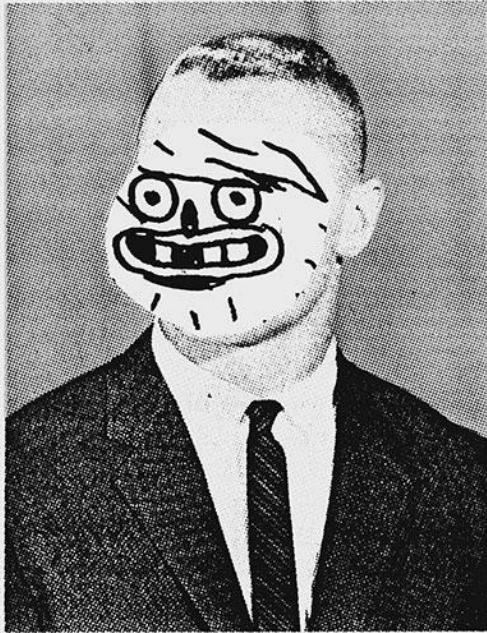


# The Stf Amateur 10

A TOUCH OF CLASS



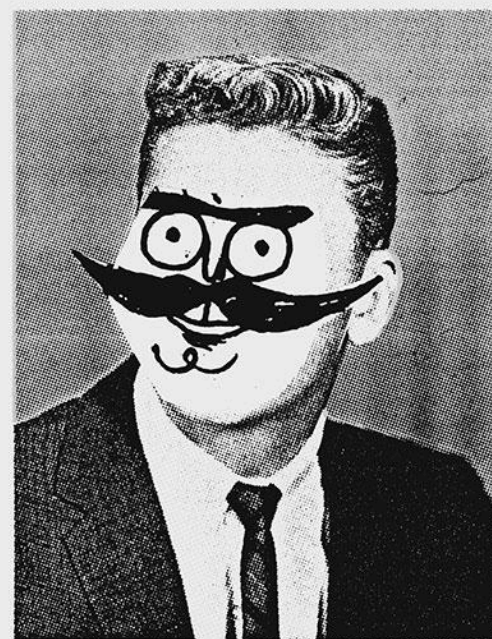
HAIRY TOOTH



PICKLES



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CHESTERFIELD

***The Stf Amateur*** 10  
July 2024

#	Title	Date	APA	Pages
1	Cover artwork by Brad Simon			1
2	Table of Contents			2
3	Letters of Comment			4
4	Call for Submissions			1
5	<i>Telegraphs &amp; Tar Pits</i> #117	June 6, 2024	APA-L	8
6	<i>Telegraphs &amp; Tar Pits</i> #118	June 13, 2024	APA-L	4
7	<i>Faculae &amp; Filigree</i> #32	June 14, 2024	LASFAPA	6
8	<i>Blue Moon Special</i>	June 2024		8
9	<i>Telegraphs &amp; Tar Pits</i> #119	June 20, 2024	APA-L	11
10	<i>Emulators &amp; Engines</i> #15	June 21, 2024	A&E	6
11	<i>Telegraphs &amp; Tar Pits</i> #120	June 27, 2024	APA-L	8
12	<i>The Explosion Containment Umbrella</i> #21	June 28, 2024	eAPA	5
13	The UFO Checklist and bacover			2
<b>Total</b>				<b>66</b>

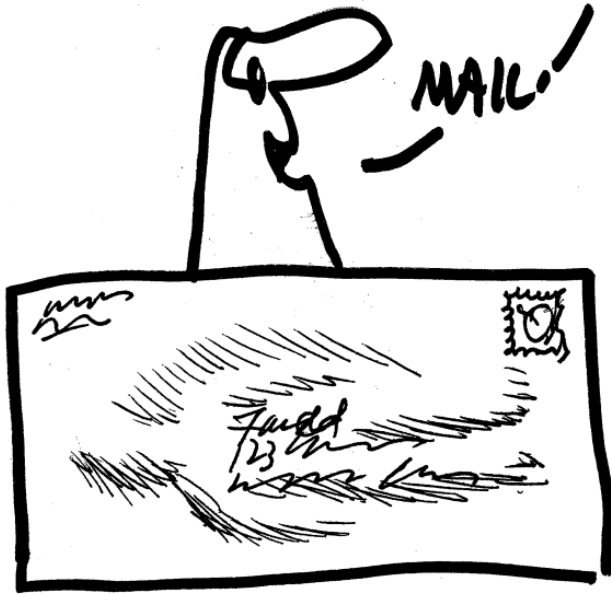
You can learn more about cover artist Brad Simon at <https://www.bradsimonart.com> and <https://www.instagram.com/straggletooth>.

*The Stf Amateur* (Or: *Amateur Stf*) is a bundlezine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; [kalel@well.com](mailto: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>) and the Fanac Fan History Project (<https://fanac.org>), as well as for the Usual. Letters of comment, cover art, and spot illustrations are welcome and desired—as are other contributions. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

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**Editor's Note:** Based on reader feedback, I offer this topical index in order to help readers of *The Stf Amateur* better find what they might be looking for, while others might read more generally. I also want to better highlight the work of contributors other than myself—so readers can more easily seek their contributions. This wasn't too difficult to compile, but I put the question to you: Is it helpful? Will you use it as a reader?



