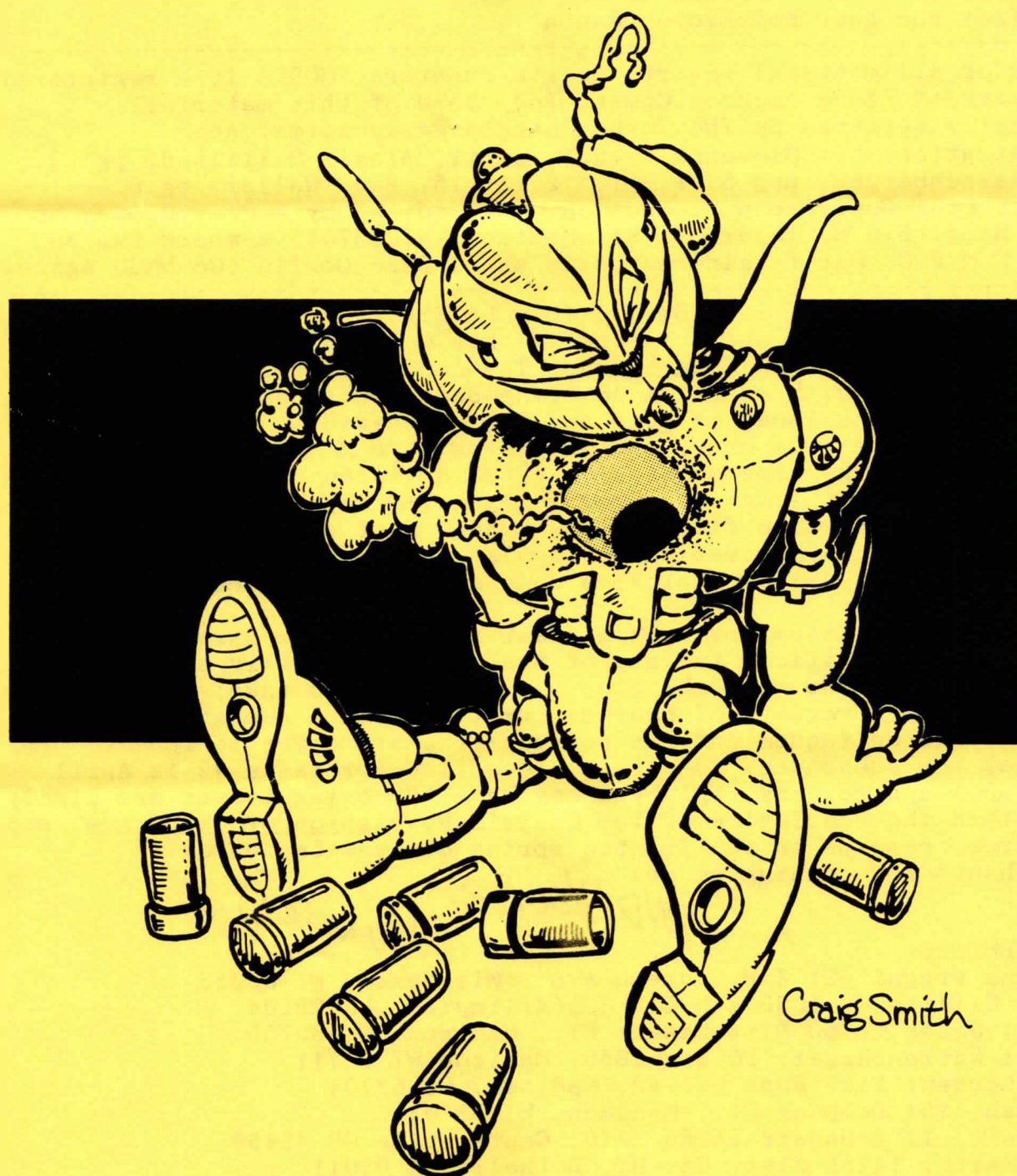


# SPENT BRASS



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Spent Brass #1, January 5th, 1989. "The Fanzine with a heart of Iron"  
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WHY. IS THIS LATE?

This has been a while in coming, but we're happy to be sending out the first issue of Spent Brass. The concept for Spent Brass, of a regular genzine with material covering both fandom and SF, arose from reading some back issues of Pong and DNO purchased at auction in Seattle. Looking them over, and listening to F.M. and Elinor Busby over breakfast the same morning, created a vision of romantic service at Roscoe's wheel, spinning a regular genzine which covered both fandom and speculative fiction. The reader must judge to what degree random forces have altered these ideals on our part, but we hope that Spent Brass at least communicates some measure of our enthusiasm for the project.

This first issue features a guest rant by Peter Larsen, who, while choosing critical targets of his own, essentially states the editorial thrust we hope the zine will continue to take; to present material from a variety of sources, writing from a number of perspectives on fandom and its pursuits. We are eager to receive material for subsequent issues (the deadline for issue #2 is April 1st, 1990) and for any reply you may have. Upcoming issues are likely to contain the conclusion of Tom Quale's Revelation of the Brave, and of course, reports on the frantic spring convention season.

Thanks for opening us up!

ANDY HOOPER      Carrie Root

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# LIVE WITHOUT DEAD ZINES!

The world is too much with us. Here at Spent Brass we realize the horrid truth of that bon mot, but we take it a step farther -- we make the world sorry they came. Too often, one spends every minute of the damn day keeping bloody pathetic medio-crity at bay. Worn out from defending the barricades, we used to whine and curse, unable to dream of making it any better. No longer. We're out to prove that a large enough pile of shell casings in the yard (be it ever so tiny) will make even the most appalling screwheads realize their position is not secure.

Yep, that's it -- the big stick -- and we intend to use it. Before the politely reticent blanch and wander off, we'd better make ourselves clear. The plan is not merely to cow the vomiting mass of the mediocre (although that would be nice) but to combat it by presenting what really makes us burn, the stinking infection of our own obsessions that we want to pass on to you. We lust after fire, fury, badly misplaced passion, the odd, the obscure, the unclean, the unbelievable -- we want to you to taste all of this, bitter, nasty, and pungent. We want to drag you out into this godawful storm we've found and let you get really wet. We want to piss you off, make you think, give you some taste of what we are about. If you don't like it, write, swear, stamp your little feet, but we will keep on saying it. The bastards, so there.

God help me, I've been reading FOSFAX again, and a more noxious pile of tripe...fuck, I'll be fair, they are regular, and the repro's pretty good -- but I can't stand it! Why! Why would anyone, however totally devoid of sense or style or ability, want to spend the sort of energy that this takes to put out every month and do it so badly? From pointless articles to the appalling blurb reviews of Joseph "Readsalot" Major (Who has since dropped the nickname -- APH), to a rambling and distracted letter column,

FOSFAX begs for some editorial attention, someone to give the zine a focus, a style, a sense of attention, to cut the forty pounds of fat off each forty-two pound issue, and make this thing sing. It's not that it can't, it's that there is so much background shit that you can hardly stand looking for the few gems that crop up now and again. FOSFAX, will you please find an editor, and a life, and do all our kidneys a favor?

