



The Stf Amateur

Or: *Amateur Stf*

October 2023

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Editor's Note: This is the first issue of *The Stf Amateur* (Or: *Amateur Stf*) published as a member of the United Fanzine Organization (<https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com>). I will continue to distribute soft copies through the usual channels, and UFO members will receive a printed version. Other than the introduction of actual covers—thank you, Dan, for this month's full-color glory—and the UFO Checklist, changes to the general content of *Stf* and its constituent apazines will be minimal. Regardless, this is another step toward publishing a proper perzine or genzine rather than multiple, distributed apazines. Feel free to write a letter of comment or review—and let me know what you think!

The Stf Amateur (Or: *Amateur Stf*) is a bundlezine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) by the grace of Bill Burns, as well as for the Usual. Letters of comment, cover art, and spot illustrations are welcome and desired. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #81

Sept. 7, 2023

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Last Week's Senru

Wife at the airport
to visit family 12 days
Monster movies: Yes!

I've actually read, watched more anime, and pursued other activities in her absence so far.

Natter: Hard Drive Recovery

I have an old PowerBook G4 that's been inoperable for some time. A friend was even unable to get it to boot up as a slave drive. So it's been sitting in its laptop backpack since it stopped working. Back in March, I bought a Zilkee Ultra Recovery Converter for about \$60 after seeing a social media ad. Just this week I decided to remove the hard drive from the PowerBook to see if I could transfer files from it to my current MacBook Pro.

I could not. I'd also ordered a Teckman nine-in-one Macbook Repair Kit containing a T5 T6 T8 Torx Screwdriver, P5 Pentalobe, Ph000 Phillips, and 2.0Y Tripoint screwdriver—another \$12—so I could remove the 40GB IBM TravelStar hard drive from the dead machine (which took some doing for the likes of this largely non-technical one).

That done, I was able to plug the drive into the converter's 2.5-inch IDE space—four pins remaining free just as they had in the PowerBook—and I was able to plug the converter into power. I then connected it to my MacBook with a USB converter, but all it did was whirr and buzz. It whirred and buzzed for some time before a fleeting error message appeared, unsuccessful. I couldn't even read what the error was.

Regardless, error it was, and I'm out \$72-plus. I'll likely try again, just to be sure. But who knows what delights lurk on the inaccessible hard drives of men?

Joe, any advice?

On *The Incredible Hulk* and *Daredevil*

Inspired by recent viewing and reading related to the Hulk (*T&T* #80), I'd reserved a couple of additional DVDs via interlibrary loan. Early this week, I watched

The Trial of the Incredible Hulk. A 1989 TV movie, the program aired on NBC well after the television show ended and was the fifth of six such TV movies.

After walking off a rural manual labor job because of an overly aggressive coworker, David Banner finds himself in a nearby city, living in a flophouse now in the shadow of a newly finished tower. He witnesses the harassment of a woman on the subway—perpetrated by a couple of criminals immediately after a bank or jewelry store heist—and intervenes, only to be summarily dispatched before he transforms into the Hulk, fueling rumors in the city. (While he's waiting for the train, viewers are shown graffiti extolling the virtues of someone called Daredevil.)

Arrested after returning to the form of Banner, he is assigned to a blind defense attorney named Matt Murdock, who explains to him that he thinks the robbery was undertaken on behalf of Wilson Fisk—but that no criminal activity has been connected to him yet. Murdock wants Banner's help, but Banner indicates he's unable to testify in court because he can't be held responsible for his actions. (i.e., he's afraid he'll get angry.)

Meanwhile, the woman who was harassed has been visited in the hospital and threatened into silence, her family members later threatened. In fact, she says that it was Banner who attacked her, putting him in a challenging situation. After a nurse attacks her and her family is threatened, she decides to be more open and honest with Murdock—once she's in protective care. Regardless, she is abducted by Fisk's cronies.

Murdock reveals to Banner that he is in fact, Daredevil, a relatively new costumed crime fighter in the city. Banner accompanies him to Fisk tower, where Daredevil is downed and Banner transforms into the Hulk to rescue him. Once Fisk thinks Daredevil is dead, he convenes the leaders of crime organizations from around the country to consolidate under his leadership.

But Daredevil isn't dead! All in all, the movie is a fun pairing of two heroes—similar to the previous year's *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, which featured Thor. In fact, Murdock and Daredevil are the highlight, which isn't a surprise because the movie was used to test the concept of a *Daredevil* series that never came to fruition.

The blind hero's all-black uniform is intriguing, the augmented vision special effects interesting, and Murdock's law firm's colleagues promising enough as a supporting cast. Similarly, John Rhys-Davies (credited as John Rhys Davies) was excellent as Wilson Fisk—the Kingpin—and would have provided an excellent foil. The special effects of Fisk escaping

in an air car were excellent for the time.

Notably, this was also the first appearance of Stan Lee in his eventually expected cameo appearances. Lee was cast as the foreman of the jury in what turned out to be Banner's dream sequence—in which the Hulk goes on a rampage in a courthouse. In the movie, the Hulk—or Banner—never goes on trial. And at the end, Banner is portrayed walking alone into the distance, a duffel bag over his shoulder, as Joe Harnell's "The Lonely Man Theme" plays.

Because of the program's focus on Daredevil rather than the Hulk, I read a relatively recent issue of the comic book, #14 (October 2023). It was a fun enough read that I'll read other recent issues I have on hand, as well. Opening with a memorial to John Romita Sr. (*De Profundis* #588), the issue was written by Chip Zdarsky and drawn by Marco Checchetto.

As the conclusion to the Red Fist Saga, this issue drops readers in at the end of what looks like a pretty action-packed story arc. The Hand has defeated the Fist and its king and queen—Daredevil and Elektra—and the souls of Foggy Nelson and others are trapped in hell. Daredevil died at the hand of Elektra to go to hell in order to free those who are trapped. "[H]e was transformed with a blazing white costume and otherworldly powers," says the editorial introduction. Now, that I've got to see! Apparently, Daredevil remains in hell.

This issue, however, doesn't take place in hell. Foggy Nelson and law partner Cole North, a former police officer, continue accepting legal clients "to help people," occasionally seeing people they mistake for Murdock. Elektra has donned a Daredevil-like uniform to continue the hero's street patrols, stopping a van she expects to be full of weapons—but which is empty.

She confronts Butch Pharris, who's recently taken his father's last name: Fisk. "[T]he Fisk name does carry some weight with it," he says. Apparently he'd stolen the missing weapons from Tombstone so Hammerhead wouldn't buy them. "Ludicrous men with ludicrous names."

Reed Richards returns Murdock's chess set to Nelson. And Elektra encounters a priest whom she mistakes for Murdock. So will readers. Is it Murdock, back from the dead—and hell—without memory?

I particularly enjoyed the exchange between a street-clothed Elektra and the proprietor of a party store. Thugs have been harassing her because of a window display of Daredevil uniforms. "You were the first person to put on the mask when he was missing," Elektra says. To which the woman responds, "[T]here's something about that mask, isn't there? It's the anonymity—like you don't have to be scared

anymore because you're not... yourself, with all your baggage and limits."

"[I]t's also a spotlight," Elektra says. "Everyone sees Daredevil. Everyone takes notice. You're responsible to the idea of it." Heroes exhibit heroism and other higher qualities. When we emulate our heroes, we become beholden to such qualities.

Subsequently, I also read *Daredevil* #3-7 and #10-11 (November 2022 to March 2023 and June-July 2023). Zdarsky's run writing the comic has been excellent, and these issues—even with a gap—are quite impressive in terms of storytelling. The artwork by Rafael de Latorre and, later, Checchetto is also excellent, perfectly dark for the storyline.

The issues from this series have been collected into at least three trade paperback volumes: *Daredevil & Elektra by Chip Zdarsky* volumes 1-3. He also wrote the previous *Daredevil* series, which has been collected in at least seven volumes. I expect that that series is similarly excellent.

Without giving an issue-by-issue breakdown, here are some highlights. Luke Cage is now mayor and meets with the manipulative Stromwyn siblings, from whom Daredevil and Elektra stole \$3 billion. Daredevil faces Aka, a Hand leader who trained Elektra. The hero returns to the Fist in order to prepare for the war to come.

He and Elektra challenge the "souls of the Hand's dead" before they marry, becoming the king and queen of the Fist. Stick officiates a very brief wedding ceremony. There's a self-writing prophetic book that Daredevil can eventually read himself, though blind. The team goes to the Myrmidon, a "super villain prison in the ocean" to release and enlist criminals to undertake their cause. Training them to channel their anger and frustrations more productively proves challenging.

The Hand has been replacing heads of state with doppelgangers, and the Punisher is leader of the Hand. The Avengers and other heroes try to intervene, not understanding what Daredevil's trying to do—thinking Elektra killed the president, who was a doppelganger.

After the gap in issues, Daredevil is despondent, and North rouses him to action again. The hero confronts the Stromwyns before dying, perhaps to go to hell himself. The backup story in #11 featuring a newly youthful Iron Fist also proves interesting.

All that because of a Hulk TV movie. Reportedly, the screenplay for *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* is available on the DVD as an HTML file, but I couldn't see it when I used the DVD with my computer. I was looking forward to reading it, too!

But I'm not sure whether the idea has legs, as fun as this novella was. He's a vampire! She's a werewolf! They're both aliens from outer space!

At some point, perhaps relatively quickly, the gambit might get old—we already have Sookie Stackhouse, the Twilight series, and *Outlander*, after all—but Gillen included enough interesting narrative around the selkie revelation and its repercussions that perhaps it could still work. Regardless, reading *Sea Creatures Prefer Redheads* makes me want to explore the novels in the series, particularly if any of them are especially hard boiled. Her *Single Indemnity* seems promising along those lines.

The combination of the golden age of Hollywood, the cast and crew of movie productions, and monsters—or other film genres (noir, sf, etc.) is a recipe I'd seek again.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Anime Reviews

Aura: Koga Maryuin's Last War

At first, I felt like this hour and a half-long anime directed by Seiji Kishi was a bit of a bait and switch. Instead of a heroic fantasy taking place in a mundane high school—what we might expect, right?—it ended up being an animated movie about escapism, bullying, friendship, and growing up.

A high school student is assigned to spend time with a girl who's lost in a fantasy world in which she is an otherworldly researcher striving to keep the world safe from dragons or somesuch. In part, the movie is inspired by Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote*. It also draws on the idea of chunibyō, or middle-second syndrome, in which some Japanese eighth graders want to individualize and differentiate, develop grandiose delusions, and think that they have hidden knowledge or secret powers.

The concept turns so much of young adult fiction—child revealed as wizard, young man as vampire or werewolf, orphan as surprise inheritor of wealth, family as superspies—on its ear. Over the course of the movie, the boy attempts to befriend the delusional girl, who is persistently bullied; is bullied himself; and is revealed to have experienced the same situation in middle school—during which he portrayed the hero Koga Maryuin.

This, then, is Koga Maryuin's final battle—for the health and wellbeing of his new friend and eventually girlfriend, which flummoxed me a little. The character design and pacing is well done, dialog compelling, and there's one great scene in which a bully goes too far in his bullying—to be turned against by the rest of the students, even his fellow bullies, as well as the school administrators.

Middle-second syndrome apparently plays a role in other works, as well, including the light novel series *Love, Chunibyō & Other Delusions*. Hikaru Ijuin, who coined the term in 1999, has since disavowed it, though it's now studied by psychologists. In the late 2000s, Hyōya Saegami wrote *Toriatsukai Setsumei Sho*, a chunibyō user manual that identifies three types: delinquents, those who opt out of mainstream trends, and youth who act like they have special powers.

I'm glad I watched it just for the introduction to the concept of chunibyō, which seems to have infiltrated American YA writing and media for decades.

Nobunaga the Fool episodes 1-4

This review concentrates on the first four episodes of the 24-episode anime series *Nobunaga the Fool*, created by Shoji Kawamori. Originally a multimedia stage play utilizing live actors and projected

animation, the anime series aired between January and June 2014. Satelight provided the animation for the play and anime series.

It's an odd duck. There are two worlds, the Western Star and the Eastern Star. They're generally not in communication, though you can travel between them, which seems to happen rarely. On the Eastern Star, a slightly less technological location, Nobunaga, the wastrel son of a head of state, witnesses the horrors of war along with two of his friends. It might just be the voice acting, but I find two of those three characters—including the titular protagonist—highly irritating and uninteresting, which makes the show somewhat of a challenge.

The Western Star is slightly more interesting. King Arthur seeks to unify the different societies with his round table of people such as Julius Caesar. Leonardo da Vinci rescues Joan of Arc in order to take her to the Eastern Star. The captain of the spaceship they book passage on is Magellan. No historical figure is safe.

There are robot battle suits in both worlds. There's a love triangle, square, or pentagon because *everyone* seems to love Nobunaga. A woman disguises herself as a man in order to take to the battlefield. The female leader of another country—who's also a pop idol, apparently—arranges a wedding with Nobunaga, who agrees to the coupling so he can access her Sacred Treasure of Lightning as a weapon. And each episode is named after cards in a tarot deck.

I don't know if I'll make it through all 24 episodes, but at 30 minutes in length with a commercial break in the middle, each episode of *Nobunaga the Fool* makes for short fun so far. What I really want to know is: What was the stage play like? I've only been able to find one picture online.

Planzet

While my wife is out of town, I also watched this 2010 anime film, which focuses on a brother and sister striving to fight against an alien invasion that's already decimated much of the Earth's population. Other humans have already absconded to Mars.

After the failure of a giant limited-use (one shot!) terrestrial cannon to destroy the aliens' mothership, the older brother, a soldier out to avenge the death of his father, dons a large robotic suit accompanied by two others to fight the incursion. He later uses another weapon, and humanity is left to rebuild from its ashes.

Directed by Jun Awazu, *Planzet* is computer animated and highly realistic, though it falls short of entering the uncanny valley. At the time of its release, the film was promoted as groundbreaking. 13 years later, it seems less so, and I'm glad the animation style hasn't become the predominant method.

The portrayal of the ruins of Earth's built environment makes for some nice eye candy, and everything is deliciously weathered. While the aliens' spacecraft are widely portrayed, no attention is given to the aliens themselves, their physiology, or culture. So the threat is a bit faceless, which is actually a reasonable approach. Is a foe you can't envision or comprehend more or less fearsome than a foe you can describe?

I wasn't at all convinced by the hard-edged youthful female military leader who faces her own parent issues. That she belonged in her position wasn't persuasive, and her actions after the failure of the one-shot cannon mystified me. It was good that other people were around.

Old-Time Radio: *Lights Out!* and *The Shadow*

There are two episodes of genre interest in the August 2023 CD set from the Monthly Classic Radio Club. The May 4, 1943, broadcast of *Lights Out!* featured "Heavenly Jeep." Written by Arch Oboler and starring Raymond Lawrence, the episode focuses on a couple of soldiers who might have died—and their travels to another world in which giant insects dominate the surviving humans. An enjoyable story, even if I thought the other characters' voices were irritating.

Meanwhile, the Oct. 16, 1938, episode of *The Shadow*, "Night Without End" concentrates on a villain who's stolen a fog-generating machine. Not only does he plan to blanket the city in impenetrable fog, he intends to mix that with poisonous gas. William Johnstone does a good turn as the Shadow, with Agnes Morehead beside him as Margot Lane.

I also listened to a third episode, which is less pertinent: *Suspense*, "Love's Lovely Counterfeit" (March 8, 1945). Notable because it's Humphrey Bogart's only appearance on the program, the story is a pretty straightforward crime and love story in which a gangster tries to elevate himself by aligning with a reformed politician—becoming attracted to a woman worth aspiring to.

Comments on APA-L #3035

Thank you to Marcia Minsky and Joe Zeff for the spurious cover photograph. When Zeff referred me to Minsky to determine the photo's provenance to determine appropriate attribution and credit, I was slow to realize or remember that she was his sister. She's also a LASFSan, a former president, and two-time Loscon chair. No wonder they live together!

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 31, **Lee Gold** updated ellers on the local impact of the recent rains. I will share your cover feedback with artist Jose Sanchez. Reportedly, it's a montage of images from *Close*

Encounters of the Third Kind. Your teacher's use of the phrase "common people" made me chuckle. Do common people use the phrase "common people"? I applaud his discarding of the idea that a work ethic was the domain of Protestants. He seems like an excellent teacher.

My wife and I employ a housekeeper who comes for a day every two weeks. At first I was uncomfortable—am I the kind of person who hires a housekeeper?—but I can't imagine spending time cleaning our home the way she does, and her service is well worth paying for. I also now think the "kind of person" who hires a housekeeper is whomever doesn't want to clean their own home and can afford to pay someone else to do so. When Caitlin was learning Spanish, she and Olivia would converse occasionally, and she's very pleasant to have around. Our cat Spooner also enjoys the company while I'm working.