—William Rotsler

I was glad to see an interest paid in the history of synergy in sf in the sixteenth issue of *Snow Poster Township* [*The Stf Amateur* #9]. I am not recalling the date of the time of the discussions in fandom of synergy and other departures from regular science fiction, but it was rounding the sixties, and it had in its background Theodore Sturgeon, Daniel Keyes, John Campbell, L. Ron Hubbard, and the editor of [*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*].

Chief among the fanzine attention to the material involved was the Cult, in their *Fantasy Rotators*, which were virtually attacking Hubbard and his new schools of thought. I don't think [Joseph Banks] Rhine used the word "parapsychology" himself; that would have meant attached to psychology rather than being psychology. Rhine was researching paranormal claims to see if any truths could be found in them.

I think the other trend you refer to is Scientology, which was an offshoot of Dianetics. There was also something involving linguistics as applied to psychology. Those explorations were interwoven with mysticism, which might well accord with the title of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. You might be referring to "sense of wonder," a term of those times, in referring to the scale and scope of the universe.

—John Thiel

[The other "psychological or philosophical trend that I forget (symbolic logic?)" was in fact general semantics, introduced by Alfred Korzybski in the early 1930s. During the 1940s to the 1960s, general

semantics showed up in sf writing by authors such as A.E. van Vogt, Robert A. Heinlein, Bernard Wolfe, Frank Herbert, and others. It was even parodied by Damon Knight.

In 2017, the New York Society for General Semantics held an event exploring "Science Fiction, Language, and General Semantics," which is available on *YouTube*. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DuG\\_ve7cwA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DuG_ve7cwA)) Roger Russell's *A.E. van Vogt Page* expands on the role general semantics played in van Vogt's fiction (<http://www.roger-russell.com/sffun/nulla.htm>).—HR]

I have been very surprised by all the apas you are in, and from the mailing comments, all the people I know who belong to them. I didn't realize so many apas were going strong, not knowing of any except the one I am in (Stipple-Apa), and the big ones, like FAPA and ANZAPA. The attraction of apas is the assured comments you receive. Certainly, the original intent to bundle a bunch of individual fanzines together and mail them thus to save postage no longer applies!

I have to agree with you, though, that belonging to an apa with a deadline to meet most definitely encourages writing in me, too, when otherwise procrastination sets in. Gosh, lately I find that I can more easily encourage myself to exercise by threatening myself with a writing project, even if I really need to write (for mental and emotional sanity).

I definitely don't think you should eliminate the mailing comments from your combo-zine. But a real table of contents is rather nice, especially when you mix in your multi-part trip report to Portugal with the other material, so people can find it afterwards, or entice them to read it first. But perhaps as William Breiding wrote in *Portable Storage*, people don't read fanzines that way, and instead scan through the pages, reading what they like along the way. (All snacks, rather than picking out a main course, with soup and salad!)

And maybe a call for submissions is wise, since you don't normally think of contributing to someone else's apazine.

Oh, I did especially enjoy your report [on the] convention in Portugal, and meeting up with some correspondents there. That sounded like so much fun—and one of the neatest things about fandom, meeting friends you've never met in person in a foreign country. Even the prosaic detail of buying clothes pins. (Do they make them locally?)

I wonder what prompted that bit from the April *Atlantic* you quoted about Paul Linebarger and his first story, "Scanners Live in Vain"? A shame if they never mentioned his pen name Cordwainer Smith,

under which all his science fiction was published.

Enjoyed your review of [*The Body Snatchers*]. It is always interesting to go back to the originals. Although the author may not have had the “Red Menace” on his mind when he wrote it, sf stories have this archetypal way of taking ideas from their times—or from the time in which they are read. Perhaps today, the bodies are those of all those people who aren’t as “good” (in the politically correct sense) as we thought, and so suitably should be replaced.

—Cy Chauvin

[If you’re interested in the “many apas ... going strong,” be sure to check out the 2024 edition of *Blue Moon Special*, an apae directory compiled by Garth Spencer and myself. (I’ll send you a copy, and by the grace of Bill Burns, it’s now available at <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>—back issues are available at <https://efanzines.com/ActiveAPAs>.) We were able to gather listings for almost 30 still-active apae, largely focusing on sf but also drawing on other fandoms—like comic books—and mundane topics.

Without my weekly and monthly apae deadlines, *The Stf Amateur* would be much thinner, and perhaps not even exist. This issue will be the first including a topical table of contents as well as its usual apazine TOC; we’ll see how interesting, helpful, and useful readers think it is!

