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1. I know that you folks depend on me to keep you informed about what is happening in the real world. You live your wretched lives oblivious to what is r\_e\_a\_l\_l\_y happening until I come like the pony

THE MT VOID

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express bringing news from the r\_e\_a\_l American culture. Well, there is what could perhaps be construed as good news this time. I see it as an optimistic sign; let me see what you think. For a long time, the general public has had a diminishing interest in history. Perhaps that is not quite accurate. Perhaps it is more a refocusing of historical interest. There is less of a focus on "What was the Hundred Years War and why didn't people get tired of it sooner?" and more of an interest in "How did the Rolling Stones come to be formed?" and "What was it like in the formative period of the Grateful Dead?" The historical films being made were less in the spirit of, say, A\_n\_n\_e\_o\_f\_a\_T\_h\_o\_u\_s\_a\_n\_d\_D\_a\_y\_s and more like T\_h\_e\_D\_o\_o\_r\_s. People used to be interested in "How did the world get in the awful state it's in?" and now it is more "How did rock music attain its current state of such unexcelled perfection that every music store wants to play it at sound levels usually reserved for taxiing 747 engines?"

Well, anyway, that was I felt yesterday. What a difference a day makes! There was an ad on television that totally changed my viewpoint. Can you imagine, it was an ad on regular commercial television and it opened with pictures of people like Napoleon and Tutankhamen. These are people you haven't seen on commercial television for the last decade or so. And now they are featured in a commercial! How edifying! This is the reincarnation line. It is a 900 number that you call and answer questions with a Touchtone (tm) phone and it tells you who you might have been in a previous life. At least it can be an educational medium. If I was told I was a reincarnation of somebody named Moliere (I wish!), I'd probably make sure I knew who that was. Of course, it would be somebody famous, because why be a reincarnation of somebody non-famous? Actually, I was intrigued and discovered I was actually someone fairly obscure in my last life. At least the encyclopedia didn't list him. Maybe someone out there could help. Anyone know who Jim Morrison was?

Mark Leeper  
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A man has generally the good or ill qualities which he  
attributes to mankind.

-- William Shenstone

## 23RD INTERNATIONAL TOURNEE OF ANIMATION

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Since 1969 the International Tournee of Animation has been an annual event produced by a company that calls itself Expanded Entertainment. A very limited number of theaters will get this feature-length compilation of animated films as short as a few seconds long or as long as this year's 22-minute "Grey Wolf & Little Red Riding Hood." Usually the films are winners of obscure prizes like "First Prize at the Hiroshima Animation Festival." As the years have passed the technique has improved, but there but there have also come to be several competing compilations each year. At the same time the 23rd International Tournee is playing in New York, so is the Festival of Animation 1991 (at another theater). A few months earlier, the British Animation Invasion was playing in New York and there is also something called the Animation Celebration. Sad to say, this much demand for animated films means that more mediocre films get shown. Usually the International Tournee would have the Oscar-winning and the also-rans. Invariably, there would

be some nominated film that would seem (to me at least) more creative and better than the actual winner. Ironically, this year, when I think the Oscar winner is really excellent, it showed up in both the F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l\_o\_f\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n and in the B\_r\_i\_t\_i\_s\_h\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n\_I\_n\_v\_a\_s\_i\_o\_n, so "Creature Comforts" is not included in the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e. And it is sadly missed, being far superior to anything in the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e.

As is usually the case I throw out my usual scale and rate the animated films poor, fair, good, very good, or excellent. This year the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e had nothing poor, but nothing excellent either. Now to the individual films.

- "Fast Food Matador" (Vincent Cafarelli & Candy Kugel; U. S. A.; 4:15): This is a continuation of the trend towards including animated music videos. It is unclear whether what we should be reacting to is the music or the animation. Neither was greatly noteworthy. The song seems to be about a deli delivery boy who either is metaphorically a matador or imagines himself to be a matador. Though there is a humorous note at the end, overall this one is just passable. Rating: fair.
- "Getting There" (Paul Driessen; Canada; 1:36): This seems to come down to a homily that being home is better than travel. A man inspired by a travel poster actually travels but keeps ending up where he started. Rating: fair.
- "At One View" (Paul & Menno de Noojier; Holland; Grand Prize-- Stuttgart International Animation festival; 6:27): This is a

Dutch film that combines animation with live action somehow modified to look like animation. It is a little long at six and half minutes of technique, and while it is not a story with a plot, it does say some interesting things about animation. Rating: very good.

- "Big Bang" (Bruno Bozzeto; Italy; 4:10): This piece, by the animator of A\_l\_l\_e\_g\_r\_o\_n\_o\_n\_T\_r\_o\_p\_p\_o, is a message story telling of the evils of pollution. The story is trite and didactical (unless you think that any anti-pollution message is deep).

The cartoon builds to a pun in English, which leads me to wonder how the end was handled in the original Italian.

Rating: good.

- "The Breakdown" (Klaus Georgi; Germany; Audience Award--Stuttgart International Animation Festival; 3:25): This is a short little blackout sketch that may or may not have an anti-government sentiment. It does not work very well on the most obvious level. Rating: good.
- "Arnold Rides a Chair" (Craig Bartlett; U. S. A.; 1:00): This is a very short piece done for "Sesame Street," though Arnold seems to be dressed in the uniform and cap of an English school. Also, Arnold looks a little half-witted, which works against the point. Arnold sits in his chair and imagines it takes him to a magical land. Rating: good.
- "The Lift" (Alexander Tatarsky/Pilot Studios; U. S. S. R.; First prize--Hiroshima Animation Festival; 9:00): One of the more amusing pieces of the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e is for the U.S.S.R., surprisingly. I say "surprisingly" because it has been suggested that the Soviet Union's only Twentieth Century sense of humor left the country with Yacov Smirnov. This is a set of short and often fairly funny blackout sketches seen from the inside of an elevator. Each time the doors open we see one of the six or seven pieces. Rating: fair.
- "I Should See" (Paul & Menno de Noojier; Holland; 2:00): This is more of the same things the de Noojiers did with "At One View." Not very interesting this time around. Rating: fair.
- "Photocopy Cha-Cha" (Chel White; U. S. A.; First Prize--USA Film Festival; 3:30): Everything here is made on a photocopy machine. This is an entirely new technique in animation and in 210 seconds we see this new medium pioneered, mature, and become over-used and finally exploitative. Now that this medium has been fully explored, new filmmakers can move on to something else. Rating: fair.
- "The Potato Hunter" (Timothy Hittle; U. S. A.; Most Popular Film--Seattle Film Festival; 7:11): A little man, animated in

clay, lives a life like a lone American Indian, hunting the herds of buffalo-like wild potatoes. It is, of course, a dangerous life battling these huge and mean potato beasts. You can never be sure when a tormented tuber will turn on you. This one is quite enjoyable and one of the better pieces, even if it is reminiscent of a film done several years ago about a fork catching wild peas. Rating: very good.