Your point about a special edition of *De Profundis* is sound, if that's the method the board of directors or club officers use for such notice. I have long enjoyed the "Death Will Not Release You" motto. I wonder which membership pool the board or officers use for club communications: active members, living members, or every member? I don't know that I've seen a list of contact information for living members, just currently active members.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1559 shared news about the El Segundo Little League team and the Dormition of Mary. Your use of "oops, out of room" suggests to me that you write your distribution comments first and top matter second. Is that always the case?

The recording of "Morgenlich Leuchtend" was credited to Catarina Ligendza, Eugen Jochum, Orchester der Deutschen Oper Berlin, Placido Domingo, Peter Maus, Roberto Banuelas, Gerd Feldhoff, Peter Lager, and Chor der Deutschen Oper Berlin. It was a Eugen Jochum and Orchester der Deutschen Oper Berlin recording issued by Deutsche Grammophon. Indeed, I don't think Frank Zappa ever performed or recorded with the Residents, though that would be wonderful. Once a mystery—and perhaps better for it—the identities of the Residents are now known (<https://tinyurl.com/Residents-identity>), and Hardy Fox died in 2018 (<https://tinyurl.com/Fox-obituary>).

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #50, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** offered feedback to cover artist Jose Sanchez—I'll pass it on! I've been corresponding with Nola Frame-Gray, and while she still doesn't want to receive or try to read APA-L, I expect she'll send additional back covers soon. I enjoy them, too.

I'd amend your remarks on "current fans" to

"current older" fen. Many younger fen might very well be in a similar life stage as those younger fen in the late 1950s—even if the gender balance is more even. There are still active college and university clubs, which we reach out to via *De Profundis* but don't often interact with given age and life stage differences, perhaps.

"I handle [problems] by postponing them." Ah, procrastination. Our son is currently learning that paying bills—including rent—and responding to communications such as notices for jury duty can be important but irritating tasks to undertake. He's been doing his best to avoid doing so, which has led to some challenges. I've found that giving him advice and helping him learn how to better approach money management and "adult business" benefits me, as well. I can't really avoid taking care of business having just told him to take care of business. So I've been doing things as they occur to me rather than waiting for later. We'll see if it sticks.

I've added you to the list of people I send *De Profundis* to. The membership list—presumably active members—provided isn't always entirely up to date or accurate.

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* pointed out a sizable difference in two editions of Robert A. Heinlein's *Space Cadet*. I will also add you to the *De Prof* distribution list—and send you the two most recent issues. I challenge you to tell us honestly that you didn't enjoy rearranging your office and telling us about it. I imagine you're quite pleased with the new setup. The pink paper is a gift to us from Marty Cantor. I'll be working my way through the odd scraps of mismatched paper, as well as the unopened and partial reams he left behind. I will not charge apans for paper (or envelopes and postage) I didn't buy myself.

In *Toony Loons* #728, **Joe Zeff** also wrote about cleaning services! Just look at us family-friendly, tax-paying, home-owning or -renting fen. Thank you for reminding me to schedule or seek a flu shot. It's already September!

I'll share your cover feedback with artist Taral Wayne. I disagree with you gently on the number of "and"'s—and perhaps commas—in the table of contents. That distribution was for two weeks rather than one, and each week's meeting recognized two patron saints. Strictly speaking, you're right. But I wanted to better indicate the two sets of two saints rather than list them all together. The first pair was recognized the first week, and the second, the second. Regardless, eagle eyes, for sure. If only my fanac proofreading were as expert.

Jackson, Steve Shipley, the Smith, Rick Manugian, and Keeter, the anthology also includes some humorous textual asides in the form of letters slipped under a bedroom door by a concerned mother. (The recurring “I’m sure he’s just kidding” made me chuckle several times.) The comic also includes fan art of the Phantom of the Opera—one of my favorite pieces—Dr. Doom, Thor, the Vision, Iron Man, Captain America, the Phantom, Batman, and others.

The “Man-Tonn the Different” story by Keeter and Robinson tells the tale of a savage tribal outcast who encounters a man-lizard and a large thunder lizard, shades of Kazar or Conan. (Interestingly, this piece echoes the *Eggman* comic strips throughout the anthology.) The Nightman piece by Keeter and Shipley resonates with his appearance in *Mantra* #12 above, though almost 50 years earlier. In the story, he goes up against the Wizard, who returns in another short segment at the end of the book.

“Planetoid Peril” by the Smith—“an Anna Logg science-mystery”—will be of particular interest to sf fen. A floating alien brain threatens the Earth with a displaced asteroid. Manugian’s “Manhunt” shares a story about being in the wrong place at the right time.

Keeter closes the issue with “Checkmate,” which transitions from a medieval adventure to a modern-day chess game, and “15 Minutes in the Life of a Madman,” retelling Abraham Lincoln’s assassination.

This reprint was a delight to read, in part because of its vintage sensibilities and amplified fannishness, but also because so many of the creators remain active. What a treasure to make available again. Inquire via Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821; stevekeeter@gmail.com.

***Tetragrammaton Fragments* #270 (April 2023)**

This is the UFO’s bimonthly newsletter and combines comics with member columns and other content related to the co-op. This is the 2023 UFO Awards issue, so the results of member voting on the best publisher, single zine or comic book, cover, comic story, article or text story, comic writer, text writer, sequential/story artist, and cover/pinup/spot illustration artist are announced and recognized. Congratulations to all so recognized!

UFO members are required to publish at least one zine or comic a year, and to contribute a column at least every four months to *TF*. So the bulk of the content are member columns by Tom Fellrath, Joseph Morris, John Muller, Joe Ely Carrales III, Jason Bullock, David Oliver Kling—a short story work in progress!—Rob Imes, Tim Kelly, Vern Holt Bond, Kurt Erichsen, Michael Waggoner, and Steve Keeter.

Most of the columns include personal news,

reviews of member publications, and other discussion—a combination of apae’s natter and mailing comments. In addition to Kling’s story, Bullock contributes five pages of “Mr. Myrrdn,” a tale of the fantastic, so there’s comic art to boot. This is perhaps the best way to become acquainted with the UFO and its offerings. \$3.50 postpaid to Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821; stevekeeter@gmail.com. Subscriptions are available without membership in the UFO for \$20/year.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: A Movie Review

In early September, a friend introduced me to the wonders of the Gardena Cinema, an 800-seat movie theater that’s easier to get to—and park at—than the New Beverly Cinema, which is ostensibly even more nearby. Family run, there’s perhaps another two years left in this theater. The father wants to retire, his daughter is running the theater, and they have a buyer lined up who plans to replace it with apartments. It has one of the largest, least-used parking lots I’ve ever seen in the Los Angeles area. And by screening both first-run features and shorter runs of independent films, the programming is really intriguing.

During one recent weekend while my wife was out

of town, three of us ventured south for *Psycho Ape!*, an hour-long 2020 independent film written by Stephen Albers, Addison Binek, and Greg DeLiso—he was at the screening with actor Kansas Bowling (Nancy Banana)—and directed by Binek. The movie was preceded by several simian-related trailers and shorts, including a music video for the Kinks’ “Apeman,” trailers for *Trog* and *Schlock*, and other promotional shorts.

Psycho Ape! focuses on an ape that escapes from the Detroit Zoo, killing a handful of teenage girls at a slumber party. 25 years later, the ape resurfaces in suburban New York City, where he re-encounters a young woman who survived the slaughter. They become acquainted, tour around the city, and otherwise try to escape from Bill Weeden’s character Dr. Zoomis. Utilizing an increasingly worse-for-wear gorilla suit, CGI blood splatters, and green screen, the movie is a light-hearted, gory romantic comedy that’s actually quite fun to watch.

The actors’ self-aware portrayal of teenagers, Banana’s prurient interest in simians and wide-ranging DVD collection, interstitial dance numbers, bizarre duck fetish bath scene, and Halloween *Ratatouille* monologue recitation contribute to a fun DIY romp I enjoyed thoroughly.

On the LASFAPA Deities

Next up in *Wurlitzer’s* Apocrypha: David Schlosser. While I’ve enjoyed writing profiles of LASFS patron saints for APA-L—and LASFAPA’s Iconography and Deities to date—it’s a bit strange when someone’s still actively contributing. Regardless, that also offers ample opportunity for clarification, correction, and additional information. Fellow LASFAPAn Schlosser served as Little Sin God for #65-173 and more recently since #556. Let’s see what online research yields about the man!

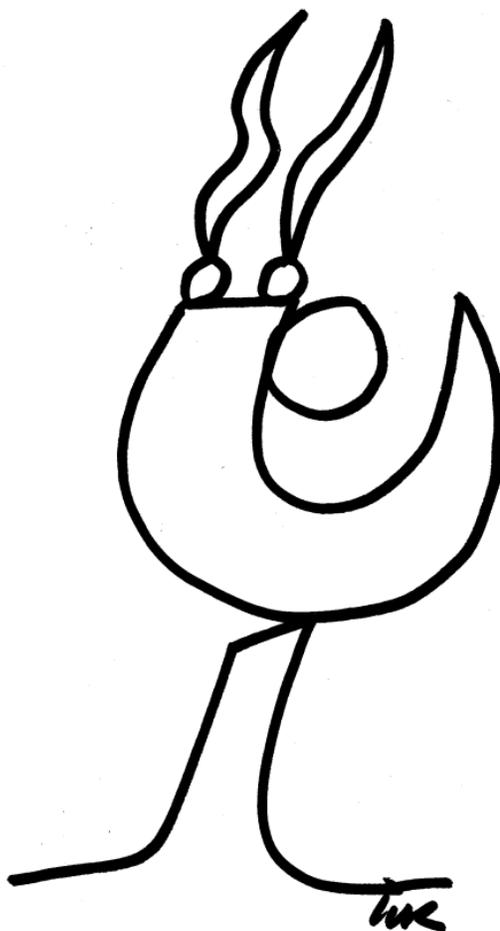
An active apahack, Schlosser has published multiple apazines, including but not limited to *Mish*, *Mosh*, *Mishegoss* (for Georgia-based apa Myriad); *Peter, Pan & Merry* (for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance); and *Ahhh Sweet Mystery of Life* (for WOOF #45). He also served as official editor for SFPA from January 2019 to at least July 2022.

Fanac.org includes an undated photograph of Schlosser with Dan Deckert during a LASFS event. He’s listed as a donor of Down Under Fan Fund auction items in Marty Cantor and Robbie Bourget’s 1985 *Here We Go ’Round the Duffberry Bush* #1.

In 2011, he ran Westercon 64’s Staff Lounge with Kay McCutcheon. He attended Loscon 5 in 1978 and supported CoNZeland, the 2020 virtual Worldcon; as well as Chicon 8, the 80th Worldcon, last year. He’d

previously attended the 2006 Worldcon, L.A.con IV, earning a mention in R-Laurraine Tutihasi’s *Purrsonal Mewsings* #27 and perhaps at least one previous issue. In 1995, he sent a letter of comment to Tutihasi’s *Convention Log*.

Shortly after LASFAPA launched in 1976, Samuel Edward Konkin III addressed comments to Schlosser in *Clear Ether!* #18 and #22. In other fan activity, Schlosser contributed to the Minnesota Science Fiction Society’s fanzine, *Rune*. He served as an agent for ConFiction, the 48th Worldcon in Holland, per a news item in the July-August 1990 issue of *Aboriginal Science Fiction*. He’s also listed as an agent in an advertisement placed in the Minicon 24 Program Book. At that time, he had a Van Nuys address.



—William Rotsler

Comments on LASFAPA #559

In *Wurlitzer*, David Schlosser proposed a slight change to LASFAPA’s deadline. My take is that as Little Sin God, you can make such changes by fiat to meet the needs of your personal life and schedule. I am not at all opposed to the proposed second Friday deadline if it’s more convenient for you.

Thank you very much for “Hemi-Demi-Pemmi-Con,” a con report in which **Schlosser** shared his experiences at the recent North American Science Fiction Convention. I’m glad you figured out how to switch your hybrid from electric to gas—seems like a good thing to learn how to do! Your travels sounded stress free, which isn’t as common as it ought to be. Neat that you saw Elayne Pelz at check in!

Also neat that you saw Cy Chauvin. Next to my work space, I have an envelope of book reviews he’d sent in March that I still need to scan and OCR for George Phillies of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. I hope to get Chauvin’s reviews into *The N3F Review of Books*. He’d written me because of something of mine in R-Laurraine Tutihasi’s *Purrsonal Musings*. Small world, smaller.

And Garth Spencer! I know him through eAPA and his own fanzine publishing, and when going through Marty Cantor’s fanzine collection, I saw that he was Canadian correspondent for Mike Gunderloy’s *Factsheet Five* in the early days. Otherwise, I enjoyed the write-ups of the programming you participated in and was surprised that 90 percent was readings and social gatherings.

In *Fool’s Mate* #262, **Schlosser** commented on Nick Smith’s absence. The last time I hung out with Smith—in mid-August—he indicated that he planned to return but had been busy with other projects. Similarly, given David DeChancie’s resignation, I messaged him on Facebook to check in and let him know I’ll miss him.

I look forward to learning about the four books you read while traveling to and from Pemmi-Con. We’ve got some travel planned for the end of the year ourselves. At the end of September, Caitlin and I will go to Tokyo for a week-plus to see our son Jonah while at college. He’s now in his second year, having attended classes during the summer, and is considering staying for his next two years instead of transferring somewhere else. That trip will be vacation time for me. And near the end of October, we’ll return to Portugal for about a month. One week of that will be vacation, and the remainder will utilize my employer’s Work Anywhere Weeks, of which we’re given a number every year since the pandemic.

My comment related to Cantor’s trust situation was mostly for Smith, who’s closer to it and has more information. Given his recent absence, I’m glad I included the update—risking no duplicative information or foot stepping.

Thank you for the additional information about Harry Andruschak. When writing somewhat critical details about someone I haven’t met, I might hedge a little bit to be polite, even if online documentation

bears out a description. Your mention of *The Fourth Tower of Inverness* fell on appreciative ears. I love ZBS Foundation’s audio dramas.

I quite enjoyed *Asteroid City* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #73) and have been watching many movies during the second half of my wife’s time out of town traveling to Michigan to see her mother. Not only did I go to Gardena Cinema to see *Psycho Ape!* (see above) and *Andy Warhol’s Frankenstein* with a friend, I’ve been catching up on the recent Marvel movies, which are solid bachelor fare. So far I’ve seen *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, and *Guardians of the Galaxy 3* in recent days. This noon during lunch, I started *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*. I should finish that before my wife’s return. Before Caitlin left, we saw *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, but not as a double feature. Both are excellent movies.

Alan Winston’s *Rat Girl Summer* reported on recent travels to Los Angeles. While we didn’t make an effort to meet, I enjoyed seeing his updates on Facebook while he was in town. Maybe the next time you come down this way! (We return from Japan on Oct. 1 and don’t leave again until Oct. 26.)

I, too, am a member of Cinemark’s Movie Club. I, too, have a sizable number of credits accumulated. We used a couple for the *Barbie* screening recently, and I took in *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #74) on a slow Friday on my own. Maybe I’ll take in *A Haunting in Venice* this Friday. We’ll see how the week progresses!

In *The Title Goes Here*, **Janice Morningstar** reported the death of their home air conditioning. Oof. My wife has been extolling the virtues of heat pumps in recent months. Even during the hottest days in Culver City, keeping shades drawn with windows open and ceiling fans on—at least in the bedroom—worked pretty well. We don’t have AC otherwise. Now that the nights are getting cooler—I’ve been tempted to add another layer while Caitlin’s out of town—we might be nearing the time for heat.

I read and enjoyed Day 1 of your Pemmi-Con conrep. What an ordeal with the wheelchair and the various pushers at the airport! At least you got to go to the head of the line. I look forward to reading more.

And in *That Flagon Last Night* #251, **Alva Svoboda** offered a page despite not expecting to publish. The camping trip sounds delightful, and I’m glad you enjoyed reading Cory Doctorow’s *Red Team Blues*. I have a copy set aside for future reading myself. It must have been sad indeed to learn of the destruction of a place you’d visited so recently.

hovering to drink of the singular flower's nectar, the insect is mortally surprised. The last page and panel are a delight. Inquire via Rick Bradford, Poopsheet Foundation, P.O. Box 86, Denton, TX 76202; <https://poopsheetfoundation.com>.

Laffs

Horsty's eight-page minicomic contains a series of unrelated gag panels—hence the title. Several are science fictional in nature. The cover gag features two aliens and a surprising beverage. The “doctor's wife” panel seems like something that could be published in *The New Yorker*. And the last page offers a Dorian Gray joke. Horsty's artwork can be quite simple or slightly more detailed, offering a welcome balance. Inquire via the Festival of Failure, 910 E. 32 St. #202, Austin, TX 78705-2719 or via Bradford above.

Nightlife 12:01

Tom Lechner's 2010 32-page dream comic is his second dream-related work. While dreams aren't necessarily fantasy, after watching *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*, I'm not so sure. Lechner's artwork is excellent, reminding me of a cross between Anders Nilsen and Jeff Zenick. Themes include collapsing ceilings, tidal waves, driving, losing control of your body, and some kind of alien or monster. Inquire via 318 SW 3rd St. #331, Portland, OR 97204-2405; <http://www.tomlechner.com>; tom@tomlechner.com or via Bradford above.