We did promise not to get too negative; here's something that isn't a pile of shit -- Colin Hinz' Novoid. Genius! This is wonderful! Multicolor mimeo, a sense of layout and typography, a clean windshield and a clear attitude, this 'zine burns on the visual page; it is a joy to look at, and is amazing to read. Tight articles, strong editorial presence, a faanish soul that doesn't like it and knows that the future is somewhere else. Yow! Colin finds writers with clear eyes, steady hands, and lots of scabs -- you should try this, it's tasty. Colin has crawled around the altar of fandom, but he has his nose in other, more interesting dishes as well. Get a look at Novoid, or die trying; anything else is idiocy.

If you've ever wanted to escape from the SF fanghetto, if you realize that pathetic worship of big-dick rocketships and telepathic (Christ!) unicorns wears thin after, hell, I don't know, fifth grade, if you realize that there's more to this mail-order road map than moronic book reviews, then Fact Sheet Five might be your baby. Mike Gunderloy sticks his prehensile neck down into the cesspool of the population, and he comes up with a whole mouthful of things only a few stamps away. Fact Sheet Five is a list of ultra-small press releases -- fanzines, mail art, tapes, rants, an incredible spewing of dreams and desires and that desperate need to talk, late, late at night, when you've got something to say that needs to be said now. Gunderloy bundles all this

stuff into a short but flavorful review on everything he receives, and in a few lines, he manages to tell more about what's in the production and why he hates/likes/ is appalled by it and why, than "Readsalot" has managed to express in his entire misspent life. Fact Sheet Five is just the sledgehammer you need to break out of your genre ghetto cesspool and into this amazing sewer out here.

Hell, back to the SF fanzines -- for something that is wacky and pertinent and definitely impertinent (and rather more an "SF Fanzine" by genetic transmission than by avocation -- APH), there's always Dave's Secular Lens, published erratically by Dave D'Amassa (Who has recently changed his name "for the stage" to Algernon Stewart -- watch for it on a marquee near you!). It's just the sort of slap upside the head that you need on a slow afternoon. It's less critical than Novoid, less crazed than Fact Sheet Five, and way less stupid than FOSFAX. It's a slice of life from a guy who's well-lubricated and proud of it. That's the kind of world Spent Brass likes.

Lastly, out of the ghetto by a pretty feisty ladder. Avedon Carol's Blatant has been grinding along for some time now, and you won't find better anywhere. She is an opinionated, loud, and often angry woman who knows how to use her mind, how to dog a point to the ground, and how to inject a little air into the gasping organs of literate SFfans. Oh yeah, she does the SF/F bit, but she uses it; she lets us know that there's a life around here, and she's in it. Politics, music, current events, and that old creaky world of goshwow, these get ground up into a frothy drink that burns as it goes down the back of your throat. Shit, Avedon can write --

beg to read her stuff, it'll do you good. So what if she gnashes her teeth and calls people shitheads in print? Hell, we can't complain about that, can we?

So, there it is -- what we think you ought to read or not in the fanzine market. No, these aren't deep critical reviews; there might be time for that later, if you're good. What we're trying to do is tell you what made our nasty little day heat up or, for one rag, made us loose our lunch. We love good writing, and we'll keep pointing it out. And if we dig up anything too noxious, well, that's part of the plan too, isn't it? This is where we live right now. What's it to you?

BY PETER LARSEN

ARE YOU ON  
OUR LITTLE LIST?



DON'T YOU  
WANT TO BE?

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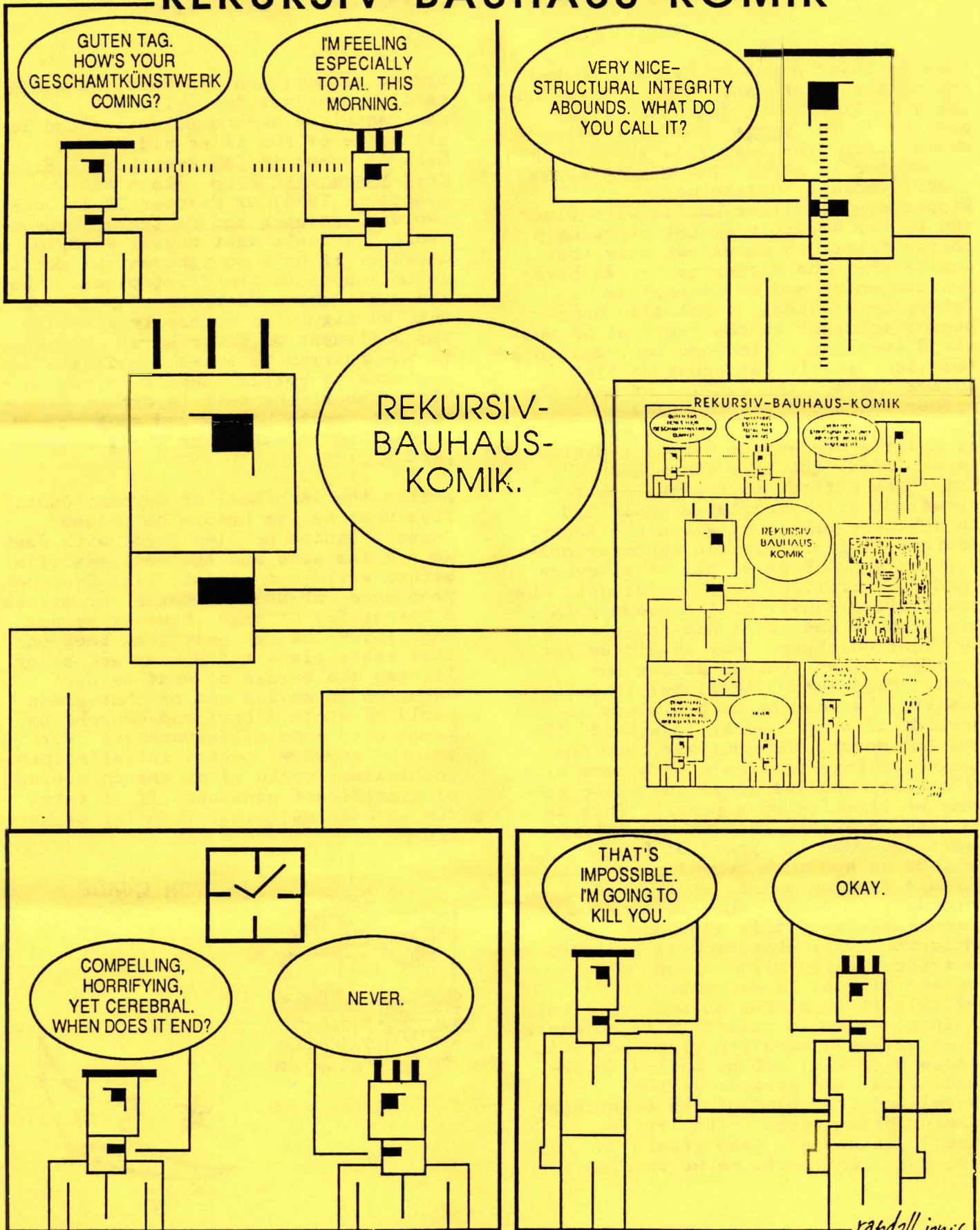
FANZINES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE:

