Journal*, and similar fanzines might find interesting, even if it's in Brazilian Portuguese. Don't let that stop you.

Inquire via Renato Rosatti, http://www.juvenatrix.blogspot.com.br, renatorosatti@yahoo.com.br.

Pablo Lennis #450-453 (May-August 2025)

If faned John Thiel has been publishing *Pablo Lennis* on a monthly basis consistently, not only did earlier this year mark the fanzine's 450th issue, but the midpoint of its 38th year of publication. That's an impressive and inspiring milestone that deserves recognition and applause, and I welcome receiving the fanzine in the mail every month. Thiel published his first fanzine in the 1950s when he was 12, and I've enjoyed my correspondence with him over the years, primarily through the National Fantasy Fan Federation—and *Pablo Lennis*.

Each of the issues read to prepare for this review contains between 18-22 pages, a manageable monthly output that features a mix of editorials, serialized fiction, poetry, fanart, fandom news, fanzine reviews, and letters of comment. The contributors and correspondents that Thiel publishes might not participate elsewhere in fanzines generally, though some do, and *Pablo Lennis* offers an interesting role model: Regardless of their involvement in broader fandom, faneds and fen can create and nurture their own pocket universes. *Pablo Lennis* is a seething, somewhat self-contained mass of creativity and commentary, though the quality of its writing can vary widely.

Much of each issue is composed of the ongoing serialization of Thiel's story "Omnis Vivandi" and Joanne Tolson's "How I Became a Ghost." In #453, Thiel indicates that "Omnis Vivandi" might conclude soon. I hope the fanzine—or another fanzine—continues after the story ends!

Other highlights include Jose Sanchez's personal writing, "Flying Saucer Sighting;" the artwork of Peter Zenger; Daniel Slaten's "The Billionaire and His Satellite" and "Dylan and the Chatbot;" and Gerald Heyder's contributions of poetry, provocative questions, and artwork. Heyder's cartooning is delightful. The mix of different kinds of content helps bring a balance and rhythm to *Pablo Lennis* that I appreciate.

But the real reasons to read *Pablo Lennis* are Thiel's editorials, fandom news and fanzine commentary (largely concentrating on the N3F), and the letters of comment. Every issue, Thiel offers a glimpse into his state of mind, his perspective on fandom ("Anniversary Issue" in #450 and the introduction to "Science Fiction Fandom" in #453 are especially interesting), occasional alerts to unfamiliar fanzines—such as *Mystery Adventure Review* in Tucson, Ariz. (Faunch! Is that, perhaps, Fred Woodworth's *Mystery & Adventure Series Review*?)—and personal news sometimes merely mentioned in passing. The mention of vandals and racketeers in #452 concerned me; I hope everything's okeh in your neck of the woods! (I was also amused and slightly perplexed by Thiel's description of *The Stf Amateur* as "dyspeptic" in #452, but I'll take that as a compliment!)

The lettercol includes missives from correspondents such as Joe Napolitano, Tolson, Sanchez—who mentions Lon Strickler's *Phantoms & Monsters Radio* (https://www.youtube.com/@PhantomsMonstersRadio)—Andy Dobson, and Slaten, indicating that the fanzine is read actively and attentively by its contributors. Tell me more about your "cult group" in Madison, sir! Anyone I should meet?

And the "Re-Entry" sections, which end each ish with an editorial evaluation, are also interesting. Thiel considers his fanzine's layout, typesetting, and content; as well as his own writing, the poltergeists that might interfere with achieving "the perfect issue," and other topics.

Pablo Lennis is a long-running fanzine that is very much its own ecosystem. I am grateful to be adjacent to it—and sometimes even mentioned inside! (Thank you for your ongoing recognition and support of the *Amateur*, Mr. Thiel; I value it.) Available for $2 or the Usual from John Thiel, 30 N. 19th St., Lafayette, IN, 47904; kinethiel@outlook.com.

Administrivia

I just realized that I might have already worked my way through 1955 movie advertisements published in the *Los Angeles Times* to use as spot illustrations in my fanzines. I thought I hadn't yet focused on that year in genre cinema and have been publishing similar ads from that time period in the *Chicago Tribune*.

Rather than continue to cover well-traveled ground, I'll finish using the ads that I've already prepared for inclusion and then move on to 1954. (I've been alternating moving forward and back in time, just like Red Dorakeen.) My apologies if recent ads have been overly similar to those published in late 2024.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Superman

My wife and I had both heard good things about the Superman movie directed by James Gunn. Caitlin doesn't usually enjoy superhero movies—Jonah and I have subjected her to many—but friends whose taste we trust had made positive remarks online, so we went to a local theater in early August to see it. At the end of the movie, I turned to her and said, "Why did we think this was going to be a good movie?" Caitlin was

relieved, because she'd been preparing to bite her tongue in case I'd enjoyed it. Neither of us had.

I really thought I would based on online discussion, though I was willing to wait to see *Superman* on a smaller screen. In addition to hearing favorable comments about the flick, I'd read the comic book stories on which the movie was based. The recently published 360media and McClatchy Media bookazine *DC Comics Presents Superman* reprinted several stories that reportedly informed and influenced the tenor, tone, and approach of the movie: 2005's *All-Star Superman* #1, 1998's *Superman for All Seasons* #1, and 2005's *Lex Luthor: Man of Steel* #1. As I wrote in a "Dollar Box Dilettante" column submitted for *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #280, "You can't go wrong with the writing of Grant Morrison and the artwork of Tim Sale."

Chicago Tribune, July 22, 1955

Gunn's movie, however, went in another direction. I found the portrayal of Superman to be overly naive and infantile—Captain Everything meets Forrest Gump—suggesting that true goodness can only be the domain of children. The logic applied by one of the most powerful beings on Earth was that of a child: black and white, good and evil, alive or dead. Superman exhibited no higher order understanding of his position in the world, the importance and impact of his otherworldly strength, or the need to work with existing power structures such as world governments or law enforcement.

Even his relationship with Lois Lane smacked of the movie *Big*. In one telling scene, she didn't give him a cup of tea, but a cup of hot chocolate. Yes, adults can drink cocoa—I do—but that scene suggested a childlike nature and a relationship more along the lines of mother and child than lover or partner. (The almost-silent battle in the distance perhaps representing Starro from *The Brave and the Bold* #28 was wonderful, however.)

Similarly, Lex Luthor was portrayed as entirely bad, even unnecessarily sadistic and cruel. His motivation? Jealousy and spite, as well as bigotry toward alien races. While Luthor pursued the malevolent manipulation of a military action and border incursion because of a profit motive—selling arms for blood money—one could consider him evil rather than merely petty. But that doesn't explain his employees' support and involvement. They didn't seem similarly evil, just… employed. They were hardly henchmen, but temporary staffing for supervillains.

In addition to Superman, Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Perry White (a woefully underutilized Wendell Pierce), Steve Lombard, Ma and Pa Kent, and Luthor—well-known comic book characters all—the movie also features a slew of other superheroes. Those include Mr. Terrific (one of the more interesting characters in the movie), the Guy Gardner Green Lantern (portrayed by Nathan Fillion of *Firefly*, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*), Hawkgirl, Metamorpho, Krypto, and Supergirl. The first three are apparently members of a yet-unnamed Justice League. The Hall of Justice's echoes of *Super Friends* were a pleasant touch.

One of my pet peeves about superhero movies is that, when so many heroes are included in a movie that's not a team movie—such as the Avengers or the X-Men series—it's usually done to distract from the fact that the plot or portrayal of the titular hero (ostensibly the focal point) is weak. Case in point: *Batman Forever*, only that flick stacked the deck with too many villains rather than heroes. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #93) There were far too many crooks in that kitchen.

I think my biggest concern is that *Superman* fell prey to something I increasingly see in modern movies and TV programs. Rather than actually establish or develop a character, introduce personal characteristics or stakes that make viewers care about what happens to a character, or otherwise evoke and elicit honest emotional responses, the movie resorts to shorthand, employing screenwriting cliches.

We aren't shown that Pa Kent is a big softy, Ma Kent tells us he is—multiple times. She even does so immediately after the one time he might actually be showing us. (Lest we miss it.) He ends up a cartoon. Even Pa Kent's motivational speech to Superman about the importance of his inherent goodness is a quickly delivered slap-dash affair. Instead of filmmakers showing us something is important or characters actually saying something meaningful,

characters say something in the shape of something meaningful—and that's supposed to be sufficient. Check that off the beat sheet.

I could go on. The movie doesn't build on the legacy of the hero; it craps on it. Jor-El and Lara intend their son to dominate the human race, establishing a harem to continue the Kryptonian blood line. Superman isn't even really that strong; he loses practically every fight, but the movie doesn't explicitly assess the limitations of physical prowess, power, or violence. Krypto is another distraction: a cute and cuddly funny animal. (Who doesn't love a pet?) Krypto isn't even Superman's dog; he belongs to Supergirl, who's featured in a brief cameo at the end—portrayed as a sort of drunk sorority girl who calls her cousin a bitch. I suppose we can expect a Deadpool-like Supergirl movie in the near future.

What did I like, other than date night with my wife and our theater pizza before the movie? Sean Gunn appeared briefly as Maxwell Lord, which was cool. Luthor built a prison warehouse in a pocket universe accessible only through interdimensional portals. The collapse of one portal almost leads to the destruction of Metropolis and neighboring Bakerline; that impending doom could be reversed by typing in a numerical code. Lane apparently grew up as a "punk rock kid from Bakerline." She and Kent debate who has more punk-rock cred. ("Maybe being kind is the new punk rock.") There's a fictional pop-punk band, the Mighty Crabjoys. And the Teddybears song "Punkrocker," featuring vocals by Iggy Pop, plays during the end credits. Though I enjoyed those latter aspects, even that is a sanitization of or shorthand for punk.

To cleanse my palate upon returning home, I read several issues of *Action Comics* published in the 1940s. Later that weekend, I watched a handful of the Fleischer *Superman* cartoons from the same time period. There's so much one could do with Superman. I guess Gunn did what he wanted to do. The Guardians of the Galaxy series has been so good. I'm perplexed that *Superman* wasn't any better than it was.

Comments on LASFAPA #581

Sincere thanks are due to our illustrious Little Sin Ghod and Lord High Counter of Legumes, David Schlosser, for mailing me what might be a second copy of thish. Thank you! Because of my recent address change, I hadn't yet received #581—which might eventually be forwarded from Culver City if that's where the first mailing went. In any event, the copy sent along with #582 arrived in Madison safely, so comments are afoot. Here they be:

In *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me* #13, **Rich Lynch** commented on the "sweet spot" of a 30-page apa mailing. I agree: apae this size are eminently manageable to comment on. I recently joined ANZAPA, and their ~600-page distributions, while wonderful, are quite a challenge on the complete reading and comments fronts. That apa is bimonthly, but even that might not be enough time to give everyone the attention and consideration they deserve.

Of the Little Debbie snack options, my favorite is the Nutty Buddy wafers with peanut butter. I want them every time I see them, but I rarely buy them. Sometimes I just look at them while at the grocery store. Because if I buy them, I'll eat them, and, while delicious, they're not very healthy.

Our attention was first drawn to Portugal because we knew several people who had already moved there, planned to do so, or knew someone who had. Then we were drawn to the idea of relocating to the country because it allowed citizenship by naturalization after five years of legal residency—rather than the more standard 10 years. Now that we've been spending time there for several years, we've fallen in love with its landscape, people, culture, and history.

Chicago Tribune, July 29, 1955

My introduction to fanzines occurred during the Age of the Photocopier—and dot-matrix printers. I remember photocopying issues of *Blooperman* and other homemade comics at my father's office on weekends, and a friend and I finagled access to the school district's printing facilities to publish issues of *Raasochomix*, which were jam comics we drew during Mr. Raasoch's physics class.

I enjoyed reading your essay about Bob Clampett's presentation at the 1981 Mill Valley Film Festival. Every time I hear or read that surname, I think of the *Beverly Hillbillies* character Jed Clampett. Even though Bob Clampett worked in animation from 1931-1984, there was never an animated version of *Beverly Hillbillies* (though there was a Dell comic book drawn by Henry Scarpelli). I know it's

convenient and lazy humor, but I like to think that Bob Clampett animating Jed Clampett would have been a sight to see.

David Schlosser's *Fool's Mate* #584 informed LASFAPAns of Arthur Hlavaty's medical issues. In the coverage of the wedding and diamond anniversary of Hlavaty, Bernadette Bosky, and Kevin Maroney in *Idea* #14 (*F&F* #41), I remember seeing photographs of Hlavaty on screen via video conference—rather than on site—while hospitalized or bedridden. His most recent post on the Facebook was dated July 25, so I hope he's doing well or is on the mend.

Does CLS mean Clinical Laboratory Services? I had to look that up. I'm glad to hear that the Fanac Fan History Project now has scans of your con badges—and that you've been in touch with the University of California, Riverside. I might have seen a Star Trek movie at the Cinerama Dome with friends in the mid-1990s. Most likely, that would have been *Star Trek: First Contact* because my friend Stephen Lynch would have been working at the *Orange County Register* after university. We no longer keep in touch, and he's currently editor-in-chief of the *New York Post*.

I will have to refer to the January 1979 LASFAPA to learn more about the bringing of snow to Marty Cantor. I appreciate the guidance! I've yet to see *Death of a Unicorn*, but Caitlin saw *Sinners* while visiting her family in Michigan. The *Crossroads* comparison resonates with me, and I still plan to seek out both. There's so much to watch on TV!

In *Labyrinthine Lines* dated June 2025, **Nick Smith** admitted creating villains for the roleplaying game *Champions*. I wonder if I have anything with your work in it! I have copies of *Enemies* I-III, *Enemies: The International File*, and *Enemies: Villainy Unbound* packed up to ship to Portugal, so perhaps they're in one of those volumes. What fanzine series were you hired to edit?

I appreciated your updates from the frontlines of Los Angeles. We read the news after our departure with interest and quickly reached out to friends to see what was really going on. Your mention of the new BritBox channel reminded me that I was recently disappointed to learn that Pluto TV dropped its Godzilla kaiju channel and TokuSHOUTsu channel earlier this year because of licensing changes. Apparently, the latter is still available via Twitch, YouTube, and Shout! TV, which I'd let lapse. I still plan to see *The Phoenician Scheme*.

You might be right that Deni Loubert helped moderate some of Dave Sim's more challenging inclinations. I remember when Renegade Press separated from Aardvark-Vanaheim during their divorce; I was relieved that my complementary subscriptions migrated with most of the titles. (I corresponded with Jim Valentino during the publication of *Normalman*.) Thank you for pointing me toward the YouTube videos that include "Ewok's Picnic." If UC Riverside hasn't cataloged Bruce Pelz's fanzine collection yet, I imagine that they won't catalog Marty Cantor's for quite some time.

Alan Winston's *Bore Me Tariffically, Too* dated June 13, 2025, updated LASFAPAns on dance events, potential political impact on his employer, and other workplace developments. I hope that your housemate's new medication proves helpful. Even if dementia wasn't diagnosed, it's promising that there's treatment available.

And in *The Title Goes Here* dated June 13, 2025, **Janice Morningstar** indicated that her family was facing some challenges. I hope that things resolve well, for the best of all involved. I also hope that your travels to Westercon and BayCon went well. It seems odd that no programming or registration information was available two weeks before the event, so fingers crossed that everything came together smoothly.

I found your remarks on programming tracks interesting. While I also support representing and including marginalized groups, we either need to do so everywhere as a matter of course or ensure that there's enough programming to address all of the specific needs in as wide a range as possible so general needs will also be met. I'm not sure if that makes sense, but sessions like "Women in SF" or "Latinx SF" seem like short-term solutions until everyone is represented in most programming.

The book about AI (and other things) that you mentioned to Alva Svoboda sounds interesting. I'll look for your review in #582. I have not yet published the forthcoming *Losconzine* #50. With selling the house and relocating to Wisconsin in early June, I haven't really been able to organize or edit it yet. This year has largely been spent preparing for the move. (Our recent experiences are more deeply documented in *The Stf Amateur* #20-23, specifically the "Natter: Preparing to Move" and "Trip Report: California to Wisconsin" items, available via https://tinyurl.com/TheStfAmateur.) Because the submissions I received on site have been packed up to ship to Portugal with the rest of our belongings, it's unlikely that I'll be able to turn my attention and energy to that project until later this year. I still hope to finish it in time for Loscon 51, but, geez, who knows.

Once our visas are approved, we'll be better able to establish a timeline for our move from Madison to Portugal. Right now, it looks like we'll be in the Midwest through September.

Space Warp & WOOF #2025

Aug. 11, 2025

Space Warp & WOOF is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; +1 718 755-9840 mobile; +1 323 916-0367 fax. It is prepared for participants in the Worldcon Order of Fan-Editors (WOOF), members of the World Science Fiction Convention, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Administrivia

Apparently, I misdated *Space Warp & WOOF* #2024, which was included in WOOF #49 and *The Stf Amateur* #11. Last year's issue of this apazine was actually completed on July 18, 2024, not a year prior.

I blame the space warp.

And, of course, WOOF.

When I first chose this apazine title in 2023, I became aware of Art Rapp's genzine *Spacewarp*—but was unaware of Dean A. Grennell's apazine for the Spectator Amateur Press Society, *Spacewoof*. Rapp was active in Michigan fandom, including the Michigan Science Fantasy Society, as well as the National Fantasy Fan Federation.

Grennell lived in Fond du Lac, Wis., a little more than an hour away from where I live now. Editing fanzines such as *Grue* and *La Banshee*, Grennell later moved to the Los Angeles area, where he was active in the Petards, which formed in response to the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

Having recently relocated from the LA area to Wisconsin, I'm quite pleased about these unintentional connections to earlier Midwest fandom!

My Liminal Year

Similar to previous editions of *Space Warp & WOOF*, thish shall serve as a catchall for fannish writing that didn't appear in my many apazines or resulting monthly fanzine, *The Stf Amateur*. (https://tinyurl.com/thestfamateur) The material herein was previously published in slightly different form in *Tetragrammaton Fragments*, the official newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization (https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com), a self-published comic book cooperative.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to fellow UFO member—and the current chairman—Steve Keeter, who helped me confirm the issues of T-Frags in which these pieces first saw print. You see, almost everything I own has been packed up and put into storage—including my books, comics, and fanzines—and my wife and I have been living in between places since May 2025.

We prepared our house in Culver City, Calif., for sale; sold it; and drove across the country with our cat and two bicycles to relocate to Madison, Wis. Here since June, we'll live closer to our parents and siblings for several months before we move to Portugal later this year. Our belongings, including my personal library, will follow in a 40-foot container.

We lived in a Culver City Airbnb for a month while selling the house. Since arriving in the Midwest, we've rented the Infernal Wilson, a furnished apartment at the edge of the First Settlement neighborhood on the isthmus of Madison by the shore of Lake Monona. At the end of August, we'll move to another Airbnb for a spell.

That liminal state has been a liberating and unsettling experience so far. I've been living out of a suitcase since May, and the Infernal Wilson is quite small, though comfortable. But I have a Post Office Box, a local library card, and a laptop. Traveling across the country and for work, I spent time with fellow fen in Albuquerque, N.M., and Chicago. I've joined the local *Doctor Who* clubs and gone to local cons, online and offline. Fanzines, fanac, and fandom have helped provide what limited consistency and stability I currently experience in life.

The Infernal Wilson is a cocoon. This faned will eventually emerge as a butterfly. Hopefully, the result will be beautiful.

Comics Community Outreach

(Originally published in *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #277, October 2024)

On the Facebook in mid-June, Larry Johnson wrote in the UFO Members Only group, "I've been thinking about Steve Keeter's essay last issue [*Tetragrammaton Fragments* #275] about the UFO constitution, encouraging members to write columns and I quote: 'Columns should ideally consist of discussion of club business, member applicants, and reviewing member zines.'"

Johnson even assessed our collective compliance: "[L]eafing through this latest issue there are 11 columns, and only 6 deal with member zines and UFO business. So nearly half did not." When he considers his own compliance, Johnson seems to be doing pretty well consistently. "[F]or the past 14 years of my current membership, I have never missed an issue and wrote a critique on every single UFO book I have ever received… ." That's impressive and inspiring.

At the time, I responded online, commenting that I'd address the topic in the future—but that I'd rather

review member works in my fanzines than in my T-Frags column. My position has not changed, and I offer this column—which addresses UFO business—to share some perspective on how I perceive T-Frags, our columns, and reviews, as well as ideas on what T-Frags could be, for members, subscribers, and other readers.

Rereading Keeter's "Quotations from Chairman Loathly" in T-Frags #275, my attention was directed to Article 2, Section E of the constitution, which reads, "Each member should submit a column to at least every other issue of the UFO Newsletter. Columns should ideally consist of discussion of club business, member applicants, and reviewing new memberzines, although other material may be included as well." Stressing the use of the term "ideally," Keeter remarks in his column, "[W]e should recognize and have something to say about zines published by our cohorts, our pals in the UFO, our partners in crime, etc."

While part of me thinks that when an organization turns its attention to discussing its constitution, that organization might be in trouble, I'm not sure that we are. Regardless, it might be good to pause a moment and assess whether we—and T-Frags—are living up to our potential and meeting each other's needs—as well as the needs of the broader self- published comics community. I think we're currently fulfilling the constitution, even if we might welcome more member reviews and commentary in the newsletter.

That section of the constitution has two parts, one that indicates minimum column activity requirements —publishing every other issue—and one that offers guidance on recommended content. I am glad the constitution is relatively vague and open to interpretation. We'll be in trouble indeed if we start monitoring and policing each other's columns beyond the loose assessment offered by Johnson.

What is there to interpret in that section of the constitution? The minac requirement is clear. So it comes down to three things, the use of the term "ideally"—which suggests it's not a strict requirement, as Keeter indicates—what "club business" entails, and the allowance for "other material." I'm a big fan of club business and other material.

In terms of club business, an implicit mission statement is offered on the Web site and in the front matter of each issue of T-Frags: "The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a co-op of small-press publishers who mutually aid each other in the promotion and production of their titles, and the promotion of higher standards of quality in the alternative press." That second part is really interesting. Anything we write about the alternative press, independent comics, self-publishing, minicomics, fanzines, and adjacent topics—if focusing on work we think is high quality—fulfills the standard of addressing club business. (More on that below.)

Explicitly, the constitution also allows "other material." That's pretty clear. So I do not believe that reviewing each other's work—in the pages of T-Frags—is the sole purpose of our columns. Not that anyone has explicitly suggested that, but we have constitutional room to swim in the sea of small-press comics in our columns, as long as we contribute to every other issue.