Primate View

A 12-page minicomic offering “sketchbook surreality” by Jerry Szostek, this is one of the items that recently placed Szostek among my current favorite artists. The wordless comics occasionally include titles such as “Run” and “Gun Horror,” and there are several mouse- or dog-headed characters that remind me of Larned Justin's “The Journey” in *Mantra* #12. (*Faculae & Filigree* #23) A rocket ship, some kind of demon or monster, astronauts, and satellites also come into play. Szostek is definitely one to watch!

Wag Rag #4 (February 2018)

Also featuring Szostek above, this eight-page digest offers four strips, one of which, “Trudy Sweet: Hidden Mewtive,” is four pages long. Not only is Szostek's absolutely wonderful drawing on full display, but this publication is even more science fictional in nature. “Naughty Bobby Holly Dazed” features a radioactive mutant, and the Trudy Sweet piece is solidly sf, reminding me slightly of Matt Howarth. Bestill my beating heart. Inquire via Bradford above.

Wag Rag #7 (November 2020)

This eight-page minicomic features several creators: Mark David Dietz, Andrew Goldfarb, Szostek (swoon), and fan favorite Brad W. Foster. Goldfarb's piece makes a horrific revelation that will test any fan's mettle. Szostek offers two delightfully dense panels on a single page. And Foster explains *everything*. See? Comix are totally adjacent to sf fandom. Foster's in the mix! Inquire via Bradford above.



—William Rostler

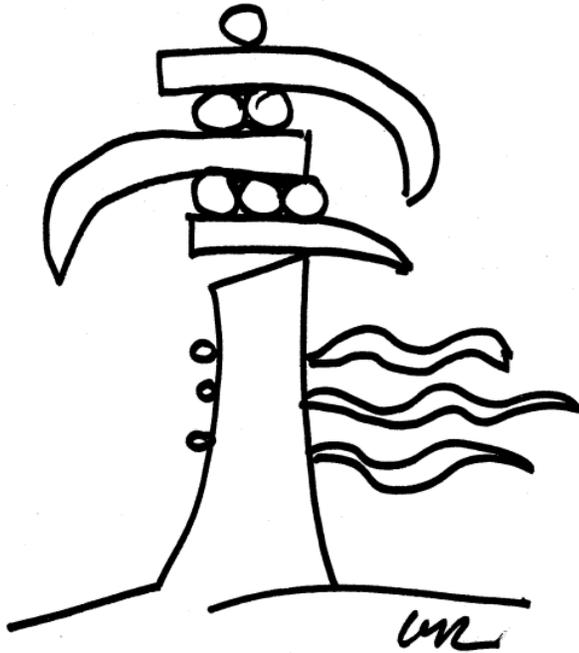
Comments on N'APA #265

Does this distribution really have almost 90 pages? Wow. It's an impressive edition!

In *Brandy Hall* #1, **Mark Nelson** joined N'APAs from Australia. Welcome to N'APA! I am sorry to hear that your fanzine collection went into the trash. I frequently donate materials to several archives at DePaul University, the University of Iowa, and the University of California, Riverside, so know that you have options should you need to make such a decision again. I'm glad you found your way to sf fandom via roleplaying games. I remain active in Alarums & Excursions and not long ago reviewed two British books (one of them an American reprint) about *Dungeons & Dragons* and other games published in

1983-1984. (*Theoretically: Game #1-2*) I'm currently playing in an online campaign via Discord that uses the original *D&D* rules up to 1974. It's great fun.

Your commentary on fanzines, magazines, and apae—including those focusing on play-by-mail games!—of the time gave me plenty to research and learn more about. Does "KTF" mean "Kill the Fanzine"? It's good to know that *Diplomacy* fanzines remain active. So: Welcome, welcome, welcome! I look forward to your future writing about multiple fandoms.



—William Rotsler

Your remark to Garth Spencer about mistyping Fanac.org inspired me to check another apazine (*Faculae & Filigree #23*) I'd just mailed. Phew! Even though I hadn't typed it as the full URL, I was not incorrect. Your retirement project to read British Science Fiction Association Award winners for Best Novel is laudable. I'd like to do the same for the Hugos and Nebulas, as well. Your discussion of whether current fen should prioritize living writers resonated with me. While I occasionally try to remain involved in current publishing, there's so much appeal in the works of no-longer-living authors.

Particularly if one already owns a lot of books they haven't yet read—or frequents used book stores—there's plenty to be gained reading out-of-print writing. Or older books by inactive or dead authors. One can still be an actifan even if you're not still buying new books at scale.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer's *Archive Midwinter*

offered a range of distribution comments. "Everyone ought to have a fan club!" might rate as the quotation of the issue. Consider me a charter member of the Jefferson P. Swycaffer Fan Club. I recently read a 1985 review of your *Become the Hunted* written by Algis Budrys for that year's December issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits #80*) I'm curious whether you remember that review—and how it made you feel as a younger writer. I'd forgotten I'd included NEFFO; I've enjoyed your and Nelson's responses to the game.

I found your piece "'Threading' in Prose Fiction" fascinating. Steven Johnson's 2006 book *Everything Bad is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter* discusses a similar topic through the lens of television. In his exploration of the idea, he concentrates on the shift from single-threaded TV storytelling to multiple storylines.

Thank you for sharing the news of Joshua Quagmire's death. The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society recognized his passing, as well. (*De Profundis #588* and *Menace of the LASFS* for August 2023) I've been a fan of his work since *Army Surplus Komikz Featuring Cutey Bunny #1* and had no idea he was still active or living so close to me—until he died.

In *Brownian Motion #3*, **Garth Spencer** discussed the importance of being organized, excerpted his 2020 *Confabulation*, and commented on N'APAn's contributions. I think Nelson's participation in N'APA is a step toward one of my favorite potential solutions to bridging the gaps between what you term Fandom Classic and Fandoms Contemporary. To wit, he brings roleplaying games to a space that is generally not focused on roleplaying games. Similarly, I occasionally review comic books, as above. We discuss sf, fantasy, and horror—and we include books and media fandom, talking about movies and TV shows. Disrespecting the traditional boundaries of fandom in our own fanac models the world I'd like to see. (Though Ahrvid Engholm might disagree. That's OK. I'll keep playing roleplaying games and reading comics.)

More crucial, however, I think, is bridging the generations—which isn't as simple as bridging online and offline fandom, or fanzine and non-fanzine fandom. At 50, I am among the youngest members of LASFS, other than a few children of other members. I'm also on the younger side of most faneds. Fan clubs occasionally face challenges connecting with college fan clubs. And young people in general might not be finding their way to our fanzines, Web sites, and other centers of fanac—which tend to concentrate on time binding as much as on contemporary fandom.

To better involve the young, we might need to let

go of some of what we consider rules. Fanfiction vs. fiction. Cosplay vs. hall and stage costuming (or recreations vs. originals, for that matter). Discord and Instagram vs. mailing lists, Facebook, and fanzines. Literature vs. media. Excluding adjacent fandoms vs. including them.

If we want younger fen to join us, we can't expect or require them to do what we do the way we do it. And—this might be an inconvenient truth—as much as we might want to bolster our ranks with younger fen to continue this grand fandom, they might not want or need us in the same way. Fandom will continue regardless. It just won't be our brand of fandom.

This also ties into Nelson's remarks on prioritizing living, contemporary authors rather than the out-of-print and perhaps dead authors we might love and enjoy most. Are we even reading or watching the same things—which might be a requirement to at least have something in common to talk about? As someone who prefers older works generally, I don't have an easy solution for this. Because—shock, horror—I'd have to change what I read, watch, and listen to to be relevant. That might be the biggest challenge of all.

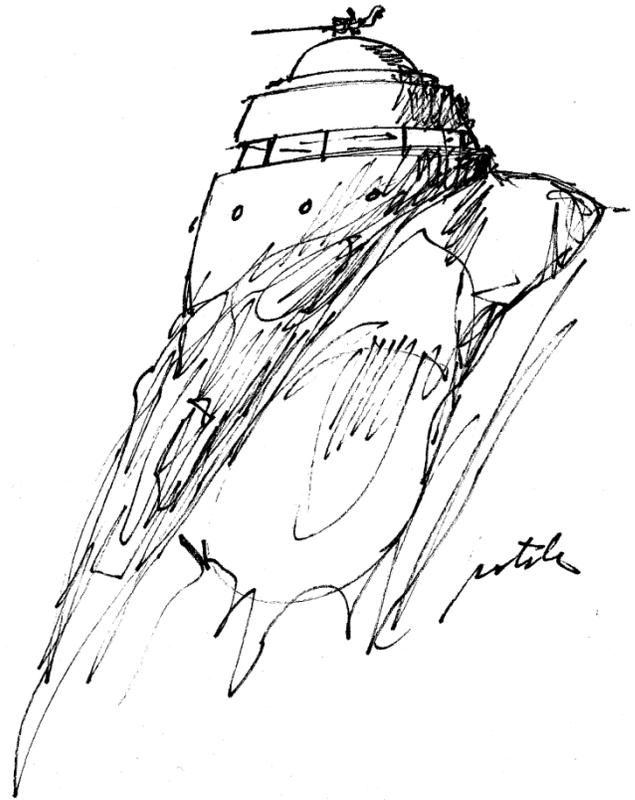
I previously reviewed **Ahrvid Engholm's** *Intermission* #133 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #10 for eAPA. "In *Intermission* #133, Ahrvid Engholm commented on generative artificial intelligence. While AI music might be on the increase, I think the publishing industry has already seen greater impact. In February, *Clarkesworld* stopped accepting submissions after an influx of AI-generated stories. Editors had received 700 actual submissions and 500 machine-written stories. February also brought the launch of an sf magazine entirely generated by AI, *Infinite Odyssey*. While I read *Clarkesworld*, I will not read *Infinite Odyssey*. There's already too much written by humans, dead or alive, for me to spend time reading AI fiction.

"A friend of mine, Amit Gupta, who's written sf for *Escape Pod*, is also working on a tool called Sudowrite, which uses AI to help writers brainstorm, explore plotlines, and write. I'm much more interested in people using generative AI to make what people do easier than to do what people might do instead.

"I appreciated your reminiscence of Maths Classon and the news about the Bertil Falk's Space Opera Prize. I particularly resonated with your encouragement to translate non-Swedish writing into Swedish, given my interest in the reverse, as well. Also in this issue: the Eurovision Song Contest, the Bradford Movie Makers, and History Corner, blending reprints with commentary and description.

"The exploration of finding a Swedish name for sf was especially interesting. And the Scandinavian-European Fan Fund fraud coverage resonated with Garth Spencer's interest in writing a balanced fan history. 'I covered the story in my newszine (300+ subs) and published the details on it...,' you wrote. 'I thus became target of loads of slander and libel by the culprits...'

"Your comments to John Thiel on Fredric Wertham's *The World of Fanzines* reminded me of how thrilled I was when I first learned of that book. While a great book, it fell far short of making up for the ill impact of *Seduction of the Innocent*."



—William Rotzler

George Phillies's *Ye Murthered Master Mage* #265 updated N'APAs on the membership challenges facing the N3F. This year will most likely be my last term—for now—serving on the directorate, and I can understand and appreciate his interest in freeing up time for other fanac and writing. The two most common pieces of feedback I encounter about the N3F is that it's a joke or has an unclear purpose (the former is false, in my mind, though the latter could be true), and that we publish too many clubzines instead of one general clubzine—which might be true, but solving that needs even more volunteer editing.

We have a clear mission—"The mission of N3F is

to help members enjoy and discuss science fiction and science fiction fandom in all media.”—but how we put that into practice might not be fulfilling the mission. I sometimes consider the N3F as the club a fan should join if there isn’t a local sf club. So we could do what local clubs do, only nationally or internationally... hold meetings, bring in readers and speakers, and encourage member interaction and participation—socializing, even.

A standard meeting agenda (riffing off of the LASFS agenda) could touch on topics of interest: recent birth anniversaries and deaths; media anniversaries; announcements of upcoming cons, events, and movies; reviews; and whatever else members want to talk about. The president or directorate chair could run the meeting, creating space for members to share and talk about what they know. We wouldn’t have to necessarily fill all the buckets ourselves.

Has the N3F ever done this? Ever? Recent history suggests that people won’t even come, based on our 2021 Mini-Con and the Tape and Video Bureau events. Our Facebook and MeWe groups don’t seem to be engendering member interaction outside of active members seeding it and official announcements, so we’re left with our clubzines as the primary mode of engagement. That works for fanzine fen but not for non-fanzine fen.

Taking an organized fandom approach might lead us to encounter the challenges facing other sf clubs. This could be another gap worth noting: organized vs. distributed. Regardless, I’m curious whether focusing on people who don’t have local clubs or who are new to fandom might be promising. If you’ve just self-identified as a fan, where do you go (clubs, cons)? What should you make sure to read, watch, and listen to? Where’s other fanac centering?

The N3F might not be a center of fanac, but we could be a clearinghouse for newcomers to fanac, pointing people to every single prozine, fanzine, apa, book, movie, TV show, podcast, Web site, discussion forum (or mailing list or Discord channel), social media account, comic book, video game, anime, cartoon, etc. Other sites come close to this—Wikipedia, Fancyclopedia, Fanac.org, and eFanzines—but perhaps not focusing on the newcomer.

In the Laureate Award nominations, what are “Heath Row’s productions”? The N3F Tape and Video Bureau activities?

“Klingon somehow does not seem to be the optimal language to go with music,” you wrote. Apparently, there will be Klingon music—and Klingon singing—at this year’s Loscon. Unfortunately, I won’t be able to check it out because

of some upcoming travel. I found your distribution comments this ish particularly interesting and wide ranging—well done!

In *Esmeralda County Line #4*, **Kevin Trainor Jr.** detailed the end of his tax season. Thank you for recommending A.E. van Vogt. Not too long ago, I read and enjoyed his *Destination: Universe!*, a collection of short stories. (*The N3F Review of Books*, November 2022) Like you, I have a soft spot in my heart for the Don Pendleton Executioner series and its offshoots. They do not read as well now as they did when I first encountered them as a preteen, but the Gold Eagle imprint—and the western adventure series such as Longarm, The Gunsmith, Jake Logan, and Lone Star—might have been the last genre series left standing. Charles Ardai’s *Hard Case Crime* continues to reprint and publish hardboiled books, but while their authors recur, characters tend not to do so.

I recently saw the Punisher in an issue of *Daredevil*, so he’s not entirely dead yet. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits #81*) Your reviews and second batch of comments were read and enjoyed.

My comments on **Ahrvid Engholm’s** *Intermission #134* previously appeared in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella #12*. “In *Intermission #134*, Ahrvid Engholm informed apans of the newly minted Bertil Falk’s Space Opera Prize. How does one donate to help fund the award? I’ll have to check out his juvenalia, ‘A Trip in Space.’ The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society recognized the death of Hans Siden during the July 13, 2023, meeting. That’s documented in the September 2023 issue of *De Profundis* (#589), available monthly upon request. I’ve added Club Cosmos to the distribution list for the next issue of *De Prof*.”

“I appreciated your remarks on Eurocon. ‘[I]t’s no point in wasting too much on a conrep nowadays, since this artform has degenerated. A good conrep used to be a witty thing, a fannish reporter walking around making [humorous] observations, funny associations and even puns. Conreps today are mostly dry diaries, or even worse...’ I’m currently writing a report on the 2022 Loscon for *SF² Concatenation* (<http://www.concatenation.org>), which will likely appear in January. The editor’s feedback to my draft largely asked how many parallel program tracks were offered. I don’t know if my review is witty or funny, but it’s hopefully fannish and not overly dry. It’s the first I’ve written not in apazines.

“History Corner was also enjoyable, with its focus on Hugo Gernsback, *Focus*, AI, and other topics. The article ‘Put Space to Use’ was particularly interesting. Isaac Asimov’s appearance in *Superman #355* is further detailed in the online article ‘When Isaac

Asimov Became a Muck Monster Who Fought Superman!’ (<https://tinyurl.com/Asimov-Superman>)”

In *Synergy* #46, **John Thiel** claimed that he “was born to produce good zines.” Keep up the good work, sir! “They are happy in their shirts,” is another fine sentence worth noting. May we all be happy in our shirts—especially if it’s a Son of Silvercon shirt!

Why were the police going to raid the writers conference? Your editorial on believability resonated with me. During a recent LASFS meeting, Kevin R. Grazier, science adviser for movies and television, gave a presentation about what science advisers do, how people can prepare to become one, and his books. One of the key themes of Grazier’s talk was the need to find a balance between accurate science and compelling storytelling. Grazier also discussed the difference between scientific accuracy in literature, cinema, and television. The upshot of his talk was that storytelling trumps accuracy, while accuracy is acceptable and desired as long as it’s not interruptive. Most readers and viewers don’t hold creators to such a high standard of accuracy.