The inclusion of the *The Atlantic* article quote was inspired by the need to fill a little bit of space with text. When I’ve got a short page or need to accommodate an illustration without resizing too much, I check recent news articles for mentions of science fiction. That excerpt was longer than most of the quotations I’ve used. It appears that our subscription to *The Atlantic* has since lapsed, so I no longer have access to the full article (<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/04/science-fiction-conspiracy-theory-psyops/678195>), but a photo caption mentions the estate of Cordwainer Smith. —HR]

And so to *The Stf Amateur* #9. Again, a most beautiful cover. Your access to [the United Fanzine Organization] (of which I’d been completely unaware until Kurt Erichsen resumed publishing *Endeavor*) has given you some wonderful covers. Next thing you know, you’ll be getting Chong to do you a cover! (If that’s too obscure, Chong, a friend of Perry Middlemiss, has done a number of portraits of Perry that he’s used as covers. Think about it!)

Alan White’s exquisite iconic spaceships-as-castles are wonderful. I have to say you don’t have any compunction about squandering lots of great art by

one artist in a single issue! (And I’ve been thoroughly enjoying your reprints of the old monster movie ads—great stuff—ripped straight from the headlines!)

I have several gigabytes of movie soundtracks, but probably very few of them from sf movies. I tend to find sf movie soundtracks manipulative. [*E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*] being a primary and the worst offender. My fave horror soundtracks are probably *The Thing*, *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage*, and *Suspiria*. John Barry’s soundtrack to *Walkabout* is an all time favorite. Incredibly evocative, as is Jerry Goldsmith’s soundtrack to *Under Fire*, Ryuichi Sakomoto’s *Merry Christmas, Mister Lawrence*, and Nino Rota’s *The Godfather Part II*. Not to mention Mike Oldfield’s soundtrack to *The Killing Fields*. I love Elmer Bernstein’s Western soundtracks. Mark Isham’s moody soundtracks from the 1980s are also great. I’ve sort of viewed movie soundtracks as contemporary classical music, though they are far more colorful and emotive, not to mention melodramatic. I’m sure a classical aficionado would scoff at the idea.

It’s interesting to me that written sf always comes back as some sort of touchstone for magazines like *The Atlantic* and *Harper’s* even if they are trashing it. *The Atlantic*’s tribute to Cordwainer Smith was unusual. These uppity magazines seem to have a love-hate relationship with genre. I already know too much about Linebarger (maybe more than I want to!) so I didn’t read the piece. Was there a specific reason they were addressing Smith’s work aside from commemorating his centennial?

I was lucky enough to be surfing Amazon when they offered the entire first season of *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* for free. I enjoyed it immensely and hope that at some point they will stream the second season and I’ll see it before it’s gone. I’ve not seen either *Star Trek: Discovery* or *Star Trek: Picard*. Maybe one of these days.

I was never able to buy into the Star Wars universe. I think the last film in the series I saw was the one with the truly wretched Jar Jar Binks, *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*. I remember telling my brother Sutton how bad it was but urged him to go see it because George Lucas stuffed every conceivable cool pulp sf idea into the film and then successfully visualized it, moment by moment. After that it was bye-bye Star Wars for me.

Fan feuds: What do they mean? After you brought that up, I did some research and came to the conclusion that fan feuds were more mythological than they were anything else. The early fans were certainly cantankerous, and I agree with you that the feuds tended to be about exclusion. When I came to

fanzine fandom in the early 1970s it was the pros that were feuding in fanzines like *Outworlds* and *The Alien Critic*, not fans. I was never involved in a feud, though in the late 1990s, a Detroit fan took it upon himself to flame me for a while. I was at that time only hooked into email and none of the early social fan sites, so I was completely unaware that it was going on until a fan emailed me to alert me that this fan was carrying on a one-sided feud. I think all he did was make a fool of himself.

I love the Chucky movies. So, of course my favorite is *Bride of Chucky*. Could a boy ask for more than Jennifer Tilly? (Maybe Chucky?)

And then there is the old saw of the artist vs. their art. It's been my observation that far too many artists (by this I mean in all creative endeavors) are jerks. If you judge an artist by their personal behavior and not just by their art, you will be limiting yourself of much beauty. So it's my credo to never judge the art by its artist, but to enjoy the art for what it is and as it stands, all by itself. Fuck the artist.

So, a question. What do you think of the quartet Oregon? You seem to be fairly knowledgeable in the field of Jazz, so I am curious how you place them in the jazz world. I won't say anything more because I want your untainted opinion, if you are familiar with the band.

I was enamored of Garth Spencer's meditative question on life goals and how seriously you chose to address it. I very much appreciated your honesty in looking at your own life and evaluating it against his questions.

