

SPENT BRASS

A fanzine that says it will be coming out a lot more often now that the cast has come off, published by Andy Hooper and Carol Root, of 315 N. Ingersoll, Madison, WI 53703, and available for the usual, 29 cent stamps, or \$1.00/2 copies. This is Drag Bunt Press Production #107, 2/12/91, member fwa. Contributing this time is Peter John Larsen. Pam Wells for TAFF!

The fanzine paved with good intentions



IN BEAUTIFUL DREAMS: A few nights ago, when I was supposed to be working on my novel (A savage tale of lust and baseball in the far future (Jim Baen will love it)), I decided instead to go through the huge mass of early 80's and late 70's fanzines I had culled from the old Aurora/Janus trade files, in hopes of indexing them and making them available to such members of SF3 as might have some interest in the fanzines of the recent yore.

Despite a sincere intention to go through as many fmz as possible, and break them into some rough geographical groupings, I'm afraid that I only got as far as cutting out a complete run of PONG from the massive herd. Finding a set of Ted White and Dan Steffan's impeccably fannish creation was better than I ever thought I would do, and I resolved to give Jeanne Gomoll my fullest thanks for first collecting a full run before turning them over to the club.

I sat down to read the colorful little beauties, snorking and hoonking frequently, enjoying tales of the somewhat more golden days of 1980 or so, when a minor rebirth of fannish energies resulted in some wonderful fanzines and high times. Knowing that the dark clouds of the TAFF conflict were on the near horizon, my enjoyment was tempered with an edge of sadness; this zine, which I admire so much, gave up the ghost just as I was entering the field with my own first crudzines. I knew brutal war, and undeserved imprisonment for Ted lay at the end of the story, and that was a bring-down, man.

I finally collapsed, having finished issue #40, at about 4:20 am, and slept fitfully through strange dreams. I found myself back in a smoke-filled room in the Roosevelt Hotel, the only time I have been in the presence of PONG's editorial duo in the flesh. Back at the real Roosevelt, I was the uncomfortable object of some well-meant kingmaking, as Ted and Dan and other wandering cells of the group mind tried to convince me that I was the only thing standing between certain parties and Corflu Nine, and that Madison would be a fine place to have that convention after its Texas sojourn.

I have nothing against those parties, personally -- only such quibbles as good taste compels upon me -- and I was uneasy at agreeing to put on a convention with no idea who would be willing to help me. In the dream, unlike real life, where I sucked more smoke and nodded affably to every suggestion, I replied, "I don't know if I'd be able to put on a Corflu in Madison. How about if I just started up a small, frequent fanzine instead? Something like PONG?"

The dream-Dan-and-Ted made no response, and I awoke in confusion.

Yet, the idea made a weird kind of sense to me. The zines I do for my various apae already sport a format that looks a lot like the way PONG used to. I would sure like to embrace brevity a little more in my fanac. I have always aspired towards having a strong editorial hand which pointed out fuggheads without fear.

And of course, the most compelling reason to take PONG as an inspiration is the admirable frequency with which the zine appeared. And there is nothing fandom needs more today than a regularly appearing fanzine.

It could be done. Now all I need is to get a great fan artist to move in next door, one who specializes in 1 & 1/2 inch cartoons. But I'll never be able to find anyone who could draw sunglasses like Dan Steffan.... -- aph.



"AN EDITOR SHOULD HAVE A PIMP FOR A BROTHER SO HE'D HAVE SOMEONE TO LOOK UP TO" DEPT.:

Thank you, George Fowler. And thank you ladies and gentlemen of the jury without whose kind efforts I could never have accumulated the sorts of jeers and catcalls that have brightened my days. It's a grand thing to be read and better to be read in the spirit in which you write. And they told me fans were clueless....

Editors edit, that's their purpose.

Now there are those dim-witted sorts in the wide world of fmz who imagine that editing means collecting and typing, but they're shoddy and contemptable, so let's ignore them for the moment. Editing involves taking control of the entire image of the zine from layout to rewriting to that mysterious "editorial presence." Good editors can take some of the crap out of bad material (or, better yet, not use it at all), while bad editors can make a hash out of the most promising goods. The trick in reviewing is to draw a line between the stuff that's not to your taste and the really bad.

Pat Mueller favors a no-nonsense, hands-off "professional" approach. Pirate Jenny is a slick product with good repro, good use of space and illustration, and, in general, a reserved attitude that lets the material speak for itself. As fanzines go, this is an easy read. However, "professionalism" is cold, and Muller is conspicuous by her absence outside of her own material. This is a matter of taste -- I prefer editorial involvement, especially in letter sections, where Mueller is quiet enough to be boring. That pro chill makes Pirate Jenny reek of product, but (again) that's taste. What isn't taste is her trouble in finding a full issue of solid material; issues #3 and #4 sagged in the middle, mostly due to the efforts of Dennis Virzi.

Virzi is married to Mueller, which is a pity, as it's likely that her readers will find more of his material. The Texas SF Inquirer printed some short bits by Virzi that were pleasant only in their brevity. He now is given between a seventh and a fifth of each issue to babble. His work is tedious, sophmoric, and desperately unfunny. He is a vast blot on his wife's generally decent production. He might be put to better use as a folder or stapler or paperweight. Other than this unfortunate lapse in judgement, Pirate Jenny is a good zine, even if "professionalism" costs it some spark.