When I read T-Frags, I sometimes feel like it's rather inward looking, and that we could be more outward looking. (Discussing our constitution is the ultimate in self-reference.) So, let's consider the audience of T-Frags and the purpose of the newsletter. T-Frags is sent to every member of the UFO (15 people), as well as subscribers (18 people). We have more subscribers than members, and people can also order single T-Frags issues. I don't know how often that occurs, but our largest audience is not ourselves. Part of the purpose of T-Frags, then, is to inform non-members of club activity and to promote the UFO, perhaps with the intent to convert subscribers to members—or readers of our individual publications.

To that end, T-Frags seeks to promote UFO publications to non-members. We offer the UFO Checklist, as well as occasional but perhaps inconsistent member reviews of member publications. That's two modes of promotion, and the question might arise what the best way to promote the work of our members—in our newsletter—is. The checklist is a wonderful element, and I love that we publish it in T-Frags as well as in our own publications to promote the co-op and each other's work. I am proud to include it in the *Amateur*, as well as to see my fanzine in the checklist.

Reviews also fulfill the purpose of promotion, as do member columns more generally. If a subscriber or general reader finds a member—a columnist—interesting, regardless of whether they offer reviews, they might be more likely to check out their publications. Our columns are our opportunity to stand up among the membership outside of our own publications. What strikes me when reading most issues is whether multiple reviews of the same items —while they do lend multiple perspectives on the same work and facilitate member discussion (offering each other constructive criticism and egoboo)—are more likely to encourage non-members to read our work.

As you know, I don't review UFO comics in my columns. I do so in my member publication, *The Stf*

Amateur, which members receive. That has an even larger, though still modest, audience than T-Frags; almost 70 people receive each monthly issue via email, and issues are available for download from eFanzines.com and the Fanac Fan History Project (https://fanac.org). Because I don't know how many people download the *Amateur* on their own, I consider my core readership to be about 70. It's not a lot of people, but they're the right people.

Reviewing our publications in my fanzine fulfills my self-imposed obligation to comment on your work—and promotes it to a broader audience. (Your mileage might vary whether that translates to orders.) I don't think that publishing my reviews in T-Frags would serve that purpose as strongly. After all, reviewing your work in my own fanzine might encourage you to at least scan my fanzine! So I do other things with my T-Frags column, attempting to meet the needs and interests of members, as well as subscribers and other readers.

Several UFO members—Johnson, Keeter, Tom Fellrath, and Joe Ely Carrales III (assessing materials within easy reach)—include additional editorial content in their comics. Others—Fellrath, Kurt Erichsen, Rob Imes, Jim Main, and David Oliver Kling—publish fanzines. That gives many of us the opportunity to review each other's comics—for a non-UFO and UFO readership alike—in our own publications. To be honest, that seems more powerful in terms of reaching additional readers. How many copies of your individual publications do you send to non-UFO members? In many cases, it might be more than the 30 we reach with T-Frags.

One member reprints UFO member reviews of their comics within the pages of their comics, usually in the letter column. While that serves to promote their own work within their pages (which is understandable and laudable), it also suggests that other reviews—of other comics they find delightful and inspiring—could perhaps also be printed, furthering the community more generally.

That's what I think the purpose of the UFO is: to promote small-press comics—our own, and others. Elevating the artform and celebrating its fandom. Reviewing each other's work in our own pages—as well as or instead of doing so in T-Frags—meets the dual purpose of fostering member discussion, as well as external promotion. Were we to explore the potential offered by publishing reviews outside T-Frags, it might free the newsletter up to do more than it is currently.

I miss comics-related fanzines such as *City Limits Gazette*, *Indy*, *Self Publisher*, *Small Press Comics Explosion!*, and *White Buffalo Gazette*. T-Frags is currently the closest thing to those periodicals available, as far as I know. (If there's a similar fanzine currently active, tell me about it in your column!) I wonder whether we might attract more readers and subscribers—and therefore eventually members—if T-Frags developed into more of a general interest small-press comics fanzine. I can't volunteer to run for or serve as chairman or T-Frags editor—I'm busy enough as it is, I'm afraid (besides, I'm too new!)—but my own columns will strive to meet that potential.

Given who members are, the comics and fanzines we make, the material we read, what comes in the mail, whom we know, and whom we interact with online, T-Frags is well positioned to be a clearinghouse of sorts for information about small-press comics, self-publishing, and reading options. Club business and other material could go a long way, in addition to reviewing each other's comics. What small-press comics news would we share with each other? What other comics do we recommend? What creators are worth interviewing? Which creator or body of work requires longer-form assessment? What resources do we recommend? Which printers should we avoid? All of that seems like fair game, constitutionally. (And some of that already comes up naturally.)

The member columns I enjoy the most are the columns that touch on members' individual creative and publishing process, upcoming plans, personal news and experiences, and broader small-press comics topics such as the tools we use and challenges faced by self-publishers. Creator as person, and the process and ideas behind the resulting comics. The UFO and T-Frags are largely my window on and entry point to small-press comics more generally.

While I do scan columns for commentary on the *Amateur*, I tend not to read reviews of other UFO publications—because I already receive, read, and review them myself. Clearly, we shouldn't lose that aspect—if we're not already reviewing each other's work elsewhere—but it shouldn't be the only standard to which we hold ourselves as columnists.

Given that they outnumber us, we should also always consider our subscribers and other readers. Why do they read T-Frags? What do they want from it? Do they also already read our comics and fanzines? Are they former members, potential members, or disinterested in membership? Friends of members? Were we to look outward more often—rather than inward—we might find that the number of subscribers (and potential members and readers) increases. That might not be a goal. All the same, subscribers, what do you like about T-Frags and want more of?

In the end, I largely think that T-Frags is fine as it

is. We should not relax the column requirement. If a member isn't currently reviewing our publications in the pages of the newsletter or their own periodicals, they should consider doing so. Reviewing UFO items outside the pages of T-Frags is an interesting idea that more members could consider. And we can consider whether and how we could share even more and different information through the newsletter and our columns, focusing more on self-publishing and small-press comics generally—for members and subscribers alike. Even reviews of minicomics and other items from outside the UFO would be welcome. Our columns should offer us room to play and run, to breathe deeply, as long as we touch on club business—promoting excellence in small-press comics writ large—and other material.

I'll continue to do my best to review everything produced by UFO members, but in the *Amateur*, not my columns. I maintain a spreadsheet of UFO materials I've received and reviewed to ensure I review everything. I haven't updated it since late July, however, so I've fallen behind in recent months. What I haven't yet reviewed includes *Ditkomania* #97, which Imes sent me as an example; *Midnight Double Feature*; the run of *Strange Times*, which I received shortly after joining; *Tales of the Broken B* #5; and other items received since late July (including some from Joseph Morris). After finishing this column, I'll consolidate my UFO materials and update my records!

After all, another issue of the *Amateur* is forthcoming, and I've got another column deadline a couple of months or so from now! Can't wait to see what you have to say in yours.

Ditkomania *#97 was subsequently reviewed in* Faculae & Filigree *#41,* Midnight Double Feature *#1 in* Telegraphs & Tar Pits *#135, and* Strange Times *#1-6 in* T&T *#158. I have yet to review* Tales of the Broken B *#5.—HR*

Self-Published Comics in Wisconsin

(Originally published in *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #278, January 2025)

In August 2024, fellow UFO member Ken Bailey and I engaged in a Facebook Messenger exchange that led to identifying some interesting connections. He'd initially reached out to me in order to receive a copy of *The Stf Amateur* #11, which included a review of his application comic, *Mighty EnergyGirl* #36. As you might be aware, Bailey lives in Sheboygan, Wis. What might not be self-evident is that I was born and raised in Wisconsin—in Fort Atkinson, which is about two hours southeast of Sheboygan.

I had just visited my parents in the Madison area after July 4 last year, so Bailey and I shared stories about our lives in Wisconsin while becoming acquainted. (I left the state in 1991 for college but still return to visit family.) Before moving to the state, Bailey had lived in Colorado, and he mentioned that the Fairview, Ill., in his comics is a fictional city of about 70,000 people, based "roughly on a city the size of Appleton, Wis." (Another city with which I am familiar.) Our exchange led me to tell him about one of my first exposures to self-publishing while growing up in the Midwest.

While I was already aware that you could draw your own comics—I'd received a copy of Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes* as a reward for completing the public library's summer reading program when I was quite young—it wasn't until Jan. 18, 1983, that I learned you could also publish your own comics. On that day, a Tuesday, the *Wisconsin State Journal* published an article about David Werdin, then a 13-year-old seventh grader in Poynette, Wis. His comic book, *Silver Bullet*, was published by his own imprint, National Nimitz Comics Inc., named after Admiral Chester Nimitz.

The article focused on how Werdin began drawing comics, the encouraging support of a specific art teacher at school, topics and themes addressed in his stories, and his approach to production and pricing. The story was accompanied by a photograph of Werdin holding an issue of *Silver Bullet*. Werdin, at least, was all smiles. He was 13, and I was 10. Surely, I could do the same thing. (After all, Poynette was just an hour away!)

Bailey told me that he was 9 when the publishing bug first bit him. "There was a … high school student in 1972 who got into *Scholastic Scope* magazine as he had created his own comic book starring a Spider-Man type known as Tarantula," Bailey wrote. "His books were hand-done but were quite good, good art, good characters, pretty good stories." You can read about that article—and the young creator, 15-year-old Elvis Murray from Washington, D.C.—at https://tinyurl.com/Tarantula-Scope. Bailey still has that issue of *Scholastic Scope* in his possession. "I remember feeling jealous and at the same time very proud for the young artist Elvis Murray."

I've never actually seen an actual issue of *Silver Bullet*, or any Nimitz comic, and I've not yet been able to track down Werdin to thank him for his inspiration. Had I been older at the time, I might have even gone to Poynette to meet him!

At some point after my exposure to Werdin and *Silver Bullet*, I learned about another self-publisher based in Wisconsin, Rodney Schroeter. I forget where

Comic book creator at 13

By Sunny Schubert
Feature writer

In the last issue, our hero traveled to his home, Tanapolis, only to find out it is under the control of Gorton, an evil scientist-criminal who, for tyrannical reasons, is out to conquer Earth also. But one person stands in his way: the Silver Bullet. But the macabre Gorton knows our hero's weakness and uses it accordingly. Our story begins on Gorton's starship . . .

Actually, our story begins in Poynette, where David Werdin is a 13-year-old seventh grader at Poynette Middle School.

He's also the creator of the Silver Bullet, a comic-book hero who has battled the evil Gorton through the first two issues of National Nimitz Comics, Inc., David's publishing company.

The story of how David got into the comic-book biz goes back "a very long time," the young man said.

"I started drawing comic books when I was about 6. Whenever I would see a real good movie, I'd put it into comic book form," he said. "Around fifth grade, I started writing my own stories and doing them in comic books, too."

That's about the time he came under the tutelage of Janet Evans, art teacher at David's school.

"Another teacher had told me about him, suggested I keep an eye out for him," Ms. Evans said. "It's really easy to pick up on his talent — it just jumps out at you."

His drawings may appear rough to the eyes of non-teachers, Ms. Evans said, "but his sense of space is incredible, better than mine. Also, he's very good at conveying energy and dynamic movement."

Ms. Evans was so impressed by David's work, she took it to the Madison Art Center, where the staff agreed to offer the comic books for sale in the center's gift shop.

The full-color comics are bound with an acetate cover, and cost about $3 each to produce in limited quantities. They will sell for about $6 each, with the art center keeping 40 percent.

"I know the price is high for a comic book," said Ms. Evans, "but I don't have any qualms about it because of the quality of David's work."

David's father, Sam Hays, is a musician. His mother, Mary Werdin, a songwriter, suffers from multiple sclerosis. David has two brothers and a sister, but they are all much older than him and live away from home.

He occupies his time by reading history, and frequently adds real characters to his comic-book scripts. The name of his company comes from his favorite World War II hero, Admiral Chester Nimitz.

He also tackles social problems and current events in his scripts. Past topics have included rape, unemployment, murder, alcoholism, child abuse and terrorism. One book, titled "The Mercenaries," is based on David's readings in Norse mythology.

David reads a lot of comic books, studying them from both artistic and thematic perspective. "Conan the Barbarian" is his favorite.

He's not convinced that drawing and scripting comic books will be his life's work. "I really don't know if I want to do this when I grow up or not," he said, "but for now, it's a lot of fun."

David Werdin holds a copy of his comic book with his hero, Silver Bullet.
—State Journal photo by Edwin Stein

Wisconsin State Journal, Jan. 18, 1983

I first saw one of his advertisements—perhaps in *Comics Buyer's Guide*, which was based in Iola, Wis.—but I had soon sent away some well-concealed cash for *Bat Comix* #1-2. The address in #2 suggests that Schroeter had moved to North Dakota by its 1982 publication date, but #1 was published in 1974 in… Random Lake, Wis. Random Lake is a half hour away from Sheboygan and an hour and a half from where I grew up.

Bat—and Schroeter's work generally—was unlike anything I'd ever seen before. It was not at all like the comic books I'd been reading since I was able to before kindergarten, and it probably counts as my first exposure to alternative or underground comix. The first issue, printed on newsprint and saddle stapled, was 48 pages of simply—or roughly—drawn comics parodying *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*, featuring a Red Skull-like character exploring a Salvador Dali-esque landscape, semi- autobiographical comics featuring a character named "R" (for Rodney, perhaps), and a superhero called the Weirdo. The comics were raw, irreverent, and addressed concerns and topics relevant to junior high and high school students.

But it was #2 that blew my mind—and continues to inspire me to this day. (While I seem to have lost track of my original copies, sent together in the same manila envelope, I've procured replacement copies—along with additional material—from Schroeter more recently.) *Bat* #2 featured a full-color glossy cover that seems to have been colored using watercolors. Schroeter's artwork has improved, finding a cleaner, fine line, and his topics and themes—while always slightly bizarre—have deepened and darkened.

The opening story of the 60-page issue, printed on heavier paper stock, was titled "Death Shoots the Works." Death is sent to collect a soul for God, in Heaven. The narrator expresses the revelation that reincarnation exists. One of the recently dead confronts God, calling him a "dirty filthy stinking son of a bitch." And Death's target is mistaken for his twin brother, leading to the wrong soul being claimed. Regardless, the surviving twin was not long for the world, and his voyage through the afterlife resonated with the more surreal scenes Steve Ditko drew for *Thor* or *Doctor Strange*. That was heady stuff for me as a tween or young teen.

Subsequent stories in that issue—the Death piece took up half the pages—featured the Weirdo (chewing tobacco and hand grenades!), semi-autobiographical work featuring R, and single-page shorter pieces. I might not have read it at the time, but a full-page text Editor's Note at the end of the issue recounted Schroeter's travails between *The Weirdo* #3 in 1980 and *Bat* #2's eventual release in 1982—as well as a checklist of work dating back to 1974.

Among the additional material I've obtained from Schroeter are *The Weirdo* #1-3, a single-page *Pick-Pocket Comics* from 1978, and two comics published by Robin Snyder that include Schroeter's material. (You might remember Renegade Press' *Revolver*.) *The Weirdo* #1 is a single sheet of paper offering eight comic strips that include the first strips he submitted to *The Sounder*, a Random Lake weekly, in 1977. #2, published in 1979, is an 84-page comic with a black-and-white glossy cover and newsprint innards featuring additional strips from *The Sounder*. #3, published in 1980, features 44 pages with similar production values. Schroeter's "How's Your Bird?", a piece from the early 1980s, appears in *Frisky Frolics* #35 (2021-2022), and an adaptation by Schroeter and William Messner-Loebs is included in *Tales of the Mysterious Traveler* #34 (2021), both published by Snyder.

Schroeter is still around, and still publishing—though his own comics work seems to have slowed. (Check out https://tinyurl.com/Schroeter-Poopsheet and https://tinyurl.com/Schroeter-Amazon for other examples of his work.) With my most recent back issue order and a previous order of Messner-Loebs original art, Schroeter also sent me a handful of back issues of *The Plymouth Review Current*, a 5,400-circulation monthly serving Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and other counties in Wisconsin. It might be an entertainment insert in the *Plymouth Review*. He's listed on the masthead as editor in chief in issues dated January 2019 to June 2024. (He's even pictured on the cover of the January 2019 edition!) Issues of the *Current* include movie listings and commentary by Schroeter, profiles of pulp magazine artists drawn from David Saunders's *Field Guide to Wild American Pulp Artists* online, arts listings, and other community news. (You can see the most recent issue at https://www.plymouth-review.com/pageview/viewer/Current.) In the June 2024 issue, Schroeter explores the production of Joe Gill and Steve Ditko's *Introducing Captain Atom: Ditko at Charlton* (SD Publishing, 2024), which Schroeter designed. Apparently, he's co-published 15 books with Snyder over the years.

Between his first self-publishing in 1974 and initial comic strip submissions to *The Sounder* in 1977 to just recently, Schroeter has remained active in local journalism and comics publishing. He does not seem to publish locally created comics in the *Current*, which he could consider—at least one strip to square the circle. You can read more about Schroeter—and his challenges with cancer—at https://www.froedtert.com/authors/rodney-schroeter.

Thank you, David Werdin and Rodney Schroeter, for helping me find one of my life's great loves at such a young age. You have no idea what impact your work has had on me—or what joy you've helped me experience over the years.

On, Wisconsin!

Incidentally, I drew my first comics in a very long time, on New Year's Day. In the most recent issue of *Meditation Funnies*, M. Elias Hiebert asks readers to send him drawings of beasts and robots. So I did. You might enjoy doing the same! If you feel like participating, you can send him what you come up with—beasts and bots alike—at M. Elias Hiebert, P.O. Box 200394, Denver, CO 80220; meditationfunnies@gmail.com.

After the publication of T-Frags #278, UFO member Rob Imes sent a copy to Schroeter. We've since emailed, and I look forward to meeting him some day!—HR

Comic Books Disguised as Magazines

(Originally published in *Tetragrammaton Fragments* #280, August 2025)

Hello from the edge of the First Settlement district and the shore of Lake Monona in Madison, Wis., where my wife and I have been living in a furnished apartment located in an addition to a 1907 building that once housed the Madison Saddlery Company. Word from our illustrious chairman Steve Keeter is that I am one of "[f]our members … on 'Must Write'" for thish of T-Frags, so here's an at-the-wire contribution written somewhat hastily (perched at a TV tray!) on the day of the deadline.

Life has been like that—perched on a wire, like the Flying Graysons—lately. If you've been keeping up with *The Stf Amateur*—which I haven't been able to print or mail to the UFO membership in recent months, so perhaps you haven't been—you might recall that my family and working life are at an inflection point. My wife and I are in the midst of several changes, with almost too many processes running in parallel. With our son on track to graduate from college in Tokyo next summer, we've been planning and preparing for our next act. That's a heck of a lot of fun—the dream looms large—but it's also unsettling.

We packed up most everything we own in April, giving away or selling the remainder and throwing away very little. We lived in a small Airbnb for the month of May before embarking on a week-long road trip from the Los Angeles area to southern Wisconsin. We sold our house; escrow closed in early June. We've applied for a visa to immigrate to Portugal. In late April, I requested a relocation to work out of my employer's Madison office; that was just approved in early July. I've also raised my hand for a voluntary exit program that—if approved— would lead to an early retirement in mid-October. (I don't really consider it as retiring, however. I'm going on strike in order to prioritize avocational labors over vocational labors.) And when our visa is approved, we will move to Portugal. The furnished apartment—the Infernal Wilson—is ours until the end of August, for now. Once our visa is approved, we'll have 100 days in which to immigrate. We'll eventually bop back and forth between Portugal and the United States, finding a new home somewhere in the Midwest. That's a lot of sequencing. We've been in a liminal state for several months now, and it looks like that could continue for several more. As I said, exciting and unnerving.

So I must apologize for my relative inattention to the business of the United Fanzine Organization. Having sold my printer, I cannot currently affordably print my fanzine to mail members. (I was running behind doing so even before I sold the printer.) Despite contributing this column somewhat consistently to several successive issues of T-Frags, this is the first time—I think—that I "must write" in order to make good on my commitments as a member. And looking at T-Frags #279, it appears that I also owe dues! (Eep. I'll address that after submitting this column, Mr. Chairman.) To quote Looney Tunes' Egghead, "I'm a bad boy!"

But I'm still here, even between places. We've secured a post office box and library cards. We've registered to vote. And I continue to receive and read items from fellow UFO members. Several of you have already sent mail to the new P.O. Box. I'll continue to review such items in *The Stf Amateur*. Thank you for offering some sense of stability and continuity through all of the changes. Your presence in the mail and online has helped me navigate all the parallel processing, and I plan to return to more active, attentive, consistent involvement when things begin to stabilize.

In late May, fellow UFO member Rob Imes brought something to my attention on the Facebook. "I saw this Superman bookazine magazine on the newsstand today…," he wrote. "This is the kind of thing that a lot of fans claim that DC ought to be doing, in order to reach new readers. Well, here they are doing it. Will fans be happy now? Probably not."

Having worked as a newspaper and magazine journalist for almost two decades early in my career, I've been fascinated by the emergence of bookazines

as the primary form of periodical present on many newsstands. As the name suggests, bookazines are publications that combine elements of books and magazines. They take the form of squarebound magazines and usually eschew advertising—except for house ads. Bookazines also tend to be more expensive than other magazines. $14.99 is a pretty common cover price.

Generally, comic book-related bookazines are published to take advantage of increased public attention drawn to the release of a comics-related movie. Titles in my collection—now packed up to send to Portugal—include *A 100th Birthday Salute to Stan Lee* (a 360media Special), *Ant-Man and the Future of Marvel* (360media), *The Story of Marvel* (published by Time), *The Story of Spider-Man* (Time), *Superman: The Comics, the Films, the Cape* (Life), *Ultimate Guide to Black Panther* (Los Angeles Times), *The Ultimate Guide to Batman* (Entertainment Weekly), *The Ultimate Guide to Comic Books* (360media), and *The Ultimate Guide to Spider-Man* (Hollywood Spotlight).

As we speak, so to speak, at least two such bookazines are available on newsstands. 360media and McClatchy Media offers *DC Comics Presents Superman*, featuring "the official comic book stories that inspired the new movie," and Meredith Operations Corporation and SPC Specials brings us *Marvel Comics: The Fantastic 4*, promising "epic comic book adventures," "behind the scenes of the new movie," and "*First Steps* interviews."

While similar to previous bookazines—squarebound, ads-free, tied in to a movie release—these two examples are notably different in at least two ways. Even though the movies remain the primary motivator and reason for being (*Superman* premiered July 7 and *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* [premiered] July 21), for the first time, these bookazines primarily concentrate on the comic books—relatively recent comics—that relate to or inspired the movies. They are a form of comic book. Other, earlier bookazines focused more on the movie, the characters, the actors—and a movie's relationship to comic books. Sometimes, such bookazines contextualized the characters and comics in the history of comics publishing, but if there was comic art in the bookazine, it was a spot illustration. Never a full page or story.