I suppose the reason for that is because I've never looked at life as a series of goals during certain age periods. In a way, I view it as a pretty retro set of questions. But [because you answered] it so seriously, I realized that certain sets of societal goals like school, job, career, marriage, kids ... are still very much the way we conduct our lives. ... I haven't had any of that. I have a fifth grade education. I am otherwise an autodidact. I had a series of low-income jobs my entire life, never a career. That has been a life choice. At least twice, if not more, I had been offered a chance to start climbing the ladder toward a career, but declined. Much to the puzzlement of management. I preferred the freedom I had job hopping to do other things I felt were more important like travel, making art, etc. I do know folks who have integrated careers with the rest of their lives. But I could never see how I could make that work for myself. My father suggested I become a freelance journalist, but he didn't understand that I am unable to write on demand, a requirement if you are to be taken seriously. I never married, until I was in my late fifties. I was what the

late Bill Bowers referred to as "a serial monogamist." I feel very lucky to have met and loved the women that have been in my life. I do regret screwing up one relationship in my mid-twenties. I should have married her and stayed with her. But then I would have never met those other amazing women. So it's a double-edged sword. Kids... I had a vasectomy in my early thirties. Knew I didn't want kids by the time I was 15. Started thinking about getting sterilized in my early 20s but didn't have the guts to do it until my early 30s when my boss at the time went and got a vasectomy and was very open about it. A year or two later, I went for mine. I never regretted it. (Tangentially, I have occasionally wished I was able to meet and get to know the kids that my exes went on to have in other relationships. But unfortunately, this has not been in the cards.)

So you can see my life trajectory is a bit different than the one Garth Spencer and you were discussing. My only real regret, in retrospect, is that I've lived near the poverty line most of my life. Not so much on a comfort level—I've lived very comfortably within those means and never have wanted for luxuries such as movies, books, music, traveling, and have lived in mostly comfortable dwellings—only a few were too ghetto for me, as expenses started escalating beyond the pace of the wages I was making, and I fled them quickly—but more that I didn't save for aging and retirement, and depending on the political climate, things could go awry economically for us. But that's in the future.

Thanks for another great issue. I still don't understand how you sustain the energy that you do to achieve all that you do—but maybe it's just that I've always been a slacker.

—William Breiding

[Since I started including cover art for *The Stf Amateur* (the unnumbered October 2023 issue), three of nine covers have been submitted by UFO members. I look forward to showcasing additional work by UFO participants in the future!

It's amusing that you picked up on the consistent wealth of Alan White artwork in that particular issue. When he offered those illustrations to faneds on the *Facebook*, I was struck by their thematic consistency and decided not to spread them out over time, but to include them in the same ish so the whole could be seen as well as the parts. It's a wonderful series.

The classical radio station in Los Angeles, KUSC, occasionally intersperses music from movie scores and soundtracks among its more traditional classical programming. I hadn't experienced that in other cities in which I've lived, and chalked it up to LA's

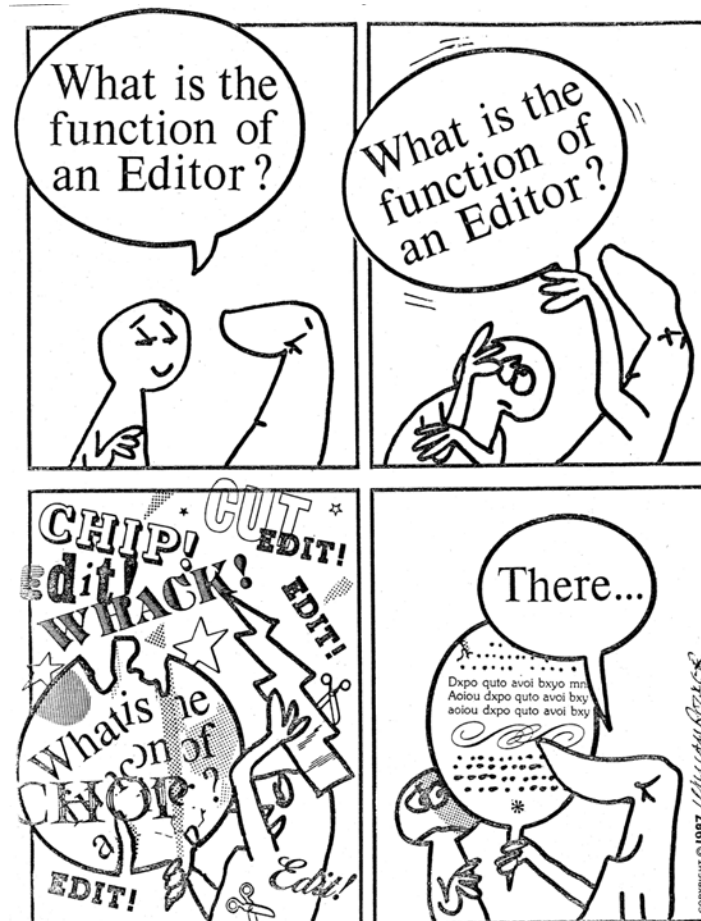
entertainment industry. Online, KUSC offers *Classical California Movie Music Playlist*, “the music that makes movies magical,” hosted by Dianne Nicolini. (<https://classicalcalifornia.org/kusc/streams/movie-music-playlist>) I’m not sure if there’s a dedicated terrestrial radio program dedicated to film scores, but I would agree: They’re a form of contemporary classical music.

While Cordwainer Smith’s 100th birth anniversary was in 2013, the more recent article in *The Atlantic* seemed to focus on his reported invention of conspiracy theory.