- "Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions" (Henry Selick; U. S. A.; 5:30): A three-legged girl with two heads looks through a keyhole to see Slow Bob go off on a weird adventure that does not make a whole lot of sense. There are more weird images than logic, well-suited to MTV (for which it was made). Rating: fair.
- "Capital P" (Stephen Barnes; Canada; 3:30): Probably the best piece in the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e is a contribution from Canada. "Capital P" brings back all those terrors we felt as children and have since forgotten. Our only character is a little boy who on a dark and stormy night must walk down a long and scary corridor to get to a toilet. It walks a very fine line between comedy and horror. Rating: very good.
- Luxo Jr. in "Light & Heavy" and "Surprise" (John Lasseter & Andrew Stanton/PIXAR; U. S. A.; 1:15): [Personal note: This is the first time I have ever reviewed the work of an actual acquaintance. Many of you on Usenet will recognize the name of Craig Good. I was even fortunate enough to have dinner with him after he saw for the first time W\_h\_o\_F\_r\_a\_m\_e\_d\_R\_o\_g\_e\_r\_R\_a\_b\_b\_i\_t? I would have liked to have been more positive here.] This piece was done for "Sesame Street" and is intended to teach basic concepts of reality to children. Those of us who already know the difference between "light" and "heavy" will find this fare pretty light. "Luxo, Jr." a previous effort, entertained mostly because of its technique. "Light & Heavy" just repeats that technique. I think this piece was appropriate for "Sesame Street" but not entirely appropriate for the T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e. I think that is more a reflection on the people who did the choosing than it is on the piece itself. Rating: fair.
- "Oral Hygiene" (David Fain; U. S. A.; Winner--Sinking Creek Film Festival; 3:17): This is a fairly funny piece of tongue-in-cheek about teeth. It is essentially a music video for ... well ... oral hygiene. It will show you several good reasons to keep your teeth clean, saving the best for last. Rating: good.
- "The Wrong Type" (Candy Guard; U. K.; 4:14): Candy Guard features what sound like very ordinary people in very ordinary situations and then draws bird-like people (or perhaps just people with huge noses) as her characters. Several of her

pieces showed up in the B\_r\_i\_t\_i\_s\_h\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n  
I\_n\_v\_a\_s\_i\_o\_n. This one  
 deals with a woman failing to learn to type and failing to hold  
 onto a good job as a result. Rating: good.

- "Ode to G. I. Joe" (Gregory Grant; U. S. A.; Student Academy  
 Award Winner; 4:55): The title is the cleverest thing about  
 this stop-motion story of toy G. I. Joe dolls having a party  
 and dancing. The same dancing was a lot funnier in "Electric  
 Funky Disco Chicken." It combines that with the old idea that  
 toys are only themselves when nobody is around. That one goes  
 back at least as far as "The Gingham Doll and the Calico Cat."  
 Rating: fair.

- "Grey Wolf & Little Red Riding Hood" (Garri Bardin; U. S. S.  
 R.; Grand Prize--Annecy International Animation Festival;  
 22:00): This is about the longest piece I have seen in a  
T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e. It is a retelling of a fairy tale (guess which  
 one!) as a sort of elliptical allegory. What it is  
 allegorizing is less clear, though these days it is safe to  
 guess it is anti-totalitarianism. Little Red Riding Hood (who  
 is n\_o\_t a Little Red) wants to take a Russian pie to Paris. The  
 wolf wants to eat Riding Hood. Riding Hood sings a Russian  
 song. The wolf sings a charming "Mack the Knife." It is all  
 reasonably enjoyable to watch, but the political message is  
 muddled and open to conjecture. Rating: good.

- "Push Comes to Shove" (Bill Plympton; U. S. A.; Best Short--  
 Cannes Film Festival; 4:41): Bill Plympton's blackouts often  
 are funny. This set of blackouts did not appeal and has a sort  
 of "Three Stooges" quality. Two stodgy-looking men take turns  
 doing violent things to each other. The victim just stands by  
 passively and lets the violence be done. Then he retaliates  
 while the first stands by stoically. The sort of attack is one  
 drops a cat and mouse inside the victim's mouth and they fight  
 it out inside the victim's head. It all does build up to a  
 point, albeit a banal one. Rating: fair.

Overall, I would have to say this was a below average T\_o\_u\_r\_n\_e\_e.  
 Rumor has it that the F\_e\_s\_t\_i\_v\_a\_l\_o\_f\_A\_n\_i\_m\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n

\_ 1\_ 9\_ 9\_ 1 is better and I  
will be seeing that soon.

### BARTON FINK

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

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Capsule review: Very strange but supremely well-crafted film from Joel and Ethan Coen. The Coen Brothers have the best batting average in Hollywood. They have made four films and each of the four is highly recommended. During a bout of writer's block (which they obviously got over) writing M\_i\_l\_l\_e\_r'\_s C\_r\_o\_s\_s\_i\_n\_g they wrote this strange film about a young playwright facing writer's block in Hollywood. Great performances, great photography, strange film. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4). (Spoiler follows the main body of this review.)

Joel and Ethan Coen have managed to do what no other American film makers have been able to do. Even Woody Allen turns out the occasional misfire. Allen is extremely creative and the really creative take chances. Sometimes they win, sometimes they lose.

The Coen Brothers have made four films: B\_l\_o\_o\_d S\_i\_m\_p\_l\_e, R\_a\_i\_s\_i\_n\_g A\_r\_i\_z\_o\_n\_a, M\_i\_l\_l\_e\_r'\_s C\_r\_o\_s\_s\_i\_n\_g, and now B\_a\_r\_t\_o\_n F\_i\_n\_k. Each has been a



totally original film and each has been spell-binding. They have made four winners out of four. If they made T\_e\_x\_a\_s\_C\_h\_a\_i\_n\_s\_a\_w M\_a\_s\_s\_a\_c\_r\_e 6, every tuxedoed film critic in the country would be waiting in hushed excitement to see T\_e\_x\_a\_s\_C\_h\_a\_i\_n\_s\_a\_w M\_a\_s\_s\_a\_c\_r\_e 6. Well, the concept of a chainsaw film at least sounds like it might have some action. But the idea of a comedy-drama about writer's block sounds like it is asking too much of even the Coen Brothers. What could be less cinematic than writer's block? It is something that is internal and creates no visual sparks for the viewer. Well, believe it or not, the Coen Brothers have made a fascinating and entertaining film about writer's block.

In the early 1940s, a great new social playwright, Barton Fink (played by John Turturro) has had his first play produced. It is a moving story about the sort of fishmongers he saw around his home on Fulton Street in New York. For a moment he has fame and that is just what he does not need. A Hollywood studio chief who has never seen his play wants the status of having Fink writing his pictures. With the force of big money he plucks Fink out of New York and lays him down in Hollywood. Fink has a tremendous fire in his belly to help humanity ("What do you do for a living?" "I try to make a difference."). But instead of a social drama he is given the task of writing a wrestling film for Wallace Beery, much like Clifford Odets wrote G\_o\_l\_d\_e\_n\_B\_o\_y.

