

# Dither

This may be Ross Chamberlain's  
contribution to Apa V 16

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**F**ANDOM, hey? ♪ *The fans that I live with, the illos that I love... That's what Fandom means to me...* ♪ Well, actually, the topic seems to be "Fandom (One Shot in a Million)" which seems like good odds to me. Wish Las Vegas had that good a life expectancy among its population.

**Fandom** (fān'•dēm, fān'•dūm) *n.* A loose community of special interests.

I once wrote a segment of a fan article—no, it was a letter of comment, to Stu Shiffman—purporting to be from an alternate universe (Stu's really into playing with alternate universe stuff, or at least he used to be). I wish I had it handy. I made up a few words for it—a Gauschwau duper was the equivalent of a Gestetner mimeo, as I recall. But the word for fan was *dev* (devotee) and things could be *devvish*—I wish I could remember other neologisms and aspects of the thing. I got into oddities of spelling, word-derivation and sentence construction and the like, so much so that it took some deciphering. I may have overdone it. The entire reaction from Stu was: "What?"

At that point, I had a sense that the devvish ethos was pretty similar to ours within a world that had gone awry from ours quite some time back—the language had more German and Spanish elements or roots in it, for one thing (because those are the two languages I had in high school). I think that its fandom (*devdom* doesn't seem quite right, maybe it was something like *devheit*) was perhaps a little earlier in its development than ours—but not as early as First Fandom or today's electronic gaming fandom. It was still pretty much an unacknowledged subculture (hmm—*devnation* occurs to me, though I doubt me that was what I called it then). Of course, *dev* lent itself to punnish possibilities with "devilish" and the like, so that I felt that the mundane aspects of that world would see devs as having more of a mischievous side than I think ours does or did, and that devs would quite happily live up to it. (Not that our fans could ever be so considered—oh, no!) The devvish Ray Nelson might have drawn fans with *horned* propeller beanies... Rotsler—probably no different.

But devs would be just as independent and resistant to over-organization as we are (and overdoing it when not), getting together on projects that have inner, devvish-related significance (*à la* TAFF or a convention) rather than of social or pragmatic import. Degler aside, fans were never an advocacy group.

I'm not sure if devs thought of themselves as the equivalent of Slans. Fans—our fans—tend to be social elitists (we're all elite together, but some are more elite than others...), I think. Devs aren't necessarily particularly inclined toward embracing the lowest common denominator concept either, but in

that world I think democracy and consensus were a little harder won and achieving them a little more recently part of the human struggle. They have less patience for divisiveness. Oh, there are BNFs and WKF's of sorts—I suppose that should be BNDs and WNDs (their spelling reforms eliminated silent "k"s), but devs don't really feel the need to distinguish them as a class. Novadevs (neofen) are simply new fans who don't yet know the jargon and some of the devvish traditions. And so on—I'm not saying their world is better; either, just—alternate. Besides, as long as I'm making it up...



My experience with fandom is largely one of constant surprise at my acceptance. I've been less responsive to its embrace than is reasonable, quite unconscious of why I should be resistant but nevertheless pensive about it. Sooner or later you guys'll find me out. I've mentioned before that when Art Widner introduced me among the well-known fans at SilverCon a couple of years ago I was astonished—and floating on a natural high for quite some time thereafter. Concentrated Egoboo. Heady stuff! Especially for a self-styled fringefan.

Yet I've had fun over the years, all in all. Certainly I've enjoyed participating in the personal journalism aspects of fandom as well as sharing space at gatherings like the Vegnants and, in olden days, FISTFA, the Insurgents and the various incarnations of the Fanoclasts. I look back in wonder at some of the things I've created as fanac; superior, many, to anything I've done lately. (But then, those are the things that have survived; I guess there were bunches that belong to Sturgeon's 90%.)

On that cheerful note—'bye for now!

Ross