These bookazines are different. *DC Comics Presents Superman* is a 100-page bookazine that is almost all comics. There's a two-page introduction and a quarter-page lead-in preceding each reprinted story that explains how the piece influenced the movie. There's an occasional bit of trivia dropped in on a page. Otherwise, the bookazine is all comics reprints, including stories from 2005's *All-Star Superman* #1, 1998's *Superman for All Seasons* #1, and 2005's *Lex Luthor: Man of Steel* #1.

While these are more recent reprints than I tend to be interested in—I'm mostly a golden, silver, and bronze age guy—I enjoyed reading them. You can't go wrong with the writing of Grant Morrison and the artwork of Tim Sale (which is absolutely beautiful in this instance). What interests me most, however, is the shift away from such bookazines concentrating on the movie as a movie—the director, the actors as celebrities, and some context—toward showcasing the actual comic books that inspired the movie. In the past, such information might occasionally come up in interviews with a screenwriter or director, but this is an explicit centering of the source material. It's not just that the new Superman movie comes out of the context or history of comics. It was influenced by specific issues and series.

Obviously, before the advent of bookazines, there were movie tie-in comics—*The Superman Movie Special* from 1983, the 1989 *Batman* one-shot, and 2017's two-issue *Spider-Man: Homecoming Prelude* come to mind—but those were perhaps more intended for existing comic book readers rather than the general public. Even if sold outside the direct market, they were published in the comic book format. They were sold where comics were sold. This bookazine takes a step beyond that. It is an example of comic books returning to the newsstand—but in the format of a magazine. Not only might a non-comics reader be interested in the new movie, they might be interested in the actual, specific comic books that provided its inspiration. Here are those comic book stories. You might be interested in reading more.

Marvel Comics: The Fantastic 4, then, is somewhat similar. Also a 100-page squarebound bookazine, the SPC special reprints three Fantastic Four stories. Included are reprints from 2002's *Fantastic Four* #60, 2009's *Fantastic Four* #570, and 2022's *Fantastic Four* #1. In addition to a page-long introduction to each reprint—the increased length offering more information on the impact and influence of the given story—there are also several short articles on the origin of the Fantastic Four (itself a two-page comic reprint), the transition from the page to the screen (less a history of movie depictions of the heroes over the years and more a consideration of the new movie specifically), and the movie's production design elements.

Similar to the Superman bookazine, the focus is on more recent comics rather than the history of comics. The readership they're targeting is a more recent,

perhaps younger audience. I've only read two of the three stories so far, but Mark Waid's piece on the team's hiring of a public relations consultant is a nifty bit of comic book movie meta-commentary. Similarly, the idea that the Fantastic Four exists not just as a team of superheroes but as an implicit apology from Reed Richards for putting his friends and family at risk is thought provoking. I also enthusiastically support bringing the writing of Jonathan Hickman to a broader audience. In my opinion, he's one of the more interesting comic writers in the last couple of decades. Again, the comic book reprints take center stage.

But these bookazines are also notable for another reason. Not only do they primarily reprint comics, the house ads they contain direct readers in a very specific direction. In the Superman bookazine, there are two ads. One is for the three graphic novels that build on the pieces reprinted in the bookazine: *All-Star Superman*, *Superman for All Seasons*, and *Absolute Luthor/Joker*. The other house ad, on the back cover, promotes DC Universe Infinite, the publisher's online service. While the ad leads with text encouraging readers to "[g]o to a comics shop near you," the real offer is a 30-day free trial to DC Universe Infinite's monthly standard tier. They don't want you to buy comic books, per se, they want you to read comics online. (Actually, given the recent distribution challenges, that might be a survival tactic rather than a cop out.)

The Fantastic Four bookazine also includes house ads. One promotes the first issue of Matt Fraction's *The Fantastic 4: First Steps* series. "Explore the world of the upcoming film," the ad reads. (That series might be more in line with the tie-in one-shots and miniseries mentioned above.) A second house ad focuses on the publisher's Marvel Premier Collection, which I've yet to check out. And the third mirrors the approach taken by DC in its Superman bookazine. "Your next steps are on Marvel Unlimited," the ad reads. By scanning a QR code, readers can "redeem" four collections to continue reading online. Those titles include *Fantastic Four: Behold… Galactus*, *Fantastic Four: Solve Everything*, *Fantastic Four: Imaginauts*, and *Fantastic Four: Whatever Happened to the Fantastic Four?*

In both cases, the next step isn't necessarily to go to a comic shop—despite some token encouragement offered by DC—but to go online. Regardless, these bookazines serve a purpose: to showcase the comic books that inspired or relate to the new movies, and to help new readers find their way to more stories.

Both are steps worth taking. Comic books have returned to the newsstand, disguised as magazines!

In early August, I finished reading the Fantastic Four bookazine. The third story, which focused on a time loop, might have been the best of the batch!—HR

Comments on WOOF #49

In *Worldcon Weetabix*, **Claire Brialey** wrote about Weetabix, the whole grain cereal biscuits, and her fanzine *Weekend Weetabix*, comparing that project to the Worldcon Order of Fan-Editors. During our last stint in Portugal, I bought several boxes of Weetabix and enjoyed eating it for breakfast, occasionally alternating days with bowls of muesli or mixing Weetabix and muesli.

My wife says that Weetabix reminds her of the musical group Madness. If her memory of fan club literature serves, at least one band member was at one time particularly fond of the cereal. In the 1980s, animated Weetabix television commercials featured anthropomorphic Weetabix biscuits representing street-wise teenagers, perhaps similar to skinheads. (https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AQTRzaVUx)

Scott also offers multiple photographs of a small armadillo figure: drinking tea, drinking beer, and drinking more beer. Armadillos, it seems, are powered by Weetabix. Letters of comment were received from Rob Jackson, Paul Skelton, and James Bacon, providing a lively, friendly exchange.

Mark Plummer's *Honcke* #1 shared some insights on the faned's retirement. His description of Novacon —"Occupy one of those chairs and the rest of the convention would eventually pass by you and so you could watch to see, say, what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouched towards the programme hall for the Saturday morning science talk."—was beautifully poetic. I enjoyed his consideration of becoming a volunteer *Fancyclopedia 3* editor. His remarks put the "proud" in "crowdsourcing." Your programmatic approach is appreciated!

I also appreciate your comments on your motivations for contributing to *Fancy 3*. Most fanac, we pursue for ourselves first, and others second. It's also wonderful to have a reason—an excuse—to read old fanzines. But rest assured that others benefit from and enjoy the results of your fannish labors. That is not meaningless work. Besides, there's got to be a story just waiting to happen in your discussion of changing the nature of reality by editing an online entry. Perhaps that's already been written!

In *Chris Garcia's WOOFzine*, "another installment in an unnumbered series," **Chris Garcia** updated fellow apans on his recent activities, primarily his podcast "I Really Wanna Like Opera." He also expressed his condolences for several notable deaths in fandom and the art world. The details about your

then-recent time in the Los Angeles and Palm Springs areas resonated with me. I might have even missed living in southern California for a moment. Having recently completed a draft of *The LASFS Hagiography*, which collects biographical sketches of the patron saints of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society—it'll be used during LASFS meetings and might eventually be published for a broader audience—and still intending to edit and publish *Losconzine* #50, I find that one foot remains in LA fandom as I find my footing in Madison. Thank you for mentioning the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*. (https://www.f4wonline.com) I'll have to check it out!

Roger Hill's *Report from Hoople* #153.153 wasn't actually ever published in APA-L, at least not in #3084. Checking my page count records for 2024, I don't think we published any contributions from you last year. Be sure to send this year's Report to the new Official Collator, Barbara Gratz Harmon. She and I were emailing at the end of July to ensure she continues sending you and Ed Buchman distributions.

I enjoyed your brief trip reports on seeing the total eclipse of the sun and operating an Illinois Terminal interurban trolley car at the transit museum. Thank you for mentioning WOOF #48's mixture of A4 and US Letter-sized pages. I just resized thish from A4 to Letter as a result!

In *Laurraine's WOOFzine 2024*, **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** described the stressful times of 2023-2024. I am glad that the difficulties seem limited to bank mergers, television reception, printers, and microwaves—rather than the health and wellbeing of you and your family.

While your reviews of books and theater productions were interesting, your Australia and New Zealand trip was even more so! Your description of the eclipse trip; tours of the Anglo-Australian 4-metre Telescope and the Parkes radio telescope; screenings of movies such as *The Dish* and *Good Night, Oppy*; and the cruise were wonderful. I'm glad you got to spend time with Bruce Gillespie and other local fen. What an awesome experience!

Alan Stewart's *Ytterbium Dodecoxide* dated July 2024 described moving after 36 years in Richmond, Victoria, Australia—to an apartment in Brunswick. Having moved recently myself, though after only 16 years in the same house, I can empathize. I can also empathize with your personal library being in storage.

I read Brandon Sanderson's *The Lost Metal* earlier this year. (*Faculae & Filigree* #39) The rest of your reading, though perhaps less than usual, was also interesting. It wasn't on your list, but I enjoyed Terry Pratchett's *Guards! Guards!* in late 2023. (*F&F* #25) I was intrigued by the multiple mentions of David C. Kopaska-Merkel's *Dreams & Nightmares*. (https://dreamsandnightmaresmagazine.blogspot.com) While I was familiar with his name from the Science Fiction Poetry Association's *Star*Line*, I was unfamiliar with *Dreams & Nightmares*. According to the blog, Kopaska-Merkel will participate in Worldcon this year. Thank you for publishing the paper plate illo by William Rotsler and Alexis Gilliland. Their joint work is consistently excellent.

In *Guy-zer* (GHLIII Press Publication #1368 6-7/24), **Guy H. Lillian III** suggested that thish might feature his "weakest zine name." I think it's a fine name. They can't all be glorious, and that's not to say that *Guy-zer* isn't. "A slack pun is better than no pun at all." Hear! Hear! I'm sorry to hear that Parkinson's interfered with your Icelandic adventures. Your 53-½-year stint in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and other fanac remains an inspiration.

As a LASFAPAn—though one of six in a mailing I recently commented on—I wouldn't say that it's "in the serious skids." In fact, we've recently been complimenting our 30-page mailings! The group remains consistently active and interesting, and Rich Lynch's relatively recent return has brought a welcome boost of enthusiasm. Regardless, I miss Marty Cantor every single day.

The Los Angeles Science Fiction Society has purchased a new clubhouse, and the bicycle shop previously inhabiting the location was expected to move out by the end of July—so any refurbishment needed for occupation should begin soon, if it hasn't already. I shake my head that the previous clubhouse closed after my arrival in the LA area—before my participation as an active member during the pandemic—only to reopen after my departure from California. I had such grand plans for spending much of my free time there. It'll be a boon for the club.

Jan Vanek Jr.'s *Newt News* #0- reported on personal difficulties that kept him from participating in the Worldcon in Glasgow. I enjoyed your commentary on the death of Eva Hauserová and the impact she had on you, as well as your reprint of her "Italian intermezzo a little à la Japanese." The footnotes alone are brilliant. By the way, your mother is a wise woman: "[E]xperience is incommunicable."

In *Null Island* dated August 2024, **Doug Bell** shared a "random assortment of Worldcon memories." The initial sentences in the Intersection, Glasgow 1995 portion made me grin. Did you end up distributing that issue of *Spoo*? What kind of Legion of Super-Heroes tattoo do you have? Neat that you participate in Klordny. Give my regards to Carl Fishman and the gang. (This is the second instance while writing this in which I've felt that *Blue Moon*

Special, the apae directory, deserves a 2025 update.)

Christina Lake's *Nothing is Sacred [Any More]* apparently represented her first contribution to WOOF after going to Worldcon 10 times. Glad you found your way to the fete! The apae archivist in me boggles while reading about Pieces of Eight and Get Stuffed. (Luckily, *Matrix* #88 is available online at https://fanac.org/fanzines/Matrix/Matrix88.pdf!) I suppose the soft toy's apa is not to be confused with the fanzine published by Jacob Blake. See, Mark Plummer, this is why contributing to *Fancyclopedia 3* matters! People like me must be able to look up things like that! I shall have to listen to Sparks' *A Woofer in Tweeter's Clothing*.

In *Ansible* #445, **David Langford** continued to inspire. I'm surprised how frequently I forget that *Ansible* is available as a PDF as well as the Web page. I don't read it often enough. At times, Ansible reminds me of the much-missed *SchNEWS* (https://schnews.org), though your newszine predated—and outlived—it. In any event, I've downloaded the August 2025 ish (#457)—and intend to develop the habit!

Marcin "Alqua" Kłak's *Forged Zine* #1 offered sound advice. "Bored? I could start working on some fannish initiatives. Overworked? Why not try helping at a convention? Sad? Doing something will surely allow you to stop worrying." I'm glad that Smokon eventually came to fruition! I shall have to keep up with *Fandom Rover* and *A~Zyn* more actively. I really enjoyed reading your ideas about con planning—and the neighborhood-inspired logo is breathtaking.

In *OASFiS Event Horizon* Vol. 36 #433, **Juan Sanmiguel** shared a solid example of the Orlando Area Science Fiction Society's newsletter. I got a kick out of seeing Lloyd Penney's presence in the lettercol—and must remember to look for your emails featuring the subject line "New Online Event Horizon" more frequently. While I appreciated the *File 770* reprints, I really look forward to the forthcoming issues of *Analog Science Fiction & Fact*, *Asimov's Science Fiction*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* under their new ownership. I haven't yet seen the July/August 2025 issues promoted on the Web sites of the first two—and online discussion from Kristine Kathryn Rusch and others suggests that Must Read Publishers' contract is problematic. Thankfully, we have other prozines available to us!

Gregory Bridges's *Thought Tangents* for 2024 disambiguated between the faned and other notable Gregory Bridges. I was going to say that doing so is a bit like painting the Gregory Bridges but that's not really true. (My apologies for the callback to *Honcke* #1, but I couldn't help myself.) It's good to see you again. I've received *Memphen* in the mail! (*De Profundis* #591 and #598)

I also enjoyed your differentiation between Big Name Fan, Little Known Fan, and Almost Unknown Fan. We can all aspire, but to which? I wish I'd been aware of Madison, Milwaukee, and Midwest fandom before I left home for college. Now that I'm back in Wisconsin, I've taken tentative steps to plug in but have mostly been checking out cons and other events (for example, the Madison Comic & Pop Culture Expo in early August) rather than hanging out with fen. Maybe that can change soon. Jae Leslie Adams and I plan to meet for coffee in mid-August.

Thank you for sharing the history of MidSouthCon. I often consider taking a more organized approach to exploring fantastic literature and media by reading through the Hugo and Nebula award nominees and winners, exploring a reading list such as *The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society's Recommended Reading List of Speculative Fiction* or *The NESFA Core Reading List of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, or picking a con and making my way through works produced by its guests of honor. One could recreate a con by spending time with each year's guests and program books.

In *How Was It That Chengdu Was Selected for the 2023 Worldcon?*, **Donald E. Eastlake** and **Tim Szczesuil** took a hard look at the site selection process undertaken at DisCon 3 in 2021. I was intrigued by the 1,591 incomplete Chengdu ballots, which "arrived at the last minute in an avalanche of emailed PDFs," and subsequent details—including accusations of racism. Apparently, the right to host a Worldcon can be bought. Perhaps the system is rigged.

Alison Scott and **Valentin D. Ivanov**'s *Glasgow 2024 Instant Fanzine* offered S. van Setten and S. Raine's "Initial observations on the Glasgow specimen of *Linobractea Gigantis Caledonis*, also known as the 'Armadillo' or 'Pillbug.'" I found the paper's details and reasoning compelling and applaud the authors' contribution to science. May attempts to communicate with the Armadillo continue.

I found "A worldcon first-timer's guide to ribbon collecting" quite helpful. In the review of Naomi Kritzer's "Better Living Through Algorithms," (*Clarkesworld* #200, May 2023) I found the following sentence delightful: "Reading is talking to others, except the interlocutors may be separated by thousands of miles and hundreds of years." In the case of WOOF, perhaps even merely a year. Kudos to Scott, Ivanov, Soph Williams, Sophie van Setten, Sam Raine, and Pat Hall for some fine silliness. Thish was awesome.

In *Intermission* #144.5, **Ahrvid Engholm** included

his always-wonderful History Corner, reprinting writing from *Intermission* #143.5, which was distributed in eAPA #242 and N'APA #271. The ABBA piece was reprinted from *Intermission* #144, also included in N'APA #271. I was especially interested in Lars Olsson's *Blixt-Grodon* collection. I seem to have missed Engholm's previous writings about *Blixt-Grodon*—which looks amazing. I shall dig into the back issues!

And **Daniel T. Miller** assured us that *Question Theatre* is "very readable." He wasn't wrong. I enjoyed your brief discussion of the artwork of Edd Cartier, as well as your consideration of the value and importance of program books. While I can understand not wanting to bear the costs of publishing a physical program book, I think that doing away with the practice entirely is a mistake. Email newsletter-style Progress Reports aren't quite the same as the mailed Progress Reports of yore. (They're certainly rarely worth rereading.) And I'd rather see a PDF program book that does all the things a good printed program book does than only a mobile app schedule, which seems to be the approach most cons take these days.

You live near Chicago O'Hare International Airport, so I was in your neck of the woods not too long ago. (*Faculae & Filigree* #44) Do you know Nigel Rowe?

Chicago Tribune, July 29, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #174

Aug. 13, 2025

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Convention Report: Madison Comic and Pop Culture Expo

Last weekend, I spent much of Saturday at the Alliant Energy Center, the site of POPX Madison (*Snow Poster Township* #22). This time, it was for the Madison Comic and Pop Culture Expo (https://madisoncomicexpo.com), a two-day con organized by Nerd Street (https://nerdstreetusa.com), which hosts multiple cons throughout the Midwest and elsewhere. A much larger event than POPX or the Madison Comic Book Convention (*T&T* #167), the con offered an impressive array of vendors selling comic book back issues, self-published comics, and related pop culture items.

The registration line—quite a wait!

Upon arrival, I checked out a couple of back issue vendors, mostly looking for monster magazines and pulps. There were at least two sellers offering such items. One had a handful of pulps and Big Little Books on display, including *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.: The Calcutta Affair*, which I had as a child. The pulps were mostly westerns. Another vendor featured a handful of boxes of black-and-white monster magazines such as *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, as well as Marvel titles; similar fanzines; and related ephemera, but his prices were prohibitively high.

I expressed interest in an unpriced copy of *Shriek!* #3 and offered the vendor $10. In return, he asked for $25. Several issues of *The Tomb of Dracula* were priced surprisingly low, labeled with $4 price tags. When I inquired whether the pricing was accurate, he asked for $15-$35 per issue. Those prices were more in line with his general pricing but were also unreasonable.

Luckily, there were other ways to engage with and enjoy the con. MadExpo attracts a sizable number of science fiction, fantasy, and horror authors from throughout the Midwest—primarily Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota—and there were multiple tables offering self-published and traditionally published speculative fiction. I'd even hazard a guess that there were more authors on hand than self-published comics creators, though that's entirely anecdotal. I could be wrong.

Authors displaying their wares included A.P. Goodman (https://apgoodman.com), Chad Corrie (https://chadcorrie.com), Jeri Shepherd (https://www.redwritesbooks.com), Jody J. Sperling (https://www.jodyjsperling.com), Joe Prosit (https://www.joeprosit.com), John Jackson Miller (https://farawaypress.com), Justin Rose (https://linktr.ee/justin_rose_author), Starr Z. Davies (https://www.starrzdavies.com), John Markestad (https://www.johnmarkestad.com), and others. Much of the writing featured was fantasy, but there was also a good amount of science fiction on display.

John Jackson Miller, writer of media tie-ins

One of the first people I met was Jared Bartemeyer (https://www.aeoniandawn.com), a comic book creator who also wrote a short story included in the Christopher D. Schmitz-edited anthology *Laser Cannons & First Contact*. (https://tinyurl.com/LaserCannons) Bartemeyer helped orient me to the sf

presence at the con before I made too much progress around the exhibitor space.

Nerd Street, which organized the con, also publishes anthologies such as *Otherworldly* Vol. 1 (https://tinyurl.com/OtherworldlyAnthology) featuring authors who exhibit at its shows. Shepherd, another of the authors contributing to such anthologies, helps schedule the programming—which therefore ends up featuring a lot of the participating authors.

In fact, the programming track, while occasionally sparsely attended—perhaps given its location—was relatively impressive in its scope and content. I alternated between meeting and talking with authors in the exhibitor space and attending programming sessions.

The first talk I went to focused on making zines and minicomics. The presenter, a fellow named Birdie (https://www.bunnyvomit.com) from Des Moines, Iowa, mostly focused on the free speech and do-it-yourself production aspects of self-publishing. He's been publishing zines since 1998 and comics since 2003. Designed as an entry point for newcomers, the session was a helpful primer that focused more on the how and why than on the what. While the relationship between zines and comics fandom was implicit (he largely used the terms "zine" and "minicomic" interchangeably), Birdie didn't offer any broader context or history for self-publishing or fanzines. That's okeh. I hope at least one participant decides to make their own zine after the con! As Birdie said, "Someone's going to love what you do."

Birdie

I also checked out "From *Animal House* and *Bring It On* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*," a Q&A with Mark Metcalf and Clare Kramer. Interviewed by Chandler Poling, the two actors shared stories and experiences from their acting careers. Poling did his best to not jump right to *Buffy*, focusing on other aspects of their careers. Metcalf portrayed the Master, a recurring character on *Buffy* and *Angel*. Born in Ohio, his first professional acting job was with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater in 1971. Later in his career, he moved to Bayside, Wis., and worked with the First Stage Children's Theater in Milwaukee. Other genre credits include *Hamlet A.D.D.*, *Playback*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *The Sleeper*, *Teen Angel*, and *The Final Terror*.

Kramer was cast as Glory in *Buffy*. Additional genre credits include *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *The Gravedancers*, *The Thirst*, *Big Ass Spider!*, *Tales of Halloween*, and *Star Trek Continues*. She also did voice work for the *ElfQuest: Journey to Sorrow's End* podcast series. She currently lives in the LA area, in Sherman Oaks, and recently toured the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. She's an enthusiastic fan of Andy Weir, author of *The Martian* and *Project Hail Mary*.

Mid-afternoon, I went to one of the more explicitly science-themed presentations. Drew Brockington, creator of the CatStronauts book series (https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/landing-page/catstronauts), offered an energetic and informative presentation on how NASA missions inform and inspire his graphic novels.