The other end of the spectrum is YHOS by Art Widner, a sprightly fan who returned from the dead. This is an incredibly messy zine, in strong contrast to PJ's cleanliness. Widner prints a great many LoCs, generally without the benefit of retyping. Reading YHOS means risking brain damage, as your eyes attempt to adjust over and over to new typefaces and scripts, sometimes several to a page. Legibility is not a prime consideration for this editorial style. Still, there is something very appealing about the way that Widner interacts with his correspondents -- comments tacked onto the page wherever they will fit, in defiance of any sort of "professionalism." Where Mueller lacks charm, Widner overflows with it. For myself, I could stand to see tighter

editing of articles and LoCs; although he never gives anyone room to build up the sort of rampaging tedium that Dennis Virzi exudes, Widner often allows a looser forum than the stomach is willing to accept. Still, that attitude is appealing; faanishness thick enough to eat with a fork. Both of these editors have faults; Mueller balances hers with an earnest legibility and presentation, Widner covers his with style and charm. As usual, taste will determine which you prefer, but try them both.

We'll turn to Britain for the middle ground. Both Pulp and Fuck the Tories edited by collective, the former by Avedon Carol, Rob Hansen and John Harvey, the latter by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas. Physically, they make a nice balance between Mueller's order and Widner's chaos. Like most British zines, they are leery of the loose illustration, and (thank God!) they believe in actually editing the letters they receive for content and use them to set up a dialogue. Their material tends to be less chancy than YHOS's or Pirate Jenny's, perhaps because, with a staff of editors, they can spread out the work. Sometimes there are lapses, more often in FTT, whose politics occasionally vote for the inclusion of ill-planned material, but overall the writing is very sharp, the tone individual and pleasantly acerbic, and the whole presentation solid. Of course, reading the these zines requires the American fan to pay attention to an alien fandom that really doesn't care what we're doing over here, but that's good for the ego.

There you have it; three different tastes in fanzines, three types of editors who, whatever other sins you might be able to pin on them, can't be accused of failing to edit. This is a responsibility, damn it; if you're going to do something, do it well, put your back into it, and do the best thing that you can. Because, if you don't, and I see a copy, I'll call you a fugghead in print. And I'll be right. -- Peter Larsen

FANZINES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE:

Fuck the Tories, Published by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Rd., Stamford Hill, London, N15 6NH, UK Available for the usual or one pound per copy.

Pirate Jenny, published by Pat Mueller, 618 Westridge, Duncanville, TX, 75116, USA. Available for the usual, \$3.00/copy, or \$10.00/4

Pulp, published by Avedon Carol, Rob Hansen and John Harvey, C/O 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, UK. Available for the usual.

YHOS, published by Art Widner, 231 Courtney Lane, Orinda, CA, 94563, USA. Available for the usual.

Peter Larsen may be reached at Box 13253, Dinkytown Station, Minneapolis, MN, 55414-0253

Born of Ratfandom, raised by Lutherans

CARRIE ON:

I fantasize that most fanwriters got started gradually -- first a LoC or two, than a con report for their local clubzine, working their way up to an article in a genzine like Mainstream, or publishing a small, but widely distributed perzine. I, on the other hand, do not even write my mother, and my only fannish contribution to date was three paragraphs in a one-shot put out at Congenial I. I'm hoping that experience years ago in producing theme papers at the last minute as an undergraduate in psychology will come to my rescue...otherwise, this editorial column is going to resemble an engineering proposal.

My experience working in an engineering group, has, on the the other hand, prepared me for the job of co-editing a fanzine. We always work as a team. We always work on a deadline. And we're always late.

In fact, there are very few major projects which I have embarked on

in my adult life which have not been late (Major, because I'm very seldom late for dinner.). There was the birth of my daughter fifteen years ago this month, two excruciating weeks late. My college career, which spanned fourteen years and three majors. During my last stint as a student, I worked as an electronics technician for the University of Wisconsin department which built the High Speed Photometer package for the Hubble Space Telescope. WE weren't late, but everyone else was. And the project for the local power utility to which I have devoted my last eight years was a "five-year" project. We're not done yet.

I have worked with Andy on Spent Brass and his other publishing endeavors for the past four years, in the role of publisher, proofreader, and margin monitor. Up to this point, all publishing delays have been due to procrastinations and miscalculations on his part. I figure that with my help, we can be twice as ~~late~~ good. -- cr.

Who saw Hanlon sawing?

FOLKAL POINT: As I write this, Don Helley, Madison Fan and scion of the Freak/Head/Activist/Swamp-Artist community, is nearing the moment of truth in his campaign to be elected mayor of Madison. The incumbent, Paul Soglin, is a former anti-war activist himself, enjoying his second tenure as executive. In his first, he was known as the "red mayor," and gained some notoriety for his visits with the likes of Fidel Castro. This time around, Soglin has repented in large part for his former radical persona, and leans heavily on a new image as friendly to business and managerially competent.

Don has so far spent about \$30.00 on his campaign, and is doing surprisingly well. Because of Soglin's moderatization program, there is no serious Republican candidate, only the weasly Bogavitch, a legislative aide who has no party backing. There are two other freak candidates, but only one is of interest. Carnell Boss Adams is a homeless black man who has relentlessly hammered Soglin on the comparative poverty of the city's predominantly black south side, and he represents much the same kind of citizens as Don does. If either miraculously wins the primary, the other will surely endorse him. The fifth candidate is Dennis Denure, a loon whose principal interest so far has been eliminating flouride in Madison's water. Madisonians will receive this fmz well before the Feb. 19th primary, so vote for Uncle Don if you can! The rest of you will get an update next issue. -- aph.

SPENT BRASS #2 (first ensmallled number)
HAPSTRETCH HALL
315 N. INGERSOLL ST.
MADISON, WI 53703



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Lee Hoffman
401 Sunrise Trail NW
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

Art Credits: Logo by Craig Smith. Page 1: Dan Steffan. Page 2: Hugo-winner (!!!) Stu Shiffman.