Samuel Lubell’s *Samizdat* #20 mentioned going to Confluence instead of Pemmi-Con. I do hope you publish a conrep. Thank you for shining your spotlight on Keith Laumer. I can hardly believe that “[n]early everything by Laumer is out of print.” He’s definitely a past author who should still be available and read, if not just his *Retief* work. I have a copy of *Retief and the Warlords* on a pile behind me—perhaps I’ll read it soon as a protest read.

Thank you, also, for sharing your undergraduate thesis, *From Wizard to Scientist: Changing Views towards The Scientist From Hawthorne to Twain*. I shall have to return to that in the future, but it seems up the alley of *Science Fiction Studies* or *Foundation*, both of which I recently subscribed to. And as always, I enjoyed your “Status of Projects.”

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

While my wife was out of town in early September, I availed myself of some extra free time to watch anime (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #81) and movies, and read comic books (as above, and in *Faculae & Filigree* #23, and *T&T* #80-81). Over the course of two days, I also watched four relatively recent Marvel movies I hadn’t yet seen: *Ant-Man and the Wasp*; *Quantumania*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*.

As I remarked to the folks who work at the neighborhood comic shop, while I enjoyed the films, I’m not sure I need to see all of them—especially in

the theater. But, they do make me want to read comic books, and if that is in part their producers’ goal, I consider them a success. Of the four I watched, I’d rank them in this order: *Doctor Strange*, *Guardians*, *Black Panther*, and *Ant-Man*. Your mileage might vary.

I found the portrayal of the multiverse in the *Doctor Strange* flick to be wonderful, combining elements of the recent animated *Spider-Man* movies and the overall vibe of *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. That Baron Mordo wasn’t initially out to kill Strange, that the Scarlet Witch returned in such a strong fashion, the visuals of the tower in which the Darkhold was kept, and the inclusion of the Illuminati were all wonderful. While I didn’t find the character America Chavez that compelling, I was pleased she helped contribute to a redemption of sorts for Strange.

The most recent *Guardians* outing might hold together the best as a non-superhero movie even though it is one. It’s pretty straightforward science fiction, a heist movie, and the concentration on Rocket Raccoon’s origin story—while he was unconscious for almost the entire movie—was a great example of comic book character study. As always, music plays an important role in the movie, perhaps ensuring soundtrack sales or streaming. On Spotify, I even found a lullaby version of the soundtrack.

Black Panther: Wakanda Forever is less a *Black Panther* movie—he is, after all, dead—and more a Prince Namor, the *Sub-Mariner* movie, though Princess Shuri will make a fine successor. The cinematic Namor was wonderful. The origin story, the actor’s portrayal, that he was positioned as an antagonist just as he was in the early comic books... Very, very cool. While some of the Atlanteans were blue-skinned, the movie didn’t go into the warring factions of the undersea world, but one can’t do everything in a movie. The siren-like singing was an especially nice touch.

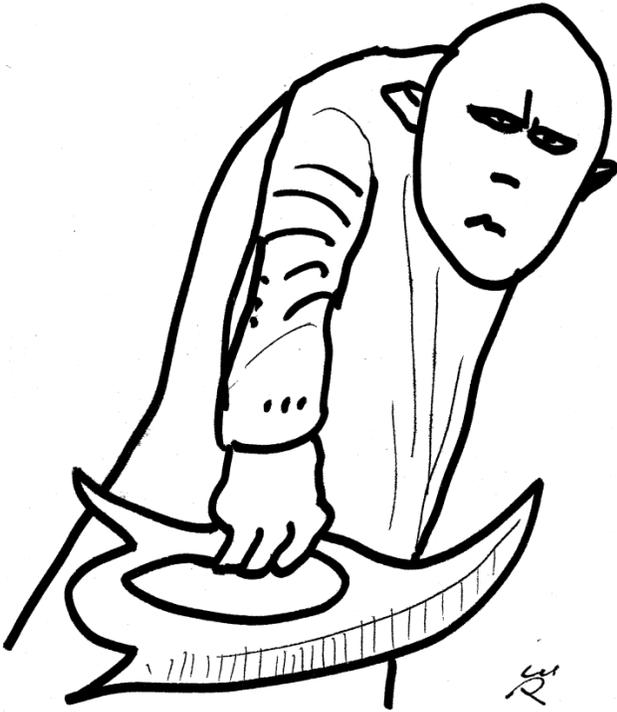
Finally, *Ant-Man*. I watched this movie first, and while the quantum realm is worth exploring and Kang the Conqueror’s portrayal was absolutely astounding—he’s so sad!—I found the jokey bookending of Paul Rudd’s newly egotistical, yet hesitant hero to be slightly irritating. Frankly, I don’t see what the Wasp sees in him. But it’s a good movie about family, about what one does when their spouse isn’t around, and—like *Doctor Strange* above—redemption. In the end, *Ant-Man* earns the respect of his daughter.

And, it made me want to read comics. So I’ve returned to *Ant-Man*’s initial appearances in *Tales to Astonish*. One could do worse.

including the names of and acronyms for various governmental programs, the ongoing case of mistaken identity, the combination of Retief's imbibing of a substance that gives him Flash- or Quicksilver-like speed and a pilfered key, and how the diplomat responds to people when they say something with which he might not agree. One could learn from the man!

Several fictional songs are mentioned, including the 2940 "Gonna Dig a Big Ditch Around Texas" and the 2939 "That Little Old Rock Called Home." I also highlighted several notable quotations such as "I'm allergic to emergencies—!" and "The past is just a collection of false impressions."

I was pleased to see that the Retief series was included in the LASFS' 2002 Recommended Reading List of Speculative Fiction, along with Laumer's *Bolo* and *Night of Delusions*. I can't imagine his falling out of fashion.



—William Rotsler

From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

Midweek, I read the September 1971 issue of *Amazing Stories*. At that time published by Ultimate Publishing, which also published *Fantastic Stories* and several other titles, this edition was edited by still-active fan and writer Ted White. Utilizing relatively small text, the issue is pretty thin and seems to offer less than other such magazines.

This issue features the conclusion of a two-part Robert Silverberg serial and a reprint, the two longest

pieces. While I didn't read the serial, the reprint, Ralph Milne Farley's "The Living Mist," originally appeared in August 1940. It's a solid story that focuses on a mysterious tentacled mist that can strip human bodies of their skin and seems to absorb the knowledge and memories of the people so consumed.

Bob Shaw's five-page short story "What Time Do You Call This?" is a time travel piece that hews closely to the Doctrine of Infinite Redundancy in a self-aware fashion. Ted White's nine-page "Junk Patrol" was an excellent tale that showcased the danger and wonder of reclaiming drifting scraps of alien technology near the moon. "From the asteroid belt: drifting debris of something inexplicable," White writes. "These weren't the first. Those had been discovered by the fourth Mars mission—or what was left of them, in an impact crater on Mars. ... This alien debris—call it *junk*—seemed to be scattered through the asteroids, but it wasn't *of* the asteroids." The mundane bookending—and the injury experienced in space—make the story self-contained, though it could be part of something larger.

In fact, White, as editor, alludes to that in a response to one of the letters of comment in the lettercol, "...Or So You Say." "It is my private conviction—unfortunately shared by rather few writers—that a good short story is actually the emotional nexus of a novel—and that a novel surrounds it by implication," he suggests. That is a fascinating idea, and I might not ever read another short story the same way again.

David Anthony Kraft's "Myrra" is all of two pages. Kraft went on to publish *Comics Interview*. He also founded Fictioneer Books, edited *FOOM*, and wrote comics for Marvel and other publishers. The piece is a brief meditation on the beauty of nature and the horrors of a police state, perhaps an early example of cli-fi writing.

White reviews a handful of books in "The Future in Books," and Greg Benford contributes a "The Science in Science Fiction" piece, concentrating on planet-building in fiction. In the article, he addresses several important considerations, including gravity, atmosphere, mass, and rotation.

The letter column is also worth exploring. Correspondents—including author Shaw and Jerry Lapidus—discuss painted covers; the magazine's previous, thinner cover stock; the use of profanity in fiction; and the role of sex in White's earlier story, "Growing up Fast in the City." Some readers found that piece pornographic and distasteful, while others found it refreshing and relevant. *Amazing* had also recently published Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Lathe of Heaven," which attracted reader comment. (Lapidus,

who died earlier this year, was a fan and apahack who participated in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, the National Fantasy Fan Federation's N'APA, and Slanapa, which is where I read him most.)

Correspondents also comment on *Fantastic*, which suggests a close relationship between the two prozines. A house ad also features *Science Fantasy Yearbook*, *Science Fiction Adventure Classics*, *Science Fiction Greats*, *Space Adventures*, *Weird Mystery*, and others. This issue might contain a serial, a reprint, and three very short stories, but there's still plenty to absorb and process—and a lively connection to the fan community. I'll be sure to seek out more.



—William Rotsler

Comments on APA-L #3036

In *Leeway* dated for Aug. 31, 2023, **Lee Gold** reprinted the LASFS By-Laws article focusing on LASFS member types. Ideally, I distribute *De Profundis* to active members regardless of whether they're attending members. The address list I procured from Elayne Pelz doesn't include any notes on member type or dues status. It's just a list of names and contact information. The next time I ask her for an updated list, I'll ask for a list of active members: attending members, current annual dues payers,

lifetime members, and honorary members.

Among Marty Cantor's computer files, Nick Smith and I also found a spreadsheet titled DE PROF that includes 162 names and email addresses. Apparently, Cantor emailed *De Prof* out in batches of 10 people. At some point, I'll deduplicate his list against the list of 173 people I have from Pelz and email them to see what bounces—and to inquire whether they'd like to resume receiving the monthly newsletter.

Additionally, John Hertz recently mailed information about APA-L to the people on a member list he'd procured. We'll see if that drums up any interest in the apa, as well as new members!

Your mention of your Verizon cell phone reminded me that our previously inexpensive landline service provided by the Southern California Telephone Company is now twice as expensive because they now charge for features that were previously free. Those include caller ID, call waiting, three-way calling, and call waiting ID—three of which we never utilize. We'll either cancel the unwanted services—or cancel the landline altogether. We mostly have it in case of an emergency or natural disaster. Because our phone service goes scratchy every time it rains, I'm not sure how useful it'll be in an actual disaster. But I'd rather pay \$50/month than \$100+.

Thank you for reprinting Isaac Asimov's writing about the moon. Informative, and poetic. I found it quite beautiful.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1560 recognized Labor Day, offering information about multiple unions. I'd prepared a flier for the Alphabet Workers Union to distribute in southern California in advance of the holiday, but the other organizing committee members didn't really nibble. So I include the text here:

“Happy' Labor Day!

“Labor Day is more than just a long holiday weekend or day off work dedicated to travel, shopping, and cookouts. (Though all those things are awesome!) It also represents more than the last weekend of summer and the start of the school year. In fact, the founders of Labor Day in the late 1800s sought something far more serious and important: the unification of union workers and a reduction in work time.

“The first Labor Day in New York City in 1882 was organized by the Central Labor Union. At that time, unions only represented a minority of workers, were highly fragmented, and were relatively weak. The Central Labor Union—like the modern-day AFL-CIO—wanted to unify the many small unions to achieve more critical mass and better represent workers. The first Labor Day was intended to bring different kinds of workers together to find common

ground. Because Labor Day wasn't yet a holiday, the workers had to make their own—by declaring a one-day strike. The striking workers marched in a parade and gathered for a picnic.

“Labor Day later became a formally recognized holiday after workers sought a more reasonable work schedule—focusing on an eight-hour work day and a five- or six-day work week. Those union workers’ efforts brought us what we now recognize as the weekend, two days off after a five-day work week. Ladies and gentlemen, the weekend.

“But not all workers get Labor Day off, and many of us at Google are privileged. In the Los Angeles area alone, workers continue to seek a stronger voice in their workplaces. Here are some current union actions currently underway nearby, and a couple not that long ago:

- Writers Guild of America strike: <https://www.wgacontract2023.org>
- SAG-AFTRA strike: <https://www.sagaftrastrike.org>
- Unite Here! Local 11 hotel workers strike: <https://www.unitehere11.org>
- City of Los Angeles strike (Aug. 8): <https://tinyurl.com/LA-Aug8-Strike>
- United Teachers Los Angeles: <https://utla.net/utla-and-laUSD-reach-tentative-agreement>

“The *Washington Post* calls this summer a hot labor summer in LA (<https://tinyurl.com/hot-labor-summer>), and it's important to reflect—on this Labor Day—on the meaning of work, the relationship between workers and bosses, and whether employees have a strong voice in their workplace.”

I'm glad you plan to forge ahead with a Fanzine Corner at the upcoming Loscon despite my absence. I've already seen at least one mention of someone—but who?—organizing another *Losconzine*, as well. If you are also interested in that, I'd contact Krystal Rains, who's an ardent supporter of the concept. Someone who attends should compile and edit the resulting conzine; they'll be more motivated to finish the project!

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #25, **Matthew Mitchell** updated ellers on business picking up after Labor Day, as well as the arrival of Christmas decorations. My wife also tidies up before our cleaning woman arrives. While I'll address something particularly egregious in advance of her arrival, cleaning before a cleaning person does so seems to make one of the two exercises moot. And the money less well spent.

I am a big fan of incremental postage stamps. As a

frequent visitor of post offices, I am often surprised by how few people seem to know how to mail a package these days. Some show up with just the item they want to send, but no packaging. Others have packed it, but not addressed the package. They might not have even sealed it and need to borrow packing tape.

International customs forms flummox even me. (I know how to fill them out; I just never remember to do so before getting in line.)

My hypothesis is that while many people might still buy Forever stamps, other increments might be little used. Instead, people print out postage at home based on weight, or stand in line to print out postage at the post office. I like applying my own postage and am particularly fond of Additional Ounce stamps. Once I work through Marty Cantor's stock of incremental stamps, I'll likely resume that practice.

Two first class stamps per flat, and an Additional Ounce stamp per additional ounce means I don't need to actually calculate postage per piece, just weight—unless I'm mailing a contributor's copy to Taral Wayne in Canada, when I might have to do so. To adjust your accounts, I do need to know what first class and additional ounce stamps cost, so I guess I do calculate the postage at that stage. More math is involved using the incremental stamps.

Barbara Gratz Harmon's *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #51 warranted at least one page of color printing so print recipients could see what color the uniform was. I hope Red Shirt Barbie made it home from the library alive. Before he resigned from LASFAPA, John DeChancie and I were discussing improvisational comedy and theater in the Los Angeles area earlier this year (*Faculae & Filigree* #20). I'll share your list of performance groups and performers with LASFAPAns, in case LASFAPAns are interested.

I was not vacationing last week, nor the week before. But I will be soon. Sept. 23 to Oct. 1, we'll be out of town. There will be no Sept 28 APA-L, but there will be an Oct. 5 distribution. You can expect a trip rep upon my return.

In *Toony Loons* #729, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers on his knee and upcoming appointments. Otherwise, RAEBNC.

“The best science-fiction movies, according to Quentin Tarantino”: *Young Frankenstein*, *Back to the Future*, *The Thing*, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *Enter the Void*, *The Host*, *The Matrix*, *Unbreakable*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and *Dark Star* (*Far Out*, Sept. 12, 2023)

George R.R. Martin's serial—but I enjoyed the short stories and other editorial content. Jack C. Haldeman II's "Vector Analysis" was illustrated throughout by Vincent Di Fate. The story focuses on an orbital laboratory whose staff is studying the reproductive habits and physiology of an alien bat-like species. They are exposed to a quickly progressing virus or other illness and need to figure out how to combat the sickness while slowing its transmission—hopefully while protecting the alien animals they study, as well. The stakes are quite high, and the approach used to solve the problem is inventive.

Jay Kay Klein's "Biolog" focuses on the Haldeman brothers, suggesting that they're the third such set to appear in the pages of *Analog*. "Vector Analysis" was Jack Haldeman's first story in *Analog*. Previously, he was a fan and chairperson of the 1974 Worldcon.

"Law of the Instrument" by James R. Preston was apparently his only sf story, according to the Internet Speculative Fiction Database. That surprised me—and is a shame—because it might be my favorite in the issue. Preston's writing indicates high quality and much potential. The author might have gone on to write hard-boiled crime fiction. Regardless, it's an excellent story, set in the Los Angeles area—El Segundo!—and focusing on the abduction and persuasion of a young woman to help a group of agents for the Bureau of Anticipatory Disaster Statistics. Utilizing a sizable amount of futuristic slang, the story includes a Governing Network of government leaders with implants, futuristic vehicles, urban gardening, and online education. Almost a precursor to the cyberpunk movement, Preston's writing is quite forward thinking and creative. It's a frustration not to be able to read more.

James Farlow's "The Demythologized Lycanthrope" concentrates on cancer research utilizing werewolves, and what might happen were one to escape. The seaside location of the research facility was intriguing, and I appreciated the lycanthrope coming from a long line of Eastern European counts. The twist at the end wasn't that much of a surprise but was still satisfying.