Fink looks at Hollywood like a baby looking through the bars of a crib, with a combination of amazement and a lack of comprehension.

Barton Fink

September 18, 1991

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It was as if he had suddenly been transported to another world. So that he will not lose touch with the common man he decides not to stay in glitzy Hollywood hotels, but at the economical and just slightly sleezy Hotel Earle. The Earle is just beginning to fall apart and boasts a staff that looks like the living dead. There in his room Fink sits trying to write a great film to make a difference for the common man--which will also be a wrestling picture for Wallace Beery.

One paragraph comes out of his typewriter and then nothing.

His overwhelming drive to write is blocked by a symphony of minutiae. His room seems to become a living breathing creature. Some law of conservation maintains always exactly one mosquito in the room. The walls digest the glue that holds on the wallpaper. Then there is Charlie Meadows. John Goodman plays Charlie Meadows, who starts as a distraction, a noisy neighbor, and becomes Barton's only friend and confidante. Barton writes about the common man, but we get the feeling he has never really known one, in spite of his Fulton Street origins. Barton's play was literary and eloquent, but not very realistic. Charlie \_ i \_ s the common man. The two make a stark contrast. Barton pulls everything he has inward in a tighter and tighter ball--even his hair seems tense. In contrast, Charlie lets everything out. He is outspoken; he oozes sweat and occasionally pus. His belly bulges and casually rolls out and over the top of his pants. And Barton is fascinated by the casual, unashamed animalness of his new friend. The scene shifts from his hours in the hotel trying to write and talking to Charlie to the weird alien world of the Hollywood studio. The studio life is back-stabbing politics (it is Barton's bad luck that the studio boss likes him, we are told and later come to believe). At the studio we meet weird people with whom Barton hilariously fails to connect. And Barton meets W. P. Mayhew, one of America's great writers, who has in recent years been sucked dry by Hollywood like a fly in a spider web. He meets and is attracted to Audrey Taylor, Mayhew's highly personal secretary. And thereby hangs a tale.

Many of the faces in \_ B \_ a \_ r \_ t \_ o \_ n \_ F \_ i \_ n \_ k will be familiar to most viewers. Turturro is here in his second Coen Brothers film. His role as Bernie in their \_ M \_ i \_ l \_ l \_ e \_ r ' \_ s \_ C \_ r \_ o \_ s \_ s \_ i \_ n \_ g will probably be the one for which he will be best remembered in years to come, though this performance probably equals that one. Another respected film maker, Spike Lee, has featured Turturro in no less than three films. John Goodman is also a repeat Coen Brothers actor, having played Gale Snopes in \_ R \_ a \_ i \_ s \_ i \_ n \_ g \_ A \_ r \_ i \_ z \_ o \_ n \_ a. He is, of course, well known for theater, film, and television work. Michael Lerner and John Polito (the latter of \_ M \_ i \_ l \_ l \_ e \_ r ' \_ s \_ C \_ r \_ o \_ s \_ s \_ i \_ n \_ g) are incredibly boorish and weird as the studio chief and his favorite yes-man. Judy Davis of \_ M \_ y \_ B \_ r \_ i \_ l \_ l \_ i \_ a \_ n \_ t \_ C \_ a \_ r \_ e \_ e \_ r, \_ A \_ P \_ a \_ s \_ s \_ a \_ g \_ e \_ t \_ o \_ I \_ n \_ d \_ i \_ a, and the recent \_ I \_ m \_ p \_ r \_ o \_ m \_ p \_ t \_ u plays Audrey Taylor.

Coen Brothers' films are strong on good dialogue, but they also have a marvelous visual style that perfectly creates an atmosphere.

As with M\_i\_l\_l\_e\_r'\_s\_C\_r\_o\_s\_s\_i\_n\_g, their period feel in

B\_a\_r\_t\_o\_n\_F\_i\_n\_k is

almost too rich to be believed. Here they bring us a sepia-toned 1940s worlds. The credits are shown over brown 1940s wallpaper that prepares us for the claustrophobic story to come. When we see the hotel room itself, it is decorated with perfectly placed slabs of light--sunlight reflected off dust in the air. It is a pleasure to watch a film as carefully crafted as this one. Peculiarly, there is one very bad continuity error and one it is hard to imagine was missed in the editing. Toward the end of the film we see a man in a military uniform. The ribbons on his chest seem securely in place and falling off in alternate shots. That one surprising fluff aside, this film is a visual marvel. Academy Awards are really deserved here.

B\_a\_r\_t\_o\_n\_F\_i\_n\_k really is the best new film I have seen this year and well worth seeing. I give it a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

[SPOILERS FOLLOW.]

My first reaction after seeing Barton Fink was that watching this film was like watching an expert gymnast on a trampoline who jumped just perfectly but came down wrong. When this story seems to be slowing down late in the film, it is only to allow it to make an acute left turn, one shockingly unexpected. On consideration, I think that is a sort of self-referential touch. The most common and banal of genres in Hollywood today is the psychotic killer film.

B\_a\_r\_t\_o\_n\_F\_i\_n\_k is a psycho-killer film as it would have been written by Barton Fink. Fink knew he was writing a wrestling film all along but kept the wrestling to a minimum and even then wanted to do a different take on wrestling. That is just what the Coen Brothers do with the psycho-killer plot. Alfred Hitchcock showed a psycho-killer film could become a genuine classic. It took the Coen Brothers to make one good enough to win the Golden Palm at Cannes.

SPECTREWORLD by Isadore Haiblum  
Avon, 1991, ISBN 0-380-75858-X, \$3.95.  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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There is no evidence on the cover that this book is a sequel or part of a series, but it certainly reads like one. Characters are introduced as if we had met them before, and halfway through the novel a totally bizarre invention shows up which is either a very bad example of d\_e\_u\_s\_e\_x\_m\_a\_c\_h\_i\_n\_a or something from a previous novel. (I had this awful feeling it was the former, but actually it was the latter; shortly after finishing S\_p\_e\_c\_t\_r\_e\_w\_o\_r\_l\_d and a first draft of this review I went to Chicon V and ran across I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_w\_o\_r\_l\_d at a used book dealer's table. S\_p\_e\_c\_t\_r\_e\_w\_o\_r\_l\_d is the sequel to I\_n\_t\_e\_r\_w\_o\_r\_l\_d which is, naturally, out of print.)