FOSFAX, C/O FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, KY. 40233-7281, Timothy Lane, editor. Available for the usual or an \$18.00 FOSFA membership.  
Novoid, Colin Hinz, ASFi World Headquarters, 349 West St. N, Apt. #3, Orillia Ontario, Canada, L3V 5E1. Available for the usual + postage  
Fact Sheet Five, Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave. Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502. Available for trade or \$2.00 a copy.  
Dave's Secular Lens (or its descendents), Algernon Stewart, 910 W. Belden, #216, Chicago, IL 60614. Available for the usual or herring.  
Blatant, Avedon Carol, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB UK. Available for the usual. Avedon also works on Pulp, and says she needs material, especially articles.

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# REKURSIV-BAUHAUS-KOMIK



# OH, MAMIE MINDED MAMA

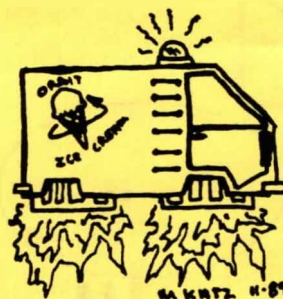
What is this? A passel of Pogo on the arm of the couch, and "Jack's Back" on the VCR. It's about Jack the Ripper, sort of -- the movie, not Walt Kelly's comic strip. The best film about Jack the Ripper is still "The Ruling Class" (1972) because, unlike most Ripper/serial killer/maniac with Black and Decker accessory of the producer's choice films, it shows not only the horror that the Ripper is -- "We have met the enemy and he is us," as Porkypine declares -- but also the horror inherent in the betrayal of what the Ripper isn't. In Pogo too, and in a relation closely analogous to "The Ruling Class," the outline of what the Ripper isn't can be discerned.

In Kelly's Okefenokee Swamp, pedantry is exploded, quackery flummoxed, bafflegab gutted, self-assuredness skewered, self-importance shot, and thoughtless orthodoxy given the laugh. In fact, I feel a little uncomfortable writing about Pogo at all -- at every ponderous critical step one expects the undignified squirt of the geoduck in his face. I know I am not above outright quackery. "Why should we let foreign powers beat us at our own game?" Pogo asks. "Absolutely!" Owl asserts, "We can be as brainless as anybody if we all works together!" "We got the money, the manpower, and the knowhow," Pogo replies with a mere hint of a gibe, and Owl gives the whole game away by lighting up a pencil. This is no less necessary than it was thirty years ago when it appeared: Pogo reminds us how much humanity we lose (ironic from an animal strip, and intended, no doubt) when we sink to humourlessness. It is also our antidote. Every character is a figure (a trope, if you will -- oops -- squirt) of fun. If we wanted to belittle it by giving it some critical stature, we would call Pogo an allegory or an extended morality play, but this Possum hide will not be nailed to the shed, Fred, and escapes in the privileged free play of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque (oops -- squirt -- whee!). It doesn't take itself seriously, in short, so we shouldn't

try to either, and, in fact, we would tangle ourselves horribly in contradiction and complication and lose all sense of fun if we did -- see Kelly's poems in Ten Ever-Lovin' Blue-Eyed Years with Pogo (Simon and Schuster, 1959) or Chapter 32 in book two of Gargantua and Pantagruel (Lyons, 1952). "I don't want nobody marryin' my daughter if he's so ignorant he gotta go to school in the first place." "But you ain't got no daughter," Pogo points out. No figure of authority survives the onslaught of humor here: ascending to the rostrum to speak, candidate Owl neglects to notice there's no top on his soapbox; the self-important Deacon Mushrat has to be dragged kicking and protesting to safety by the innocent pupdog.

Behind the 14th Earl of Gurney, Jack, lies what he was before he became "sane": Behind us lies Pogo. With Jack, we are the sane and the denizens of a mature world who cannot, like Grundoon, pronounce "SPNHC" or "GRNXF" or mistake a boxcar for Chicago (however we may want to) -- we can only look back on that other place and wonder and enjoy, lighten the burden of what we have taken on in moving out of that green world of Uncle Albert and Churchy La Femme with some self-awareness. Our modern "knowhow" cannot solidify into unthinking devoid of an anarchic play of significant nonsense. If it takes fun to make us think, then let us have fun!

BY TOM QUALE





# TINY TALES OF TERROR

## The Rat and The Fan

This is a true story. It happened when I was about 10 years old. We were living in Madison, in a wonderful old house on Van Hise Avenue, and although it had numerous "mouse" holes in most of the closets, no one ever had ever actually seen a rodent of any sort. We always kept two or three cats, so we didn't expect to see mice. Anyway, summer was almost over, so the fan that had spent most of its time in the upstairs hallway got moved into my room. I always liked to listen to the drone of a fan as I fell asleep and this was a fine fan to fall asleep to.

My father worked for the phone company, and was always bringing home broken and surplus junk. This fan was either part of a Sopwith Triplane, or had been designed to cool entire office buildings. Its blade was at least three feet long and shaped like a propeller. The motor was massive and had only two speeds; very slow and very fast. The housing was a heavy grating made out of angle-iron and chicken wire the thickness of chain-link fencing. It was painted with battleship-gray enamel and was chipped and stained. It was the only fan in the whole house and I coveted it.