I was unfamiliar with the jazz quartet Oregon. But its members, including Ralph Towner, Paul McCandless, and Trilok Gurtu, intrigued me, as did their activity during the 1970s. Their 1970 album *Our First Record*—sporting an album cover reminiscent of Neil Young’s 1972 *Harvest*—opens quite well and is honestly not what I expected. Neither the Latin-infused jazz fusion of near-contemporaries Spyro Gyra nor the mid-1960s progressive jazz settings offered by the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), the little I’ve listened to invokes a more serious form of New Age music, bordering on that offered by Windham Hill. The focus on string instruments—Towner’s guitar and Collin Walcott’s sitar, for example—also invokes folk music and ensembles like The Incredible String Band, only sans vocals and less psychedelic. Thank you for bringing them to my attention. Oregon is a group worth listening to! Chamber jazz might be an appropriate label to apply, should one be applied.

What I think is interesting about the life goals Garth Spencer, I, and now you have been discussing is that they can actually be boiled down to happiness and health—in all their forms: professional, familial, relational, physical, mental, and emotional—though societally, I think we tend to focus on them more functionally. We can hike all sorts of trails to achieve those goals, for sure. Your path, for example, sounds extremely worthwhile and rewarding, though I appreciate and understand the concerns about financial stability in the later years. But you are definitely not a slacker. I’ve read enough of *Star Fire* and *Portable Storage* to know that that cannot possibly be true.  
—HR]

# Call for Submissions



—William Rotsler

Do you write or draw? As *The Stf Amateur* continues to evolve from an interconnected assortment of standalone apazines to its current bundlezine format, it's only natural that it eventually becomes a proper genzine. Effective immediately, *The Stf Amateur* is open to submissions of all kinds.

*The Stf Amateur* is hereby requesting the following:

- sf, fantasy, and horror news
- fanart, illos, and fillos
- cover art
- poetry
- filk songs and lyrics
- short fiction
- articles and essays
- fanzine, book, movie, television, and other reviews
- con reports
- jokes
- letters of comment
- ... and other material

If selected for publication, material will initially be included in one of my apazines, as well as a monthly issue of *The Stf Amateur*. Cover art will be considered solely for *The Stf Amateur*. Contributors will receive the issue in which their material appears.

Send your contributions to Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); or via fax to 323-916-0367.



## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #117

June 6, 2024

*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto: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.

### Administrivia: A Correction

In *T&T* #116, I neglected to include a credit line for the *Perri* advertisement. The ad ran in the Nov. 29, 1957, edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

### Last Week’s Senryu

I am so behind  
on LASFS minutes, *Menace*:  
Something’s got to go.

I’ve decided not to run for scribe for the second half of the year. My deadlines are starting to tighten and rub up against each other, I’m five weeks behind on LASFS meeting minutes, and I’m three months behind publishing the unexpurgated *Menace of the LASFS*.

In late May, I let Christian B. McGuire, who leads publications for the LASFS, know about my thinking along those lines. He shared the news with the board of directors last weekend, and the decision feels good—the right choice to make.

Kristine Cherry recently updated the *De Profundis* archive on the LASFS Web site (<https://tinyurl.com/LASFS-DeProf>), and I’ll continue to publish *De Prof*, working with the next scribe and Susan Fox, the board secretary. The minutes archive (<https://lasfs.org/lasfs-meeting-minutes>) hasn’t been updated since late 2023, so that’s next, hopefully.

It’s been a good run—18 months—and I’d be open to serving in that capacity again when I have more time.

### The F&SF Films and TV of Russ Tamblyn

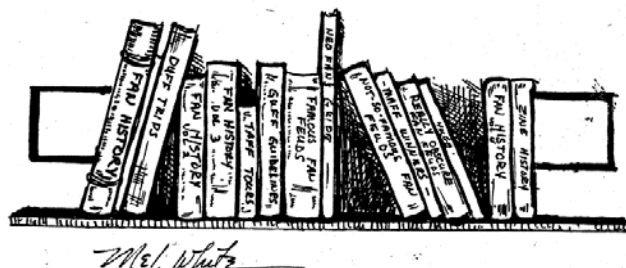
Last Friday, my wife and I joined friends to attend an on-stage interview with Russ Tamblyn at Beyond Baroque in Venice. Tamblyn recently authored *Dancing on the Edge: A Journey of Living, Loving, and Tumbling Through Hollywood* (Blackstone, 2024), and even though the event ended early—Tamblyn is 89 and was drinking tequila—it was a fun survey of his multi-decade career in the entertainment industry and the fine arts.

In addition to his notable mundane roles—

including *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *West Side Story*, and others—Tamblyn also appeared in a number of genre flicks (several directed by Fred Olen Ray) and series that might be worth watching and revisiting. In part, I offer this list to inform my own future viewing:

- *The Boy with the Green Hair* (1948)
- *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (1962)
- *The Haunting* (1963)
- *The War of the Gargantuas* (1966)
- *Tarzan*, “Leopard on the Loose” (1966)
- *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* (1971)
- *The Phantom Empire* (1988)
- *Necromancer* (1988)
- *Quantum Leap*, “Thou Shalt Not...—February 2, 1974” (1989)
- *Aftershock* (1990)
- *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991 and 2017)
- *Wizards of the Demon Sword* (1991)
- *Cabin Boy* (1994)
- *Babylon 5*, “A Distant Star” (1994)
- *Attack of the 60 Foot Centerfold* (1995)
- *Invisible Mom* (1996)
- *Johnny Mysto: Boy Wizard* (1997)
- *My Ghost Dog* (1997)
- *Little Miss Magic* (1997)
- *Joan of Arcadia*, “Night Without Stars,” “Do the Math,” and “Friday Night” (2004)

My wife is currently reading Tamblyn’s memoir, to which I’ll eventually turn. Have any of you seen any of the above? What’s your favorite Tamblyn flick?