The story itself is a hard-boiled detective yarn, though in this case the detective is actually the head of a robotic security force. Someone is attacking all the sites they guard and the robots turn out to be fairly useless, being mostly cowards who seem remarkably like Marvin of T\_h\_e\_H\_i\_t\_c\_h\_h\_i\_k\_e\_r'\_s\_G\_u\_i\_d\_e\_t\_o\_t\_h\_e\_G\_a\_l\_l\_a\_x\_y. It turns out that this is all leading to an attack from parallel universes, but given the bizarre Balkanization of our own into rival city-states, this twist seems superfluous by the time it is introduced (along with the aforementioned invention allowing travel between universes).

I really wanted to like this book. But the annoying robot portrayals, combined with my having come into this series in the middle, prevented me.

(I would like to mention a note placed on the copyright page stating that if you bought this book without a cover, you were purchasing stolen property. Whether this will cut into coverless

book sales remains to be seen, but at least it is informing more people--I hesitate to say "the average reader"--about where coverless books come from. I have since seen at least one other publisher put in a similar notice, so this could be a new trend.)

Chicon V 1991  
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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(Part 1 of 3)

Chicon V, the 1991 World Science Fiction Convention, was held August 29 through September 2 in Chicago, Illinois. The attendance was quoted to me by Registration as approximately 5500, with a registration of about 6400. This is just a rough estimate; at no time did the convention newsletter announce the figures, nor did the information desk have any idea, and other sources have claimed that only half of the 5200 pre-registered members attended, plus 400 at-the-door members (totaling 3000, for the mathematically impaired). The latter figure sounds far too low, but the state of the economy certainly made a dent in attendance. (And in sales--Andy Porter said that I was the only person to buy a \_ t \_ w \_ o-year subscription to \_ S \_ c \_ i \_ e \_ n \_ c \_ e \_ F \_ i \_ c \_ t \_ i \_ o \_ n \_ C \_ h \_ r \_ o \_ n \_ i \_ c \_ l \_ e rather than a one-year.) The lack of information is a far cry from last year's convention when the statistics by country were in the daily newsletter. The European contingent was much less in evidence than at last year's convention in the Hague, which shouldn't surprise anyone. One attendee from

the U.S.S.R. said he left there the day of the coup and in fact spent the first night of the coup in the Moscow airport. The U.S.S.R. fan table was selling science fiction buttons and also old Lenin and Communist lapel pins. I think everyone is trying to unload those.

We arrived in Chicago Wednesday morning and spent Wednesday afternoon at the Oriental Institute and the Museum of Science and Industry, as well as in a couple of bookstores. Thursday morning was the Field Museum of Natural History. However, I will confine my description to the convention itself. But I will mention that the "five blocks" mentioned in the progress reports from the rapid transit to the hotel was really eight--directions should be double-checked and miles or kilometers are a much more universal measure.

### Facilities

The convention facilities were quite reasonable. I don't know about the overflow hotels, but the two main hotels and main convention facilities were all connected by tunnels, malls, etc., meaning one never had to go outside. (As someone pointed out, the domed city of the future \_ h\_ a\_ s arrived.) If you did go out, there were many restaurants within a fifteen-minute walk, so even though most of the mall's restaurants were closed Sunday and Monday, there was no problem eating.

My only major complaint would be that a ballroom was used for the masquerade and the Hugo ceremony rather than a theater-type room

(which provides much better visibility). Yes, the two were broadcast into the sleeping rooms in the Hyatt, but I sort of felt obliged to be physically present at the Hugo ceremony. :-) Having the events broadcast is a good idea; the line waiting for the masquerade Saturday night convinced me I didn't want to stand in it to see the masquerade and so I could go back to my room and watch in comfort. But more about the masquerade later.

Another complaint was that although the Dealers' Room and Art Show adjoined, the connection was blocked off (except for handicapped access) and to get from one to the other required going

up an escalator, down a hallway, through the main programming area, and down another escalator. The plus side was that the Art Show was easy to get to from the programming, which may have helped boost attendance.

### Registration

We registered Wednesday night and got our Program Books and Pocket Programs. Chicon used the now-standard technique of putting program participants' schedules on labels on the backs of their badges, but for some reason did not have ribbons for Hugo nominees (and the pins weren't available until the next day). Staff and program participants both had red ribbons; dealers and artists both had green. Staff had red borders on their badges instead of white, but it was still confusing.

Registration managed to run out of Program Books for several hours on Thursday (the books were locked away somewhere), and friends said the procedure was somewhat slow.

Other odds and ends: the badges had clips only--no pins. This is fine for shirts with pockets or lapels, but not so great on T-shirts. The newsletters were late--Thursday's came out between midnight and 3 AM Friday morning and was gone from most spots by 10 AM. Even skipping one of the issues in an attempt to catch up didn't help. The drop-off points seemed to be at the freebie tables which were quite a ways away from all the programming, etc. (though near the Con Suite) and mixed in amongst all sorts of other flyers which were on high counters wrapped around pillars in registration, high enough that I couldn't just glance over but had to make a real effort to see what was what.

There were lots of flyers on the freebie tables, but the days of freebie books and magazines seems largely to have passed, no doubt a victim of the current economic conditions.

### Program Books

The Pocket Program, though done by computer, had no index by participant. (Funny how something can become expected only two

years after its introduction. This was specifically mentioned in last year's gripe session and ConFiction's excuse was a database crash shortly before the convention. Wasn't Chicon listening?) In keeping with last year's convention, the descriptions of the various panels were not in the Pocket Program, though at least the titles were a bit more descriptive than last year. The descriptions in the Program Book were not in alphabetical order, but in semi-chronological order(!), making it almost impossible to find a description for a given panel, or the time when an interesting sounding would happen. And, of course, since the Program Book went to press a while ago, some of the described panels had been canceled and others added in the interim.

In addition, there were other, more substantive errors. The "Phantom of the Opera" panel was listed as "literary" in the Pocket Program, but its description in the Program Book made it clear it was intended as "media" (about the Lloyd Webber play, of course)--or at least that's what the Programming Staff thought. Of course, even there, it was listed as "illusion" (the only item on the "illusion" track, in fact). When I got to the panel, it turned out that they didn't understand the description at all ("The play-within-a-play philosophy of the show and its SFX, physical (real) and psychological"), so it turned out to be somewhat about the book after all. Of course, one panelist wanted to talk about the many versions, several about the many different Lloyd Webber versions only, and one was on because he knew about the special effects in one production! But more of that later.

On the plus side, all major tracks were collated within the Pocket Program (unlike last year, when there was no easy way to see the primary track and the secondary tracks side by side); only children's programming and gaming were separately listed. Most items occurred as scheduled, though items scheduled for two of the six sections of the main ballroom for Saturday and Sunday had to be canceled or moved when those sections were "commandeered" for technical run-throughs of the masquerade and Hugo ceremonies.

On the other hand, some people thought there were more problems with scheduling, cancellations, and maps than I did: Alayne McGregor asked, "Has anyone else noted the similarities between Connie Willis' story 'At the Rialto' and the meeting room assignments at Chicon? I'm thinking particularly of the disappearing L2 floor in the Swissotel."