Drew Brockington

Initially self-publishing *Cat-Stronauts in Space* as a 12-page comic book, Brockington—who lives in Minneapolis—began researching space exploration to inform his first graphic novel. (He got the call after tabling at Small Press Expo in Maryland.) He already knew a lot about cats because of his grandmother's pets, but he knew little about space. So Brockington researched the history of NASA, astronaut training—even going to Space Camp in Alabama—rocket construction, analog computers such as those on *Saturn V*, and other topics.

His book *CatStronauts: Space Station Situation*, for

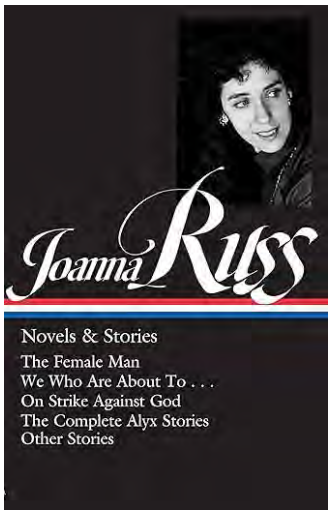
example, was informed by two real-world space initiatives, the Hubble Space Telescope, which launched in 1990, and the Asteroid Redirect Mission. Brockington's presentation also offered tips and tricks from his creative process, including the use of a page geometry guide to assist layouts. His seventh book, *CatStronauts: Cosmic Clutter*, was just recently published, and he's already completed an eighth. There's also a CatStronauts board game available, and Hachette offers online activity kits, including downloadable activity sheets.

Because of the threat of rain (parts of Wisconsin experienced flooding last weekend, but not in our neighborhood)—and wanting to read at home—I left before a two-hour workshop led by Shepherd titled "Create Your Own 1-Page RPG." I hope that's offered again in the future.

Even though MadEx was a professional con rather than a fan-run con—and a comic con, not an sf con—my experience of it was very much that of an sf con. Focusing primarily on book vendors and sf- and fandom-related programming, MadEx felt like an sf con. That was a very cool experience.

From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Female Man and ***We Who Are About To…*** by Joanna Russ (Library of America, 2023)



I didn't make it all the way through the Library of America collection of Joanna Russ's novels and stories before I returned it to the library, but I did read her 1975 novel, *The Female Man*, and the 1976 novella, *We Who Are About To… .*

Both were terrific, and served as an excellent introduction to the work of a writer with whom I was unfamiliar. Originally published as "A Frederik Pohl Selection" by Bantam, *The Female Man* is a slightly complicated but entertaining and thought-provoking novel that balances feminist critique and interdimensional travel to explore the different experiences of four women.

Each of the women featured in the novel have names that begin with the letter "J": Joanna, Jeannine, Janet, and Jael. Janet narrates the book in the first person, and Joanna might represent the author. Her world is similar to Earth in the 1970s while Janet comes from Whileaway, an all-female utopia (the men might have died in a plague) 1,000 years in the future. Jeannine lives in an alternate New York City of 1969 in which the Great Depression never ended and World War II never occurred. And Jael's world, Womanland, is a dystopia in which men and women have been engaged in a war for several decades, occasionally trading in children.

Janet arrives in Jeannine's world, initially presumed to be an alien. They travel to Joanna's world before going to Whileaway and eventually Jael's world. Along the way, various experiences of women are considered and discussed, as are heterosexual and lesbian relationships, alternative family structures, gender roles, sexuality, and other themes. The book is occasionally confusing because sections and chapters change narrators, points of view, times, and worlds. But on the whole, it's an astounding piece of literature. Funny, provocative, and highly recommended.

We Who Are About To…, the second piece in the collection, was serialized in the January and February 1976 issues of *Galaxy* before it was published in book form by Dell a year later. A highly entertaining novella, it turns the traditional approach to space colonization storytelling on its ear. In this story, the colonists don't just fail, they turn on each other. Their enemies aren't aliens, the natives of the world on which they crash—but themselves.

The story is also a feminist critique. The narrator defends herself against an intended rape after the stranded colonists begin to negotiate who will reproduce with whom in order to continue the human race. She doesn't believe that survival is possible, even if the stranded space travelers procreate, and the book challenges preconceived notions of colonization, gender roles, procreation, heroism, and leadership.

Once the threat of rape and apprehension has passed, the story continues, concentrating on the sole survivor's internal monologue, experiences, and starvation as she continues to maintain an audio diary. The drawn-out nature of the story becomes quite chilling. If everything Russ wrote is like these two selections, perhaps everything she wrote is worth reading.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Heretic

This surprisingly effective 2024 movie released by A24—always a good sign—stars Hugh Grant in a delightfully sinister role. It's borderline supernatural horror and stops shy of torture porn, so, while the film is intensely suspenseful, it's not overly cruel or sadistic.

The gist of the flick is that two young women, both Mormon missionaries volunteering for a term of proselytization and service, visit the home of a middle-aged man during a thunder storm. He'd expressed interest in learning more about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Initially seeming like an imprisonment story—perhaps a sort of reverse home invasion movie—the movie becomes a philosophical consideration of which world religion represents the true church. Grant's character compares the succession of prophets such as Moses (Judaism), Jesus (Christianity), and Muhammad (Islam)—and perhaps Joseph Smith (the LDS church)—with different editions of the board game *Monopoly*, which was preceded by *The Landlord's Game*, which was decidedly more antimonopolistic. He also comments on how many religions involve the birth of a notable spiritual figure on or around Dec. 25.

Giving the missionaries a choice between Belief and Disbelief in order to exit his home—which is locked using a clockwork mechanism—he directs them into his cellar. There, a prophet of what might be the true church is held captive. That encounter is also intended to challenge their beliefs in prophetic succession—he supposedly desires witnesses of a miracle, death and resurrection—and their exit from his house is hard earned.

The lighting of the movie is deliciously dark, Grant's character is creepily disarming as heck, the house's clockwork mechanisms and secret passages are interesting, the portrayal of the imprisoned prophet takes inspiration from the unnatural movements and postures of Korean horror, and the philosophical underpinnings of the movie are thought provoking.

But the ending is a bit of a cop out, Chekhov's gun in the extreme. You might not be sure who the Final Girl will be, but in the end, there is just one.

Also watched this week: *Columbo* S3E1, "Lovely but Lethal" (featuring Vincent Price!) and *Peep Show* S1E3, "On the Pull"

Comments on APA-L #3124

While I haven't yet seen *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* yet, I did read the comic books on which it's based (*Space Warp & WOOF* #2025), and Caitlin and I recently saw *Superman*. (*Faculae & Filigree* #45) I look forward to seeing the Fantastic Four movie and recently enjoyed Pablo Pascal in *Prospect*. I'd forgotten that he was in *Game of Thrones*.

In *Vanamonde* #1658, **John Hertz** offered a memorial to Mark Leeper, whose co-edited fanzine *The MT Void* started as a newsletter for the Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society, as Hertz indicated. That society was a science fiction club for employees of Bell Laboratories in New Jersey. "MT" was the mail designation for Bell Labs' Middletown facility. Employees from the Holmdel and Lincroft facilities also participated, and the Leepers continued publishing the fanzine after it was no longer affiliated with Bell Labs.

Where I work, there's a Fantasy Book Club that meets monthly. Members occasionally seek beta readers for their own novel drafts, and recent titles

scheduled for discussion include Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (July 1), Carrie Vaughn's *The Naturalist Society* (July 29), and Robert Jackson Bennett's *The Tainted Cup* (Aug. 26). I am not able to participate in the reading and discussions as often as I'd like, but I'm glad the group exists, just as I'm glad *The MT Void* continued after leaving Bell Labs—and Leeper's death. He'd previously been a member of the UMass Science Fiction Society in Amherst, Mass.

Thank you for mentioning the James Gunn who founded the J. Wayne and Elsie M. Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas. (https://sfcenter.ku.edu) During the school year, the center offers a monthly online discussion of short stories, novellas, and novels, which might be worth checking out. (https://sfcenter.ku.edu/virtual-book-club) If I'd known about the center before our road trip earlier this year, I'd have stopped by on the way to Kansas City!

Caitlin and I toured Taliesin in mid-July, and I met Nigel Rowe while in Chicago for work in early July. (*Faculae & Filigree* #44)

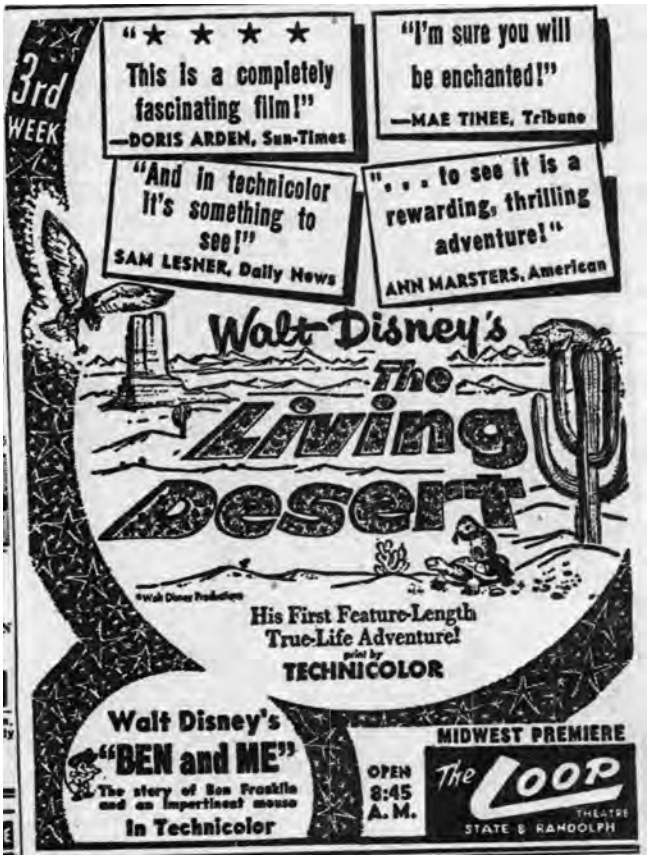
Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #110 skipped straight to mailing comments, which is a rare occurrence but understandable when busy. I'm glad that the draft of *The LASFS Hagiography* is already getting used during meetings. I plan to finish copy editing it and send it to Matthew B. Tepper and Charles Lee Jackson II to solicit their contributions before considering it finalized for meeting use.

If we publish the hagiography for broader circulation, we'll have to do more work on it, and I'm not sure I can commit to that personally. Ideally, patron saints still living would review, amend, update, and approve their individual listings. And Christian B. McGuire has expressed interest in cross-referencing the hagiography against other LASFS lists such as the other Prometheoids, Loscon chairs, and the like to ensure that All the Things are included. We'd want someone to write an introduction, and we'd have to secure a cover. It'd make a pretty nifty publication, but all of that preparation for public use would take more effort than I can commit. I'll at least see a Meeting Version to completion.

You liked the movie *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* better than the comic books on which it was based? Harrumph. And *Watchmen*, too? Double harrumph. Sure, the later Watchmen comics aren't as good as the original by Alan Moore, but the movie better than the mid-1980s comic? To each their own.

Wow: An 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift at a gas station. Such is the stuff of stories and cinema. I've never worked retail, but I have worked vendor tables at conventions. Such experiences include tabling with Highwater Books at the San Diego Comic-Con in the late 1990s and helping Gavin Claypool at the LASFS book table during Loscon.

And in *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #84, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** reported progress on the mailing and digitization fronts. In early August, she emailed me a scanned PDF of #3125 that looks great—so I hope she's past the worst of the troubleshooting. I look forward to updating our online archives with your distributions! I can also compress the files if we find that they're too large.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 8, 1954

I've now finished writing biographical sketches of all the current patron saints. Those have been collected into a draft Meeting Version of *The LASFS Hagiography*, which will be used during meetings when members don't remember much about the saints of the week. As mentioned above, we'll consider preparing a public version of the hagiography as a publication.

While I haven't yet identified when the patron saints were first recognized, I suspect that it was around the time of Bruce Pelz and his active fundraising for the Building Fund. In *Profanity* #11 (January 1976), Pelz writes:

> Then I sat around working on the LASFS Patron Saint signs. LASFS has a system in which donors to the Building Fund get certificates when their donations reach $20 (Associate Friend of LASFS), $50 (Supporting Friend), and $150 (Patron Friend—which also gets you lifetime rights to regular LASFS publications, and your name on an engraved placque of Patron Friends). When they reach $500, you get an individual placque and a meeting-of-the-year in your honor as a Patron Saint of LASFS. We have a large signboard which declared that Meeting ____ is officially St. ____ 's Day, and I, as Corporation Treasurer, get to keep track of the Patron Saint Days, making sure the signboard goes up, with the right name and the number of the meeting. We have 10 Patron Saints so far, and I'd finished only a few of the name-signs. One of the unfinished ones would be needed for the evening LASFS meeting, so I decided to finish the lot. I got through #7, using 2" peel-off letters, and discovered I needed two more apostrophes and one more complete name.

Ratatosk #43 indicates that the Building Fund was started in 1963. *Profanity* #13 (August 1977) reports:

> [A]fter six or seven years, it became quite obvious that quite a few individuals could be parted with more than $150, and there ought to be a Level higher than Patron Friend. One of our Elder Statesmen, who has been a member since the 30's, Dave Fox, came up with the name: Patron Saint of LASFS.

Six or seven years after 1963 would place that around 1970. By the publication of *Profanity* #13, there were 14 Patron Saints. I'll continue to look for the earliest references to the patron saints—somewhere in 1969-1970, perhaps. But it was after the late 1950s, and we can credit Dave Fox (*T&T* #57, and in the hagiography) for the name!

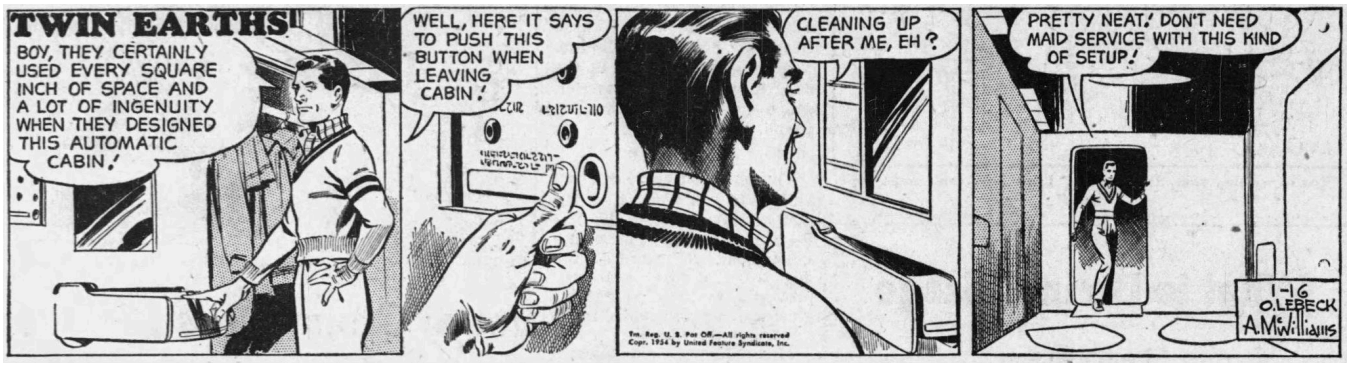
You should have everyone's email addresses (when available) in the APA-L Participants Roster I sent you. I've emailed it to you again just in case!

Comic Strip Club

While gathering movie advertisements for thish, I encountered a comic strip that I'd never seen before: *Twin Earths*. Written by Oskar Lebeck and drawn by Alden McWilliams, it was published between 1952 and 1963, distributed by United Feature Syndicate.

Here are the Jan. 15-16, 1954, strips published in the *Chicago Tribune*. I'll have to learn—and read—more!

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 15, 1954



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 16,1954

The Talk Merchant #2

Aug. 13, 2025

The Talk Merchant is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; +1 718 755-9840 mobile; +1 323 916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-V and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Experimenting with Audio

Having recently listened to a couple of *Doctor Who* full-cast audio dramas produced by Big Finish (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #152) and currently in the midst of an Audible recording of William King's Gotrek and Felix Warhammer novel *Trollslayer*, I've been looking for shorter genre-related audio recordings to listen to during my daily walks to and from work. (15 minutes each way!) I've been looking for options that aren't necessarily an ongoing story or an audiobook—and are more recent than old-time radio, which tends to be my default.

In *T&T* #130, I explored the state of speculative audio drama and listed a bunch of sf-related podcasts that I hadn't yet listened to, but I've spent very little time exploring shorter recorded works. Not too long ago, I took a run at Old School Renaissance roleplaying game podcasts such as *The Redcaps* (https://www.theredcaps.net), reaffirming that I don't seem to enjoy podcasts in which people just, well, talk. So, during a bout of late-night wakefulness last weekend, I looked into what genre-oriented podcasts that focus more on readings were available through my iPod's Podcasts app.

Several of the podcasts I found I'd previously listed in *T&T* #130: *Clarkesworld Magazine*, *Lightspeed Magazine*, and *Simultaneous Times*. I also became aware of several new options:

Apex Magazine Podcast
https://apex-magazine.com/category/podcast
While there hasn't been a new episode since 2023, if you haven't been listening, there are 100 episodes available.

Asimov's Science Fiction
https://asimovs.com/more-stuff/podcasts
With the change in publisher, contract controversies, and delayed new issues, there hasn't been an update to this podcast since May, but there's still plenty to explore.

Beneath Ceaseless Skies
https://www.beneath-ceaseless-skies.com/audio
This podcast series offers new episodes once or twice a month.

khōréō magazine
https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/khoreo-magazine-3790411
Audio versions of stories published in the magazine are presented between one and three times a month.

Uncanny Magazine
https://www.uncannymagazine.com/type/podcasts
Each episode features several items from a recent issue of the magazine.

Chicago Tribune, July 29, 1955

There are also a couple intriguing short story-related podcasts that aren't related to a current prozine or semiprozine.

Classic Science Fiction Stories
https://www.spreaker.com/podcast/classic-science-fiction-stories--5182827
The Sol Good Network offers a story a day.

Science Fiction—Daily Short Stories
https://open.spotify.com/show/7lWwL4gxw5jZeWHTMPSIOO
Another similar daily effort from the Sol Good Network

What I'm looking for are podcasts that are self contained and between 15-30 minutes in length. While the *Lightspeed* and *Uncanny* options are on the longer side, many of the above fit the bill. I recently listened to two examples.

The May 9, 2025, episode of the *Asimov's* podcast featured Misha Lenau's short story "Cryptid or Your Money Back," which was published in the March-April 2025 issue of the magazine. Read by the author, it's a brief tale that draws similarities between gender identification and cryptozoology. It doesn't go as far as Isabel Fall's "I Sexually Identify as an Attack Helicopter" but inspires comparison. I didn't find Lenau's reading that compelling—not all writers are good readers, not that Lenau was bad—and am curious whether I'd enjoy reading the story more.

While walking to work early this week, I listened to that day's episode of *Classic Science Fiction Stories*, which featured Lester del Rey's short story "Dead Ringer." Originally published under the title "The Dwindling Years," the story first appeared in the January 1956 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction*. At first, I thought the story might have been read by a synthesized voice, but I'm not sure. The diction of the narration was awfully consistent, but character dialogue didn't feel as synthetic.

Regardless, I think *Classic Science Fiction* and similar, reading-oriented podcasts might be up my alley. They feature classic and current sf stories, are the right length for my pedestrian commute and similar listening opportunities—in between and on the way—and offer an invitation to read the story after I've listened to it. I've already procured a copy of that issue of *Galaxy*, and I'm pretty sure that issue of *Asimov's* is available at the library.

From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Coding Humans: A New Moon by Jonathan David (False Reality, 2025)

This short story, the first in a series of eight, is available in two print formats: a 36-page chapbook and a 225-page minibook that's smaller than a deck of cards, Shambhala Pocket Library editions, or the Hanuman Books series. (Apparently, it's also included in Jonathan David's 758-page *Timewaves* omnibus!)

I read the story in the chapbook and minibook editions to compare the reading experiences. While the chapbook was an easier, almost breezy read, the minibook is a tidy little item, lending itself to a slower, more focused reading experience. The editions' type sizes are roughly the same, and the minibook can easily fit in a shirt pocket, making it an optimal format for reading while in transit.

Content wise, *A New Moon* is an explicitly fictional retelling of Zecharia Sitchin's ancient alien theories as espoused in books such as 1976's *The 12th Planet* and other titles. Starting in 4.5 billion BCE, the story details the arrival of a spacecraft turned artificial satellite sent to terraform Earth. It references the arrival of the satellite; planetary impact theory and the separation of the supercontinent Pangaea; colonization by alien astronauts (hybrid forms infused with "tranoquarts"), the Anunnaki; the construction of the pyramids in Egypt; and other events, speculative and otherwise. It's an effective summary of pseudoscientific theories that have been challenged and debunked by astronomers and historians.

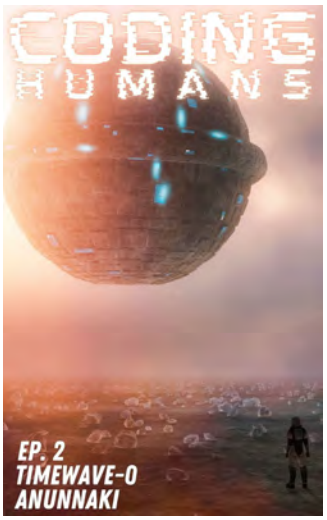
The writing feels more like a story treatment than fiction itself because the prose is primarily descriptive in its narration, lacking characters and dialogue. Regardless, it's not badly written. At times, the story reminded me of Arthur C. Clarke retelling the Book of Genesis, or if J.R.R. Tolkien had written *The Silmarillion* but not *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*.

Jonathan David is the first Madison-based author I met after moving back to Wisconsin. Writing using a pen name and working as a STEM tutor, he lives on the isthmus and tables at various events on the capitol square. An audiobook version of this series is available at https://castbox.fm/channel/Ancient-Astronauts–Anunnaki-Origins-id5289525, and you can learn more about David's work at https://madisonmurdermysteries.com.

Coding Humans: The Anunnaki by Jonathan David (False Reality, 2025)

I read the minibook edition of this book, the second in the Coding Humans series. The volume continues the

story begun in *A New Moon* above, even maintaining the chapter numbering; the book begins with chapter seven. *The Anunnaki* introduces the concept of the planet Nibiru, also known as Planet X, continuing to draw on the ancient alien theories of Zecharia Sitchin.



Diverging from a fictional summary of Sitchin's theories, Jonathan David incorporates the hypothetical planet Theia, speculated to have collided with the proto-Earth, Gaia, to alter our planet's surface and form the moon. Maintaining his descriptive narration largely devoid of characters or dialogue, David tells the tale of the Anunnaki sending their synthetic satellite back in time to thwart the giant impact.