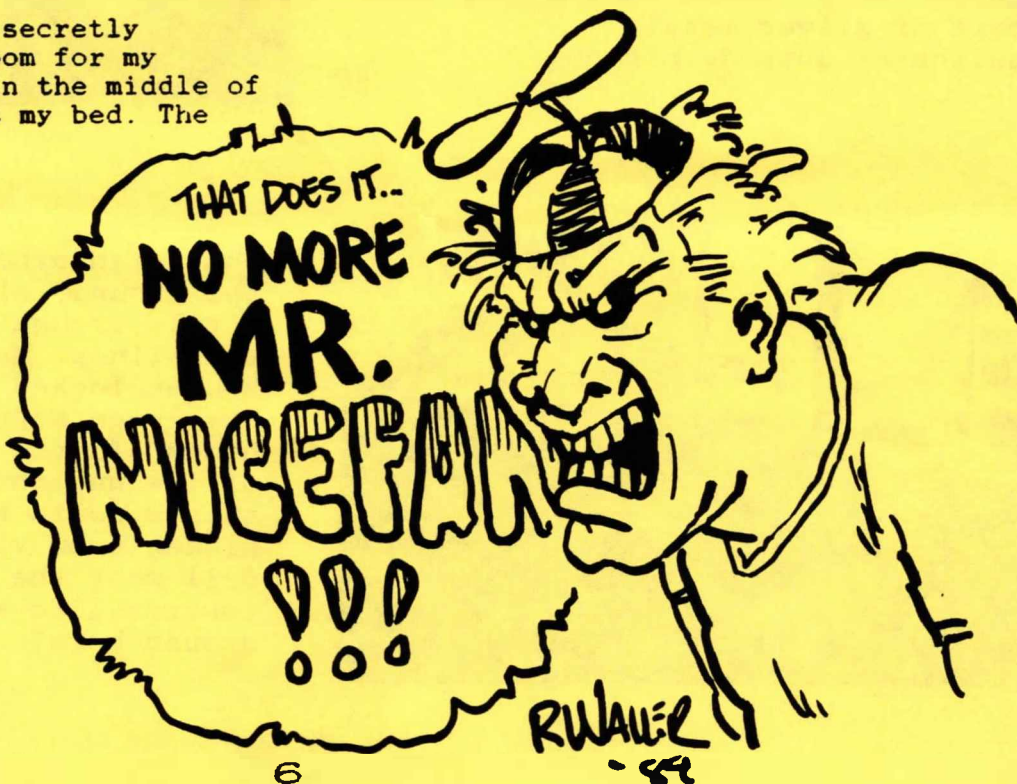
One not-so-hot night, I secretly dragged it into my bedroom for my personal use. I set it in the middle of the room and aimed it at my bed. The

breeze was too chilly, but rather than turn off the fan, I pulled up the covers and fell asleep the steady beat of the old vanes.

When I woke up the next morning the first thing I noticed was some reddish-brown spots on the wall above my bed. I touched them; they were dry. I looked down at my bed. My sheet was stained with blood. I had been stabbed in my sleep! I jumped out of bed and checked for wounds. Not a gaping hole or a protruding rib to be found. Then I noticed the crescent spray of crimson ichor on the floor in front of the fan. There, fused to the front of the grate, was a rat...well, half of a rat. Bravely, I switched off the fan, and, as the blade lazily slowed to a stop, I noticed the rest of the unfortunate rodent adhered to the blade like a drunk on a Ferris Wheel. I did what any small boy would do; I yelled for Mom, and gagged.

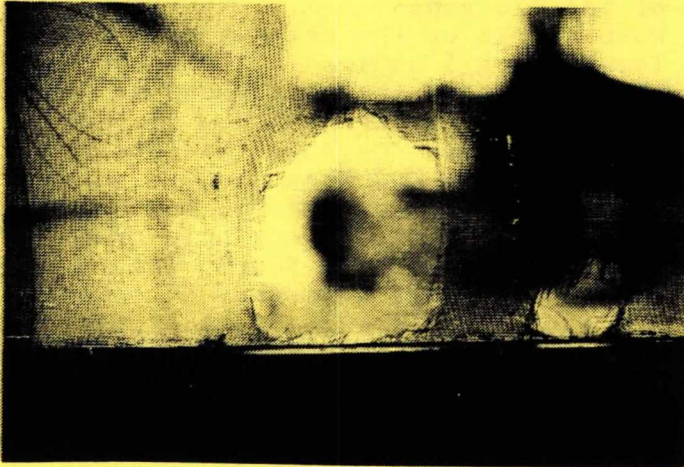
Later on, when the mess had been cleaned up, I went back up to my room and pulled the fan back out into the hallway. There was still a rat leg unaccounted for. This remains a mystery to this day, but I still don't sleep with my mouth open.

BY KIM NASH



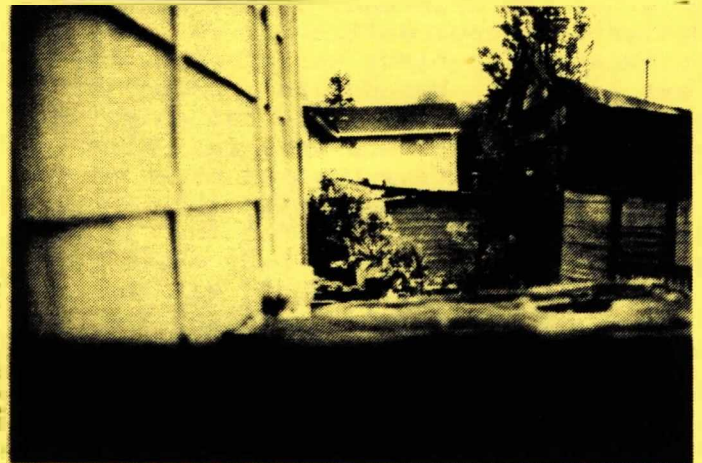
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This place never closes...but it gets pretty dull after sunrise.  
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THEY LIVE NEXT TO JERRY AND SUZLE  
PHOTOS: ANDREW HOOPER



In the kitchen, hands were wrung. A whole salmon lay gutted on a board next to the sink, still frozen. It seemed to be made of titanium. In a berserker gang, I seized the ginsu knife from the sideboard, then slashed and sawed until the red haze left my vision. The salmon was in ragged chunks. I went out onto the porch for some air.

Spring in Seattle. Leaving the lingering gray ice of the Midwest behind. The air ecstatic in my lungs. Outside, someone was already turning out dandelions with a garden fork. There were a pair of silver metal suitcases outside his door.



The neighborhood was low to the ground, dispersed in a little trough between ridgelines. Many of the houses looked like they might have been happier as mobile homes. In the stooping riot of the underbrush, a lot of things could have happened, hidden from view. Who could tell what the attitude towards life and limb was around here?





I liked the idea of sea gulls and no snow removal. People always seemed to find time to make muffins on Sunday mornings, too. That has to make a person feel at ease. But also, some guy came up to me outside this little hole-in-the-wall bookstore and tried to sell me some hot essays by Chip Delany

The nerve of these guys. Some woman was in so much trouble, I heard she fled to Antarctica to get away from the heat. I thought it was a long way to go just to prove a pun. There's no question it's as tough a town as it is pretty. A dangerous combination for an idle gumshoe on tilt.



The guy in the garden had it in for some little dog, now; I could hear it yappin' and scratchin' away, back behind that old Buick. But some times, the best questions are the ones ya don't ask.

The salmon was delicious.