### From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

In *T&T* #116, I considered Jack Kerouac’s short story “cityCityCITY.” So doing, I mentioned biographer Tom Clark, who wrote *Jack Kerouac: A Biography* (Da Capo, 2001).

While at Beyond Baroque last weekend (see above), I spied another Kerouac biography, an earlier edition of Barry Miles’s *Jack Kerouac: King of the Beats* (Virgin, 2011). Miles’s portrait of Kerouac directly addresses “cityCityCITY.”

[Kerouac] also experimented with science fiction, but the one story he wrote, *cityCityCITY*, showed that he did not have a feeling for it; it is a run-of-the-mill short story of an overpopulated totalitarian world in the distant future where individualism has all but been stamped out. Jack was floundering about; he had no prospects....

The biographer's description is not inaccurate.

Inspired by reading a 1992 *Omni* cover story on cyberpunk and hacking, I recently pulled out the November 1983 issue of *Amazing Science Fiction* to read the short story that might have coined the name of the movement: Bruce Bethke's "Cyberpunk."

Despite reading cyberpunk fiction for decades, I'd somehow missed that a story titled with the term itself predated William Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. Gibson's 1981 short story "The Gernsback Continuum" and 1983's collaboration with Bruce Sterling, "Red Star, Winter Orbit," are also considered cyberpunk, so Bethke's piece definitely isn't the first example of cyberpunk. In fact, Jared Shurin, editor of *The Big Book of Cyberpunk*, considers "The Gernsback Continuum" the "boot-up sound" for the other stories in that 1,116-page anthology. Bethke's story is also included in that book. I read it in its original form.

Accompanied by artwork by Bob Walters, Bethke's "Cyberpunk" is a 12-page story focusing on a group of teenagers who are adept at navigating the secure computer systems of their school, a parent's employer, and financial institutions. The story largely draws on hacking culture of the early 1980s, which led to the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. (The story itself was written in 1980.) It's also near-future sf. Characters possess smartterms and microterms that feature wafer displays and touch pads. There are dataphones and a civic network dubbed CityNet, as well as personal networks such as OurNet.

A second story in the same series, "Elimination Round," was later published in the July 1989 issue of *Amazing*. Bethke subsequently combined similar related stories into a novel also titled *Cyberpunk*, which he offers for free as shareware. He's also expanded on how the story title came to be. (<https://tinyurl.com/cyberpunk-term>) Bethke continues to program, write, and publish Rampant Loon Press and the Stupefying Stories series of anthologies. (<http://www.brucebethke.com>)

Also in the November 1983 issue of *Amazing* is Robert Silverberg's novella "Homefaring." It's one of the best time travel stories I've ever read, as well as a great example of biological sf. If you've never thought about how lobsters sense the world or how marine life

might interact and communicate as it evolves, the novella will encourage you to do so. Nominated for a Nebula Award, the story has been widely anthologized and collected, appearing in *The 1984 Annual World's Best SF* and *The Nebula Awards #19*, for example.



—William Rotsler

### Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

#### *The Amazing Transparent Man*

Director Edgar G. Ulmer filmed this 1960 movie in close conjunction with *Beyond the Time Barrier* in Dallas. He shot the movies in just two weeks. Despite that demanding schedule, the result of *The Amazing Transparent Man* is actually a pretty good flick.

The movie combines elements of crime features with science fictional aspects. A safecracker is sprung from jail in order to become the subject of a series of experiments involving an invisibility ray. The scientist is involved against his will, his daughter held prisoner. And a former military leader hopes to enable an invisible army to upend the balance of power.

There are two basic plotlines. One includes the balance of power among the criminals. The woman who picked up the safecracker after his escape might be loyal to him, or to the military leader. The scientist is involved against his will. The safecracker is loyal to no one and dislikes being manipulated, when he could use his newfound invisibility for his own ends, his usual trade. That combination of tensions results in most of the drama of the picture.

The other plotline focuses on the invisibility ray and a series of crimes undertaken by the safecracker to fund the military leader's work. That part of the movie offers basic special effects, as the criminal disappears in part or in whole after the beam is trained on him. What he doesn't know is that the beam becomes less effective over time, and that its radiation is deadly.

That results in an awkward situation while the criminal robs a bank to fund his escape from the military leader. Similar to how he fades out when first made invisible, he prematurely becomes visible again—his face, his shirt—while leaving the bank. Once he realizes that the beam's radiation is killing him, he turns his attention to the military leader. (That takes us back to the first plotline and its relational tensions.)