The story details the orbit of Nibiru; its effect on the Anunnaki living on it—or in it—another hypothetical planet, Phaeton; the characteristics of the fictional tranoquarticles; and units of time such as the slice and nanoslice. It also introduces David's first characters: Adamah, the leader of the Anunnaki, who dies shortly after his first appearance; and the physicists Abaddon and Yeshua, who do not.

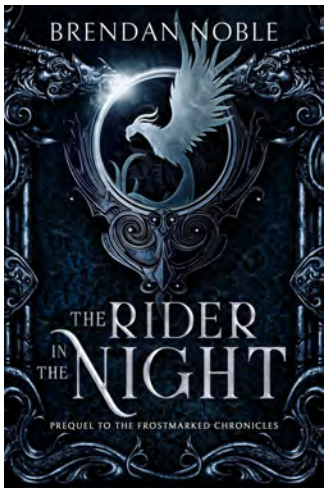
While I am fascinated by David's approach to serial writing, audiobooks, publishing, and book packaging (and repackaging)—everything seems oriented toward the author's subscription-based Fiction Fan Club—I might appreciate a more traditional approach to serialized fiction.

Regardless, it's interesting stuff: a fictional treatment of Sitchin's ancient alien theories, as well as a synthesis of speculative astronomy. (There are so many opportunities for further reading and research!) I look forward to seeing where David takes the series.

The Rider in the Night by Brendan Noble (Eight-One-Five, 2021)

Brendan Noble, who lives in Rockford, Ill., is one of the authors I met at the Madison Comic and Pop Culture Expo. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #174) This 113-page novella is a prequel to the Frostmarked Chronicles, which currently features seven books, including five novels, this novella, and another "optional side-story."

Perhaps inspired by his Polish and German-American heritage, Noble's epic fantasy fiction draws on Slavic mythology. One of the pantheons featured in this book includes Slavic gods such as Marzanna, Dziewanna, Jarylo, and others. Noble offers a pronunciation guide to the names of characters and gods alike, as well as other terms, before the story begins.



The novella is a compelling read, and the Slavic aspects are intriguing. A week before the spring equinox, the protagonist, a young indentured soldier, encounters two travelers seeking safe passage for their people through the lands of his liege. Gods are invoked often—and occasionally intervene in mortal affairs. There are demons (aspids, ovinniks, and zmory) and sorceresses (szeptuchy) lurking in the woods. And our hero ventures from his home village to a distant region in order to seek military assistance during the Drowning of Marzanna, a celebration of the equinox. You can even refer to a map in the front of the book to follow his progress.

Noble's writing is strong, his characters are interesting and worth following, and the challenges they face are exciting, as well as numinous. Even though I purchased this particular book because it was smaller and would better fit in my bag at the con, I look forward to reading more of the series. The prologue and first chapter of *A Dagger in the Winds*, the first book in the series, are included at the end of this book to help pull readers forward.

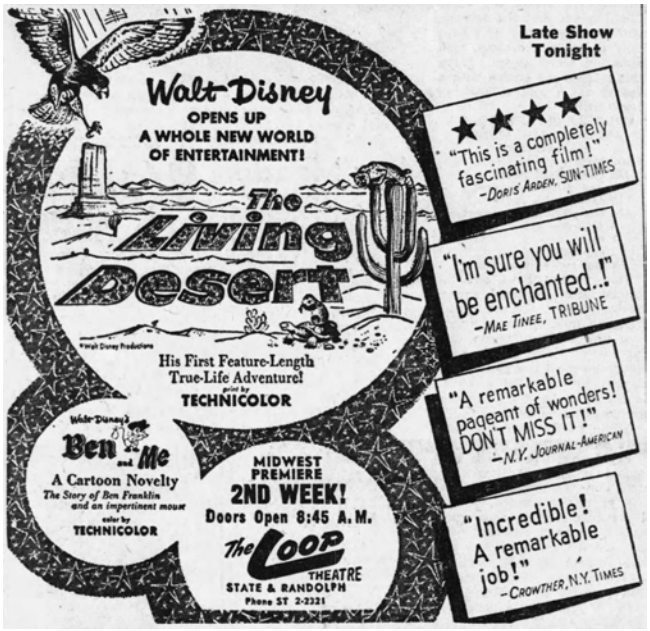
You can learn more about Noble and his writing at https://brendan-noble.com. The blog, Slavic Saturday, is especially interesting. Its posts concentrate on Slavic mythology, folklore, and history.

Comments on APA-V #69

In the OO, *Revenant*, our illustrious OC Nic Farey described me as "the World's Greatest Apahack." I'm not sure that's true, but it's certainly flattering. That could go one of two ways. Personally, I prefer Lynn Anderson's 1968 country song, "Flattery Will Get You Everywhere." On the other hand, Miss Moneypenny would disagree: "Flattery will get you nowhere, but don't stop trying." I also appreciate the May Menu's approach to tracking minac. The color highlighting and checkmarks are very clear indicators of where contributors stand.

In *Faster Than Spinach* #3, **Nic Farey** discussed his caffeine intake and mentioned Lee Ermey's drill instruction role in *The Boys in Company C*. That reminded me of Mark Metcalf's appearance at the Madison Comic and Pop Culture Expo (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #174). Following his role as ROTC officer Douglas C. Neidermeyer in *National Lampoon's Animal House*, Metcalf went on to appear in several Twisted Sister music videos: "We're Not Gonna Take It," "I Wanna Rock," and the compilation *Twisted Sister: Come Out and Play*. All are worth watching.

Thank you for mentioning Don West's *Fanzines in Theory and in Practice*, which is available among the TransAtlantic Fan Fund's Free Ebooks. (https://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=FITAIP) I look forward to reading it.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 1, 1954

Your mention of your mother's Sunday roast reminded me of the once important Sunday dinner—and the rooms in which one eats. While growing up, my parents had an entire living room and dining room that were dedicated to holidays, family events, and entertaining company (like bridge club and elderly relatives). We didn't even really have that large or luxurious a home, but we spent most of our time in the "family room"—effectively the functional living room, complete with a fireplace, stereo, and television. My father had his recliner. My mother had her seat on the couch. My sister and I usually sat on the floor. We ate in a smaller dining room between the family room and the kitchen. We ate most Sunday dinners in that everyday dining room, devoting the more formal dining room to holiday meals such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Two meals a year. Otherwise, that dining room went unused.

Our house in Culver City, Calif., was much smaller than my childhood home in the Midwest (again, even that wasn't that large), but we also had two functional living rooms. One we called the living room. It was an open-plan dining room and living room with a fireplace, bookshelves, and art on the wall. We made a point not to have the TV in the living room because we didn't want it to be the focal point. We also don't have a TV in the bedroom, because there are more important things to do in the bedroom.

The TV was in the TV room, which I also called the living room and sometimes the family room. Old habits die hard. Caitlin rarely knew what room I meant, but it was the room with the TV, the stereo, and more bookshelves. We'd usually eat in the dining room adjoining the living room, and sometimes on TV trays in the TV room—when we wanted to watch something while we ate (or eat while we watched something, depending on the priority).

These days, we eat on TV trays all the time, even if we're not watching TV. Our furnished apartment, the Infernal Wilson, is small and offers no dining table. There are two smaller coffee tables, but they're too low for eating when you sit on the couch. So, no special Sunday dinner in the Infernal Wilson—unless we go out.

Growing up, I ate my share of frozen TV dinners, but I'd never heard of the Vesta freeze-dried meals. I did eat freeze-dried food while camping and backpacking. Mountain House's Beef Stroganoff with Noodles in a pouch is a culinary delight after an active day outside.

The other night, we ate dinner at the Mediterranean Joint near the Infernal Wilson. That's what the restaurant is called. You order at the counter, and the food is brought to your table. My falafel roll was surprisingly good—not your run-of-the-mill falafel—and priced accordingly. I've always considered falafel to be cheap eats. When I lived on Magazine Street in Cambridge, Mass., there was a falafel joint (not its name) on the corner nearby. It looks like it's no longer there. The falafel there was much less expensive.

Kris Ayer's *Twiddles* #2 extolled the benefits of cryptocurrency, but I think they were mostly writing about the blockchain—until they turned their attention specifically to cryptocurrency itself. I'm a crypto skeptic but think blockchain technology has promise and potential. I've never gone on a cruise and have little interest in large cruise ships, though I quite like the idea of a riverboat or Great Lakes cruise. In Madison, you can go on pontoon boat cruises of the nearby lakes. Some even feature ice cream.

In *Brownian Motion* #3, **Garth Spencer** mentioned participating in two apae collation meetings via Zoom. Which apae were they for? I'm glad you were able to participate in Fran Skene's memorial service and celebration of life. Kudos on your 100th blood donation! By now, you've gone camping—outfitted in Temu finery. What was that like?

Thank you for listing the National Fantasy Fan Federation's nominees for the N3F Laureate Awards. I seem to have secured the Laureate for Best Fan Writer, receiving a certificate in the mail in recent weeks. Even if I was the sole nominee, I might not have won, I suppose. Given my prolific publishing, Most Fan Writer might be an award worth considering.

I shall have to make your dish, Cheese Louise. Who's Louise? "No wonder many people started to take their health care into their own hands," you wrote. Do people do that? Are there home surgeries? Amateur and hobbyist physicians? Might be a good side hustle for carpenters and automobile mechanics. (I think there's a story in that idea.)

I was also intrigued by your suggestion that education is merely conditioning for bureaucratic routine and the warehousing of youth until they can be legally employed. That's pretty standard critique but perhaps also the fodder for a story. What if students were being conditioned for something else? (If military service, then we have *Ender's Game*.) What if the warehouses are actually stockyards?

Your joke about the weather in the maritime provinces reminded me of a joke about the weather in New England, generally credited to Mark Twain: "If you don't like New England weather, wait a few minutes." Apparently, people make the same joke in Wisconsin. Since moving back, one of the things I appreciate is that there's more variety to the weather—over the course of the week, as well as over the course of the day. A rain squall can just pass through. In southern California, the weather, though generally lovely, was sometimes oppressively consistent. And if the weather took a turn for the worse, it hung around a while.

In response to Cora Silva, you wrote, "You realize that the structure your kids were playing on was a pentagram, don't you?" There's another story idea: children mucking about on a pentagram scrawled on the floor. Your reference to a "condensed library-in-a-box" struck a chord with me. When we were in Door County recently, we visited a lighthouse museum. I learned that when lighthouses were staffed by keepers, before automation, there were indeed traveling libraries. The U.S. Lighthouse Board sent portable lighthouse bookcases to lighthouses for the keepers and their families. (https://www.beachcombingmagazine.com/blogs/news/lighthouse-libraries)

The boxes—somewhat similar to the patrol boxes used by Scouts—contained about 50 books, including a mix of history, fiction, poetry, and scientific works. According to museum signage, "[t]he books were carefully chosen based on 'a good standard' appropriate for the families who would read them." By 1888, 550 such libraries were in circulation.

While the books on display might not all have actually been included in such a portable library, titles above include William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring*, a satirical fantasy published in 1855. There's also a children's series book, Laura Lee Hope's 1924 *The Bobbsey Twins and Baby May*. The libraries would be swapped out every three months or so and fell out of use in the late 1920s as radio and telephones became more widely adopted.

A 2023 *StackExchange* discussion thread features a list of books that have been taken into space by astronauts. Titles include:

- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams—taken by astronaut Michael Foale to the Russian space station *Mir* in 1997 and Samantha Cristoforetti on the *Expedition 42* mission in 2014
- *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells—taken by astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the *Apollo 11* mission in 1969
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Arthur C. Clarke—taken by astronaut Frank Borman on the *Apollo 8* mission in 1968
- *Dune* by Frank Herbert—taken by astronaut Koichi Wakata on the Space Shuttle *Discovery* in 1994
- *The Martian* by Andy Weir—taken by astronaut Tim Peake on the International Space Station in 2016
- *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe—taken by astronaut Robert Gibson on the Space Shuttle *Atlantis* in 1991
- *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne—taken by astronaut Terry Virts to the International Space Station in 2015
- *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells—taken by astronaut William Pogue on the *Skylab 4* mission in 1973
- *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* by Robert A. Heinlein—taken by astronaut Michael Collins on the *Apollo 11* mission in 1969
- *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells—taken by astronaut Shannon Lucid on the Space Shuttle *Atlantis* in 1996
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien—taken by astronaut Clay Anderson on the International Space Station in 2007

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 1, 1954

I got a kick out of your exchange with the person who asked if you had read Ayn Rand. "Yes, but I got better." An excellent rejoinder.

Ross Chamberlain's *Vegas Notion* #40 remarked on the increasing difficulty he experiences avoiding the awareness of current events. I feel your pain. I haven't been reading the news on a daily basis lately, and returned to doing so a couple of mornings this week. I found it alarmingly easy to spend an hour-plus reading the news—and found the experience upsetting.

The National Guard has been deployed in Washington, D.C., despite decreasing crime—after a former DOGE staff member nicknamed "Big Balls" was carjacked by two 15 year olds. Texas Republicans plan to redraw the state's congressional districts to eliminate Democratic districts. (Reportedly, California plans to do the same, targeting Republican seats, so there's that. Harvard economist Roland Fryer recommends implementing the Relative Proximity Index.) A COVID-19 vaccine protester shot up the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention headquarters in Atlanta.

I need to find a way to remain informed—and politically active and involved—while not spending so much of every day feeling disenchanted, worried, appalled, or alarmed. As I quipped to my wife before walking to work, "I'm off to be productive and act like everything's normal!" I am tired of being governed by the willfully ignorant and people who are Bad at Their Jobs or want to destroy the very agencies they lead. Seeking the blisses and blandishments of youth is an understandable response to the state of the world. So I apahack!

In *My Affair with Food* #3, **Stephanie Zachar** considered the role food plays in movies such as *The Godfather*. In addition to your list of favorites, I'd recommend *Repo Man*; *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*; *Soylent Green*; *Delicatessen*; *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*; *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*; *My Dinner with Andre*; *Pink Flamingos*; *The Stuff*; *The Menu*; and *Creepshow*. One should also read Stephen King's *Thinner*. Jody J. Sperling's short story "Timepperware Complete Kitchen" is also a hoot and a half. I found the typeface you chose to be somewhat difficult to read, especially once I reached the mailing comments. There's no need to change it on my account, though; I'll manage!

John Wesley Hardin's *Liminal* #3 reported on using generative artificial intelligence to create a constructed language. I was amused that Dalosh included "seven different negation particles … but no explicit way to say 'yes… .'" If the language can be decoded, I could see its use in a roleplaying game. Otherwise, it feels like something well suited for a fantasy novel, perhaps quotations from religious texts.

Thank you for mentioning the Saxon song "Sixth Form Girls." I shall listen to it! (I shall also have to check out the recordings in Heavy Rotation.) Your experience "cruising through the Indian Ocean full of bioluminescent plankton on a moonless summer night" reminded me of a moonlight swim near Woods Hole, Mass. That experience was amazing.

Jacqueline Monahan's *All Jacq'd Up… Again!* dated May 2025 compared a stovetop milk steamer to a Dalek. "Pasteurizate! Pasteurizate!" I know it'd be "pasteurize," but that doesn't have quite the same ring to it. You mentioned asbestos. I was this week old when I learned that asbestos was used for visual effects in *The Wizard of Oz*. The artificial snow in the poppy field scene, for example, was white chrysotile asbestos.

Congratulations on your recent retirement! It's now been several months since that ish, and I'm curious how you're finding the life change. I find out whether I've been approved for my employer's Voluntary Exit Program midweek; if I make the cut, I'll go on strike in mid-October or so. I appreciate your recommendation of the Ticonderoga #2. Stephen King swore by the Blackwing 602, which is no longer produced. The closest you can get—unless you buy antique pencils—is the Palomino Blackwing 602.

In *Krill Joy* dated May 2025, **Jen Farey** expressed an appreciation for Hagen-Renaker pottery from Monrovia, Calif. I think you'd share common interests with some friends of mine! I hope you some day find a copy of Robert Cremer's *Lugosi: The Man Behind the Cape*. I just checked to see whether Larry Edmunds Bookshop (https://www.larryedmunds.com) in Hollywood, my go-to for such things, has it in stock; they do not.

Cora Silva's *Ramble Bramble* #3 applauded the art exhibits at her local library. Your photographs of the pieces of art, as well as the display created by the Lego Users Group of Southern Nevada, were wonderful. I didn't take any pictures, but at work, there were multiple framed pieces of abstract Lego art displayed on the wall along the walkway near my desk. A colleague removed the installation Monday. Meanwhile, a friend of mine runs a Lego store nearby.

Your inclusion of Green Day and David Crowder Band song lyrics—as well as Hardin's reference to Saxon above—reminded me that I made a playlist last ish. I don't think I'll do the same thish, but perhaps I'll return to the idea in the future. O Molossia!

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 8, 1954

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #175

Aug. 21, 2025

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Con Report: Egocon

Last Saturday, I drove about an hour and a half north to Plover, Wis., a village with a population of about 13,000, near Stevens Point. My destination: the Springville Sports Barn, a sports bar and function hall, for Egocon: The Next reGeneration (https://sites.google.com/site/egoconevent). Egocon is a one-day con organized by members of the Northeastern Wisconsin Friends of the Doctor, a *Doctor Who* club that's been active since 1982. NEWFOD publishes the newsletter *Tales of Rassilon*. (https://sites.google.com/site/egoconevent/tor-aka-tales-of-rassilon), and members are "interested in practically everything."

I joined NEWFOD upon arrival in the Midwest and have already received the two most recent issues of *Tales of Rassilon* in the mail from Paulette Imhoff, who organizes Egocon. We exchanged emails before the event and met at the registration table after my scenic drive, which included intense, hard rain south of Plover. Visibility was poor for that part of the trip, and traffic was going 40 miles per hour in a 70 mph zone. I was glad to reach my destination.

Joe Thorp's Dalek Thay

Egocon is a relatively small, cozy affair. As the schedule pamphlet indicated, "People assume time is a strict procession of cause to effect, but actually from a nonlinear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly wobbly timey wimey stuff. Or on Earth know[n] as SCA time. (aka—subject to last minute changes)" Imhoff used the phrase "SCA time" in conversation; it wasn't until I saw it in print that I realized it meant "Society for Creative Anachronism time." (I wondered who Scott was!) While not quite a relaxacon, Egocon was pretty chill.

Jason Belter, who coordinates Paizo Organized Play in Wisconsin, ran several *Starfinder* games. There were three or four players at the table most of the time. Dave Duca, an announcer for WOCO AM-FM in Oconto, offered information about ham radio. Peggy McDowell, one of the vendors—and creator of the game *Elegy to the Abyss* (https://foxandfelicity.com/shop/board-games/elegy-to-the-abyss)—gave an informal talk on ghosts and spirits while reclining on a couch in the corner. And a youth dance troupe from Pittsville performed several routines.

Jason Belter and *Starfinder*

Multiple vendors displayed their wares around the perimeter of the hall. Rod's Collectibles proved the most promising, and I found several issues of *Files Magazine* from the mid-1980s; *Files* was published in Canoga Park, Calif. He also had a couple of *Battlestar Galactica* fanzines (*Purple & Orange?* in particular) and the James Van Hise-edited *The Best of Enterprise Incidents*. I also met Maggie Thompson, former editor of *Comics Buyer's Guide* and *Fantasy Empire*, as well as a long-standing sf and comics fan, near his table.

I found a *Red Dwarf* T-shirt that fit me at the PAW's Creations table, where I met a fan from

Minneapolis. And Carol's Collectibles offered a range of items from her personal collection, including large bins of *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, and other video tapes, some recorded off television. At the end of the con, I picked up about 15 *Star Trek*-related audio cassettes, mostly copies of various books on tape, along with another *Files* back issue.

A definite highlight of the day was NEWFOD's 36th annual charity auction, which raised money for PBS Wisconsin and a food pantry in Stevens Point. Led by Adam Netzler, the auction included an incomplete K-9 kit, several very impressive quilts, small Dalek cakes, a number of gift baskets, and other items. Between the auction and the door prizes, pretty much everyone could walk away a winner.

Maggie Thompson and other Egocon members

I took a break from the hall in the early afternoon to eat lunch at the adjacent sports bar. They were doing brisk business, even delivering orders to the con, and I enjoyed a cheeseburger with fries and a Coke. Talking to my parents the next day, the location might have been the site of a cousin's wedding reception when I was a teenager. The function hall features a disco ball and wood-panel dance floor, so I might very well have been there before.

Imhoff kindly invited me to join her and others for dinner after the con, but I had a drive ahead of me and wanted to get through any further rain before dark. I also wanted to return to watching *Doctor Who*. If a con makes me want to read or watch something, it's a good con. Egocon was a very good con. I'll return!

Comic Strip Club: *Twin Earths*

Unlike the buildup promoting the debut of the *Buck Rogers, 2429 A.D.* comic strip in *The Pomona Progress Bulletin* in 1929 (*T&T* #121), there was little fanfare leading up to the introduction of the 1952- 1963 comic strip *Twin Earths*—at least in the *Chicago Tribune*, then titled the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. During the week before its premiere on June 16, 1952, slight tease lines appeared above other comic strips on Friday and Saturday, and there was a single advertisement promoting the strip the Sunday before it began:

Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1952

Regardless, *Twin Earths* was a welcome addition to the funny pages, with a Sunday strip joining the daily on March 1, 1953. The Sunday strips featured different stories from the dailies, even focusing on different characters. It was not a continuation of the daily strip despite the relationship.

Written by Oskar Lebeck and drawn by Alden McWilliams, the strip was distributed by United Feature Syndicate. Born in Germany in 1903, Lebeck worked in stage design, moving on to industrial design after his relocation to the United States. He also wrote and illustrated children's books.

Hired as an art director and managing editor by

Racine, Wis.-based Western Publishing in 1938 to establish the line of Dell comic books, Lebeck led the company's New York editorial office. Key hires under his management included Walt Kelly, who created Pogo while there, and John Stanley, whose Little Lulu soon appeared in comic books.

Lebeck left Western in 1949, continuing to work as a consultant. In semi-retirement, he enlisted artist Alden McWilliams, with whom he'd worked before, to develop *Twin Earths*. McWilliams's comics career started assisting Lyman Young on *Tim Tyler's Luck*. McWilliams also illustrated for pulps such as *Clues Detective Stories* and *Flying Aces* before moving on to comic books for Dell such as *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* and *Star Trek*—where he met Lebeck.