The maps were adequate, though the print was very tiny, and the connecting path between the two main hotels not shown.

### Green Room

The Green Room at Chicon was perhaps the convention's worst feature (though the masquerade runs a close second). It seemed to



in the morning; at no time after 10 AM could one find all three of lack everything a Green Room needs: a complete schedule, an informed staff, refreshments, organization. Coffee was set out first thing coffee, cups, and cream (though sometimes you could get two out of three). When one participant told the staffer there were only two cans of soda left in the tub, the staffer brought out \_ o \_ n \_ e six-pack of cola! (Consider that there were supposed to be a couple of dozen people in there each hour preparing for panels, as well as the usual other participants looking for a quiet place to think.) The Con Suite, on the other hand, was amazing well stocked. If they had just brought some of the stuff from there.... (I'm all for giving the convention at large the goodies rather than hoarding them for the participants, but when I arrived for a late-night panel and couldn't get a cup of coffee to improve my alertness level while congoers in the Con Suite were sucking down the suds non-stop, I think that's carrying it a bit far.)

There was no master schedule indicating what panels were when or where (O NESFA, where are you when we need you?), and the staff said that wasn't their bailiwick--ask program operations (in a different, locked room). Name cards also came directly to the rooms from program operations, so it was always in doubt whether they would arrive either. (They were nice name cards though.)

### Dealers' Room

The Dealers' Room (a.k.a., the Hucksters' Room) was very large, with a lot of books, but also a lot of non-books. Most of what I found, though, was for friends rather than off my own want list--maybe I'm just too selective or something. It was somewhat off the beaten path, being a level down from the Hyatt programming and two levels down from the connecting corridor between the two parts of the Hyatt, but it was centrally located rather than off to one end. The aisles were large enough that you could walk around (and wheelchairs could negotiate as well). I found one book I was looking for, but it was \$100.

Someone pointed out that the index to the Dealers' Room was by dealer's name, not by business' name, so you couldn't look up "Hippogriff, Inc.,"--you needed to know it was owned by "Wu, Juanita." (I made these names up as examples--can't you tell?)

## Art Show

Many people liked the art show a lot. I found that as usual, there was too much cutesy fantasy and "humor" for my tastes (maybe they should set aside a separate area for Star Trek cartoons with punch-line captions, and then I won't go there). The room was large enough though, and it was possible to see the art without tripping over everyone else. The bidding seemed very light (the economy strikes again!) and the auction scheduled for Saturday was cancelled (but that may have been because of the function space muck-ups--see my comments under "Programming").

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## Con Suite and Exhibits

As I said before, the Con Suite was well stocked with soda and beer, as well as chips, pretzels, and popcorn. They sometimes had coffee, and occasionally brought in surprise treats (petit fours and such). It was, however, noisy, crowded, and pretty messy--which probably means it was a success. Rumor has it that the free beer in the Con Suite kept the crowds down at the open parties.

The exhibits (History of World Bidding, SF Around the World, and History of the Worldcon) were down the escalator from the Con Suite, near the bidding tables. The Message Board was conveniently located near the main programming area.

## Programming

Given that it's impossible to see everything at a Worldcon, I will cover just the programming I attended. I hope I got all the panelists right, but I foolishly failed to write down the names in the rooms, trusting I could get them from the Program Book later. Bad move--I \_ k \_ n \_ o \_ w the "Phantom" panel had closer to seven people than the four listed in the book.

For comparison, the Pocket Program lists about 520 program items, while ConFiction had 337 and Noreascon 3 had 833, not counting films or autograph sessions. The breakdown by type would be roughly 25% readings (123) (honest!), 20% science (102), 17% literary (90), 15% art (73), and the rest distributed among fan (29), academic (18), filk (14), costuming (13), late night (12),

media (11), cities (8), and trivia (3), as well as WSFS, SFWA, and other meetings, various ceremonies, and other special events.

There were also 86 films and a full schedule of television programs in their television retrospective (which claimed to have an episode from every televised science fiction show--it didn't, but it was very close).

By the way, this analysis would not be possible (or would be much more difficult) without the help of Bill Higgins, who sent out an electronic copy of the schedule to people a week before the convention. Thanks, Bill!

Opening Ceremonies  
Thursday, 3 PM

These were well-attended, but considerably less classy than last year's (when classical music was played as a platform rose from below the stage revealing the Guests of Honor). Instead, they decided to do the whole thing in a very large ballroom with no microphones (or only one badly placed microphone). They may have tested the acoustics first, but what may have been audible from the

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back of an empty, silent room was inaudible even part way back in a room full of moving, talking fans. Since the visual part consisted of half-naked men carrying people in on litters, I decided to leave early.

Panel: S S S Se e e ee e e e Y Y Y Yo o o ou u u u o o o on n n n  
t t t th h h he e e e N N N Ne e e et t t t : : :  
C C C Co o o om m m mp p p pu u u ut t t te e e er r r r  
C C C Co o o om m m mm m m mu u u un n n ni i i it t t ti i i ie e e es s s s  
T T T To o o od d d da a a ay y y ya a a an n n nd d d d  
T T T To o o om m m mo o o or r r r r r r ro o o ow w w w

Thursday, 5 PM

Evelyn Leeper (moderator), Chris Dunn, Michael Kube-McDowell,  
Robert Sawyer, Clifford Stoll, Chuq Von Rospach

Official Description: "Thanks to computer networks, millions now participate in social and professional exchanges using

electronic mail. What effect is this having on society? What will happen when the Net is available to almost everybody?"

I was the moderator of this and had contacted most of the panelists ahead of time (via electronic mail, of course), but was a bit worried when four of the five panelists hadn't checked in shortly before the panel and three didn't show up in the Green Room. When we arrived at the room, two of the three missing panelists were there, and Chuq Von Rospach had already sent his regrets because he was arriving too late. Well, we were (mostly) all there, but the microphone wasn't working. I announced finally that the loudest panelists would introduce themselves while we waited for the microphone to get fixed. Someone called out to me, "Use the mike!" so I grabbed the dead microphone, lifted it to my mouth, and said loudly, "Okay. Is this any better?" which got a big laugh. This helped put me much more at ease about moderating a panel.