"A Time to Live" by Joe Haldeman is a time travel tale involving a successful businessman who goes back in time to live his life all over again—after a fashion. The story also includes the Adams-Beeson drive, almost 875,000 years drifting in space, investing in the moon, and the terraforming of Mars.

And Jim St. Clair's "Selling the Promised Land" brings together organized religion and the advertising and marketing business. The somewhat humorous story also features advertisements in telephone communications and multiple television shows

promoting organized religion.

Lester del Rey's book review column "The Reference Library" addressed the perceived conflict of interest of a writer and editor—and spouse of another prominent editor—reviewing books written, edited, and published by others. The concerns were valid, and I'm not sure del Rey adequately addressed them—but he reviewed books for *Analog* at least from 1975-1979, so it must not have been seen as a problem. In this issue, he reviewed books by Andrew J. Offutt and H. Beam Piper, as well as two reference and how-to books, including *Who's Who in Science Fiction*.

John A. Carroll offers a brief poem, "What's in Store?", accompanied by slightly more cartoony artwork by Sternbach. The pleasant poem owes a debt to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven." And the letter column, "Brass Tacks," features several letters in response to a science fact article published in October 1976.

Also of note are advertisements for the magazines *Strategy & Tactics* and *Galileo*, and two sf tactical wargames made by Taurus Ltd. This is a solid issue overall, though I wish Preston had stuck with science fiction a little longer. His story alone is very well worth reading.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes

If you haven't ever seen this 1978 sf—or arguably fantasy—comedy, or haven't seen it recently, it is exactly what it is. Produced for less than \$100,000, the movie is notable to local fen because it was filmed primarily in San Diego, Oceanside, and elsewhere in southern California. One such location is now San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium. Ellers might be interested in a 1977 *Evening Tribune* article about the production. (<https://tinyurl.com/Tomatoes-SD>)

Drawing explicit parallels to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, the movie focuses on tomatoes somehow becoming intelligent, threatening vegetables, growing at times to immense—for tomatoes—size, and killing the people who get in their way. There's also a scene hearkening back to *Jaws*. Government leaders try to persuade the public that the tomatoes pose no threat, but a task force is established.

The task force's meetings are among the funniest moments in the movie. The room in which they meet is much too small, and they need to climb over the table. One of the specialists assembled is a disguise expert who dons a number of inventive outfits over the course of the movie. Another is a scuba diver, even while on land.

Eventually, the forces facing the tomato onslaught realize that they are sensitive to music, particularly a song titled "Puberty Love," which is thankfully available on Youtube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsxwwhJ6GrY>) That song was reportedly sung by Matt Cameron of the band Soundgarden.

The movie led to three sequels, a 1991 cartoon series that lasted two seasons, a three-hour documentary, and a novelization by Jeff Strand based on the screenplay. Not bad for a one-joke premise.



—William Rotsler

Dr. Terror's House of Horrors

This 1965 Amicus anthology is one of the best anthologies I've ever seen. Not only is the cast excellent, featuring Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Donald Sutherland, and the surprising Roy Castle, but the framing and bookending itself is compelling and convincing. Each segment is noteworthy—there's not a stinker in the bunch—but the ending also matters. That's a rare experience among anthologies.

Segments focus on a werewolf on a Scottish island; a fast-growing, intelligent, murderous vine; the influence of a voodoo ceremony on a jazz musician's creativity—perhaps the standout of the anthology—the detached hand of an artist harried by a cruel art critic; and a newlywed French vampire.

The framing for the segments focuses on a character from each piece in the same compartment of a train together, along with the mysterious Dr. Schreck (played by Cushing), who performs a tarot card reading for each—leading to each portion of the sequence.

While all of the segments are strong, the ending is what impressed me. It all hangs together, resolving in a surprising manner that is itself terrible for those involved. After all, the only way to escape the future—as foretold by the cards—is death.

The Return of the Vampire

This 1943 Columbia vampire flick starring Bela Lugosi is reportedly not a sequel to the 1931 *Dracula*, but it could be. Cultural historian David J. Skal has suggested it's an unofficial sequel—and that the vampire was renamed because Universal didn't produce it.

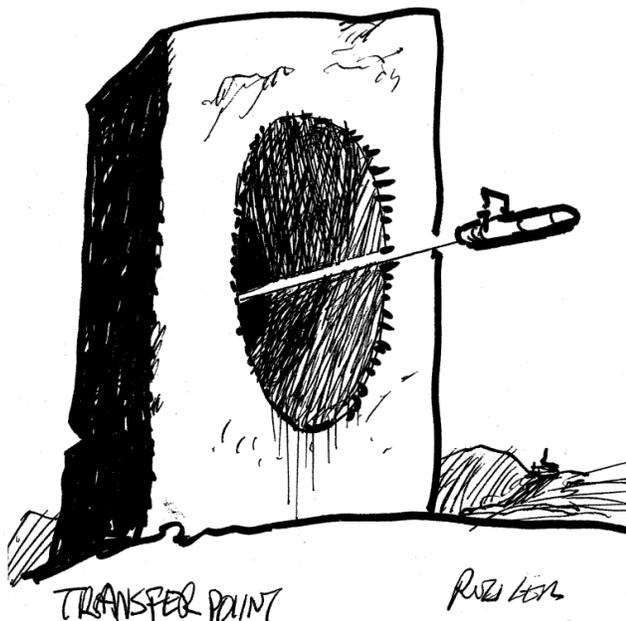
Regardless, Lugosi was cast as the vampire Armand Tesla, who enlists a werewolf as his thrall. The movie takes place during World War I, and later during World War II. While Tesla was initially tracked down and killed with a stake through the heart, after an air raid during the later war, a couple of caretakers cleaning up an abandoned burial ground remove the stake, reviving the vampire, who prowls again.

During both periods, Tesla stalks an Englishwoman named Lady Jane Ainsley—or those around her. She's initially the mother of two children, aged via makeup for the later portion of the movie, her daughter now beautiful and engaged to be married. During World War I, Tesla targets children and other young people, raising concerns about a mysterious form of anemia. Once revived, he takes on the role of a visiting scientist who keeps odd working hours.

The scene in which Tesla reasserts control over his werewolf thrall, who has also stayed in the area, is particularly interesting, and the werewolf plays a

major role in the unfolding of the mystery and resolution of the film. Tesla's exposure to the sun at the end is brief, but fascinating. Similarly, the transformation of the werewolf is also well handled.

Name change aside, this could easily be a sequel to *Dracula*. After all, vampires live through the years, if they survive. In the case of Tesla, the vampire died twice.



—William Rotsler

On *The Death of the Incredible Hulk*

Early this week, I watched a DVD of the 1990 TV movie *The Death of the Incredible Hulk*, the sixth and final TV movie related to the TV series. While *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* (T&T #81) was very much a Daredevil movie, this one squarely focused on David Banner and the Hulk. It indeed served as the Marvel hero's TV epitaph, though the manner in which the Hulk dies begs credulity.

Two storylines run throughout the movie, eventually connecting. In the first, Banner is working at a government laboratory posing as a simpleton of a janitor. ("I like the weather. There isn't any inside.") Each night, he lets himself into a scientist's lab to review—and correct—his work. The scientist eventually stays late one night to see who's been guiding him every step of the way and helping him, learning Banner's true identity.

The two, along with the scientist's wife, become close in a relatively brief montage of scenes, and the scientist—once he's seen Banner transform into the Hulk while in the confines of a magnetic cylinder—endeavors to help Banner remove the danger and influence of the Hulk, while furthering his own

healing research.

In the second storyline, a beautiful espionage agent and mercenary, Jasmin, is assigned to obtain information about the scientist's work—ostensibly to gain the freedom of her sister. While infiltrating the lab facility, she encounters the Hulk, later meeting Banner, who helps her after she's wounded in a gas station double cross. The two become lovers and plan a new life together but get pulled back in when the scientist and his wife are abducted. The Hulk saves the scientist and his wife, but cannot save himself.

The Death of the Incredible Hulk continues many of the recurring themes inherent in the TV series and other movies: loneliness, isolation, being on the run (though, by now, the investigative reporter is no longer present), chosen family, and grief for Banner's dead wife—this movie even includes fleeting flashbacks from the pilot. (T&T #80) Joe Harnell's "The Lonely Man Theme" isn't used until relatively late in this movie, and the ending features a prolonged, progressively receding shot as a helicopter trains its spotlight on the dead body of Banner, Jasmin mourning beside him.

It's not a bad movie. Bill Bixby remains compelling in his portrayal of Banner, and Lou Ferrigno's Hulk is starting to look a little down at the heels. Jasmin is an intriguing romantic interest, and the scientist and his wife are convincing as a chosen family—though they're pretty quick to contend that Banner is like the son they never had. Overall, the movie focuses on Banner as a man, overwhelmed by a force he can't control. Even though I don't think the Hulk would have died this way, it's a fitting end to the series and subsequent movies.

But clearly, while the TV Hulk might have died, the Hulk did not. The character's comic books continue to this day. I last reviewed the current series of Marvel's comic in *Faculae & Filigree* #11 and T&T #24. After finishing the movie, I read more recent issues, including *Hulk* #8-11 (October 2022 to March 2023), #13 (May 2023), *Incredible Hulk* #1 (August 2023), #3 (October 2023), and the March 2023 facsimile edition of *Incredible Hulk* #347, originally published in 1988.

Hulk #8 concludes the Banner of War storyline, written by Donny Cates and Daniel Warren Johnson, and drawn by Martin Coccolo. The Hulk is still a spaceship piloted by Banner's psyche and fueled by the Hulk's anger. The issue opens with the Hulk fighting with a hulked-out Thor as Odin confers with Banner. "The Hulk has never fought Thor. Not the real Thor..." says Beta Ray Bill. "In the past, when they have fought, Hulk faced the Avenger. The humble and noble Thor. ... But now, Hulk faces not just the mirror

of his own rage, but a rage that has been held back for hundreds of years.”

In a two-page spread, Thor uproots Yggdrasil before Odin intervenes. The Hulk flees, and Thor tells others that Banner and the Hulk are dead. The next issue, #9, written by Cates and Ryan Ottley, and perhaps drawn by Ottley, takes the Hulk to Planet Hulk. Every day, Banner undergoes two hours of talk therapy with Doc Samson before he’s cleared to continue piloting the ship that is the Hulk.

The session opening the issue adds some intriguing color to the Hulk’s origin story, including an abusive father and an accepting friend. “He’s the only person I never hurt,” Banner says. The ship’s crew locates a planet broadcasting a distress signal. The planet, drenched in gamma radiation, has no topography and is ringed with what seems to be debris—while still featuring spired centers of commerce and leisure, casinos. The Hulk lands on the planet, seeing a large statue of him and meeting a towering woman named Monolith who welcomes him home.

The beginning of #10 adds to the back story shared in #9. Banner interacts with an officer at a police station and Banner’s mother suggests that he isn’t weak, but strong—because he casts a shadow, overcoming the strength of the sun. The Hulk learns that the planet is populated by outcasts and abominations sent through a portal that he in fact created. They pulverized the mountains of their new home world before rebuilding.

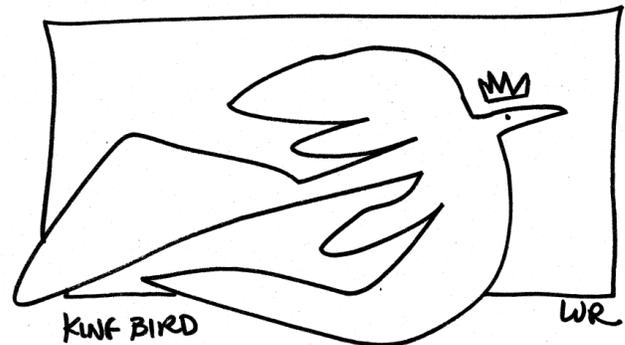
Now, they spend time playing a game called Godball (#11) in which they pulverize neighboring uninhabited planets (“We aren’t monsters.”) to condense its core. They then throw the godball at the ring of rocks surrounding the planet. The Hulk competes in the game to secure his place in the hulked-out society, attracting the attention of the “protectors of the arterial dimensional between-space,” and Monolith is forced to act as diplomat. The game—and the recurring arrival of the protectors—adds some welcome humor and levity to what’s been a relatively heavy storyline.

I wasn’t able to readily find #12 and only know that Titan is a hulked-out Hulk and “unstoppable killing machine” from #9, but in #13—now written and drawn by Ottley—Titan has emerged on Planet Hulk. Doctor Strange identifies the source of the magic allowing Titan to take over from the Hulk and tries to stop him. Unfortunately, I also couldn’t locate #14, so I’m not sure how the storyline resolves.

In any event, #1 rennumbers the series with a new creative team: writer Phillip Kennedy Johnson and artist Nic Klein. Featuring the cover line “The Age of Monsters Has Begun!” this issue features a Hulk who

is no longer a spaceship. Instead, Banner’s on the run again, perhaps from himself. A mysterious woman named Eldest is tracking the Hulk using misshapen creatures disguised as humans.

Meanwhile, a teenage girl running away from her abusive father encounters the Hulk in a forest. And Eldest, a child of “the mother of horrors,” calls upon the terrors of Earth—including Moloids and Man-Thing—to “seek out the fractured son, the one men name Hulk.” Apparently, he’s the key needed to “free the mother of horrors and usher in a new age of monsters.”



—William Rotsler

The next issue readily at hand, #3, featuring the same creative team, continues the “That Old-Time Religion” storyline. Zombies sing praise to their lord, Brother Deep, in a church, and the Hulk faces them, attempting to rescue the teenage girl he met in #1. In this issue, the zombies sing! Beneath the church, the story of Brother Deep is carved in the walls of a cavern and the Hulk confronts the monstrous lord.

A stark departure from Cates and Ottley’s outer space adventures, this new series is promising. The Hulk hopes to sublimate Banner. The teenage girl’s background is similar to that of Banner as revealed in the Cates-Ottley run, and the upcoming appearance of Man-Thing has got to be good.

The facsimile edition of *Incredible Hulk* #347 commemorates the first appearance of the Hulk as Joe Fixit, a mob enforcer working for a Las Vegas casino. Written by Peter David, who also wrote at least two Hulk movie tie-in novels, the comic book was drawn by Jeff Purves. As Fixit, the Hulk, who was then gray, didn’t return to human form for several months. In this issue, Fixit doesn’t appear often but does provide a looming presence. The letter column includes a missive from Hollywood-based Craig D. Smith.

The current comics—even the 1988 reprint—have very little to do with the TV show and subsequent movies other than the ongoing struggle between Banner and the Hulk, the sadness inherent in his

childhood and solitary nature (#1 resonated slightly with the wandering aspect of the TV program), and the finding of new friends and family. I'm glad the new series will draw on Marvel's history of monstrous creatures rather than hulked-out heroes and villains. That's a nice wrinkle that's worth exploring. Is the Hulk really a monster?

Natter: OC, on the Road

As mentioned previously, I'll be out of town next week, leaving this upcoming Saturday and returning the following Sunday. That means that there will be no APA-L distribution Sept. 28, but that we'll have a dual issue the following week, representing two meetings.

You can choose to submit two apazines if you'd like, should you be so inspired, or just one. I'll collate and mail this week's mailing before I leave, and the next distribution on Oct. 5.



—William Rotsler

Comments on APA-L #3037

In *Leeway* dated for Sept. 14, **Lee Gold** wondered whether an Asimov robot would apply different standards to the orders of a child rather than an adult. Your mention of *The Futon Critic* reminded me to

spend some time with the fall preview specials of *TV Guide*, *TV Weekly*, and *Channel Guide*. You and Barry are both on the LASFS address list I have.

I look forward to seeing what others think of Jeffrey H Wood's comic pages, which I asked to publish after seeing photographs posted on Facebook. He might not join us as an ongoing participant, but as OC, I would welcome occasional guest submissions along these lines. Wood's currently active in the comics-related apa Rowrbrazzle. He also sent me a copy of *The Retread*, his almost 40-page contribution to the July Rowrbrazzle, and it seems like an impressive apa! Potentially familiar participants include Charles Brubaker, Niall Shapero, Edd Vick, Taral Wayne, and Gary Fields. I half expected to see Charles Lee Jackson II mentioned in the comments!

As **Matthew Mitchell** reported in *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #26, I, too, have been summoned for jury duty. I'm to report Oct. 9, depending on the results of my telephone check-in. I can't imagine that the placement of a Green Giant ad during the premiere of *The Incredible Hulk* was anything but purposeful. I can't find meaningful references, but the Green Giant was redesigned a number of times over the years, progressively muscular, and by the premiere of the show, his diminutive sidekick Sprout had been introduced. I shall hereby start using goldenrod paper for your apazines.