In *Yandro* #100 (May 1961), Dean Grennell of Fond du Lac, Wis. (*Space Warp & WOOF* #2025), wrote about McWilliams, saying, "Science fiction fans will recognize the name as that of an occasional illustrator in the s-f mags as well as the artist for a short-lived s-f comic strip called 'Twin Earths.' McWilliams was a pretty fair-to-middling draftsman and his pen and ink work had a clean, sure quality I've always liked."

Andrew Darlington described the content of the strip in *The Mentor* #82 (April 1994):

> The *Twin Earths* picture strip serial was an American newspaper reprint written with considerable imaginative flair by Oskar Lebeck with art from Alden McWilliams. The story involves a boy from Earth carried by Flying Saucers to the Moon where he is temporarily trapped within underground caverns, only to be rescued by robot "spiders," and eventually taken to the alien's home world which—like John Norman's Gor, occupies Earth's orbit but is located on the far side of the sun and is hence undetectable.

Ron L. Clarke, publisher of *The Mentor*, was an avid reader of the strip, which suggests it was also syndicated in Australia. (Page Publications reprinted the strip down under in the 1960s.) A classified advertisement in *The Fantasy Collector* #122 (February 1969) indicates that fen such as Bob C. Giles in Canada were also reading and collecting the strip, but I can find little discussion of *Twin Earths* in fanzines while the strip was in print.

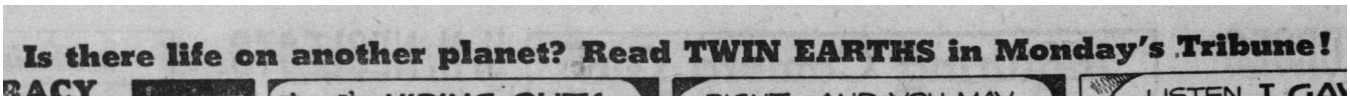
Lebeck retired from the strip in 1957 and McWilliams took over its writing. The Sunday strip ended Dec. 28, 1958, and the dailies continued until May 25, 1963.

Dragon Lady Press published one issue of *Science Fiction Classics* reprinting the strip in 1987. Several years later, in 1990, R. Susor Publications published at least eight issues of *Twin Earths* reprints. That series reprinted material up to early 1960 but did not complete the run. Susor also published five issues of *Twin Earths Sunday Pages* in 1990-1991 and a *Twin Earths Special Edition* in 1993. Additional reprints have been reported in United's *Tip Top Comics*, as well as in England.

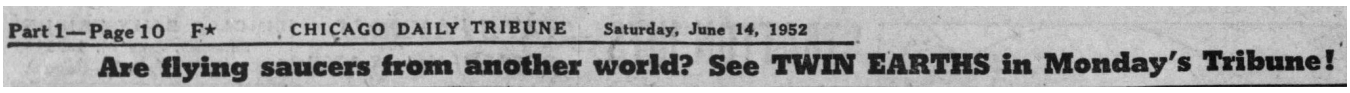
In Susor's Letter from the Editor in the first issue of reprints, he wrote:

> *Ask any fan of Twin Earths and they will tell you that this is not just another "space opera" such as Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon, but was done with a very "realistic" presentation in mind. The characters which populated this strip all had very real and intriguing interpersonal relationships with each other. This was very unique for a comic strip of that time period.*
>
> *Although many people regarded it as just another science fiction strip, with it's main theme being the "flying saucers", I think that when you examine this strip over it's almost eleven year run, you will see that it is also a great espionage thriller. It is this thread of espionage which runs through the entire strip and greatly helps deliver the realism it was noted for. After all, most of the strips main characters were either spys or on the periphery of the spy world. This also dovetailed with the "world politics" of both Terra and Earth and their leaders and peoples' concerns with both internal and external threats as they perceived them.*

The Susor reprints were published to commemorate the strip's 40th anniversary. We're now nearing its 75th—and *Twin Earth* remains worth reading.



Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1952



Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 16, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 17, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 18, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 19, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 20, 1952

Chicago Tribune, June 21, 1952

While visiting long-time Madison fan Hank Luttrell's 20th Century Books (https://www.southparkbooks.com) after a company picnic early this week, I found two reprint volumes of *Twin Earths*: Dragon Lady Press's *Science Fiction Classics* #1 and Susor's *Twin Earths* #2. They were the first items to draw my attention, and their presence was a pleasant surprise.

Science Fiction Classics #1 reprints the strip from its beginning. In the issue's 75 pages, the run from June 13, 1952, to May 23, 1953, is included—pretty much the first year of dailies. Kean Crowe's introduction suggests that *Twin Earths* "may very well be the best illustrated SF strip ever."

While a second issue was planned, the reprint series doesn't seem to have continued past its debut. Regardless, Dragon Lady reprinted other notable strips in periodicals such as *Classic Adventure Strips*—which reprinted *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*—and *Thrilling Adventure Strips*, as well as other volumes, including Jack Kirby and Wally Wood's *Sky Masters of the Space Force*.

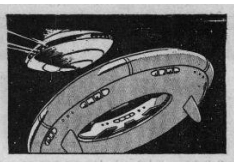
Twin Earths #2 features 80 pages of strip reprints between May 25, 1953, and May 29, 1954, picking up where *Science Fiction Classics* left off. That's fortuitous! A page-long biographical sketch of McWilliams and a Letter from the Editor penned by Susor precede the reprints. In addition to the daily reprints, Susor also reprinted the Sundays in a separate title, as mentioned above.

Interestingly, Susor was based in Las Vegas. I'll have to explore the locations of his offices—and what's there now—in my apazine for APA-V.

After I finished browsing, I got to spend some time with Luttrell, who moved to Madison in the early 1970s and was previously active in the Ozark Science Fiction Association in the St. Louis, Mo., area. A founder of WisCon, he co-chaired WisCon 6 and has published a number of fanzines, including the Hugo nominee *Starling*.

Now located on South Park Street, mere minutes from our post office box, 20th Century Books was previously located at 105 King St. just down the street from the Infernal Wilson. That might now be the site of Ancora Cafe + Bakery next to the restaurant Lucille. I walk by that site several times a week—even to meet local fan Jae Leslie Adams for coffee last week!

Is the Earth doomed to destruction by war-crazed hordes from another world?



Are FLYING SAUCERS advance elements of an invasion fleet from limitless space?

Read TWIN EARTHS, dynamic, science-fiction adventure strip

TWIN EARTHS — **Here is what has happened so far** — By Oskar Lebeck

TWIN EARTHS — By Oskar Lebeck

TWIN EARTHS — By Oskar Lebeck

TWIN EARTHS — By Oskar Lebeck

TWIN EARTHS — By Oskar Lebeck

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Vana

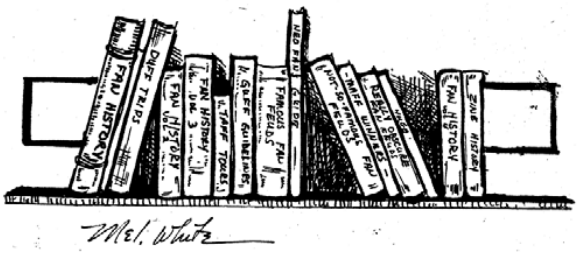
Can we believe her story of dangerous spies from a Twin Earth beyond the sun who have landed secretly in Flying Saucers and are now plotting our destruction?

Garry Verth

Alert FBI agent who faces the most puzzling assignment of his career. Is he intrigued by the strange mystery of Vana . . . or is he falling in love with the exotic beauty from another world?

Start reading "TWIN EARTHS" now and follow it every day in the CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE

Chicago Tribune, June 22, 1952



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Valesco by Jody J. Sperling (Crea8 Collabor8, 2024)

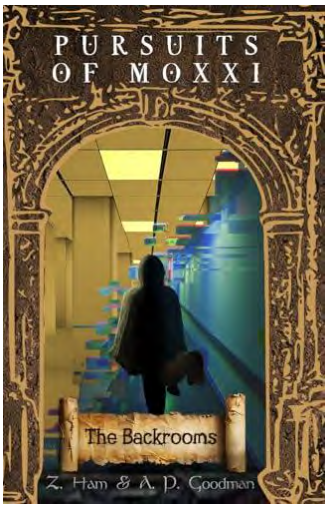
I met Jody J. Sperling, the author of this collection of short stories at MadEx (not MadExpo as abbreviated in *T&T* #174). He lives near Omaha, Neb., and operates Crea8 Collabor8 as a self-publishing cooperative, managing the consignment sales and returns for participating authors. This 133-page paperback collects four short stories by Sperling: "Valesco," "Timepperware Complete Kitchen," "Mr. Sticky Fingers," and "On the Banks of the Columbia River."

The title story, "Valesco" is a Max Allan Collins-like piece of pulpy noir in which a salesman covers up the killing of a colleague by another colleague in order to capture his paramour's complete attention and dedication. "Timepperware Complete Kitchen" is a dark sf tale told in the form of an infomercial script. A series of Timepperware products utilize "patented cooking technology" to cook meals, prepare ingredients—and dispose of bodies. This story is quite funny, and the interplay between the various characters is increasingly amusing.

"Mr. Sticky Fingers" might be a story about a challenging friendship or dissociative identity disorder. It works well either way you interpret it. And "On the Banks of the Columbia River" tells the tale of an emergency medical technician who experiences a crisis of confidence after witnessing an accident. His passivity erodes during an armed robbery that threatens his family.

At least one of the stories might also appear in Sperling's collection *Mr. Sticky Fingers and Other Stories*, which consists of almost 20 stories previously published in literary journals. His Luke in Time mystery series also looks promising. You can learn more at https://www.jodyjsperling.com.

Pursuits of Moxxi: The Backrooms by Z. Ham and A.P. Goodman (A.P. Goodman, 2025)



I also met co-author A.P. Goodman at MadEx earlier this month. A resident of Wisconsin, Goodman seems to be moving ever northward, and she frequently participates in events in Kenosha and the Madison area. She's the author of multiple YA fantasy novels, and I chose this title—co-written with her "kiddo"—which might tie in to her Legacy Academy series, because of another local connection.

"The Backrooms" of the subtitle is a Creepypasta (https://www.creepypasta.com/the-backrooms) that dates back to 2019. Initially inspired by an online photograph posted on *4chan* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Backrooms), the Creepypasta led online sleuths to eventually identify the actual location: the former Rohner's Home Furnishings in Oshkosh, which was renovated for a new tenant, HobbyTown. (https://tinyurl.com/backrooms-Oshkosh) The original photograph was taken in 2002. Fans of the Creepypasta spread out to discussions on Reddit, Twitter, and TikTok, and its influence helped inspire the television series *Severance*.

In my conversation with Goodman, she expressed enthusiasm for her and her co-author finding literary common ground, combining interests—Creepypasta and YA fantasy. The Acknowledgments at the end of the book indicate that Z. Ham might have also named the protagonist during an illness.

The book, while not a Creepypasta itself, incorporates some elements from its precursors, at least their sense of liminal suspense and dread. Moxxi is a transporter associated with Legacy Academy who helps shepherd displaced souls, or Nulls, to their appropriate afterworlds. Able to transform into a shadow shelf, Moxxi finds themselves in an unnatural dreamworld via some kind of vortex. Once there, they encounter a young girl before meeting a couple of other people in the liminal space: a young boy named

Azi and his protector, Harper.

They orient Moxxi to the Backrooms before setting off to find the girl, Azi's sister. There are other creatures lurking in the Backrooms—Disguisers, Happy Face, hellhounds, moths, El Ojo, and La Madre—not all of them friendly. Some of them are dangerous. They meet another comrade and overcome a series of obstacles as Moxxi endeavors to figure out how to return to her world—and her new friends to their afterworlds.

An intriguing collaboration—and perhaps a good introduction to Legacy Academy. Learn more at https://apgoodman.com.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Spookies

In recent weeks during a late-night bout of wakefulness, I watched the 1986 flick *Spookies* on Shudder. A late-1980s USA Network staple, the movie is a bit of an *Evil Dead* knockoff that alternates between awkward oddity and silliness, and some truly stunning visual effects. The movie is reportedly an expanded version of another flick titled *Twisted Souls*, which had been completed except for post-production before a production dispute. Additional scenes were shot and edited in to create *Spookies*.

The movie is notable in part because it was filmed at the boyhood home of John Jay in Rye, N.Y. Jay served as the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and co-wrote the Federalist Papers. While the homeowners had apparently hoped that the filmmakers would damage the property during the shoot—so it could be condemned—they instead repaired it, restoring the plumbing and electrical wiring. The house is now a National Historical Site.

A group of partygoers seek another diversion after being thrown out of a party. They come across a seemingly abandoned mansion and decide to explore it, encountering a warlock and his minions, who strive to rejuvenate the warlock's unwilling bride. The group is largely composed of stereotypes: the straight-laced responsible man, the juvenile delinquent, the joking goof (truly enjoyable), the floozy, and others.

The makeup, special effects, and visual effects departments worked especially hard, and the results are occasionally quite impressive. The warlock is largely uninteresting, but his hook-handed werecat minion and son are consistently intriguing if static. The character Carol's possession offers an early indicator of the wonders that await. The spider woman, grim reaper, hallway demon, and snake demon provide ample eye candy, and the emergence of the muck men in the cellar might be one of the neatest things I've ever seen in cinema. Watch this movie for the muck men alone. They're wonderful.

Also of note is the ending of the movie, which offers a bit of a surprise—and a detournement of standard horror movie tropes. Richard Corben drew the poster art and video box, and the *Twisted Souls* project was covered in a Starblazer Special magazine. A welcome diversion that had more going for it than expected.

Also watched this week: *Altered Carbon* S1E1; *Daredevil* S1E3, "Rabbit in a Snow Storm;" *Doctor Who* (1963) S1E5-11, "The Daleks;" S13E9-12, "Pyramids of Mars;" *Doctor Who* (2024) S1E4, "73 Yards;" S1E5, "Dot and Bubble;" S1E6, "Rogue;" S1E7, "The Legend of Ruby Sunday;" S1E8, "Empire of Death;" *The Prisoner* E1-3; *Space Patrol* S2E26, "The Interplanetary Smugglers" aka "The Deadly Ray Gun;" and S3E8, "Operation Rescue."

Comments on APA-L #3126

Apparently, the copy of APA-L #3125 that Barbara Gratz Harmon mailed to me was returned, but I received the most recent edition this week. I'll comment on the previous issue once it arrives.

The do-it-yourself cover design featuring mailing labels and the use of a Sharpie or other marker offered an interesting aesthetic. The political commentary is clear. *Star Trek*'s message of inclusion—including the Vulcan philosophical belief in Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations—remains important, perhaps crucially so.

In *Vanamonde* #1650, **John Hertz** commented on the Fanzine Lounge at the recent Worldcon, as well as the annual apa WOOF, the Worldcon Order of Faneditors. While Hertz helps coordinate WOOF but does not contribute, I've submitted material for the last few years, reprinting writing published outside of my apazines and *The Stf Amateur*. For the last couple of years, that's featured my "Dollar Box Dilettante" column for the United Fanzine Organization's (https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com) newsletter, *Tetragrammaton Fragments*. That means that I mostly write about comic books, and I look forward to this year's comments to see how people respond to the cross-pollination. It's worth recognizing that this year brings the 50th edition of WOOF.

You are correct that the Herbie I referenced is the Fantastic Four robot, not Herbie Popnecker—or the cinema's sentient Volkswagen Beetle. As a former journalist, I tend not to initialize acronyms that can be read as words because of my lingering adherence to Associated Press style. Not only is H.E.R.B.I.E. ungainly and perhaps unsightly, but I didn't think Highly Engineered Robot Built for Interdimensional Exploration or Humanoid Experimental Robot, B-Type, Integrated Electronics was worth using as first reference. Herbangelists among us would be pleased by his invocation.

Welcome, **Jeremy Yong**, to APA-L. I was thrilled to finally see your *Procrastinate Everything* #1 in the pages of APA-L. Jeremy and I first corresponded in April when he inquired about how to gain access to the APA-L archives. New to apae, he chose to join our ranks—and that is wonderful. It's neat that you learned about APA-L from Jon Peterson's book *Playing at the World*. The *Dungeons & Dragons*-related activity, debates, and schism of sorts occurred in the mid-1970s, resulting in the formation of the roleplaying game apa Alarums & Excursions, which has since ceased publication. *RPGGeek* considers the *D&D* issues of APA-L to be #493-537. At least two apae launched after A&E's final issue: Ever & Anon and A Gentle Stroll. (My Ever & Anon deadline is today!) There have been other RPG-related apae over the years such as Interregnum, Lords of Chaos, and The Wild Hunt, but they're no longer active.

I'm also glad that you're exploring the fantasy fiction highlighted in *D&D*'s Appendix N. The upcoming reading you outline is all worth checking out. You're in for some good stuff! I look forward to future reading notes and other discussion.

—Brad Verter

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #112 shared an update from work and commented—I'm extrapolating a little, perhaps—on the value of reading about people who are unlike you. This is something my wife and I often talk about. Reading about other points of view and experiences is tremendously rewarding and can help develop empathy. A 2019 BBC article summarizes research done along those lines. (https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190523-does-reading-fiction-make-us-better-people)

And in *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #86, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** offered memories of participating in Seacon, the 1961 Worldcon. I'm glad your daughter's health is on the mend. Moving canceled con programming to the lobby or other found space sounds like a great idea. But, how to get the word out? I've been considering returning to *Shazam!* and *The Shazam!/Isis Hour*. It's been decades since I've seen it. Proto-sf is sf-like writing published before "science fiction" or another term was applied. "Amusing himself in a public park"? Euphemism of the week!

Thank you for reproducing the cover of and commenting on your reading of *The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum*. I procured a copy while in northern California earlier this year (*The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #30) but haven't read much

past Isaac Asimov's introduction. It's one of the books I brought with me from California to Wisconsin, so I should make a point of reading it instead of… obtaining more books.

While spending time with my parents last weekend, we went to Barnes & Noble so I could use a gift card my wife and I were given ages ago. (That certainly didn't help matters.) I was surprised to see the July/August 2025 issues of *Asimov's Science Fiction* and *Analog Science Fiction & Fact* on the newsstand. With my subscription copies not yet arriving or being forwarded, I had assumed their publication had been delayed, but the first issues published by Must Read Magazines seem to have been available for some time despite the online discussion about problematic contracts. The Web sites now feature covers for the September/October issues.

I was also surprised that the B&N in west Madison also sells used books. Not overstock or remainders, though there's also some of those on display, but actual used books. They're shelved far back in the store up a small flight of stairs in an area labeled the Annex. The used books weren't organized at all, didn't seem to include many mass-market paperbacks, and included at least one Science Fiction Book Club edition priced at $5. While I was tempted to pick it up, I couldn't bring myself to buy it because I felt slightly uncomfortable that the one remaining national bookstore chain was selling used books—which seems to undercut their selling of new books.

If used books weren't sold at that location, I suppose that the shelves would have been empty. The perception of empty shelves might be even worse. Regardless, the spread-out shelving of used books indicates that that B&N location, at least, is in too large a commercial space for its needs. The two wings of the elevated area contained new stock, and the central portion would have to be walled off otherwise. The Bookstore of Amontillado, perhaps.

In the end, I used the gift card on the current issues of *Analog*, *Asimov's*, and *Heavy Metal*, and splurged on a B&N collectible edition of *H.P. Lovecraft: The Complete Fiction*. The company has also published a similar edition of *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, which would make a good pairing. The location we visited offered a buy one, get one at 50% off deal for such books, but even at $30 a piece —which then becomes $15 for one of them, or $22.50 a piece—I certainly didn't need to bring both back to the Infernal Wilson.

So far this week I've been reading a Lovecraft story each night before bed—except one night when I continued reading Richard K. Morgan's *Altered Carbon*, which I checked out from the library earlier this week to read ahead of the TV show as I watch it. By midweek I'd read "The Beast in the Cave," written when the author was almost 15, "The Alchemist," and "The Tomb." "The Alchemist" was first published in *The United Amateur*, the official publication of the United Amateur Press Association. The other two stories were published in *The Vagrant* by W. Paul Cook, perhaps while he was active in the National Amateur Press Association.

Aug. 20 was Lovecraft's birth anniversary. He was born in 1890.

—Carrie McNinch

Engines & Emulators #3

Aug. 21, 2025

Engines & Emulators is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; +1 718 755-9840 mobile; +1 323 916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to Ever & Anon and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

An Apparent Preference for *Pathfinder*

Since I moved to Wisconsin, *Pathfinder* keeps coming up. In late July, after my first official day in the local office of my employer—I've now got an assigned desk and key cards for the building and parking lot—I learned that there was a workplace "MSN TTRPG" group that had organized late last year to play *Pathfinder*. I reached out on the chat space to introduce myself and see if there was a current game I could get in on. (I'd previously run *Pathfinder* sessions at one of my previous worksites in southern California because I wanted to experience 3.5, so it'd be a neat return.) While the group, mostly newcomers to roleplaying games, had gone through the *Pathfinder Beginner Box* introductory adventure at the end of 2024, they "kind of petered out this spring" and haven't gathered since. We'll see if anything gels in the office where I now work.

Early this month, a long-time friend—we worked at the same Boy Scout camp the summer after I graduated from high school—messaged me on the Facebook while in the area before returning home: "I'm at Noble Knight running away from a *Pathfinder* table that I'm way under-experienced to play. Welcome back to the Middle West! I'm headed to Willy Street to find some cheese. If you're free, let's trade a story or two? If not, hope to cross your path." We weren't able to connect before he drove back to Indianford from Madison, but we'll see each other soon, I'm sure.

I recently remarked on being drawn to the *Pathfinder* Pocket Edition volumes while browsing at a nearby store, I'm Board! Games & Family Fun. (*E&E* #2) Excited about the possibility of a workplace session, I checked in at Gamer's Library (also *E&E* #2) to see if they had it in stock or could order a copy before I ordered one from Paizo directly. Once it arrived in the mail, I randomly selected a character's ancestry, background, and class, creating a dwarf barbarian named Kotri. The dice might have been inspired by my recent listening to an audiobook of William King's Gotrek & Felix novel *Trollslayer*. I haven't yet finished the character, but if a game does spin up at work, at least I'll be prepared.

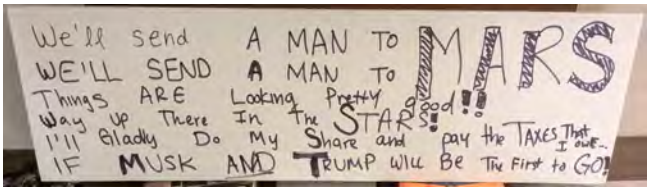
And last weekend, at Egocon, a one-day *Doctor Who* event north of Madison (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #175), Jason Belter, who coordinates Paizo Organized Play in Wisconsin, ran several *Starfinder* games. I didn't join in on any of the sessions, but he ran several adventures, attracting three or four players.