The movie is filmed well despite the tight schedule, and there were no production gaffes that I noticed. Douglas Kennedy is particularly compelling as safecracker Joey Faust, but the rest of the cast is largely forgettable—even Marguerite Chapman, in her final feature role. I was struck by the idea that this might be a crime picture with sf elements rather than an sf film proper, but that's open for debate.

### *Monsters Crash the Pajama Party*

If you've been curious about any of the spook show advertisements that have appeared in recent issues, this short 1965 movie might be as close as we can get to one at this late date. It tells the tale of a group of college students, perhaps sorority sisters, who plan to spend the night in a haunted house as part of some sort of initiation.

Their boyfriends plan to return, to frighten them while wearing monster masks, and neither group knows that the house is already inhabited by a Mad Doctor—it's embroidered on his lab coat!—a gorilla; Igor, his assistant; and a svelte dark-haired beauty reminiscent of Elvira or Vampira. The gorilla is actually a person who's been transformed using some sort of contraption, and the 31-minute movie feels primarily made up of chase scenes as the gorilla abducts each sorority sister individually to chain them up collectively in the basement.

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Los Angeles Times, Dec. 6, 1957

The Mad Doctor transforms one of the girls into a gorilla, and then the residents of the basement realize they need One More Girl. So he sends emissaries out into the audience to get one. This is the spook show part of the proceedings. On screen, the film is either blacked out or punctuated by lightning flashes. In the movie theater hosting the screening, several costumed people—perhaps the Mad Doctor, a gorilla, and Igor—would leave the screen or stage area to move throughout the crowd, secure a volunteer, and return to their hiding place backstage.

examples of spook shows, including Dr. Sin Presents *House of the Living Dead* (featuring an in-person appearance of Dracula), the Huston's Hallucinations stage show, and Dr. Rome "the Ghostmaster"'s chamber of horrors show.

*Monsters Crash the Pajama Party* was reportedly screened after *The Time Travelers*. The former isn't much of a movie—in length, content, or quality—but it's a fun oddity indicating what a spook show might have been like. One could even screen it today. The in-room shenanigans would be delightful.

## Branches of Science Fiction

In *T&T* #20-21, I started outlining a classification system for science fiction writing. In it, I concentrated on types, plots, subgenres, and elements, as well as the branches of science represented in the story or book. While reading Harry Warner Jr.'s *All Our Yesterdays* (NESFA, 2004), I learned about Jack Speer's 1942 "Decimal Classification of Fantasy Fiction" from *Spaceways* #30.

Speer collaborated with Samuel D. Russell to update the classification system in 1945 (*The Acolyte* #13), and Russell also revised and extended their system in a two-page one-shot for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. In 1952, Alastair Cameron published his own classification system, acknowledging the work of Speer and others, but not Russell.

Needless to say, this is very exciting. Even though work on my system has languished, I now have several examples to build on, which will be more interesting and productive. I've yet to read all of Speer, Russell, and Cameron's work, but it'll be easier to update an existing, combined system, than to start from scratch.

One possible source I've identified as a place to start identifying new aspects of sf since the 1950s is the *Internet Speculative Fiction Database's* tags used by contributors. Users can download the database, so I hope to be able to get a list of tags used.

Are you aware of any more recent classification systems?

Here's what I have outlined so far:

**Type:** Hard sf, Soft sf

**Plot:** Adventure, Gadget, Social

**Subgenre:** Afrofuturism, Alien Invasion, Alternate History (sf), Alternate/Parallel Universe or Parallel Worlds / Multiverse, Anthropological science fiction, Apocalyptic Fiction, Artificial Intelligence, Biopunk, Black science fiction, Christian science fiction,

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as a living nightmare stalks the ocean floor!  
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THE WORLD ENDED BY ATOMIC FURY!  
THE HORRIBLE "MUTANT" WHO SEEMS A MATE!  
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ED 8-1175

**SOUTH GATE SOUTHGATE DRIVE-IN**  
Firestone at Atlantic  
LO 3-3396

Los Angeles Times, Jan. 6, 1956

Simple costumes might have been shipped with the film reels, or easily procured locally by those screening the flick. Once back on screen, the emissaries return with a struggling girl in tow, to strap her to the examination table. The movie ends abruptly.

The Sinister Cinema DVD transfer (originally on VHS) I watched was accompanied by trailers for other movies—*Lightning Bolt (Operazione Goldman)*, *The Prime Time*, and *Gun Girls*—as well as other

Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi), Colonization, Cyberpunk, Cyberpunk derivatives, Decopunk, Dieselpunk, Dying Earth, Dystopian fiction, Ecofiction, Edisonade, Feghoot, Feminist science fiction, First Contact, Galactic Empire, Generation Ship, Grotesquerie, Human Development, Imaginary voyage, Immortality, Interstellar war, Libertarian science fiction, Light/Humorous/Comedic sf, LitRPG, Mathematical fiction, Military sf, Mind Uploading, Mundane sf, Mutants, Mythic Fiction (sf), Nanotechnology, Near-Future, New Wave science fiction, Post-Apocalyptic Fiction, Postcyberpunk, Pulp, Recursive science fiction, Robots/Androids, Sci-Fi Horror, Science Fantasy, Science fictional space warfare, Scientific romance, Singularity, Skiffy, Slipstream, Social science fiction, Solarpunk, Space Exploration, Space Opera, Space Western, Speculative evolution, Speculative poetry, Steampunk, Superhuman / Metahuman, supernatural, Tech noir, Terraforming, Theological, Time Travel, Transrealism (literature), Uplift, Utopian Fiction, Virtual Reality, Weird (sf), Widescreen baroque, Tokusatsu, Visionary Fiction