TEXT :

ORSON LUNDEEN

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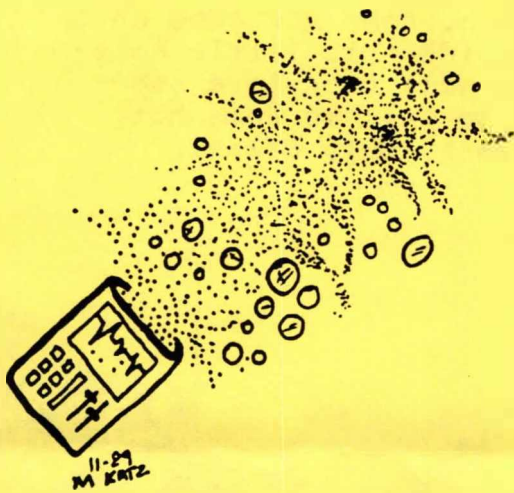
"It'll sink in when I go back to work and don't have a job to do," he said. "I'm just a coach. I coached a long time at a great school. I had a lot of fun, I coached a lot of great teams and I made a lot of friends."

"I'm just a whistle-tooter. It's time for me to go and I'm going. But I'll always be Michigan."

-- Glen "Bo" Schembechler, 1/1/1990

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# THE REVELATION OF THE BRAVE



Tom Quale writes: When asked at a WHO-vent in Madison some number of Octobers ago what he thought the Seventh Doctor was like, Colin Baker, the Sixth Doctor, wittily replied "He's about four years old right now." Alas, the Sixth Doctor is gone now, without so much as a regeneration scene and the Seventh Doctor, Sylvester McCoy, is nowhere near four years old. One of my two favorite Doctors -- gone. And death has claimed the other, the wonderful Patrick Troughton, as well. To assuage the hurt and pique the mind, I have decided to come up with my other favorite Doctor, the Eighth Doctor. Ladies and Gentlemen,

## "THE REVELATION OF THE BRAVE"

(somewhere in season thirty)

The Doctor.....Laurie Anderson  
Louie Zane.....Alexei Sayle  
The Master.....Sarah Sutton  
Savage Penny.....Bridget Lynch-Blosse  
Wallop.....Alexei Sayle

Scene: The main console room of The Doctor's TARDIS. THE DOCTOR, newly-regenerated, is wandering the corridors talking oddly to herself. THE MASTER, a newcomer to regeneration (somehow) herself, is manipulating the TARDIS controls with evil glee, her back to the inner door.

The inner door flies open, the portly, shaven-headed figure of the Doctor's companion, LOUIE ZANE, gun in hand.

ZANE: (Blustering) I have a gun here, and I know how to use it!

MASTER: (Not even turning around): No you don't.

ZANE: I don't know how to use it?

MASTER: You don't have a gun.

ZANE: (Looking down at the incredibly deadly-looking thing in his hand) I don't?

MASTER (Shakes her head, entering coordinates) That is a hair-dryer.

ZANE: (Quick glance up at his shaven head) Not much use for that, then. (Tosses the hair dryer, picks up a big box from behind him and pulls the next items from it, one by one, under one arm) All riiight... (Looking forcefully) I have a gun here and I know how to use it!

MASTER: (Turning, unflustered) Electromagnetic spectrometer.

ZANE: (Glancing nervously at the device) Does it kill?

MASTER: Only if you're hit violently on the head with it. Repeatedly, I should think.

ZANE: Oh (Tosses it) Ahhh...I have a gun here and I know how to use it!

MASTER: Paint-sprayer.

ZANE: (Dubious) You sure?

MASTER: Paint-sprayer. (She's sure)



ZANE: (Gives it a try, anyway, putting a broad wet yellow line across the MASTER's immaculate coat) Oop! That's a paint sprayer, alright. (Tosses it) Hmmm... (Rummages) I have a gun here and I know how to use it!

MASTER: (Coldly) That's a banana.

ZANE: Oh, this organic technology! (Tosses it) Okay. I have a gun here and I know how to use it!

MASTER: That's a lie detector.

ZANE: (A little red light flashes on the device) I think you're lying! (The MASTER is close enough to slap it out of his hands, tired of this game, and ZANE pulls out the Tissue Compression Eliminator. The MASTER backs worriedly off) I have a gun here and I know how to use it!

MASTER: That's a flashlight. (She doesn't sound very convincing to herself.)

ZANE: A flashlight? (A tense moment. The light flashes on the lie detector on the floor)

MASTER: (Desperate) Just...Just a... (ZANE tosses it onto the pile of discarded devices)

ZANE: (A new device) I have a gun here and I know how --

MASTER: Polycharge phase converter.

ZANE: What does it do?

MASTER: Convert Polycharge phases, of course. (ZANE tosses it and, his attention drawn by the box, the MASTER scoops up the dreaded TCE) You blundering, simian fool! You had a weapon, but now it is mine!

ZANE: (Second of shock, then) Ho ho ho! Don't I look the fool! (Shakes his head in jovial, grudging admiration) Ho ho ho! Good joke on me there! Ho ho ho! (He's moving around, covering with joking camaraderie, hands up, until he and the MASTER have changed positions, the MASTER now by the inner door)

MASTER: (Raising TCE) Enough! You'll not interfere again in my plans for your friend, The Doctor. (Just before she fires, the inner door swings suddenly open, giving the MASTER a brutal clout on the side of the head, knocking her unconscious to the floor)

DOCTOR: (Peering in the door, right hand pretending to be a gun) She said I have a gun here and I know how to use it.

ZANE: (In a complete change of mood) 'Ere! You took your precious time gettin' back! I'll have you know that I have a great fondness for the size I am.

DOCTOR: (Coming in. Gone are the baggy remains of the Seventh Doctor's clothes -- she is wearing a white pocketless jacket of severe and narrow cut, white pants and shoes, white shirt and a skinny white tie. Strapped to her head is a Harmonizer, pinhead mike in front of her mouth.) She said I know. I was looking through some old clothes. And it occurred to me to ask myself where I was going what I was looking for. And it occurred to me to ask myself if I ever knew these things. (She wanders around the TARDIS console.) For we were moving very fast. And where we were going I didn't know. (to ZANE) Do you know? (that eerie, detached tone) Who reset the coordinates? Who broke my polycharge phase converter? (ZANE making innocent-little-brother gestures and pointing to the MASTER. The TARDIS shakes as if struck) Uh oh.

ZANE: Trouble?

DOCTOR: (Deadly serious) Right here in River City.

END PART I

## PART II

Scene: A posh reception area, night. On the back wall in bold gold lettering, "MAMMOTH ORGANIZATION MONOPOLATED." Left, a glass wall with double doors in the center. There a furtive figure picks the lock, gaining entry. This is Savage Penny, dressed in a stylized battle-suit and aviation goggles. Inside, PENNY swiftly removes her pack, places it strategically and runs like hell. There is the sound of the TARDIS materializing, but before it does so completely, the bomb goes off. Horrendous explosion. Desks are slammed about the area. The glass outer wall is blasted to bits. The TARDIS completely materializes, and the DOCTOR and ZANE enter from it. A small fire burns cheerily on a computer console.

ZANE: Mmmph. They could have picked up a bit.

DOCTOR: At least they left a light on for us.