Well, eventually we got everything working and proceeded with the panel. Though the description said we would be discussing what happened when almost everyone had Net access, we agreed this was unlikely on a global scale--most people don't even have telephones (or television). But we thought it likely that most people who have things like VCRs today would have Net access soon. Stoll described the Net as being populated by people "all the way from chemists to physicists" (which reminded me of "she runs the gamut of emotions from A to B"). This got a laugh--Stoll seemed to have intended it seriously--but it isn't far off in the sense that people with Net access do form a less than totally diverse class (just as the literate did several hundred years ago). Even the non-scientists among them tend to embrace science and technology rather than reject them. Within this subclass, however, there is a diversity of personalities, cultures, and perspectives. We agreed that one of the advantages of the Net is how it provides the ability to communicate with all sorts of people all over the world. (The telephone doesn't do that, especially considering the time differential--when \_ d\_ o you call someone ten time zones away? And the telephone is intrusive, while bulletin boards and electronic mail wait for you. The postal service is too slow, and neither the postal service nor the telephone has the broadcast capabilities for

you to meet these people in the first place.) Stoll, for example, said he received 10,000 to 20,000 messages in response to his book T\_h\_e\_C\_u\_c\_k\_o\_o'\_s\_E\_g\_g.

Wider Net access, then, would seem to imply fewer voice phone calls (though more data calls), and fewer pieces of paper mail (even now, fax is cutting into this area). By not having to handle paper, more information can be transmitted faster. For example, Mark and I do a weekly fanzine with an average of 6 pages a week and a distribution of over two hundred. On paper, this would involve collating, stapling, mailing, etc. Electronically, it's much easier, not to mention the trees being saved. And for those who want a paper copy, they can print it at their end rather than our having to mail the paper. Saul Jaffe does three issues of S\_F\_L\_o\_v\_e\_r\_s\_D\_i\_g\_e\_s\_t\_a\_d\_a\_y, a number I think would be impossible if he had to print them, especially considering its circulation. (By the way, Nick Simicich (scifi.uucp) has announced a general availability service for S\_F\_L\_o\_v\_e\_r\_s\_D\_i\_g\_e\_s\_t; he will send you paper copies of the digest for postage and copying fees; send a check of at least US\$10 to Nick Simicich, P.O. Box 1214, Peekskill, NY 10566 USA and he will send you the Digest until your account runs out. Non-USA residents should send at least US\$20. Get further details from him.)

Given the conclusion that Net access would not be universal soon, we talked more about the pros and cons of life on the Net now, along with some problems of scale. As you might expect, all this has its bad side too. The Net can be a real time sink, especially for authors making their own schedules (according to Kube-McDowell). And the quantity of data--particularly on the unmoderated part of Usenet--can be overwhelming, or as Stoll put it, "a firehose in [your] eyes." Were this all useful data, it would be bad enough, but the signal-to-noise ratio is nearer 10% than 100% (some might say 1% is even closer).

In addition, the relative anonymity of the Net makes "flaming" (violent or abusive criticism of an individual) easier. Even the traditional print media include a columnist's picture at the top of a column or an author's photograph on a dust jacket. This serves to make the author a person and probably tones down the sorts of letters received. The Net has no such capability yet. (One can transmit pictures, but not easily and not in a format everyone can use.) But every cloud has a silver lining and this lack of visual cues also makes the Net very egalitarian. Age, race, sex, handicap--all are unknown (many users use "handles" similar to CB radio that conceal any clues a name might give.).

However, before we all become one big happy Net community, we still have to overcome a few obstacles, such as multiple inconsistent and incompatible networks (people on GENIE can't send electronic mail to people on the Internet, and vice versa) and what one person described as "lousy user interfaces." In regard to the

latter, Stoll said his biggest problem was that he used six different networks, each with a different interface. An analogous situation would be if you owned six VCRs, three Beta and three VHS, and all had different ways to program and use them. (Come to think of it, that's not far off the mark. We have three: one requires on-screen programming, one has both on- and off-screen, and one uses a display screen in the hand-held control. One has a timer button; the other two use the on-off button to activate the timer. On one (two?) a second press of the fast-forward button returns the tape to normal speed; on the other(s) you need to press the play button. And so on.)

Of the three hundred or so in the audience, about 60% had "free" access to networks through school or work and about 60% used a pay network such as CompuServe or GENie. Obviously some had both--20%, since everyone seemed to be hooked up somehow. This was not the case at all panels, though, and a convention with a lot of programming about networking might do well to schedule a "Electronic Networks 101" panel early on to define such terms as "modem," "bulletin board," "sys op," and so on.

It must be mentioned that whatever the limitations of networking may be, the Internet and Usenet were instrumental in helping defeat the recent coup attempt in the Soviet Union, so networking affects even those who are not directly hooked in.

Panel: H H H Ho o o ow w w wt t t to o o o  
 U U U Un n n nf f f fa a a ai i i ir r r rl l l ly y y y  
 J J J Ju u u ud d d dg g g ge e e ea a a aB B B Bo o o oo o o ok k k k  
 b b b by y y P P P Pa a a ag g g ge e e e l l l 1 1 11 1 1 17 7 7 7

Thursday, 11 PM

Theresa Nielsen-Hayden (mod), Evelyn Leeper, Laurie Mann,  
 K. Massie-Ferch, Robert Reed, Amy Thomson, Chuq Von Rospach

Official Description: "Would your favorite novel hold up if you judged it by the first page? How about page 117" (By the way, this description appeared on page 117 of the Program Book!)

There was some discussion beforehand about whether the title meant judging a book on the basis of what was \_ o \_ n page 117 or what was up to and including page 117. Luckily one person had been on the original Readercon panel which inspired this and was able to

confirm it was the former. The technique used was to read all of page 117 of a book and then let the audience and panelists make observations about the book: category, quality, etc. The fact that none of the six of us (alas, I cannot remember which of Massie-Ferch, Reed, or Thomson was not present) had a book with us meant that we had to borrow books from friends in the audience. We started with a couple of mysteries, William Marshall's T\_h\_e\_F\_a\_r\_a\_w\_a\_y M\_a\_n and Sara Paretsky's I\_n\_d\_e\_m\_n\_i\_t\_y O\_n\_l\_y. Next was Dave Wolverton's S\_e\_r\_p\_e\_n\_t\_C\_a\_t\_c\_h, which did not fare as well in the quality area. I think it was the reference to the Mastodon Men that lost it points. (This was lent to me by a friend whose name will be concealed to protect the innocent--he bought it in the airport and decided early

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on it was pretty bad.) After I returned home I read that Wolverton had just handed in the s\_e\_c\_o\_n\_d\_h\_a\_l\_f of the novel--not a sequel--to be published soon. I wonder if this was the book that Budrys was talking about in his recent F&S F column.

Then came Eluki bes Shahar's H\_e\_l\_l\_f\_l\_o\_w\_e\_r, written in an odd mixture of high-flown language and colloquial dialogue. Full of words such as "baldric," it prompted me to reminisce that when I was in school we used to get twenty "Word Wealth" words a week and we had to write a story using all of them--I hadn't realized these stories were getting published now.

Jennifer Roberson's S\_w\_o\_r\_d-B\_r\_e\_a\_k\_e\_r was described as reading like a high school production of a Shakespeare play, or as Theresa Nielsen-Hayden described it, it had too many speeches of the type "I say thee, nope!"