In *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #52, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** updated others on her progress updating her computer applications and accounts. I often find myself needing to access my mobile phone for a code sent via text for something I'm doing online—usually two-factor authentication for financial sites. If I don't have my phone with me, I need to go get it. Congratulations on untangling the web of accounts and billing information—and for updating your will and estate plan! That's quite an accomplishment.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1561 shared some memories of recognizing Sept. 11 22 years ago. I remember my business travel at the time being somewhat thwarted, requiring troubleshooting, and I'm curious whether the congoers were all able to make their flights to Capclave I and Foolscap III.

In *Toony Loons* #230, **Joe Zeff** announced the arrival of his new leg brace, discussing recent difficulties with a cleaning service. Your Daredevil vs. Prince Namor remark resonated with me. Not only do I think that the Sub-Mariner would win in such a pairing, but it reminded me of the Hulk vs. Thor, as above. I usually consider myself the kind of comics reader who doesn't engage in "Who would win?" debates, but here we are.

Emulators & Engines #7

Sept. 21, 2023

Emulators & Engines is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to *Alarums & Excursions* and select others. (It succeeds *Theoretically: Game* and *The Game Closet*.) A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

On Playing *Dungeons & Dragons* in Prison

A recent *New York Times Magazine* featured an article by Keri Blakinger titled “Escape from Death Row. The subtitle reads “For a group of men in a Texas prison, *Dungeons & Dragons* became a lifeline—to their imaginations, and to one another.” The piece is available online, dated Aug. 31, 2023, at <https://tinyurl.com/DnD-prison>.

Initializing the game D.&D., the article focuses on a group of inmates on death row in a prison near Huntsville in West Texas.

To cope with the isolation they face daily, the men on death row spend a lot of their time in search of escape—something to ease the racing thoughts or the crushing regrets. Some read books or find religion. Some play games like Scrabble or jailhouse chess. Others turn to D.&D., where they can feel a small sense of the freedom they have left behind.

Not only are gaming tools and resources scarce—prisoners often can’t even get the rulebooks—they’re occasionally confiscated. Regardless, prisoners play on, hand crafting randomized spinners because dice are forbidden and creating their own rules, creatures, statistics, and fantasy worlds. All of it, house rules, or by memory.

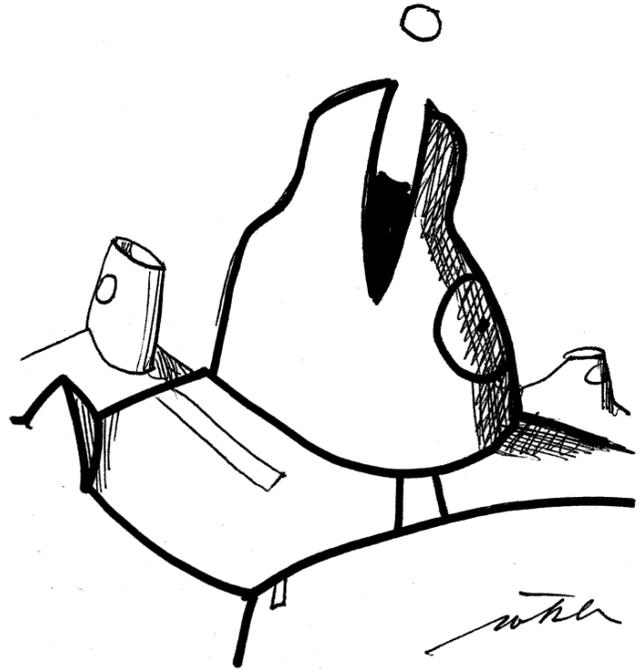
Much of the article concentrates on one death row DM in particular, Billy Wardlow. “Wardlow went on to play dozens of games with many characters,” Blakinger writes. “One he became known for among his death-row peers was Arthaxx d’Cannith, a magical prodigy. Though his home planet, the war-torn Eberron, was an established setting among D.&D. players, Arthaxx was Wardlow’s creation — a character he developed through pages and pages of game notes and hand-drawn illustrations.”

Some of those materials are photographed for the article, including painstakingly handwritten and drawn pages of information, campaign notes, and maps.

After Wardlow was executed, a family member sent the reporter “his cardboard box of gaming supplies.”

The article is a fascinating read, equal parts love letter to the game and criticism of the death penalty, as

well as the negative impact of solitary confinement and the debilitating isolation of prison. In this case, the game was a healing salve for the prisoners who played. While playing, they could be heroes, not criminals.



—William Rotsler

Solo Game Report: *Relics of Danoria*

In early September, I played *Relics of Danoria* (<https://capacle.itch.io/relics-of-danoria>) solo for the first time. Written by Cezar Capacle, it’s a two-page fantasy adventure game that utilizes the Push SRD, which Capacle also developed.

Players portray characters who rank among the Prestige, the heroes remaining of the fallen kingdom of Queen Nahlet the Just. They go up against the forces of Korlax the Crimson Wizard and try to locate lost relics to help restore peace and prosperity to Danoria.

Character creation is simple, and there are no stats, per se, just traits. You can choose your gift, upbringing, experience, mark, charm, and bond yourself, or randomly. I chose to roll a d6 for each. You decide how your traits affect your abilities to succeed at various tasks and challenges. The basic game mechanic is to roll a d6 for checks, for complications, and to consult the oracle.

For checks, results are skewed toward success, which means the game is more focused on storytelling and enjoyment than challenge or competition. On a 7 or higher, your attempt misses, and there’s a complication. On a 5 or 6, it’s considered a strong hit,

and on a 4 or lower, it's a weak hit, and there's a cost of complication. In the case of a weak hit, you can choose to roll another d6—the “push” of the system—and add it to your result, which increases the likelihood of missing.

While you can play Relics in a group, it's well suited for solo journaling play, as well. Your mission is to locate the Cobra King's lost daughter, who's the only one able to wield the Serpent Scepter, which has been claimed by the Brothers of the Beast. You cannot let them destroy the scepter, or the Lizard Folk will lose faith in their king, joining the sinister brotherhood.

Each play session has multiple goals—to make a new ally, learn a weakness of Korlax, show mercy, commune with nature, reveal a secret, and receive a magical item—and play unfolds similar to character creation, via themes, which reminded me of the aspects of the *The Dresden Files* roleplaying game. (*The Game Closet* #7) For each scene, you roll on a matrix to select a prompt. You establish a challenge, frame the scene, take actions, and refer to the oracle. And when you think a scene is done, you move on to the next scene.



—William Rotsler

Here's how my play session progressed. I've bold faced traits and scene prompts, occasionally drawing on additional prompts when consulting the oracle.

Desdemona is a 23-year-old woman who was **raised by moon wolves** (upbringing). Abandoned as a child, she was found by a roving pack and lived with them until her early teenage years, when she sought out

human companionship. Because of her **bear strength** (gift)—raised in the wild, she is quite strong and hearty—she was enlisted as a soldier. The discipline of the military helped teach her the ways of civilization. A **veteran of the Zyox War** (experience), Desdemona retains her fighting ways and **always carries a hidden dagger** (mark). Also carrying a skin-polished wood carving of a **snow hawk** (charm), made by her as a child while with the moon wolves, she has thrown in with the remaining heroes to retrieve lost relics and do what she can to help **the Forgotten Folk** (bond), those cast aside by population centers to live in the wild—like the moon wolves who raised her.

Scene One

Setting off from the village of Wickham to help find the king's lost daughter, Desdemona follows a path into the countryside. Midday, she encounters a rustic-looking individual who seems to take notice of her. She stops him to ask if he knows anything about the Cobra King or his daughter. He's heard a rumor that she's been seen within a day's walking near the site of the **Battle of Quaruna**. He's unable to tell her any more. She continues to follow roads and trails that might lead toward Quaruna—she knows the way—but she takes a wrong turn, her sense of direction lost, and heads toward a shadowy forest (secret home of **the Cobra King's cousin, Coral**).

As evening approaches, **Korlax's spy bats** leave their roost to patrol. They do not see Desdemona immediately, but there are a lot in the area, and she encounters a sizable deadfall blocking her way. She hears the sounds of the bats but is unable to move quietly. Her presence in the forest is reported to Korlax.

That night, she builds a fire but hurts her hands while trying to light the flame. The welcoming glow of her fire attracts the attention of Coral, who approaches carefully—accidentally walking through flat stones sheltering a **nest of purple snakes**. Desdemona hears her cries of surprise and makes her way toward the sound. She and Coral are able to drive off the snakes without injury, and Desdemona invites her to share the warmth of her fire. Together, they share a meal of cooked snake.

While sharing their stories, the two determine that they can trust each other, and Desdemona tells Coral of her mission. Coral reveals that she is the Cobra King's cousin and knows his daughter—but that for some time now, she has disguised herself as a male lizard folk (she's not yet mature)—to serve as apprentice to **Olara, the Sunken Witch**. The two tire and bed down for the night. Their sleep is uninterrupted, but when Desdemona wakes, Coral is

gone, having decided she's at risk traveling with a companion. She's gone off on her own to remain hidden.

Scene Two

Desdemona continues on her way, deciding to seek out Olara instead of continuing toward Quaruna. Coral's insight was more promising than that of the rustic. As she travels, she loses her snow hawk charm, its thread worn through. She's heard stories of Olara's location, in a marshy area rumored to have a network of tunnels nearby. Around 9 a.m., she encounters a figure wearing charred, smoking armor blocking her way.

The Cinder Knight stands in her way. Voiceless, it doesn't let her pass unchallenged, and she is forced to confront the knight. Though the battle is hard fought, she defeats the Cinder Knight and continues on her way.

Scene Three

Early that afternoon, she sees some kind of **(lost) amulet** on the trail ahead. Approaching to retrieve it, she sees the signs of a trap too late. She is able to avoid it but twists her ankle falling out of the way of a high-tension, spiked cross bar released to swing across the path. The amulet is carved wood in the form of two running men **(brothers on the run)**.

Scene Four

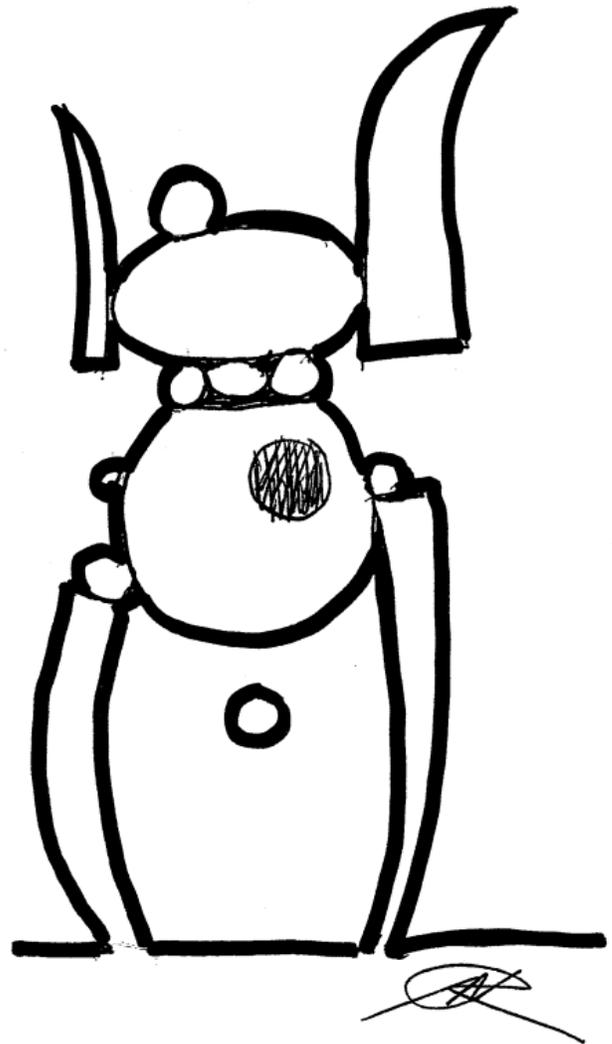
Desdemona continues on, locating a place to camp around sunset. She discovers **a nest of purple snakes**, and her efforts to avoid them—though successful— attracts other attention: a luminous **crystal moth (with a message)**.

As you can see, scenes can be fluid in terms of how much time they take up. One challenge I faced was trying to balance the traditional overland adventuring I'm used to with a slightly more abstract game, though I think it worked well in the end. I also found myself referring to the matrix less to identify standalone scenes, but more to add color to a given scene, and perhaps introduce additional information. I could have done that using a different form of oracle or random tables, and if I return to this two-page game, I'll have more story seeds available for my use. Using the game alone for your prompts.

Given the amount of time I gave myself for this play session, I didn't accomplish the mission, but I might have accomplished some goals on the agenda. Meeting Coral could qualify as making a new ally, and spending time in the forest could be loosely interpreted as communing with nature—though I'd feel better claiming that done taking more explicit

steps to do so.

In any event, I found the character generation light and intriguing—I spend much too much time making characters who die quickly—and I liked the matrix approach to scene development. I might want to incorporate a different oracle and other story seeding tools to flesh out the narrative as it unfolds. It might also behoove me to spend more time with the Push SRD, not to make my own game, but to flesh out my understanding of the Breaking Down the Roll and The Oracle sections. Regardless, for a new system—and my first true journaling solo experience—this was fun and promising.



—William Rotsler

Game Report: The Long Road May 27, 2023

I had missed more than two months of Saturday game sessions and was glad to return to the game.

The Side Questers

- Bo: A very muscular hobbit who's heavily armed and scarred, she looks like a dwarf and can turn into a wolf. (Netherlands)
- Gebun Dallons: An acolyte of the Lord of the Forest, fresh from the farms of Dogborn (California)
- Noxarius: A satyr druid who follows the Lord of the Forest and can take animal form (Massachusetts)
- Theren: An elven ranger, wearing a hat with a feather in it

Previously, a land warden needed the party's help. Ruins near the town were populated by undead, the head of which was a vampire. The Side Questers were unprepared. Noxarius was cursed by a dying goblin. Keeva, now Treeva, an ent, fell to the zombies and is one herself until the adventurers defeat the vampire and return to the temple.

Dallons has been spending time on the airship. He's had a bad case of the rabbit flu since he transformed. When he returns to consciousness, no one else is in the hold of the boat except for Scruffy and Pickles. Dallons feels completely rung out, but his guts no longer feel like a brewery. It's only been about three hours of game time.

Using the winch, Dallons lowers himself to the ground so he can rejoin the party. He sees some smudges of dust and rags on the ground. The ruins include broken walls and columns. There's a little mound with a hole in it. Peering into the hole, Dallons sees a staircase leading down. He lights a torch and sees that it's a helical staircase, which he proceeds down, maintaining his footing.

At the bottom, Dallons sees broken bits of bone amidst the dirt and sand. In the distance, he sees a flickering torch, which he heads toward. On the way, a large spider drops out of the darkness on to Dallons. The spider's jaws scrape his armor and poison slavers, but nothing penetrates. Noxarius rushes toward him, slipping on a piece of bone, sliding in front of the spider, which attacks.

Dallons swings at the spider but does not connect. Noxarius attacks from the floor, collapsing. Bo runs toward the skirmish, and Theren launches a small flame into the remains of the spider's web, which burns. The spider snaps at Noxarius, fangs rending into him. Dallons misses again, and Noxarius tries to stand up. Theren fires an arrow and misses. The spider clamps its jaws together above Noxarius's head. He tries to stand up again.

Almost dropping his mace, Dallons attacks again. Theren lets loose another arrow, which lodges in the spider. Bo swings her cleaver at the spider twice, slamming into him. The spider snaps at Bo, tripping over Noxarius. Dallons, still getting used to his rabbit legs and ears, misses with another swing of his mace.

Noxarius swipes his claws at the spider, and they fly off, sailing into the darkness. Theren lets fly an arrow, which thwocks into the spider. Bo's cleaver also connects solidly. Something falls from the ceiling slamming into Bo. Dallons swings again, finally finding his mark, and the spider collapses. In the distance, party members hear a tinkling crash. Then another, followed by a series of clattering and shuffling in the dark from three directions.

As the group tries to find a vantage point at which the sounds cannot converge on them, Noxarius looks for Keeva's claws. He encounters a couple of ghouls and some skeletons approach the party. Dallons forcefully presents his amulet of the Green Father, turning the skeletons away from the party. He does not succeed at turning the ghouls. Theren attacks the ghouls, doing little damage.

The ghouls attack Noxarius. They tear at him. Dallons swings at one of the ghouls approaching the party, his mace connecting soundly. Theren continues to fire arrows from a safe distance, his arrow lodging into a ghoul. The ghouls attack Dallons and Bo, missing Dallons and scraping against Bo. The party hears additional shuffling in the darkness. Dallons's mace connects again, not entirely effective. Noxarius stays out of melee range, and Theren's arrow passes through the rags of a ghoul. Bo cleaves into a ghoul, which falls.

A ghoul slashes at Dallons, and he falls to the ground paralyzed. His mace whiffs on the way down. A ghoul sneaks up on Theren from behind, attacking unsuccessfully. The other one misses, as well. Noxarius stumbles but doesn't drop his weapon. Theren's melee attack is unsuccessful, and Bo wades toward the ghoul by Dallons and Noxarius. She downs it, and its dying claws miss.