ZANE: Where are we?

DOCTOR: (To the air, very loudly) I inquire of the universe! where are we? (wait) Either it doesn't know, she said, or we're not on speaking terms again. (Moves into hallway, right. Loudly, as before) Look, I said I was sorry about the Vervoids...

ZANE: 'Ere! Is it really safe to leave the Master alone in the TARDIS?

DOCTOR: (Shows him a small, shiny component) Drive coupling (Struck) Drive coupling. (tastes it) Drive coupling. DER - EYE -

ZANE: You means she can't move it?

DOCTOR: Ayup. And anyway, I miked him. er. her.

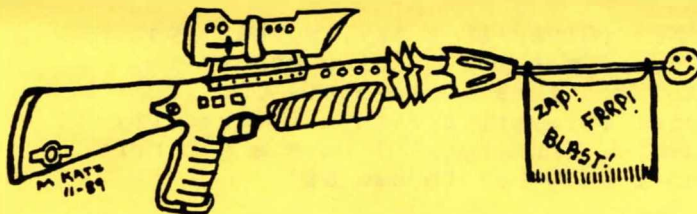
ZANE: Miked?

DOCTOR: Bugged, tapped, wired for sound. (thoughtfully) Drive coupling. Drive coupling...

Exit.

Enter WALLOP, gun drawn, and several guard types. WALLOP is identical to ZANE, but dresses, and talks like a mobster.

WALLOP: (Assessing the damage) Schistosomiasis! (with feeling) Some of you lot check out the labs, the rest keep watch outside. Any looters show, you know what to do, eh?



GUARD: No, what?

WALLOP: Aim for the eyes. They hate that. (Reassured, the guard units move off. WALLOP lifts a phone, but the cord dangles, blown away, from the receiver.) Blast!

WAG: (Off) BOOM! (WALLOP jumps, then holds up an admonishing finger)

WALLOP: (Finds an operating phone, dials) Get me Mr. Sanguinetti. (Whistles, while waiting, "So hold me, Mom, in your long arms...") Ah! Mr. Sanguinetti? Wallop. I'm down at the head office. Bomb. Yeah, again. And there's this strange blue box down here sitting in the middle of the wreckage. Yeah. (listens) Uh huh. Uh huh. Sure, Mr. Sanguinetti. Leave it to me. Aloha. (Hangs up phone and straightens his tie) One man expeditionary party, that's me. (enters the TARDIS) Knock-knock!

CUT TO: The DOCTOR along the hallway. She suddenly stops, one finger to her earpiece.

DOCTOR: Ssshh! This ought to be good.

CUT TO: TARDIS control room. WALLOP is roughly lifting the MASTER to her feet.

WALLOP: Wakey-wakey! Nice place you have here, Toots.

MASTER: Place...? Who...?

WALLOP: I'm here to invite you to a little talk with Mr. Sanguinetti. He'd very much like to know why you tried to blow up his head office.

MASTER: Why I...(gets a good look at WALLOP) Oh no you don't, you lumbering cretin. You don't fool me. This is some little game you and the Doctor are playing, isn't it?

WALLOP: Doctor?



CUT TO: The DOCTOR in the hallway. Listening, she looks at ZANE, then focuses on her tap.

DOCTOR: You have a brother at home?

ZANE: Huh? (A GUARD passes across the mouth of the hallway behind the pair, looking up and seeing them.)

CUT TO: TARDIS

MASTER: What are you trying to pull?

WALLOP: You, sister. Now come on. (Manhandles the MASTER out of the TARDIS) Mr. Sanguinetti has proposed and Mr. Sanguinetti may yet dispose ...of you.

Exit.

CUT TO: Hallway

DOCTOR: (To herself) "We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when -- "

GUARD: Halt! You are trespassing on private property!

ZANE: Security!

DOCTOR: They don't look very secure.

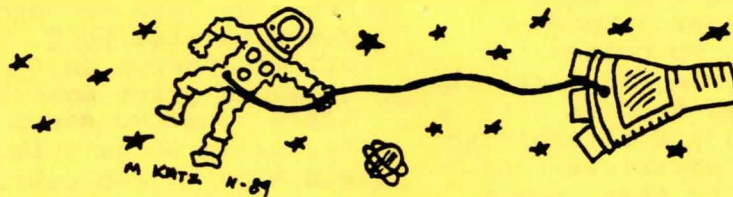
WALLOP: They don't make me feel very secure, either.

DOCTOR: Run like a xenobiologist! (Runs. Laser fire.)

ZANE: (Running, disgustedly) "Run like a xenobiologist!"

End Part II

BY TOM QUALE



## THE CONVENTION OF THE FUTURE

Everything old is new again. Instead of buckling down to this article like I was supposed to be doing, I have been sitting here at the computer playing the game Starflight, by Electronic Arts. My Stepson got it for my birthday, and I have been spending long stretches at the keyboard not working ever since. It's a great game: The premise is that you have been chosen to command an interstellar exploration ship, somewhere in the far future, and commissioned to seek out suitable worlds on which to transplant humanity. Your own world, a planet called Arth, is threatened by stellar flares; and as befell the original human civilization on some last planet called "Earth," you are left with no choice but to leave your world and find another. Pure swashbuckling space opera of the highest order; unfortunately, I am

often unable to rise to the task, and my actions seem rather more like subsidized piracy than high-minded scientific inquiry. On the last trip out from Arth, I entered a continuum flux with my ship, the ISS Hank Greenberg, but instead of being spit back out near a mineral-rich planet I was planning to do some prolonged looting upon, I was dumped adjacent to the homeworld of an alien race that I keep having the worst sort of trouble with. They resist all my efforts at communication, and all I know about them is the configuration of their ships; otherwise, they remain entirely mysterious.

What was easy to fathom was the fact that seven of them ganged up on me and began banging away at my shields with small nuclear missiles, just because I

tried to land on their home planet. Some people! I had no choice but to fry each and every one of them like an oyster, and collect up all their valuable trace elements afterwards. I decided to try another planet in the system when I saw seven more ships coming up at me at about three gees constant, and this proved to be interesting. Blessed with gravity at about .91 Arth's, a thinnish Oxygen/Nitrogen atmosphere, a surface of flat-black basalt, and just enough water to keep a small gerbil alive. It had precious few mineral resources, no life, and maybe 160 acres on its entire surface that could have supported life if there was any. But it fell into the acceptable range of worlds that could be colonized; I recommended it for the same, named it "Morgoth," pocketed the 35,000 credit finders fee, and laughed all the way to the bank.