Other than seeing a flier for the Old School Renaissance-focused Venger Con IV in early June, a flier for a largely inactive Fox River OSR group at UFO Museum Gift Shop and Records (https://www.facebook.com/GBUFOrecords) in Green Bay in late July, and fliers for Gamehole Con 12 (https://www.gameholecon.com) posted beside the urinals at MadEx (T&T #174), most of the roleplaying game opportunities I've encountered since moving here seem to point toward *Pathfinder*.

I find that interesting!

Billions Vs. Billionaires—at Worldcon

While I didn't go to the recent Worldcon in Seattle, a friend of mine, Nick Mamatas, did. On the Friday night of the con, he hosted a room party to recognize the publication of a fanzine titled *It's Okay, Just Set Me on Fire!* and a two-page roleplaying game by M.K. Anderson, *Musk Pit: Mars*. Both are available from https://billionsvsbillionaires.itch.io. The party's refreshments featured a beverage called Muskblood, which consists of rhubarb and strawberry gin, vodka, Diet Coke Caffeine Free ("Musk's fave!"), grenadine syrup, and lemon.



Courtesy of Nick Mamatas

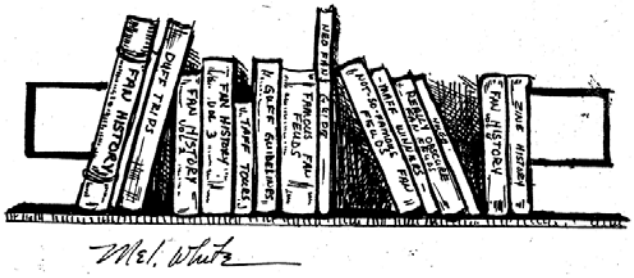
The party was reportedly "hoppin'," and even though the hotel "demanded quiet," no noise complaints were received. However, copies of the Mamatas-edited anthology *120 Murders* and his forthcoming novel *Kalivas! Or, Another Tempest* were available for purchase. Safely at the Infernal Wilson, I downloaded the fanzine and roleplaying game.

The 22-page fanzine features writing by Cyan Katz, Rick Claypool, Anderson, Britta Burdett, Bitter Karella, and Elly Bangs. Anderson's contribution, "Elon's Basilisk," features gameplay elements, including a 2d6 table, "The Elon Matrix," which might prove useful in other dystopic cyberpunk game settings. The rest of the material is cleverly critical AI- and Mars-related sf.

Musk Pit: Mars, then, is a two-page roleplaying game for one GM and up to three players—though you can easily play it solo. (In fact, I highly recommend it.) To create a character, you answer three questions, rolling dice and referring to tables: Who did you think you were? What must you do? What are you hiding from us? (That last question reminded me of *Paranoia*.)

There are two abilities: Dumb and Luck. (Together, Dumb Luck.) Characters strive to accomplish one of three objectives, and failed tasks attract the attention of Elon Musk, triggering Elon Events. If characters draw Musk's serious attention, they get sent to the Musk Pit of the game's title.

I don't know how much game-related programming there was at Worldcon, but I was pleased that at least one room party was centered on fanzines and roleplaying games, as well as political activism. Both the fanzine and the game are worth spending time with.



From the Reading Pile: Comic Book Reviews

Pathfinder: Wake the Dead #1-4 (Dynamite, 2023)

Inspired by my repeated exposure to *Pathfinder* in recent months (see above), I read several issues of this 2023 comic book series. I occasionally enjoy roleplaying game tie-in comics (*Culver City Comics Collector* #4—I published six issues!—*Theoretically: Game* #1, and a Media Diet Comics Commentary video I recorded during the pandemic—https://youtu.be/I41yIceVOCw), and this was no exception.

Written by Fred Van Lente and drawn by Eman Casallos, the series features iconic *Pathfinder* characters such as Sajan, Lem, Seelah, and Harsk (you might recognize them from the artwork in the handbooks)—and introduces a consulting investigator named Quinn. While the comic draws heavily on the *Pathfinder* world of Golarion, game mechanics don't really show up in the story beyond the inclusion of creatures from the various *Bestiary* volumes, such as shredskins.

Instead, the story, which focuses primarily on undead themes given the series' title and the character Nyctessa of Geb, is a relatively straightforward fantasy adventure. There's even a zombie triceratops.

Game elements come more into play in the Pathfinder Rules Appendix material included at the end of each issue. Articles written by Mikhail Rekhun focus on the iconic characters featured in the series, even including a character sheet for each. #1 features Seelah the champion, #2 Sajan the monk, #3 Lem the bard, and #4 Quinn.

There were five issues in total, so I haven't yet read the whole storyline. Regardless, the series is fun, funny—and offers game-related content you can incorporate into your own game, if interested. The Pathfinder Rules Appendix material is even approved for use in Pathfinder Society public play. Dynamite also collected the series in a 136-page hardcover so you don't need to miss an issue—like I did.

Comments on Ever & Anon #2

In *Reddened Stars* #0, **John Redden** reported on recent reading, local theater, and television viewing. I was alarmed to learn of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid of South Kona Farms. Locking the gate sounds like a good idea. I enjoyed the writeups of the Reconstructing Planets and *Horror on the Orient Express*—perhaps appropriate given your recent theater experience!—game sessions. I quite like the idea of adapting short stories for game sessions and can appreciate the concerns about railroading. I shall have to look into your new novel, *Cosmos Nirvana*. Your recent travels to Norway sound like quite an adventure. Where did you live in Culver City? I was unaware we had that in common.

Brian Rogers's *Denizens of the Library* #1 marked his return to an Alarums & Excursions-related apa after a six-year absence. Welcome back! I recognize your name, so we might have overlapped in the past. Congratulations on running the recent 5K. I used to run—and run 5Ks—but have fallen out of the habit. I am glad that you run games for teenagers at the local library. That's a worthy endeavor.

I was very intrigued by "Stating up Regrets 1: The Eye." Not only is it a great idea to create characters based on Golden Age comic books and potentially public domain superheroes, but the gameplay opportunities, solo and otherwise, are vastly apparent. I've been interested in returning to *Champions* or *Villains and Vigilantes* in recent months—a supers game in which there's not an ossified extensive universe of heroes and villains already. There's got to be a rules light supers option someone could use to adapt comics, regardless of whether it's a single issue, miniseries, or series.

A *Cannibal Halfling Gaming* post (https://cannibalhalflinggaming.com/2024/05/07/rules-lite-superhero-

rpgs-revisited-part-1) recommends *Risus* as one possible option. And a Reddit post in r/Solo_ Roleplaying suggests games including *Friendly Neighborhood Superhero*, *Anyone Can Wear the Mask*, *Supersworn*, and *Herosworn*. I'm not recommending that you ditch *Gumshoe*, but you've given me food for thought, as well! (I'm going to check out *Superhero: 2044* for solo play.) Thank you for sharing "Reviews to Fill Space." Your reading notes offered much more than space-filler.

In *Quasipseudoludognostication* #2, **Patrick Riley** took a cue from George Phillies and expanded on his gaming journey. You reminded me of my own introduction to the AD&D *Monster Manual*. While I later bought my own new copy of *Monster Manual II*, my *Monster Manual* was a hand-me-down copy of the first cover edition—and I forget from whom. I'll have to dig it out once our belongings (and we) arrive in Portugal, but I remember that whoever owned it before me had colored in the front flyleaf with a bright pink crayon, perhaps with somewhat cryptic hand-lettered text such as song lyrics. (They might have done so to replicate the red flyleaf included in earlier printings of the book.) A few of the monster illustrations inside were also colored in, either with crayon or magic marker. I remember feeling amused as I imagined someone "getting high" and reading through the *Monster Manual*.

In your writeup, "The Adventurers Guild," I especially enjoyed that "[o]ne of the stated goals of this gaming group is to socialize in person (and not on screens)... ." I also appreciated the photographs of miniatures. Are those minis actually being used in the game? They're beautiful. I like the way you lay out your apazine with boxed content like that in published modules. We could recreate the quests on our own!

Gabriel Roark's *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #41 updated apans on his mother's health and father's retirement. I'm glad that "[s]he is getting her fiery personality back"—and that you've returned to ice skating in adulthood! Growing up in southern Wisconsin, I skated every winter on Haumerson Pond near my childhood home. I'd cut across neighbors' yards walking through the snow, and the warming shed of my youth was a ramshackle affair. I understand it's much nicer now; I've never seen or used it. The pond was divided by a slender peninsula, and we only ever skated on the near side. Beyond the peninsula and far side was the Bark River.

When my wife and I moved to southern California, buying a home in Culver City, we lived within easy walking distance of the Culver Ice Arena, which closed after 52 years in 2014. We skated there only a few times with our son before it was shuttered. I remember not wanting it to be turned into a climbing gym, but it ended up a Harbor Freight. I would have preferred a climbing gym! The Harbor Freight is only using about half the space, but I appreciate that they kept most of the exterior and signage the way it was.

I am indeed a member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (https://tnfff.org), which is how I first met George Phillies. In fact, I used to edit its clubzine, *The National Fantasy Fan*, and serve on the directorate, even as its chairman for a time. These days I participate in its apa, N'APA, and remain a general member.

Eep! I forgot to loop back to you once we were safely settled in Madison. I've now emailed you where you can mail the A&E back issues I'd sent you. To wit, the P.O. Box at the top of this apazine. We'll be here at least until the end of September, and the P.O. Box will remain active even after that. (My parents will check it weekly for anything pressing, and the bulk of our mail will await our periodic return.)

You are right: We should probably confer with Lee Gold about collecting an archive of A&E PDFs. My hypothesis is that she didn't want purchasers to share the PDFs they bought with others so such sharing didn't lessen the potential supply of future purchasers. That might have changed now that she's no longer selling back issues.

In *Twisting the Rope* #2, **Myles Corcoran** used the phrase "the delight of ice cream vendors," which I found poetic imagery. We're immigrating to Portugal in part to get our cost of living low enough that my wife and I can stop working a decade-plus earlier than we might otherwise. With our son graduating from college next year, we didn't need to stay in southern California, where we'd moved to better share custody and which we enjoyed thoroughly. In the interim, we live closer to our extended families.

Since we've been traveling to Portugal over the last few years, we've fallen in love with its landscape, cities, history, culture, and people. We're both still in our 50s and hope that travel, learning new languages, and other activities will help us age more gracefully. Tickling the old neuroplasticity, if you will.

We've also been inspired by Portugal's modern constitution. The collective memory of its relatively recent fascist dictatorship remains strong. The country's leadership seems to have the best interests of its citizens in mind. We'd like to experience living in Europe and traveling throughout the European Union more—and plan to maintain firm footing in the United States all the while, likely in the Midwest.

Apologies for the truncated ish; I'd like to make the deadline in order to be included—even if time is tight this month. Made it about one-fourth through!

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #176

Aug. 28, 2025

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Event Report: Bristol Renaissance Faire

Last Sunday, I met a couple of friends from the Chicago area at the Bristol Renaissance Faire (https://renfair.com/bristol) in Kenosha. It's owned by the same company that owns the Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire (https://renfair.com/socal) in southern California, which my wife and I were unable to participate in earlier this year because of preparing for our relocation to the Midwest.

As I said in *T&T* #172, the Bristol Renaissance Faire was founded as King Richard's Faire in 1972 by Richard and Bonnie Shapiro. They sold the fair to Renaissance Entertainment Corp. in 1988. That company also bought the southern California fair in 1993, and both fairs now seem to be owned by Renaissance Entertainment Productions.

One of the friends I met at the fair grew up in Ohio but still went to this specific fair with his father and brother every year from about the age of 10-12 onward. Even though I grew up in southern Wisconsin, I neither ever knew about the fair nor went with my parents and sister. My parents indicated that they became aware of it when we started driving to and from Northwestern University after high school.

Similar in some ways to the southern California fair, the Bristol fair is largely a study in contrasts. The two are similar in their logo, graphic design, and marketing materials—they even share a Web site—and the two events share multiple performers. The primary differences result from the Bristol fair's location on a permanent site. In fact, such recurring events that don't have a semi-permanent or permanent site are the exception in the United States, not the rule. Even though the Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire might have been the first such fair in the United States, the nearby Koroneburg Renaissance Festival might have an advantage because of its permanent facilities. I'll have to return to California just for that.

The Bristol fair is held on a 30-acre site near the Wisconsin-Illinois border. When Renaissance Entertainment Corp. bought the fair in the late 1980s, it stopped being King Richard's Faire to recreate the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to the English port city of Bristol in 1574. There are multiple warehousing facilities near the fair's site, and online scuttlebutt suggests that Uline "straight-up stole some of the Faire's parking lot for their headquarters and were trying to sue for the rest of the property." Regardless, the southern California fair is held on about 20 acres, so the Bristol festival feels—and seems—larger. That's good, because it also seems to attract more people.

After finding each other and orienting ourselves upon arrival, we went to the Mud Show (https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Mud-Show-100063496785638), which has been put on by the Sturdy Beggars for 46 years. My friend remembered them from childhood. They smeared mud on their faces, they shoved mud down their hosen, and they engaged in quite a bit of extravagant silliness as they made repeated calls for donations, pitting the two sides of the audience against each other. Appropriate for such self-proclaimed beggars, the entire show was a prolonged, humorous exercise in grift. They seemed to make good money.

Making our way around the grounds doing our best to walk up and down every single path on the map, we sought out or happened upon multiple performances. Those included some or all of the Clan Tynker Family Circus (https://www.clantynker.com), Adam Crack's fire whip show (https://www.instagram.com/winrichadam), Aerial Silk Fantasy (https://www.instagram.com/aerialsilkfantasy), Music the Gathering (https://www.musicthegathering.com), Supernova the Strongwoman (https://circusstrongwoman.com), the Washing Well Wenches (https://www.washingwellwenches.com), and Dora Viellette the Hurdy-Gurdy Girl (https://www.instagram.com/thathurdygurdygirl).

Adam Crack

We also availed ourselves of the fair's many food options: soft pretzels, a Cornish meat pie featuring chicken and vegetables (my current favorite), corn on the cob, butterfly potatoes (basically elaborate kettle chips), cheese fritters, hot and iced coffee, and gelato. Given the festival's built environment, I was struck by the presence of flush toilet facilities in addition to portable toilets (just imagine!), the number of permanent food stands and stalls, and the number of vendor spaces. There was also more seating and shade than at the southern California fair.

We didn't shop much, but we did check out some pottery and glass work, Music of the Spheres' wind chimes (https://www.musicofspheres.com), and a crowded game store that included an intriguing array of vintage roleplaying game materials from the proprietor's personal collection. I did not brave Arte of the Booke (https://arteofthebooke.com), though I was glad to see a bookstore on site.

Having met around 10 a.m., we were easily able to spend most of the day at the fair, departing to head our separate ways home at about 5:30 p.m. The fair runs from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., so we were there for almost the entire day.

While I was also struck by how many people dressed up for the fair—more, perhaps, than in southern California—I did miss one important aspect: the visible, explicit presence of guilds or clans. Even with the permanent site, I didn't see any evidence—outside of Nobles' Glade and its programming—of guild camps or themed clans.

Aerial Silk Fantasy

There's a Joust Arena, a Queen's College offering classes and demonstrations, and a Glass Blower, but there didn't seem to be any encampments, canvas tents, cooking setups, or other evidence of reenactment groups or overnight stays. There's a chance that some of the shops include upstairs housing for vendors.

Supernova the Strongwoman

According to *Fandom*'s Renaissance Faire Wiki, Bristol's cast of nobles draws on the Guilde of St. George. There are also other guilds—even if they're not visible as such—including the Guilde of St. Lawrence, which cooks for the cast and crew and represents middle class merchants and townsfolk; the

Guilde of St. Michael, which reenacts an English militia before the first Spanish Armada; the Bristol Buskin Frolic, which performs dances, mummers plays, and music; and the Fantastickals, or fantasy creatures. There are also street performers, town criers, a troupe of fighters, musicians, and RenQuest, a live-action role play activity. Past groups have included Thistle Croft, a group of Celtic craftsmen, and the Pusblotches, a family of gravediggers.

Dora Viellette

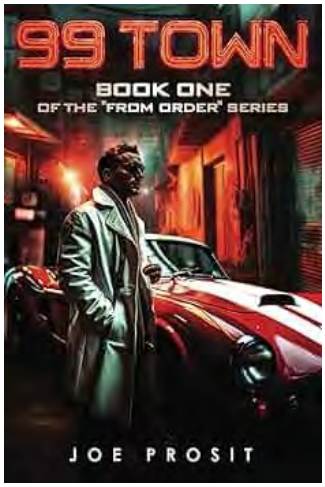
Overall, the Bristol Renaissance Faire was an excellent experience. I'll return—and wish I'd known about it and other such events when I was younger.

From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

99 Town by Joe Prosit (Joe Prosit, 2023)

I met author Joe Prosit at MadEx (*T&T* #174) earlier this month. He currently lives in Brainerd, Minn., two hours northwest of Minneapolis. A writer of sf, horror, and "psycho fiction," he's had work published in magazines and on podcasts such as *365tomorrows* (https://365tomorrows.com), *The NoSleep Podcast* (https://www.thenosleeppodcast.com), *Metaphorosis* (https://magazine.metaphorosis.com), and *Kaidankai* (https://www.kaidankaistories.com). This novel is the first book in the From Order series, which currently includes three books.

99 Town is a cyberpunk mystery that might qualify as reverse-cyberpunk. The protagonist, a federal agent from a highly technological and tightly controlled society in the year 2112, is sent to the much lower-tech enclave 99 Town to investigate the murder of the daughter of two wealthy Chicago residents. In 99 Town, no technology that was developed after 1999 is allowed.



Unable to use the technologies usually available to him—including persistent networked communications, augmented reality displays, autonomous vehicles, geolocation, self-medicating neurotransmitters, and so on—the detective must rely on more traditional shoe leather police work. At his table, Prosit promoted his books using cards identifying similar movies, marketing by comparison. Instead of *Minority Report* or Isaac Asimov's Elijah Baley and R. Daneel Olivaw novels, however, *99 Town* seems more like *Witness* by way of China Miéville's *The City & The City*. (*T&T* #127)

Given that most of the narrative takes place in the low-tech 99 Town, there's little cyberpunk in play and the book is more of a fish-out-of-water story as well as a mystery. The noir elements of the mystery are entertaining and intriguing even with the reverse-cyberpunk nature of the story.

During his investigation, the protagonist encounters the Keepers, a group of anonymous administrators who oversee 99 Town. The Order, the source of much of the technology outside of the enclave, is somewhat totalitarian, a development in response to a cataclysmic Event, some kind of "pandemic bug." There's also an Underground, activists who oppose the oversight of the Order.

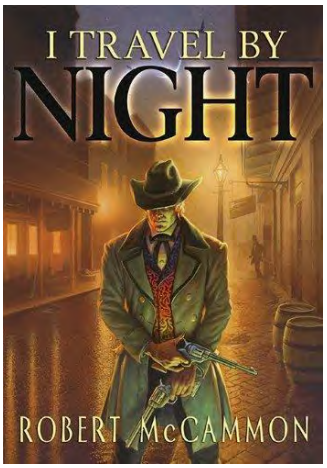
Some of the writing is quite thought provoking. "We should be better than our emotions," Prosit writes. "The system is what matters. If we find the flaws in the system and fix those, then the system will fix the people." Also: "[W]here does the system end and people begin?" And: "Aren't we all still Neanderthals staying together so we can weather the storm coming in against us?"

While the novel is largely noir-styled sleuthing, there are some fun learning curves that provide humor throughout the story. The federal agent has to become acclimated to driving a car, remembering details and faces, and even using profanity convincingly. At one

point, Prosit lists a selection of books seen on a shelf, "old collector's pieces" that might offer clues to the writer's influences. "[W]ho'd ever heard of Kurt Vonnegut, Ray Bradbury, Albert Camus, or Hunter S. Thompson?"

I can see that. *99 Town* will resonate with readers of Philip K. Dick as well as Raymond Chandler. The end of the novel points forward to the next in the series, which might be a little more science fictional. This first book in the series, while bookended by sf elements, is primarily a mystery. You can learn more about the author at https://www.joeprosit.com.

I Travel by Night by Robert McCammon (Subterranean, 2013)



After exploring the Swiss Historical Village Museum in New Glarus last Saturday, I saw chalk markings on the sidewalk downtown directing pedestrians to a used book sale at the New Glarus Village Hall. Following the arrows, I walked multiple blocks, through a church courtyard, down a flight of stairs, and along Village Park to see what delights awaited at the end of the hand-drawn and -written trail. Such was the strength of the siren song. This "deluxe hardcover edition" of a novella was among the delights I found on the tables.

I haven't read much by McCammon, but I enjoyed reading his 1987 novel *Swan Song* sufficiently enough that I've kept my eyes open for his name ever since—even though I haven't actively sought out his work. That this book was published by Michigan-based Subterranean Press was frosting on the cake or perhaps gravy on the pasty.

While the book echoes Stephern King's The Dark Tower series—and its gunslinger—it's slightly less fantastic and more horrific, and much more of a western, perhaps Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire mysteries crossed with Stark Holborn's Nunslinger work. (*T&T* #69) And if you enjoy it, there's a sequel, *Last Train from Perdition*, which was published several years later. An ebook edition includes both.

Set in New Orleans shortly after the Civil War, the novella focuses on a well-intentioned but understandably sun-averse gunslinger who works as a sort of bounty hunter or troubleshooter. His calling card reads: "All Matters Handled. I Travel by Night." He is hired to rescue the kidnapped daughter of a man who subsequently received a ransom note—asking for the protagonist by name to deliver the ransom. After encountering an enemy in the city, Trevor Lawson, our antihero, heads into the swamps in search of an abandoned town, a folly now sliding into the mire, to rescue the girl.

As a novella, the book is short, sharp, and succinct. McCammon accomplishes his goals as a storyteller efficiently, effectively, and elegantly; I read it the evening I obtained it. It's tempting to seek out the sequel immediately, and I'm glad that McCammon is still writing. Apparently, he'd taken a decade off, effectively retiring, following a series of publisher disagreements. Luckily for readers, his retirement has ended. The tenth and final book in McCammon's Matthew Corbett of historical thrillers was published just last year, so there's plenty more to explore.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Prospect

A friend and I watched this 2018 space western a couple of weeks ago, in part because of Pedro Pascal's role in the flick—he's top of mind because of the recently released *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*—and in part to continue an accidental career retrospective focusing on the work of 25-year-old Sophie Thatcher, who appeared in *Heretic* (*T&T* #174) more recently.