Theren is mauled by two ghouls, taking a substantial amount of damage. Before he sinks to the ground, paralyzed, his spear slams into one of them. Noxarius takes a moment to neutralize the poison for Dallons, who becomes aware of his surroundings again. Bo approaches the ghouls accosting Theren.

The ghouls meet Bo halfway, attacking. One misses, and the other hits. She cleaves again as she falls, paralyzed. Noxarius heals some of Dallons's wounds, and he rises, presenting his amulet to the remaining ghoul. It flees.

Noxarius offers Dallons a maul the party found in

an armory, and Dallons accepts it, a much sturdier weapon than his initial mace. The two go over to Bo and Theren as rotting, decaying ghouls shamble out of the darkness. They see four spiked clubs on the ground. Noxarius picks one up and roots through Bo's backpack for her potions.

Dallons attempts to turn the approaching ghouls but fails. Noxarius and Dallons pick up Theren to move away from the undead. Noxarius cures Theren's wounds, as well. The two deposit Theren on the ground and turn to face the ghouls. One strikes at Dallons, but he doesn't fall.

Noxarius tosses something into the distance, blessing the ground as Bo rises. He senses something approaching behind the ghouls. It glows slightly. Dallons is not yet used to the new maul, and fails to hit a ghoule. The approaching figure, a towering skeleton, lashes out with a large whip made out of bone.

Dallons tries to turn the towering skeleton, and it hesitates. Noxarius heals himself. Dallons swipes at the towering skeleton with the maul. His maul connects again as he avoids the towering porcelain skeleton's attacks. Noxarius backs up toward Theren, feeling worse for wear.

As Bo presses her attack, the party realizes that the creature is the skeleton of a velociraptor wielding a whale-spine whip. She gets hit solidly as others continue to fight the ghouls. A ghoule hits Dallons, damaging his armor. Noxarius ceases his prayers, debating whether to flee. He is downed, attempting one last attack.

Dallons finally downs a ghoule, Noxarius unconscious nearby. Bo also falls, and Dallons downs the remaining ghoule.

Dallons prays for protection. He determines that he can not defeat the remaining undead and runs toward the helical stairs. Once outside and on the ship, Ruby has prepared another potion of cure poison. Dallons returns to administer it to Theren. The ghoule remains, stymied by Bo's armor, and the skeleton has departed.

Theren rises, unsteadily. The still-standing adventurers engage the remaining ghoule in ranged and melee combat, in order to free their comrades. The two down the ghouls. Staggering under the weight of Noxarius, they make it to the stairs. Ruby has created two additional potions of potential use. They administer one to Noxarius. Returning for Bo, they use the flying ship's crane and rope to tow Bo out and up.

Administering another potion to Bo, the party is unable to revive her immediately. The airship heads toward the temple.



—William Rotsler

Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #572

In reading A&E #573 and writing the mailing comments for *E&E* #6, it struck me that I'd missed quite a bit in #572, so here are some comments on the distribution I didn't respond to, having not contributed an issue in #573.

In *Tantivy* dated June 8, 2023, **Lee Gold** asked a few questions about *Tiny Dungeon*. Players choose a weapon group for proficiency, and those weapon groups are relatively broad: light melee (dagger, short sword, hand axe, rapier, mace, staff, club—1-5 gold), heavy melee (greatsword, war axe, spear, polearm, two-handed flail, warhammer—5-10 gold), and ranged (sling, crossbow, bow, throwing darts, shuriken—1-15 gold). Every successful hit in combat does one point of damage unless the GM rules otherwise.

There's an optional rule for item tracking that gives you six inventory spaces of three slots each to hold items. Items might take up more than one slot. For example, a dagger takes up one slot, while a short sword takes up two, and a longsword three. Not everything is spelled out, so there's ample room for GM and player determination.

With my using three-by-five cards as character sheets, I can list money and basic equipment on one

side and would use the back as needed for other items and information. The actual *Tiny Dungeon* character sheet is 5.5" by 8.5" but can be reproduced standard sized, so you can also just use a more traditional character sheet.

Index Card RPG offers a wealth of ideas and resources for notecard-based gameplay. One could have a card for each character, NPC, monster, room, item, etc.—with cards coming into use as needed while mapping.

Part of my goal for minimizing character sheets and other materials for any given game session is that so much time spent playing is spent setting up and putting away—like a complicated board game. When I DM'd for public play, I had two canvas bags full of books, miniatures, mats, maps, rulebooks, adventure materials, dice, and other items. I'd like to get to the point where I can just pick up on an adventure with some scrap paper and a few dice—while still seeking continuity between sessions and perhaps across games.

To be fair, John Redden isn't actually selling me his A&E back issues, though I am paying for the shipping. I'm not sure I'd be able to afford acquiring back issues solely to donate them to a university, but I'll keep your offer in mind for the future.

Your description of Eric Frank Russell's *Sentinels from Space* reminded me slightly of the game *Psi World*. I've long thought it might be fun to base a game or session on the Marvel New Universe comic book series *D.P. 7*, which concentrated on young, "displaced paranormals."

Welcome back, **Rob Heinsoo**, and *Flagrant Blossoms*! I thought I recognized your name in #573. I'll read the *Dungeons & Dragons* and *13th Age* materials you contributed to in a different light knowing you're here. I appreciated that you jumped right back in commenting on IgThemes, which I tend to neglect.

Mark A. Wilson mentioned layoffs and a job search in *Bumbling Through Dungeons* #46. My employer laid people off earlier this year, though my team and self weren't directly affected. I've been waiting for another round later this year, but there hasn't been one yet, even though attrition has been occurring otherwise. My wife and I are starting to plan stopping work, perhaps when our son is done with college, so that puts us out a few years. I kind of hope to be laid off rather than quitting. The severance packages I've seen have been appealing. Regardless, your situation seems different, and I wish you all the best. It's not enviable to lay off coworkers, or to look for new work yourself. I wish you the best of luck.

In *Reddened Stars* #32644.8bit, **John Redden** reported on his travels earlier this year. I enjoyed thinking of you in Los Angeles, even if traffic was daunting. Peru sounds lovely. Let me know what your son's family thinks of *Tiny Dungeon*.

Mark Nemeth's *The Seedling* #26 commented on other people's confusion about playing through modules solo. I think there's more awareness of and openness to solo gaming now. There are certainly more tools and resources available, so the idea of GM-less play is less mystifying. At least the player knowledge vs. character knowledge and chance elements are more readily addressed.

If you're still interested in play-by-forum, I've enjoyed games on RPOL (<https://rpol.net>) I find text-based forums preferable to digital tabletops or playing via Discord, which I use for the OD&D game run by Lee Grixit. I think it's the asynchronicity, which I find easier to manage in terms of time. I've been thinking about returning to play-by-mail games—even if via email—in recent weeks, too. I even dug up my old Xott materials to consider returning to that game.

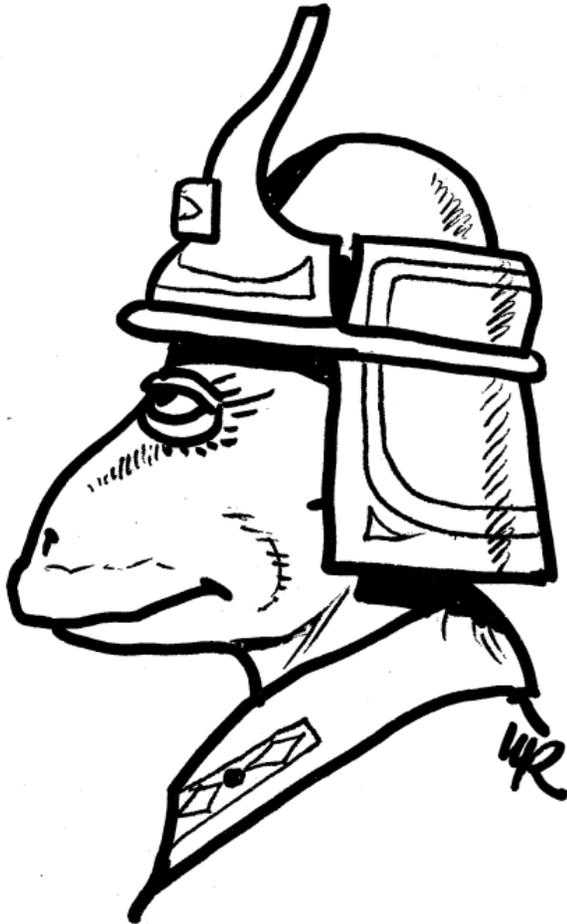
In *The Babylon Free Press* for July 2023, **Jerry Stratton** mentioned Michael Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue*, which I'd been unaware of. I finally read his *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* at the end of last year and enjoyed it (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #47); this title seems similarly intriguing. Your other reading—Edgar Rice Burroughs and Michael Moorcock—seem ripe for game inspiration.

The comments accompanying **Jim Vassilakis** and **Timothy Collinson's** *Traveller Play-By-Email* are a fine example of what I felt like I was missing in commenting on A&E #573. Thank you for the encouragement to return to *Marching Order* and to expand my game write ups.

Your query about how a solo gamer handles searching for traps and secret doors is an important one. If you, as a solo player, are reading a module, you as a player know that something is there, but your character does not. This is where things like oracles come into play. Oftentimes, if my character doesn't have a reasonable reason to presume that something might be somewhere—other things have been hidden, other doors have been trapped, the layout of the room as mapped suggests an inconsistency—I might choose to consult the oracle asking questions like: Does my character have any second thoughts about this door or room? If the oracle says no, I move on unaware.

If the oracle says yes, I might follow up by asking: Does my character decide to spend time looking? Even playing with a DM or GM, that's the most important thing for me: Searching takes a lot of time

in most game systems. And time can be of the essence, either in terms of new creatures moving into already-explored spaces, any pursuit that might be in play, a deadline for an accomplishment, and so forth. I'm usually not going to search every 10-foot section of wall or floor even if I'm suspicious. That can often lead to missed opportunities, but more often, rewards.



—William Rotsler

If finding something hidden is important—i.e., it's a blocker—I might approach it like other apans' discussion of core clues. It's less important to stick to the game mechanics or to play as written in cases where a discovery is necessary for the story, even if it's a soft form of cheating in terms of success. Certainly, if I wanted to play *White Plume Mountain*, I might approach the oracle several times before I'm able to determine I succeeded at entering, but it's also a fun story if you follow an adventure hook, don't find the entrance, and then have to follow another adventure hook. What lies behind the secret door remains for that character in the future, should they decide to seek it out again—or for another character. The character matters less than the player, and I think

most of us are playing a life-long game. I can always seek the entrance to the mountain again in the future.

I'm with **Michael Cule** in terms of his comments to Joshua Kronengold in *Mundus Vult Decepi* about *Tiny Dungeon*'s use of "heritage" instead of "race." "Species" is by far a better choice, though regardless of what a game calls it, you can still consider it a character's race if you're not offended or desiring a more inclusive language. Read and play around it.

Patrick Riley: Thank you for reminding me about *Lost Souls* in *Sinister Things* #317.

In *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #381, **Lisa Padol** mentioned her Mythopoeic Award reading. I'm a new member of the Society and unfamiliar with this—which I assume to be reading nominees for the awards. Will check *Mythprint* for details.

Columbo is an awesome TV show and a great view of Los Angeles in the 1970s. More recently I've been watching *Adam-12* (*E&E* #6), which showcases the city a little earlier. I've never played *Over the Edge*, but it looks interesting—might be another option for that supernatural law enforcement idea in *E&E* #6. The back of a business card, you say? That is an economical use of real estate!

I haven't used an online character keeper since *D&D* 4E—actually I have for 5E—but I downloaded all of them so I didn't have to rely on a subscription service. I haven't explored them otherwise and don't mind character sheets, notecards, or PbF profiles. To be honest, I'm trying to move away from focusing so much attention on creating low-level characters and letting the gameplay create them as I go. Otherwise, I could spend all my time generating characters rather than playing. Thank you for the additional resources for dead characters! I'll check those out, too. (I also appreciated your comments on the play report; again, I often debate including such, but they do help fill a page.)

Gabriel Roark's *Bugbears and Ballyhoo* #23 speculated that *Dungeon* #39's "Below Vulture Point" and *Treasure Hunt* (N4) were designed for level-0 PCs. You are correct, sir! I don't remember if I took many notes on the sessions, but I'll check. I keep changing what game I want to play! Keeva's burning down the treehouse is kind of par for the course with that adventuring party. Not only do they often decline to take adventure hooks—forcing the DM to improvise on the fly—they're also agents of chaos, not in terms of alignment, necessarily, but in terms of what they choose to do. I'll actually check whether they're behavior is true to their alignments; they're pretty kooky.

OD&D's approach to alignment focuses on law, neutrality, and chaos as a "stance," which one blogger (*Grogardia*) considers more of an allegiance than an ethical outlook or moral code. I tend to read it as good, neutral, and evil rather than structure, neutral, and disarray—if we were to consider AD&D's more detailed alignment system. The characters are definitely not evil, though they might be unpredictable. Sometimes they remind me of playing with children when I played more in stores.

Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #574

In *Tantivy* dated Aug. 1, 2023, **Lee Gold** mentioned people thinking early issues of A&E would "tell the history of roleplaying." That reminded me that early this month, George Phillies emailed me indicating that the Strong National Museum of Play (<https://www.museumofplay.org>) has at least one complete set of A&E, as do Phillies and Jon Peterson. While I will continue to donate back issues to the University of Iowa, I am now much less concerned about the preservation of the A&E archive.

Spike Y Jones asked me a question in *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #444: whether the two D&D bookazines I wrote about in *E&E* #5 had significantly different prices. They both cost \$13.99. I largely agree with your assessment of the recent D&D movie as not being a financial success—you'd have to make back your production and marketing budget—but I think cinematic flops also have a qualitative aspect to them. In that regard, I'd consider the movie a creative success but a financial failure. I generally consider flops to be creative failures, as well. There might be a difference between a bomb and a flop. However, you wrote—or edited—the book on flops, so I defer to you and your documented definition.

In *Oops, Wrong Planet!*, **Doc Cross** informed apans of Duke's birthday. Our cat Spooner turned eight in mid-September. He was perplexed when we sang to him that morning upon waking. Please feel free to share your low-magic fantasy sandbox session zero questionnaire. I'm intrigued about such instruments informing campaign design and gameplay focus.

Jerry Stratton's book reviews in *The Bibylon Free Press* dated September 2023 were wonderful, particularly the inclusion of Arthur Machen, A.E. van Vogt's *The Silkie*, and Charlie Jane Anders. Your consideration of the comic books of Alan Moore continue to inspire me to return to his work.

I found **Lisa Padol's** commentary on the ENnie Awards and Others in *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #383 of interest. I've been intrigued by *Vaesen, VHS: Very Horror Stories*—which I own; I

consider it a more focused version of a cinematic *Chill*, though I haven't played with it yet—*Fearful Symmetries* (which was woefully not included in the recent Pelgrane Press Humble Bundle of *Trail of Cthulhu* materials), the *Blade Runner RPG Starter Set*, *Feather & Bone*, and *Brindlewood Bay* (which I backed via Kickstarter). I also enjoyed your remarks on sharing the spotlight and fading. In a recent Long Road game session, I and another player were able to take the spotlight when a couple of the more powerful characters were unconscious. That wasn't necessarily a conscious attempt to "split the party," but it was entertaining and ended relatively well. I remember *Mutants & Masterminds* offering a more explicit way to focus on a given character in a session or scene. I shall have to seek out the RPGaDAY2023 prompts—or just refer back to your own responses to consider my own. Neat stuff!

In *Age of Menace* #223, **Brian Christopher Misiaszek's** conrep about PulpFest 2023 was very enjoyable. I need to remember that it's OK to go to events like that and not buy anything. You can just go to soak up the sights and sounds, spend time with like-minded people, and maybe even take some relevant reading material.

I similarly enjoyed **Patrick Zoch's** KantCon 2023 conrep in *The Dragon's Hoard* dated August 2023. Strategicon recently held Gateway over Labor Day weekend in Los Angeles, but I did not go even though my wife was out of town visiting her mother. Instead, I watched anime and movies, and read. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #81) Your discussion of the pitfalls of speaking in character was thought provoking.

In *Bumbling Through Dungeons*, **Mark A. Wilson** offered additional activities to undertake at a gaming con: check out the programming, just hang out, and work on personal projects and games. That resonates with my reaction to Misiaszek's PulpFest conrep above. Again, I need to remember that I don't need to just run games or play games. There's more one can accomplish at a con!

I also read and enjoyed **Craig Kamber's** consideration of NPC relations in *Craig Cornered*. Your contribution makes me think it might be good to determine what role an NPC is intended to play. Are they a source of information? A supporter? Access to a network of informants and influence? A source of adventure hooks? An NPC might play multiple roles over time if they're a recurring character—rather than drop out once a function is fulfilled.