Classic stuff, eh? Reminds one of a lot of old books with rocket-ships on the cover. But hey, that stuff is back in again, or haven't you heard? Once Cyberpunk became passe, we coined "Steampunk" to pigeon-hole Jim Blaylock and Tim Powers and other writers fond of clockwork automatons and alternative history Victorian high adventure. And after a few fine years of that, now it seems the next critical division that will be rearing its head is "neo-space opera," books like Iain Bank's Culture novels, Emma Bull's Falcon, newer works by William Jon Watkins, Walter John Williams (Perkin Simnel? Lambert Warbeck?), Lois McMaster Bujold and many others. CJ Cherryh's Hugo awards attest to the fact that the classic robe and blaster novel will never go completely out of style, if in fact it ever did at all; but in the gnarled world of publishing and public relations, rediscovery of a flexible theme is worth money, and even in a forward-looking field like SF, nostalgia never hurts one's sales.

In many ways, fandom begins to seem more and more backward looking all the time. A few years ago, one of the kinder epithets thrown about during the TAFF imbroglio was "Sixth-Fandom Fan," a supposed slam against a group of fans that helped to thaw out a number of fifties fans that had fallen into icebergs about when the Beatles invaded America, and found that their fannish values were perfectly encompassed by those espoused by fanwriters and critics of several generations past. And naturally, in making friends with

these venerable souls, the fans in question became thought-criminals and traitors to their class. In longing for a simpler time when you could go to a convention and expect that when you gave them your name at the desk they might say, "Oh, I've heard of you! I was hoping I might get to meet you," we theoretically lost our dedication to bringing about the perfect realization of the brave new world, or some bullshit like that. Anyway, all those Sixth-Fandom Fans have been rounded up and gassed, and we don't have to worry about that sort of counter-revolutionary behavior any more, do we? And, as should be, what you will hear at the desk when you go to most SF conventions today, what you're most likely to hear at the desk is, "What's your fan-number, drone?"

A lot of ink being spilled on this issue in a lot of fanzines. Debate over what we ought to do to keep fanzine fandom alive rages high and low in this big wide land of ours. Art Widner, in his fine zine YHOS, finally had to cut off discussion on the subject, so that he could print some letters on another topic. The two sides of the issue seem basically to be this; one, if you go to big-time SF fan conventions, you are putting money and energy into the pockets of low-life mediafen scum, who have taken our ball and won't give it back; or, two, that it is only by remaining in contact with neofen and other single-celled life forms that we can hope to propagate the species of the zine fan. No one seems to have given much credence to the idea that zine fans ought to put more effort into specialty conventions like Corflu and Ditto, that empower and enlighten zine fans as to the state of their community, granting them both the trappings of the conventions that have become (there is no denying) the heart of fandom today, and the camaraderie and feeling of elan that turning the crank confers.

I want to hear and see more about this compromise. I have been to two Corflus now, and doing so has done more for my self-image as a fan than any ten other conventions I have attended. There is such a sense of engagemant, of colloquy and community at Corflu; one gains the sense that if one were not in attendance, the convention would be markedly different for it. Can one gain this impression from a big airport-style convention, like, oh, I don't know. Minicon? I don't want to pick on



MnStf, they do a great job on Minicon. I have fun when I go there. But I have no illusions about how important the individual fan is to the convention. I feel no sense of responsibility toward my fellow fen, beyond the people I'm sharing a room with. If I decide to leave the convention and go hang out in a bar somewhere instead, feeling sorry for myself, no one's weekend will be in the slightest way diminished. I am a small fish in a big pond, caught in the current, and washed out to sea.

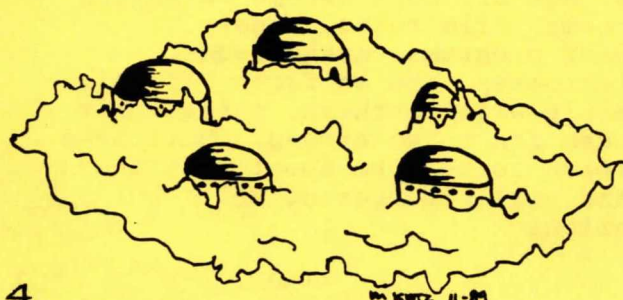
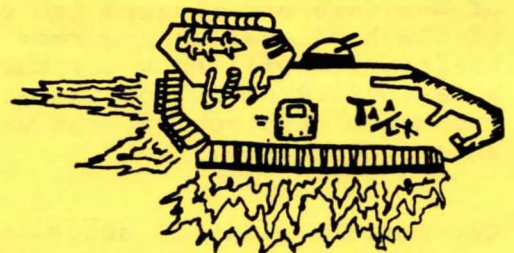
I have to believe there is another way to operate these things. I feel that this is the exact opposite of the feeling a fan ought to get from a good convention. Beyond all the ideological issues of what kind of literature, Sf or Fantasy, one likes, whether you like or hate Star Trek, if you like chocolate or vanilla, the average fan should be able to go to a convention, and feel that his contribution to the convention means something. That he or she does not have to set off the sprinkler system in order to make contact with his or her fellow human beings, who ostensibly feel some sense of community with him or her by virtue of the fantasies and aspirations they share.

Simply put, this means we can't go on cramming 900 people into a hotel for the weekend and hope that something worthwhile will come of it. I remember from some high school social studies course that some anthropologist had set the upper limit of man's ability to know people at about 500 individuals; the only conventions I have been to in the past ten years that fell below that number were the two Corflus, and V-Con 14, which also happened to be, bless their souls, the Canadian National Fan Convention. The national convention. And there was room to spread out and have a party whenever you wanted to. It takes one back to, oh, room 770, or some other place that today's fans have never seen in their lives and have little hope of doing so if things stay the way they are (Oh yeah, there was also that con called Congenial, in Racine. They had me as a guest of honor, which must be why it slipped my mind).

This is not to state that big conventions are all bad. If you accept a certain amount of responsibility for entertaining yourself, for finding your

own good time without expecting the poor slobbs that run the convention to make your fun for you, you can have a hell of a good time at a big convention. Yes, I say this because I told a lie above; one other convention that meant a lot to me was Conspiracy, in Brighton, '87. There were thousands of people there, mostly skinny, tall, hairy young englishmen who stalked about with dour looks on their faces, wondering where the real ale was, and how were they going to pay for it. But I had a tremendous time, because I did a little footwork in advance; figured out who was going to be there, getting BNF pals of mine (I know hundreds, of course) to introduce me to salient features of British Fandom, and generally prepared myself for drinking unto a state of prolonged drooling, and laughing at jokes bout Roy Kettle and Martin Hoare. It's easy when you know how.

But there isn't always time or energy for that sort of thing. Sometimes, you wish you could go to a convention, and find a seat without conning someone out of theirs; where you could be assured that if you did something silly, it would end up in the newsletter, that you would later see stick figures of yourself in a Lee Hoffman zine, that someone would be there to laugh at your puns, and spread it around until everyone had heard it. The personal touch. The chance to be a big wheel, for a few hours. We crave this, even if we loathe to admit it.