Prospect is an absolutely awesome movie. While clearly science fiction—the movie takes place on an alien planet populated by alien flora and fauna, the characters wear spacesuits, and there are spacecraft—the movie is also entirely a western. In fact, Pascal pretty much plays his character straight from a western, delivering his lines in an archaic, somewhat stilted learned diction (occasionally similar to dialogue written by Quentin Tarantino), providing the most obvious bridge between the two genres. His delivery seems a little over the top at first but ends up being a highlight of the picture. The screenplay could have worked as either a western or an sf flick. As both, it's a lot of fun.

The storyline focuses on two pairs of characters: a father and daughter stranded on a hostile planet after their ship malfunctions and a pair of potential claim jumpers who seek the same treasure sought by the family members. That treasure is a little mysterious and challenging to obtain. You have to reach into the body of a partially buried or excavated creature, remove its organs, and apply some sort of solvent or solution to remove a valuable gem. If you do it wrong, the gem is ruined.

Due to some ill happenstance, two characters are forced to partner in order to survive. The movie seems to have had a limited theatrical release but did well on the festival circuit. It secured multiple nominations and won awards at FilmQuest (https://www.filmquestfest.com) and the Festival Européen du Film Fantastique de Strasbourg (https://strasbourgfestival.com/en). Both of those genre-oriented festivals are scheduled for later this year.

Also watched this week: *Batman—The Animated Series* S1E1, *The Prisoner* E4-6, and *Ren Faire* E1-3

On the Former Location of Bookstores

In *T&T* #175, I remarked that Hank Luttrell's 20th Century Books (https://www.southparkbooks.com) was previously located at 105 King St. down the street from the Infernal Wilson, where Ancora Cafe + Bakery is now located.

I was wrong! According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, the previous location of his shop was 106-108 King St. across the street, specifically the 108 King St. address. 20th Century Books once occupied what is now Jalisco Cocina Mexicana. If I eat at the restaurant, I'll have been in the former location of his store. That'll be a priority.

Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society

Courtesy of Google Maps

Luttrell indicates that his store was located there in the 1980s and 1990s. Originally built in 1852, 108 King St. housed the *Capital Times* in its basement from 1917-1927. While it's currently a two-story building, at one time, there were three stories. That seems appropriate for a building with a journalistic and literary past! (Get it? Stories? Heh.)

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #33

Aug. 28, 2025

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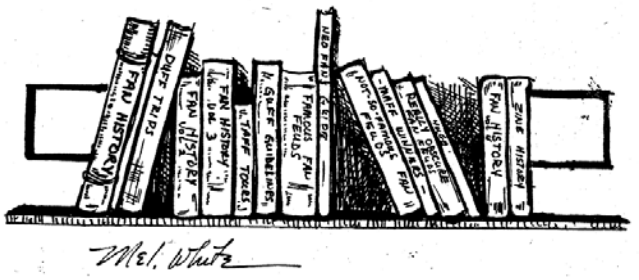


From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Inhuman Condition by Clive Barker (Poseidon, 1986)

Originally published in England under the title *Books of Blood* Volume IV, this collection compiles five tales of terror. All of the stories seem to have been original to that volume, without previous publication.

The title story, a novelette, is a tale about several juvenile delinquents who roll a drunk, procuring a mysterious length of knotted string. The knots become an obsession, passing from hand to hand, and as they become undone, dangerous creatures are released. Sometimes, powerful forces can be restrained by little. "[A]ppearances can be deceptive. In fact, that's the rule, not the exception," Barker writes.

"The Body Politic," also a novelette, is a humorous example of body horror. Shades of movies such as *The Hand* and *Idle Hands*, or even *The Addams Family*'s Thing T. Thing, the story details an uprising in which appendages go out on a limb. The author terms it "body-in-rebellion" syndrome. One of my favorite characters, a Rastafarian, suggests that multiple appendages can be affected thusly.

The novella "Revelations" might be my favorite story in the collection. A traveling revival preacher, his wife, and an assistant are stuck overnight in a motel during a thunderstorm. Their room was the site of a shooting 30 years ago, and the ghosts of the killer and victim, a married couple, return from the afterlife to patch things up if they can. Their presence has some effect on the relationship of the preacher and his wife, and history—in a way—repeats itself. The character Laura May, daughter of the innkeeper, is especially interesting.

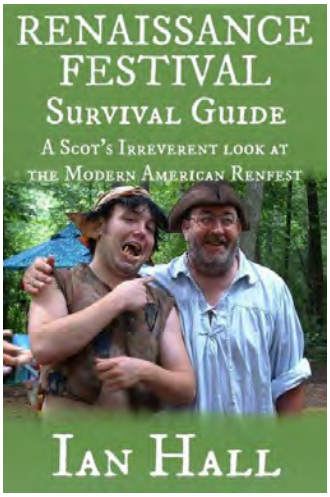
The short story "Down, Satan!" is the briefest piece at six pages. It reminded me slightly of Edogawa Rampo's *Moju: The Blind Beast* (*Faculae & Filigree* #43). A wealthy man who failed to find heaven attempts to recreate hell on Earth in order to attract the attention of the devil. He might have succeeded.

And "The Age of Desire," a novella, qualifies as sf. Scientists develop a serum that, when injected, brings its test subjects to hitherto unreached heights of passion and lust. That goes about as well as you might expect. The story is also notable for its gently critical commentary on pop music, advertising and product design, and machismo. "Men's supply of passion … was easily depleted," Barker writes. "Though they might threaten to move earth and heaven too, half an hour later their boasts would be damp sheets and resentment." What a phrase at the end!

The writing in this collection is more fantastic and less splatterpunk than I remember from my previous reading of Barker. He also put into writing something I've long thought but not expressed as well: "We're *all* dying… . Life is a slow disease, no more nor less. But such a *light*, eh? in the going."

Barker burns brightly in this collection.

The Renaissance Festival Survival Guide by Ian Hall (Hallanish, 2013)



After visiting the Bristol Renaissance Faire near Kenosha, Wis., last weekend (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #176), I had Renaissance festivals on the brain—and sought out the HBO miniseries *Ren Faire* and related reading. This "informal and hopefully amusing guide to the modern Renaissance Festival" was written by a long-time fair participant who eventually became a performer and jewelry maker, selling his wares at festivals throughout the

Midwest.

The primary purpose of the ebook is to determine what is appropriate—and inappropriate—at a Renaissance fair. The GRiFON test—Genuine Renaissance Festival, or Not?—is jokingly applied to multiple aspects of current-day events: the music performed, pirates, Gypsies or the Romany, belly dancers, and other elements.

Hall's approach to determining what belongs at a Renaissance fair and what decidedly does not is somewhat based on historical research and is primarily delivered with humor and verve. He also addresses other aspects of such festivals, less to apply the GRiFON test and more to share the background on why particular aspects are present.

The author discusses jousting, turkey legs, William Shakespeare, accents, the codpiece, cleavage, and weaponry. The result is a brief, breezy read that's shallowly interesting and amusing, but not important or in depth. The Renfest Out-of-Place Game might make for a fun on-site scavenger hunt or Bingo counterpart.

It was worth the $0.99 I paid for it.

Touched by Walter Mosley (Atlantic Monthly, 2023)

While I was aware of Walter Mosley's crime fiction, I only recently learned that he also writes science fiction—at least since the late 1990s. At the central Madison Public Library, I checked out a copy of his short story collection *Futureland*, and then I saw this hardcover "chapbook" (so saith the *Internet Speculative Fiction Database*) at the Verona Public library while there for a reading by John Porcellino (https://www.king-cat.net) and Chris Fink (https://www.finkc.com). I read this book before the short stories.

At 159 pages, it's a quick read. The story focuses on a character who wakes from a dream realizing that he is one of 108 people on Earth now assigned to the Great Change, each with their own Plan. "[T]he planet itself, had spawned a disease of which I was a part," Mosley writes. "This contagion had begun to multiply and it had to be rendered impotent—by any means necessary."

Genetically modified, the protagonist is a superior version of himself—stronger, more forward, more honest—and can pass on some of his abilities and power to others through the transmission of saliva, blood, and semen. He is arrested relatively early in the book, and much of it deals with his arrest and imprisonment, interactions with law enforcement and the legal system, and encounters with the compatriots of a man with whom he was jailed.

Mosley also directly addresses the lived experience of racism, and the hero at times remembers that he's black, that his position in society is different because of that, and that his behavior—and treatment—might adjust as a result. Among the social commentary and New Age spirituality, there's also a compelling, adventurous conflict between good and evil.

Touched feels like an experiment, almost as though it were a lark. That there are 107—perhaps 106 by the end of the book—others like him suggests potential for at least one sequel.

—William Rotsler

Screened at the Infernal Wilson: Movie Reviews

Don't Listen

As my friend and weekly partner in cinematic crime put it: Don't Bother. While interesting on its face, this 2020 Spanish supernatural horror thriller—original title: *Voces*—is a bit of a stinker. A married couple moves into an old house in order to fix it up and resell it. Their 8-year-old son is able to hear voices, occasionally through a walkie-talkie, and the voices instruct him to draw things—and sometimes do things. Terrible things.

The movie is largely a series of cinematic cliches. It draws on so many different horror movies and styles that you could play Bingo based on its inspirations alone. Here's the *Insidious: The Red Door* moment! Here's *Poltergeist*! That must be the expert from whom they'll seek help. *The Omen*? Check. *The Exorcist*? Boy howdy! Here come the Conjureverse elements.

What could have been a suspenseful Old Dark House movie or ghost story ends up coming across as a bit glib and shallow as it runs through its influences at a pretty brisk pace. The filmmakers even throw in a secret prison in the cellar, torture implements, and witchcraft trials. One of those movie ideas might have worked well. Trying to cram so many into one did not.

A particular visual aspect did impress me. The use of lighting and shadows while in the discovered cellar makes some of those scenes relatively effective. The rest of the movie, however, is a mess.

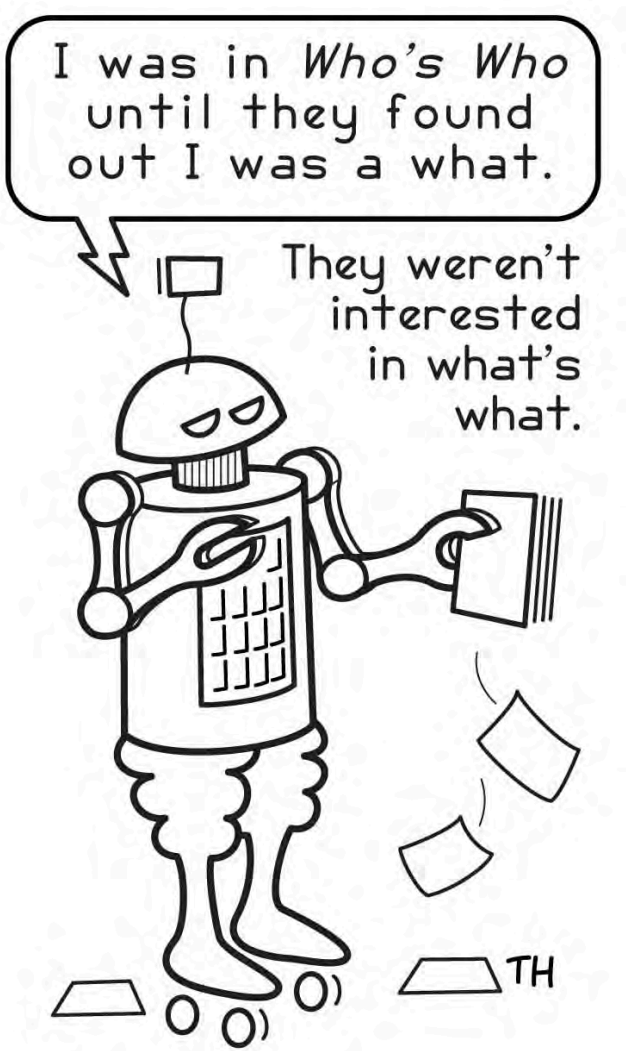
Comments on eAPA #256

In the Official Organ, I could hardly believe that **Henry Grynnsten**'s *Wild Ideas* #62 was only four pages long. Thankfully, that was an error, and his always-interesting fanzine actually clocked in at 16 pages. In this edition, he explored the "hysteria" surrounding travel, specifically the performance of wealth and status on social media. As one who currently remains in between states and places, I look forward to his essay.

In regards to my "Earth-O-Vision" quip, I was trying to be punny, coming up with a name as close to Eurovision as possible. Your proposed name for the song contest, while more accurate, perhaps, might be a little ungainly. We'll continue to workshop it.

"[W]e should establish a dedicated fund to support the expansion of missionary work to every nation—so that the good word can reach people in all corners of the world," you wrote. "I nominate Garth Spencer to come up with the name for the fund and to organize the whole thing." Mr. Spencer, do you accept the nomination? Other fan funds include TAFF, DUFF, GUFF, FFANZ, CUFF, and NAFF, so the approach to naming is pretty consistent and clear. Perhaps DEFT: Darn Everywhere Fan Travel. Or DAFT: Directions All Fan Travel or Deliverance for All Fan Travel.

If our missionaries are to bring the Good Word of one single sf book to all the people of the fine lands far and wide, which book should it be? Google's AI Overview contends that "There isn't one universally agreed-upon 'best' science fiction book, but some of the most frequently cited and beloved titles include *Dune* by Frank Herbert, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, *Foundation* by Isaac Asimov, *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell." Maybe the Adams text?



—Teddy Harvia

Maybe some of our fellow eAPAns are confusing hippies with yippies, zippies, yuppies, guppies, puppies, or some other group. There are actually two forms of zippies, an offshoot of the yippies and

another as explained by *Wired* magazine in 1994. (https://www.wired.com/1994/05/zippies) A 2019 book review in *The New Yorker*, "Hippies and Yippies in Historical Fiction" (https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/06/hippies-and-yippies-in-historical-fiction), might prove instructive. Your description of hippies is recognizable to me.

I found your attempts to translate the Esperanto version of Spencer's fanzine amusing. "Sed mi jam traktis tion aliloke" reminded me of Rasta Talk and might mean "The jam on my tracksuit looks like alioli." That's a fun game, and I mean Esperanto—or any language—no disrespect.

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 15, 1954

Your comment about trusting thermometers resonated with me. In late August, after going to a nearby Renaissance fair (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #176), the tire pressure light went on in our car. So midweek, I went home from work early in order to put more air in the tires before driving to my parents to pick up some mail. That meant that I checked the inside of the car to see what the tire pressure should be, looked up the difference between cold and hot tires—it was a warm day in the sun; were the tires still cold?—and so forth. While doing some research online, I came across a comment that one person didn't trust the pressure gauge on their pump and recommended that others use a separate manual tire pressure gauge. So, there might be some variance in pressure gauges as well as thermometers. Regardless, I'd still trust them generally.

In any event, I was actually unable to put more air into the tires at first because the car wouldn't start (the pump I have plugs into the car) and its dashboard lit up like a Christmas tree—or like the Las Vegas Strip to be less seasonal. I called AAA's roadside assistance service for a battery test, hoping that it was just the battery, not the alternator or a more complicated and expensive electrical issue. About two hours later, I had a favorable diagnosis—just a dead battery—and a new battery.

Not only was I relieved that this happened while parked in the lot for our furnished apartment, the Infernal Wilson, rather than at the Renaissance fair or some other inconvenient, out-of-the-way place, I was relieved that I didn't have to select an automobile mechanic, arrange for such work, rent a car, and so forth—because we're moving to another short-term residence at the end of the month. The situation could have been much more difficult. As it was, it was just a passing hassle.

So, tell me more about this female tourist. Thank you for introducing me to the idea of the bokslukaråldern, or book devouring age. What a wonderful concept and time of life. Google's AI Overview—take it with a grain of salt—suggests that women tend to read more than men because of "early exposure to reading, social conditioning that encourages reading, a greater enjoyment of fiction for its emotional and empathetic qualities, and the presence of supportive reading communities." On the other hand, men might be drawn to other forms of entertainment, occasionally lack reading role models, or prioritize functional requirements for reading.

When it comes to travel, AI Overview indicates that women might travel more than men because of "a prioritization of experiences and personal growth, and travel being seen as a form of self-care and a break from traditional responsibilities." Your contention that patrilocal societies with exogamous marriage might contribute seems reasonable to me.

Focusing solely on whether American college students leave their home state to go to university, we might consider the following. About 20 percent of college students go to a school outside of their home state. (Some data indicates that might be as high as 31 percent.) Generally, women seek education more than men: ~43 percent of undergraduate students are men while ~57 percent are women; 39 percent of graduate students are men while 61 percent are women. My

cursory research hasn't yielded a gender breakdown for students who leave their home state.

While you might be painting with a broad brush—I'm not convinced that men stay at home primarily to participate in hunting- or gathering-like activities—the essay was thought provoking. I'll have to spend more time researching gender differences in travel. Even the Institute for College Access & Success' 2023 Geography of Opportunity brief (https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Hillman-Geography-of-Opportunity-Brief-1_2023.pdf) doesn't break things down by gender. The Migration Data Portal seems to do a good job considering gender (https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/women-girls-migration) but indicates that only slightly more women migrate to North America, Europe, and Oceania. Globally, more men migrate.

As the political situation continues to change in the United States, we're seeing an increase in relocation driven by abortion and other healthcare access, and women's rights. Education, empathy, and a greater variety in potential mates might have been joined by other considerations. All of this is dependent, of course, on one's income, so there's a class disparity in all of this. Moving and travel is for many a luxury.

In *In the Meantime* #13, **William McCabe** reported on a local history project that sounds fun though frustrating. May you find the information you desire! I can appreciate the need to keep track of what you read. I don't know that remembering everything that you read in terms of content is important, but I do like to remember what I read in terms of the title or container. (Experiencing a text doesn't always mean learning a text.) Regardless of what I remember, I also don't always recognize it if I reread something—or see something again. When I do recognize something I didn't remember, I usually move on to something else unless I'm enjoying it thoroughly.

I quite like that Alan E. Nourse wrote a book called *The Bladerunner*, William S. Burroughs wrote *Blade Runner: A Movie*, and the film adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was titled *Blade Runner*. I'll have to seek out the first two!

Your discussion of the Fugs and Ed Sanders made me think about the Holy Modal Rounders and Peter Stampfel, whom I recently learned married Betsy Wollheim of DAW Books. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #172) Both bands are totally worth listening to.

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #157 took a look at "SF Folks Who Have Contributed To Science," including Dan Alderson (who also participated in the Terrean Amateur Press Society), Jordin Kare, Arthur W. Saha, and others. I especially enjoyed learning about the numerous Swedish scientist-fen such as Jan-Åke Wallenius and the prozine *Aniara*. (I just watched the 2018 movie and have started reading the book-length poem by Harry Martinson—fascinating! I also need to seek out the 1960 television movie, an avant-garde, atonal opera.)

I'll also have to seek out Arthur C. Clarke's "Dial F for Frankenstein," which was new to me. I had no idea that taser was an acronym for "Thomas A. Swift's Electric Rifle." Its inventor, Jack Cover, named it after the 1911 novel *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle*. Thank you for your ongoing report on Archipelacon 2. I do enjoy your conreps. The box of older Swedish and Norwegian books sounds like a delightful find. The lettercol was a joy to behold.

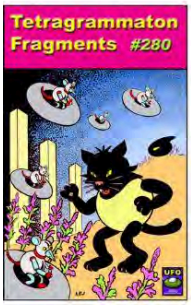
And in *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #236, **Garth Spencer** mentioned the Unity Housing Society. I'm intrigued by the cooperative aspect of your living quarters! It doesn't seem quite like cohousing but feels more intentional than other housing options. Your August sounds full of worthwhile activity.

I look forward to hearing more about the campout. The photograph on the cover was great fun. Did you personally throw hatchets or axes? Not only was I not aware that Alexis A. Gilliland wrote as well as drew—I didn't know he wrote about artificial intelligence. His Rosinante series looks promising. On which book(s) are you commenting?

Chicago Tribune, Jan. 15, 1954

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) Check out the Official UFO Website at https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags

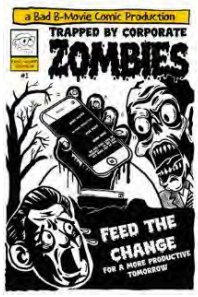


TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS! (THE UFO NEWSLETTER) ($4.00 for non-members, or a 6-issue subscription for $24 from Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821. Or, PayPal to: stevekeeter@gmail.com) The Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members. Many of the greats of small press have been, and are, involved in this influential group.

CAPFAN #2 ($3.50 postpaid in the USA from Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195 or via Paypal to robimes@yahoo.com) Captain America comics of the 1980s are examined. Ceylon Anderson reviews Cap #284 and Mark Domeier reminisces about reading the series through the years. Rob Imes compares the long runs of Mark Gruenwald and Ed Brubaker. There's also a defense of the 1980s spin-off series Team America. Plus a letters page. 32-page B&W digest size fanzine.

IMPROBABLE GIRL & THE WONDER KITTY #14 ($10 USA or $15 Canada PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com, or email marisolinskikitty@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Alex Moore's dramatic front cover of Mari and Niko gives a startling glimpse of the action to come! The main story is Joe Carrales' "Journey To The Master of the World, Part 2" – a 23-page epic in which The Improbable Girl and Wonder Kitty endure an attack from a super submarine and a power-hungry madman! Brian Amstadter is on board as well, with the comedic "Captain Coffee Cup." And check out Mark Wyrosdick's stylish artwork in a compelling backup strip "Madame Justice in a Man Called Spade." The New People's Journal also appears, and a profound illustration honors our dear, departed friend Larned Justin.

THE MIGHTY ENERGYGIRL #38 ($7.99 US or $9.99 Canada from Ken Bailey, 2232 N 30th St., Sheboygan, WI 53083 or via PayPal to Ken @ cartoonistman32@gmailcom) The mighty artist/writer/publisher Ken Bailey pulls out the stops in this latest issue (#38!) of THE MIGHTY ENERGYGIRL, in which the great super heroine competes against her former protegee, heretofore known as "Newbie"! Even in dreams, Energygirl cannot escape the challenge of this larger and more muscular superheroine! As the Federal Department of Super Heroics (FDSH) intervenes, Energy Girl is stripped of her official heroic capacities... but we can darn sure tell she's not going to take this lying down!



TRAPPED BY CORPORATE ZOMBIES #1 (Available on Matt "Doc Hoff" Hoffman's website for $9.00 plus shipping, at this link: www.dochoffcomics.com) The amazingly talented Doc Hoff offers a weird, creepy, and satirical look at modern toxic life... in a "Bad B-Movie Comic" featuring corporate zombies! In a post-apocalyptic world, humans are collected for breeding purposes by the living dead. Somehow, Matt Hoffman makes this extremely humorous, and even a bit poignant. Not like anything else you'll read this month!

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