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #13

Sept. 22, 2023

The Explosion Containment Umbrella is an apa commentzine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to eAPA and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Comments on eAPA #233

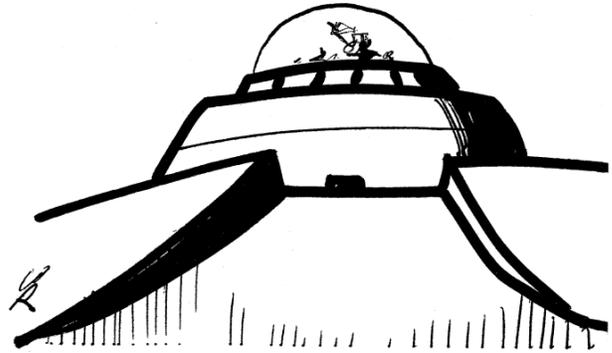
How neat it is to see Jose Sanchez grace the front of eAPA! I enjoyed his cover for *The Obdurate Eye* #30, which I didn't see until I'd used the very same illustration for the cover of APA-L #3034. Sanchez informs me that that piece was also used as the back cover for *Tightbeam* #347 and in the August 2023 issue of *CyberCozen*. It's wonderful that his work is starting to make inroads with faneds around the world. I've been working with him for years through the National Fantasy Fan Federation—and more recently, APA-L—and quite like that his work is getting picked up. His UFO- and cryptid-related artwork is particularly interesting.

In *Wild Ideas* #39, **Henry Grynsten** explored the simulation hypothesis proposed by Nick Boström, offering a counterproof. He also engaged in lively discussion and debate with other eAPAns about a number of topics, including the replication crisis and its impact on science generally. I found your exchange with Ahrvid Engholm on correlation vs. causation to be particularly interesting. Yes, correlation is not causation, but if there's a high degree of correlation, you can generally use it as a predictive signal, even if it's not causal. The degree of correlation can indicate the strength as well as the direction of a relationship between two variables.

I also enjoyed the discussion of objectivity and subjectivity. As a former journalist, I've thought a lot about objectivity. Now, I'm not entirely sure that people can be entirely objective. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try. In terms of American journalism, the focus on objectivity has unfortunately led to reporting in which all opinions or "facts" are held as equal rather than fair and balanced reporting that attempts to portray the truth. I find the idea that there might be no truth—that we can have "alternative facts"—to be especially concerning and not in the interest of an informed electorate or strong body politic.

Your suggestion to William McCabe that his pockets develop holes more quickly than they used to

because of economizing on materials and planned obsolescence made me chuckle. Exactly. A consumer culture built on low cost of production and consumption, but increased sales doesn't necessarily lead to products that last a long time. Even our durable goods are becoming less durable. I recently received notice that my employer will soon stop supporting the corporate mobile phone issued to me; it's only two years old. Personally, I expect a mobile phone to be usable for much longer than that.



—William Rotsler

The exchange between you and Engholm on the survival preparedness of a modern human during the time of the Cro-Magnons made me furrow my brow. Having spent quite a bit of time camping, hiking, and backpacking with Scouts, adult leaders, and their family members, including many of whom had had some outdoor survival and wilderness first aid training, most people—even those with training—are quite challenged applying such skills when they actually need to. A two-day course would not be sufficient. A week-long course would not be sufficient. And people without training? We read about them dying because of a lack of common sense or appropriate tools with some frequency.

Garth Spencer's introduction of the idea of sloyd skills—handicraft-based education focusing on manual skill and cognitive development—is a wonderful addition to the above discussion. I'll have to learn more about sloyd skills!

As usual, that was just your mailing comments! I read "The Simulation Illusion" with interest, though perhaps not with objectivity. After all, I think the world is real—and even if it isn't, we'd better act like it is. If it is a simulation, it doesn't matter what we do, perhaps, but if it isn't—if it *isn't*—what we do matters a lot in terms of human survival. I find the concept to be somewhat distasteful, perhaps interesting as an intellectual exercise, but potentially dangerous if it leads to actions or behavior presupposing simulation.

A college professor of mine and a friend subscribe to the subjective idealism of Bishop Berkeley, which I find less threatening than simulationism. I was intrigued by your remarks about posthumanism depending on evolution continuing to progress up and to the right in terms of line charts. I also find posthumanism interesting but not necessarily important. Regardless, I wonder what the correlation between survival and intelligence is. It might be a weak relationship!



—Alan White

The part of the idea that gave me some enthusiasm, however, was this: What if posthumanism isn't based on intelligence but on consciousness, spirit, or energy? This gets a little woo-woo, but if we could perhaps evolve into disembodied spirit or conscious energy—neither of which has happened yet, discounting ghosts and related concepts—the resulting broadening of consciousness could be mistaken for intelligence: awareness vs. knowing. If one were to evolve thusly, why would they spend their time running simulations of the past? And if they did, we'd be less a simulation and more a memory or a dream. Basing a posthuman argument on the availability of "computing power" doesn't seem very posthuman to me. Unless we are all part of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Over-Soul or the panpsychism you mention, in which

case we're back to memory, dream, or awareness.

Your discussion of the correlation between technological development and brain atrophy is also interesting—and resonates with our discussion above. Aldous Huxley addressed that in *Brave New World*: an alpha jokes that they sometimes have to use their brain, and that that can be difficult. We might be more likely to take the path of least resistance and devolve as technology progresses. Very thought provoking!

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #136 opened with an energetic analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Will Vladimir Putin fall prey to the sunk-cost fallacy? He might be stubborn and maniacal enough to do so. May the Kremlin never obtain the desired copies of your fanzine!

Your comments on being against burning books while also being against banning the burning of books intrigued me. What do you think about flag burning? What do you think about book burning in which the book burned is a proxy for a hated minority or other? How thick is the line between burning the Quran and a hate crime against Muslims?

My distaste for burning books is similar to my distaste for throwing away books. Both seek to minimize knowledge and access to knowledge. Or at least devalue knowledge. Because most book burning is done by people who want to obliterate a way of thinking or living, it seems to me that book burning opposes freedom of expression rather than asserts freedom of expression. Freedom of expression for me, not thee. None of my response addresses whether banning book burning is acceptable, but your comments were thought provoking.

Thank you for reprinting Hugo Gernsback's "How to Write 'Science' Stories." I wonder how it'd compare to a similar piece written by the current editor of *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *Clarkesworld*, or *Interzone*. I can imagine an anthology of stories written following this guidance—it'd be wonderful.

I was unaware of the tragic death of Gernsback's daughter. I'm curious whether anyone has written a story about that—surely Gernsback might have tried to go back in time to avoid the tragedy. I'm somewhat surprised there isn't yet a definitive biography of Gernsback. We have Michael A. Banks's 20-page ebook *Hugo Gernsback: The Man Who Invented the Future*, Tim Black's 14-page ebook *Hugo Gernsback: An Amazing Story*, Larry Steckler's "un-attributed autobiography" *Hugo Gernsback: A Man Well Ahead of His Time*, and Gary Westfahl's more widely ranging *Hugo Gernsback and the Century of Science Fiction*. Are you aware of any good biographies? I appreciated reading about his work in multiple communications media. This is an issue to return to.

Your remark to Garth Spencer about television viewing rooms resonated with me. Before TVs were a device found in many homes, people watched TV together in public: store window displays, bars, friends' homes, and other locations. Now communal TV viewing is mostly limited to catastrophes and disasters, and I wonder what collective TV viewing was like—compared to the individual or family-oriented experience today. When *Game of Thrones* was on, my wife and I would go next door to watch it with our neighbors as a social occasion. I watch a movie weekly with a friend in my home. Those experiences might be close but aren't entirely similar.

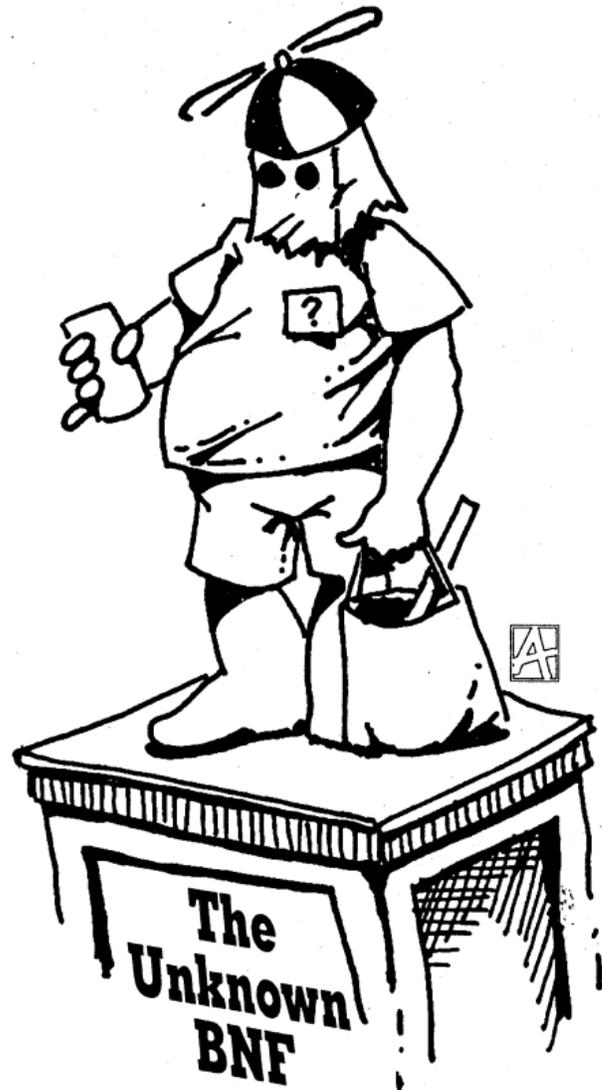
In *Living Inside Number 9*, **William McCabe** wrote about people offering partial information in support of their cause—or opposition to another—as well as adopting other living authors' names to market AI-written texts. Interesting stuff! I think it's relatively common for people to attempt to persuade others using incomplete information. Just include information that bolsters your point of view and exclude the inconvenient. In research, that comes into play when people cherry pick data—highlighting data that backs up their position while neglecting data that counters it. The important thing is to be media literate and read through what's said or unsaid, a skill in seemingly decreasing supply.

But the authorial question about attributing work not by an author to an author—and that being allowed—is fascinating. Yes, one might not have trademarked their name. But if you're in the business of communicating ideas—and someone else does so using your name—surely there are grounds for confusion and misleading efforts to profit off your name. After all, why else would they use your name? I'll have to look into this more.

And **Garth Spencer's** *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #213 announced the revival of the Minnesota Science Fiction Society's fanzine *Rune*! I was mailed a copy of *Rune* not that long ago. I'll have to dig it up to see how old it is. While I've recently referred to or reviewed older back issues (*Faculae & Filigree* #23, *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #61, and *The Brass Hat Mind* #1), I haven't actually read the print fanzine I received. Marty Cantor's fanzine collection contained many, however. It's a welcome return.

I'll share your calendar of Canadian cons with fellow Neffer Mindy Hunt to inform her con calendars in *Fanactivity Gazette*. I was interested in the discussion on Facebook about whether the cons are traditional sf cons that warrant a Canadian Unity Fan Fund delegate. It's an intriguing question. If we want fandom to continue, the answer might be yes, we

should still send delegates to either the primary con remaining—or the con of their choice—to continue fostering the sense of community intended by CUFF and similar efforts (“to represent distant fan communities in Canada to other fan communities in Canada,” in CUFF's case). As you say later in the ish, “the ‘fringe’ fandoms ... have, in effect, out-competed fannish fandom for popular awareness.” Cons might change, but the desire to represent and cross-pollinate communities hasn't. Taking the ball home seems no fun for anyone.



—Alan White

Your conrep was awesome. Thank you for it. I'm glad the “Rebuilding Fannish Community” panel made some progress. “[I]t simply isn't the job of elder fans to recreate the fan activities they knew” resonated with me. Huzzah!

The UFO Checklist



The United Fanzine Organization (UFO) is a group of small press creators who come together to support and encourage each other, and to promote higher standards of quality in small press. Applicants may contact Chairman Steve Keeter/ 10118 Mason Dixon Circle/ Orlando, FL 32821 (stevekeeter@gmail.com) Check out the Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags>



TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS! (THE UFO NEWSLETTER) (\$3.50 for non-members, or a 6-issue subscription for \$20 from UFO Chairman Steve Keeter, 10118 Mason Dixon Circle, Orlando, FL 32821. Or, PayPal to: stevekeeter@gmail.com) The Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members. Many of the

greats of small press have been, and are, involved in this influential group.



HOLOGRAM: COUNTING THE DAYS, BOOK ONE (\$5.00 + \$2.00 shipping to Tom Fellrath, 8031 Griswold Drive, New Albany OH 43054, or PayPal/Venmo to @tdfellrath) The first six issues of Tom Fellrath's amazing sf fantasy are represented in a beautiful package with a standout cover by Scott McClung. Tom scripts, and William Henry Caddell illustrates the gripping saga of a man who is transformed into a hologram during an unfortunate lab accident, and the effects that this has on his life as he glides through one adventure after another.



THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #7 (\$10 US, PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com. Check or money order may be sent to: Carrales Studios Productions P.O. Box 1274, PREMONT, TEXAS 78375-1274. Contact Marisolinskikitty@gmail.com for details or to acquire back issues. Canadians inquire before ordering.) A new story arc begins for those remarkable mail room super heroines, Mari and Nico! The discovery of a mysterious Druid's orb unleashes a terrible power upon the world, and our cast of heroes heads off to Wales to explore the mystery! But... a hideous power lies waiting, bandaged, in a hospital bed... something that could turn their world upside down!



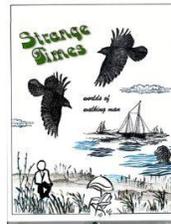
SMALL PRESS ACTION THEATER #1 (\$5.00 postpaid, or PayPal to torcpress.com or from Joseph Morris, 4511 Crossgate Dr., Champaign, IL 61822) Joseph Morris' SMALL PRESS ACTION THEATER is an exciting anthology comic featuring some of small press's finest talents, including Jason DeGroot, Joel Cotejar, and Marc Haines. "Lightning Strikes Twice!" (featuring Bob Elinskas' Mister Midnite) is an amazing super hero action tale, brilliantly written and illustrated, and one of the best action stories you're likely to read this year! In "Not a Hoax, Not An Imaginary Tale!" Marc Haines gives us a glimpse of the funeral of the hero Dynamik, but with a strange twist. And Joseph Morris himself writes and

illustrates the weird sf tale "Phantom Frequency, Part 1." Another triumph from TORC PRESS!

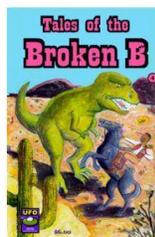


SMALL PRESS COMICS PARTY!, Fall, 2023 (\$5.00 postpaid from Joseph Morris, or PayPal to: torcpress.com) The final issue of SMALL PRESS COMICS PARTY! offers three hilarious comic strips: "The Masked Platypus in A Shocking Duel" by Joseph Morris and Terry Flippo, "Uncle Pook in Ogre Trouble" by Joseph and Larned Justin, and "Trippy Dawg in From Hugs to Eternity" written by Jason DeGroot

and drawn by Joe Morris! Featuring some of the finest and funniest talents ever assembled in a small press comic, this one is a winner!



STRANGE TIMES #3 (\$6.00 + \$2 shipping to Tom Fellrath, 8031 Griswold Drive, New Albany OH 43054, or PayPal/Venmo to @tdfellrath) The stunningly beautiful rubber stamp images of Matt Levin fill this unique full color magazine. Many of Matt's classic comics are reprinted. "Over the next 50 plus pages," writes Editor Tom Fellrath, you will enjoy a beautiful explosion of creativity. Odds are his work will be unlike any you have seen from any other creator. "This one is definitely different, and totally inspiring!"



TALES OF THE BROKEN B #4 (\$6.00 postpaid from Larry Johnson, 31 Greenbrook Rd, Hyde Park, MA 02136, or PayPal to: LewBrown1@Verizon.net) The cowboys working at the Broken B Ranch were used to the occasional wild animal in the hills and plains nearby but nothing like the prehistoric beast that suddenly started eating their cattle! Larry Johnson is writer, artist and editor of this thrilling new full color adventure! Also included: a letter column and a fascinating excerpt from the 1890s newspaper EVERY SATURDAY (what would you do if you were attacked by huge, and extremely perturbed, bears?!).



UNCANNY ACTION, #1-4 COLLECTED NEWSPRINT EDITION(\$5.00 postpaid via PayPal johnmullerillustration@gmail.com or from John Muller, P.O. Box 41, Scotrun, PA 18355) Issues Number 1 through 4 of John Muller's gripping sf epic UNCANNY ACTION are collected in one (newsprint!) edition. The drama begins on page one: "It had slept for thousands upon thousands of years, but it has awoken... it will start feeding..." As the creature contemplates its revenge, it is pursued by the only one courageous enough to follow! John Muller spins an unforgettable yarn.