As the realization of what we really want to do comes over fandom, there will be more and more small conventions popping up all over the landscape, often with tighter and tighter focus. Already we have had Sercon, ReaderCon, Corflu, Ditto and Mythcon for a number of years; as time passes, we will see more and more of the like. Large commercial interests stand in the wings, ready to take on the burden of producing bigger and bigger conventions that diffuse their focus all over the genre spectrum, like the unlamented Triangulum in Milwaukee, the roving Dr. Who and Star Trek shows that pop up like perverse Chautauqua rallies in those hotels near the airport, Giant Regionals that are getting to the point where no hotel will have them anymore, because in any group of fifteen hundred people, at least seven or eight will be paranoid schizophrenics, and some of these are armed. The actual involvement of fans as we think of them in these events will shortly be extremely minimal.

The convention of the future will have to limit its membership. This is sad, but unavoidable. When a half-dozen people band together to have a weekend event for their fen-friends, the degree to which they can afford to stretch their budget is limited. I would assume that the number will eventually stabilize around 210 or a little more; this will allow fans to continue to use those bulk-mailing permits we fought so hard to get, while still trying to make a bottle of home-made beer for every fan in attendance. In addition, by limiting the membership, you can publish a list of who will be there in advance, so that if someone will be there who recently came to your place of business and slugged you in the side of the head over an argument you were having, you will know it; they won't be able to loom up out of the madding crowd and stab you without warning, unless disguised.

Conventions will, of necessity, begin dropping a few events, in favor of others. Not all cons can go on having filk rooms, film rooms, ninety different programs, masquerades, twinkie-tosses, and so forth. If only 200 people will be there, there won't be enough fen to go around. Committees will learn to be firm about what they will and will not present at conventions.

My feeling is that some fans are moving towards making this sort of small, personal convention a reality again, and on a regular basis. They have never really gone away, altogether; the concept of the relaxicon was invented to keep the low-intensity spirit of an early fifties world con alive. Wherever I go, people talk about the old Midwescons, where people laid around poolside and wondered where they might be able to build the Tucker hotel, and other great fannish pipe-dreams of the past. Nobody comes up and tells me what a fine time they had at clonecon one, craning their necks at the back of the crowd to hear Piers Anthony talk about how the muse comes to him, or huddled in dark rooms watching a bad print of "Moon O-2" at three in the morning.

And after all, when one knows who will be coming to a given convention, one can begin planning one's weekend accordingly. What a pleasure it will be to go to a con and know who is having "the" party, without having to hem and haw around about who has a bottle of what in their room, who to let in and who to keep out as being members of the hoi-poloi; once again, the unquestioning acceptance of all fen in attendance as members of the same cosmic league will be a reality once more.

I know this is a wild dream on my part. After so many years of doing our level best to meet and greet every single neofan that comes to the surface, famished for contact with kindred souls, it goes against our collective grain to undertake these snooty, elitist actions. But we must learn to live with it. Fandom and its liturgy, SF, have burst from their genre ghetto in ways that we would never have imagined possible fifty years ago. In any given busload of people, half will tell you that they like SF. But are they fans? Well, everyone (mostly) likes sex. Do you want to screw every one of them?

I feel like the process of making enemies is sometimes an adjunct to making friends. In order to identify the people that you want to spend time with, you sometimes have to identify the people you don't want to spend time with. In that we have lost our identity as put-upon outcasts that lurk at the fringes of society, it is time for us



to find a way to recover some of the special cachet that that feeling once conferred. Let's put the false elitism and nerd-chic back in fandom, eh? Next time you think about putting on a convention, first draw up a list of your 200 best friends, and try to think of what they would like you to do; and when you're done, you'll probably have achieved what your heart desires most anyway.

Ah, well, I think I'll go back to blowing up mucus monsters for awhile, and put these social-engineering pretensions behind me. The hardest currency of our field remains a stiff stream of charged ions, no matter what the critics say; even in the loudest, most unmanageable SFWA parties, I imagine every now and then, most everyone there mumbles softly to themselves, "All clear and on green, QX."

BY ANDY HOOPER



Steve Jackson, scion of central Texas fandom, has achieved a remarkable brand of Pro-hood through the success of his company, Steve Jackson Games, and its numerous adventure gaming products, such as Car Wars, Ogre/GEV, Illuminati, Kung Fu 2100 AD, and the Generic Universal Role-Playing System, or GURPS. GURPS is the product which should stir the stfnal initiate the most; I don't know first hand if Steve's activities in fandom predate his professional interest in SF and Fantasy, but some of the the works he has attained game conversion licenses for -- Robert Adams' Horseclans, Alan Dean Fosters Humanx, the Wild Cards series -- touch a place in the fannish heart that I find difficult to find appropriate words for.

Anyway, an avalanche of new and unusual material has been issuing from Austin for quite a while now, sometimes in the area of a dozen releases a year. And yet, some of us down at the old lazy polyhedron ranch were thinking, there were a few things we had heard rumours about but had never yet seen...

#### GURPS tm PRODUCTS WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

The GURPS "Mersey Beat Companion," with a special emphasis on Priscilla Black

The GURPS Bestiary of mudpuppies and walking catfish.

The GURPS Bohemians sourcebook, with three section: Paris in the 1890's, Berlin in the 1920's and San Francisco in the 1950's & early sixties, plus a short adventure set in Zurich, in 1915, featuring Tristin Tzara and Lenin.

GURPS Liberace combat module

GURPS/Car Wars (tm) Tollbooths & Speed Traps adventure set, with micro-campaign setting "Decatur, Indiana."

GURPS Ballet & Pantomime, featuring bar-graphs analyzing "Coppelia" and "Les Sylphide," recordings of Marcel Marceau on BBC 1, and the adventure "The Red Shoes".

The GURPS MISL Soccer adventure game, complete with maps representing 7 different Ice Hockey rinks covered with artificial astroturf, 36 Steve Djungel cardboard heros (tm) stand-up playing pieces (converted from unsold Moammar Qaddafi figures from the "Zurich, 1915" adventure), and a 63-sided die from Zocchihedron Inc. Co-sponsored by the Baltimore Blast.

GURPS Charles Bukowski Adventure Handbook, including a pull-out wallchart of "Shots, Shooters and Boilermakers," and possibly a colorforms (tm) playset.

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#### WHY YOU GOT THIS:

You are a contributor. Thank you, and I hope you like the zine \_\_\_\_\_

I trade. Thanks for your own efforts, and keep the crank turning \_\_\_\_\_

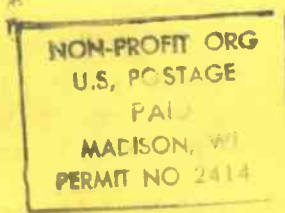
I'd love to see some or more of your work in issues to come \_\_\_\_\_

On a whim. I thought you might like to see it. X

You've written letters of comment on a previous effort. Thanks. \_\_\_\_\_

See you in Pennsylvania in January, Racine in February, Madison in March, Minneapolis in April, or New York in May. \_\_\_\_\_

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