The question of whether all this was a valid way to judge a book was raised. The consensus was that you have to have some way to judge a book in the bookstore (unless you have infinite money to buy everything and infinite time to read it) and that page 117 was at least as reliable as trusting the cover blurbs or the critic's quotes. I pointed out that this method was only valid with novels, not with non-fiction and not with anthologies or collections. We suggested that if page 117 looked bad, pick another page at random; assuming that page 117 is about one-third of the way through, try

one at about 234 or so. I said that there was a series that started out good, but by book seven or so I could pick up a volume, read ten pages at random, and not find the plot being advanced on any of them. (After the audience tried unsuccessfully to guess the series, I admitted it was John Norman's "Gor" series.)

Panel: P P P Pr r r ro o o oj j j je e e ec c c ct t t t  
C C C Ca a a an n n nc c c ce e e el l l ll l l le e e ed d d d: : : :  
G G G Gl l l lo o o or r r ri i i io o o ou u u us s s s  
T T T Te e e ec c c ch h h hi i i ie e e e  
D D D Dr r r re e e ea a a am m m ms s s so o o of f f f  
Y Y Y Ye e e es s s st t t te e e er r r ry y y ye e e ea a a ar r r r

Friday, 10 AM

Arlan Andrews (mod), Laurie Mann, Ken Meltsner,  
John F. Moore, John Maddox Roberts, Dave Stein

Official Description: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" A look at what might have been, from the Analytical Engine to damming the Mediterranean to the nuclear airplane."

The panel started by having the panelists list their "favorite" failed dreams--the ones they would most have liked to see come true. Moore stuck close to real-life projects: MISS (Man in Space Soonest) and a space program called "Dinosaur." Roberts said he missed holograms and "the city of the future" (though as someone pointed out, we were in it in the Illinois Center, what with the Hyatt's skylight lobby and the enclosed mall surrounding the hotels). Andrews (a former Bell Labs person) wanted fusion power, which the papers had said was forty years in the future. The problem was that

it was \_ a \_ l \_ w \_ a \_ y \_ s forty years in the future (though someone said that now they were saying it was twenty years in the future). Meltsner missed robots, especially the "man-mate" sort, including a centaur-like one in which you stand in the front and the back half is robotic. Mann, ever the activist, missed good, reliable, safe birth control.

Stein yearned for walking machines (which he remembered being described under the slogan "Wheels Are Dead!"). Of course, the ones



built needed a semi-trailer full of hydraulics to run and could only be operated by women experienced in balancing on high heels (probably even stiletto heels at that time). Even then, they were extremely tiring to use. All sorts of investigations were made for them. For example, the walkers tended to sink into the walkways, so a team was sent out to study moose in the north woods and why they don't sink in the mud. The answer? The moose don't sink in the mud, because the moose don't walk in the mud--they walk around it.

Other failed dreams mentioned included underwater cities (Stein), cities on Mars (Mann), and Arctic cities under glass. Meltsner mentioned cheap and efficient air travel, but said even cheap and efficient postal service would have been nice. (Andrews wanted efficient and swift elevators.) Meltsner also mentioned someone's idea to recycle manure into cattle feed, an idea that failed when the bad bacteria tended to overwhelm the good bacteria used in the process, resulting in a large, smelly mess. Large atomic aircraft failed when not only did the radiation make the entire plane radioactive, but no one would let them land anywhere either. Solar energy and artificial intelligence were also mentioned as dreams of yesterday that did not blossom as people expected. But Mann pointed out that even though traditional AI has failed, almost every home has a computer (if one includes all the electronic watches, calculators, etc., that people of yesterday would certainly have called computers). Maybe it is true: "You can't always get what you want, but sometimes you just might find that you get what you need."

Roberts mentioned the Picturephone (is that still an AT&T trademark?). Others pointed out that video-conferencing is basically Picturephone, and Andrews said that Picturephone itself was making a comeback.

What were the panelists' techie dreams of today that they thought would fizzle out in the next nine years? Moore named the super-conducting collider, and Stein named fusion power. Roberts cited "wetware," and Meltsner thought nanotechnology in general would not achieve expectations. Mann thought the biosphere experiment in the Southwest would not achieve its goals. Everyone agreed that all these failed projects would have spin-offs that we couldn't even dream of now--every cloud has its silver lining.

There was also a discussion of failed economic and political systems (I wonder why?). That Raisa Gorbachev spent twelve years getting a Ph.D. in Marxist/Leninist philosophy was taken as an example of how the future can make obsolete political training as well as scientific training. What else has appeared to fail (or failed to appear)? Controlled anarchy said Stein, and Communism on a large scale said Mann (that's too easy, Laurie). Moore said that the current breakdown of Communism seemed to be the "people asserting their fundamental right to kill other ethnic groups." It was pointed out that the techie dream of networking was part of what killed the coup: the Soviet Union can't shut down just the civilian phone lines, because they are inter-connected with the military ones, so all the networking traffic couldn't be stopped. And hand-held video cameras can be expected to bring about more cases such as that of Rodney King in Los Angeles.

Andrews pointed out some interesting things about S t a r T r e k in this context. It had been claimed to him that science fiction on television was making people more liberal or even libertarian, but a close examination of S t a r T r e k showed him that:

- everyone works for the government,
- everyone wears uniforms,
- no one votes in any sort of elections,
- there is no money, and
- the examples of free enterprise (no pun intended) we see are Harry Mudd and the Ferenghi, neither held up as great examples to follow.

In short, S t a r T r e k was reactionary rather than revolutionary.

Returning briefly to the issue at hand (from which we had clearly drifted), two more failed techie dreams of today were mentioned: body sculpturing and major changes in family structures. Though some change in the latter area is in progress, it seems obvious that major changes involving the recognition of group marriages, marriages for a limited time period (at least officially recognized as that from the start), etc., are not in the near-future.

The panelists' want list for future techie dreams was intelligent conversational computers (Stein--I suppose the observation that it's getting harder to find intelligent conversational p e o p l e would be considered catty), matter transmission (Mann--especially for transporting equipment to a con), decent apartment heating and a moderated Usenet (Meltsner), nanotechnology (Andrews--though on another panel someone said they wouldn't trust nanotechnology because "would you want a hardware crash in your pancreas?"), a weight loss pill and a baldness cure (Roberts), high efficiency recycling (Moore). Moore also wanted involuntary education, possibly by injection, which led another

panelist to comment that aside from all the civil liberties issues, you would have scenarios where the teacher calls the parents in and says, "I'm sorry, but little Billy is allergic to mathematics" ... and means it!

The mention of L5 colonies led one panelist to observe that most of the people pushing for them, especially at conventions, would never qualify, because in such a small space colonists would need to be clean and polite.

Afterwards, I asked if the modified SCUD missile was a failed techie dream of (Saddam Hussein's) yesterday.

Panel: F F F Fa a a an n n nz z z zi i i in n n ne e e es s s s  
o o o on n n nt t t th h h he e e eN N N Ne e e et t t t? ? ? ?  
( ( ( (T T T Th h h he e e eF F F Fu u u ut t t tu u u ur r r re e e e  
o o o of f f fF F F Fa a a an n n nz z z zi i i in n n ne e e es s s s) ) )

Friday, 12 noon  
Tony Ubelhor (mod), Evelyn Leeper, Dick Smith,  
Leah Zeldes Smith, Chuq Von Rospach

Official Description: "Alternatives to the written word for fan publications."

(What a silly description! Fanzines on the Net are done almost entirely in the "written word," as artwork is still difficult to transmit. Of course, if they mean \_ r \_ e \_ a \_ l \_ l \_ y written, as with a pen and ink, no fanzine is done that way that I know of.)

Someone on this panel referred to "organized fandom," which was immediately leapt upon as an oxymoron, but it seemed as if the major objection to fanzines on the Net was that fandom there was even less organized than outside the Net. But the major obstacle to communicating on this panel was that the non-net people seemed to be talking about newsgroups, bulletin boards (BBs), special interest groups (SIGs), and so on--not about fanzines. It was difficult to explain in this setting that there were \_ f \_ a \_ n \_ z \_ i \_ n \_ e \_ s--magazines edited by someone, having distinct issues, sent out on a schedule, and so on. I tried to use the \_ M \_ T \_ V \_ O \_ I \_ D (our clubzine) as an example: I

produce some paper copies for those who have no computer access, but mostly I send out electronic copies that people can print at their end (if they want) rather than having me print them at my end and sending them the paper. The end result is the same, only faster and more convenient.

Newsgroups, on the other hand, are on-going discussions with no deadlines, no editing, and often no content. They merely serve as a useful way to divide up the discussions by topic. I described them as a sort of Dewey Decimal System; Von Rospach said they were more like Dewey Decimal on Drugs.

All this confusion between newsgroups and fanzines merely underscores the need for the "Electronic Networks 101" panel I mentioned earlier.

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When we finally did get down to brass tacks, there were a couple of issues raised. One was the motivation for writing in a fanzine. We all agreed, I think, that many people on the Net write more for quantity than for quality, but those of us familiar with electronic fanzines believe (I think) that in the \_ f \_ a \_ n \_ z \_ i \_ n \_ e \_ s the quality is basically equal to that of "traditional" fanzines. (I would observe in passing that two of the six nominees for Hugo for Best Fan Writer this year are known for their electronic writing as much as for their writing for "traditional" fanzines.) The other problem raised was that of archiving electronic fanzines. But I pointed out that first of all, many are designed to be printed--the electronic medium is only for the faster transmission and the fanzines are unreadable unless you actually print them. Second, many paper fanzines probably suffer the fate of being lost because no one has saved a copy. (Okay, I have the first issue of the UMassSFS fanzine, but I'm an unrepentant pack rat. How many other copies are there around? Yet I suspect that between disk archives, and people who archive paper copies, there will be a lot of electronic fanzines around. The \_ M \_ T \_ V \_ O \_ I \_ D is two-thirds electronic, yet there are at least four sets of full archives of it.)

I think a more real (and usually unspoken) concern is that now that networking is so wide-spread, electronic fanzines may completely overshadow "traditional" fanzines. Yet no one (well,

hardly anyone) objected when photocopying replaced mimeo or even hectograph. It is much easier to distribute several hundred copies of a fanzine electronically than it is using hard-copy, and circulations in the thousands are not unheard of. It is also true, however, that many of these recipients are not currently in fandom, so fears of electronic fanzines "taking over" the Hugos are, as yet, unjustified. I see these fanzines as enlarging fandom and the fannish community, and I think this is a good idea. I suspect there are those who want fandom to remain small enough for everyone to know everyone else, but I'm afraid it's too late for that. But there will be more commentary on this as this report proceeds.

WSFS Preliminary Business Meeting  
Friday, 1 PM

This began with a lot of procedural stuff, followed by a long apology from D A. Martin about why the ballot got released in two pieces. (A preliminary ballot with only three names in most categories was released to \_ L\_ o\_ c\_ u\_ s and CompuServe, then a subsequent ballot with five entries on all categories (and six in one) was released.) The explanation seemed to boil down to the committee saying they gave the preliminary ballot to \_ L\_ o\_ c\_ u\_ s so that Charlie Brown could verify that all the candidates were eligible, but it wasn't made clear this was only a preliminary ballot. Then someone explained to the ballot-counters that they had misinterpreted the rules and there were really more eligible candidates than they said, but by then the news was out. Why the ballot was posted to

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CompuServe, and why it is necessary to have an outside source--which as a news magazine has an interest in publishing the list of nominees as soon as possible--verify the ballot was not at all explained, and I hope that in future the committees get their act together on all this.

The meeting then proceeded to set discussion times for various motions, which would actually be discussed at the business meeting on Saturday. First were five amendments passed on from ConFiction (amendments must be ratified by two consecutive worldcons before taking effect). There were also eleven proposed constitutional amendments submitted this year and six standing rule amendments.

The debate time for the old amendments was set at times varying from six minutes to thirty seconds (well, they were already debated at great length last year). Of the new constitutional amendments proposed, several were killed outright (including the "Life Hugo for Non-English Language Writing," "A Year Delay on the Hugos," and the "Hugo Fanzine Proposal" regarding electronic fanzines); others had their debate times set for the next day's meeting. Several of the standing rule amendments were also killed ("Partiers' Rights," "Defining 'Session,'" "Editorial Changes," and the "Shut Up Amendment"--don't ask). I didn't stay for the whole session; when the "Hugo Fanzine Proposal" was defeated, I decided to skip the rest and see something besides a business meeting.

This seems like a good place to comment on the "Hugo Fanzine Proposal." It is spoken of as allowing electronic fanzines, but in actual fact the amendment would also have extended fanzine status to audiocassette fanzines for the blind, videocassette fanzines, and so on. The wording, we realize now (and knew even at the time) was awkward, and tried to do too much in one stroke. So next year we will probably try again. To the argument that an electronic fanzine would require a recipient to buy special equipment, I would reply that the same is true of an audiocassette fanzine, a videocassette fanzine, or for that matter a paper fanzine that the publisher would only fax, not mail. You can rent a fax machine at the library or the corner drugstore these days, true, but you can also rent a computer at many libraries. Where does one draw the line? I think most fans would say that an audiocassette fanzine for the blind should be eligible. This alone means that terms have to be redefined. For example, "professional" versus "non-professional" publications are defined strictly in terms of "press run," a concept meaningless when applied to an audiocassette. One part of the proposal, which probably should be split off, would have defined "professional" as having a c i r c u l a t i o n of over 10,000, and in addition paying either its contributors or its staff in other than copies of the publication. (This is in line with the SFWA definition of "professional.") Stay tuned for further developments.

(To be continued)