**Elements:** Advanced technology, Aliens / extraterrestrial lifeforms / mutants, Alternative histories, Fictional planets, Fictional worlds, Interplanetary warfare, Lost World, Mind control / telepathy / telekinesis, Parallel universe, Robots, Spaceships, Space exploration, Space travel, Space warfare, Speculative technology, Superintelligent computers and robots, Telepathy, Teleportation, Time travel

Clearly, much of that needs to be deduplicated within itself, as well as cross-referenced with the branches of science so it's not repetitive. The subgenre list seems to include many things that might be elements rather than subgenres, so that requires work. I should also include fantasy more formally, perhaps. It's a messy first draft. Based on what I have so far, do you have any feedback or input? Anything missing—or that should be removed?

### Ignorable Theme: Prozines

This issue's Ignorable Theme posed the queries, "Do you subscribe to or read prozines? Which ones? Why? What role do you think they play in sf and fantasy today?"

I currently subscribe to *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Interzone*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and *On Spec*. In the past, courtesy of Weightless Books (<https://weightlessbooks.com>), I've subscribed to *Apex Magazine*, *The Dark*, *Nightmare Magazine*, and

*Uncanny Magazine*. I also used to subscribe to *Clarkesworld*, *Galaxy's Edge*, and *Space and Time*.



Los Angeles Times, Dec. 27, 1957

The trouble is, while I subscribe—or subscribed—to them, I don't—or didn't—really read them. At least not the new issues. With the PDF magazines I subscribed to through Weightless, I was even less likely to read them because they weren't physical items. They'd sit either in my email inbox or in Drive without drawing my attention.

I'm slightly more likely to read hard copy prozines—so it's frustrating that *Interzone* seems to have gone ebook only with recent editions. But even in hard copy, I'm more likely to read prozine back issues than I am current issues (see above). So I guess I subscribe to and read prozines, but I don't keep up with the new issues. I don't use them to keep up with developments in modern sf, though I continue supporting them.

Because I do think they're important. And I don't want them to go away. Especially now that the market for non-reprint anthologies is smaller—there just aren't as many original anthologies published, as far as I can tell—short fiction requires and deserves an ongoing home, and prozines can help establish less

experienced writers, which introduces new talent to the field. The PDF magazines are welcome, but in many cases, they're semiprozines or unpaid, and the quality of writing and design can therefore vary. We need more periodicals that qualify as paying markets for Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association membership requirements.



Los Angeles Times, Jan. 6, 1956

So I think it's crucial that at least *Analog* and *F&SF* remain, particularly because of their straight line to history. *Asimov's*, *Interzone*, and *Clarkesworld* are also nice to have because they offer additional market real estate for story placement, as well as diversity. I thought *Space & Time* had ceased publication, but it continues to be available through Amazon. (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08RDVZ6F9>) I recently encountered a rumor that *Galaxy's Edge* might be relaunching, but I can't confirm that news. And the relaunch of *Worlds of If* is very welcome; I look forward to ongoing issues.

Why haven't I mentioned *Amazing Stories*? Even though the Web site continues, they haven't printed an issue since 2021, and just as I can't keep up with PDF magazines, I can't really keep up with fiction-based Web sites. I want to be able to hold a periodical in my hand, not a tablet or my Kindle or Kobo—unless it's an older back issue only available as a PDF.

To return to why I think prozines are important and worth supporting, I offer the following arguments:

- The short story, novella, and novelette are excellent forms for sf and fantasy storytelling.
- Self-publishing and fanzines, while awesome and worthwhile, are insufficient.
- Very few fanzines publish fiction.
- Prozines provide a straight line to the literary and publishing history of the genre.
- Readers and authors deserve multiple paying markets for sf and fantasy short stories.
- A larger number of markets can increase the number of stories published, as well as the diversity of voices and ideas represented.
- New authors can often enter the field more easily through short fiction than with novels.
- Prozines can also offer up-to-date science news and commentary, as well as book and movie reviews, providing broader coverage of developments in science and sf media.
- They consolidate an in-depth editorial point of view on the state of the industry more strongly than the wide range of online sources—Web sites and social media alike—available to readers. (The editorial voice of periodicals is stronger than that of Web sites.)
- While economic gains afforded by online or PDF publication might lessen business challenges faced by publishers, offering hard copies and subscriptions, even if print on demand, remains important in terms of developing ongoing attention and support.
- In-print prozines contribute more to the historical record than online or PDF sources.



Some of the above might be presumptions or hypotheses—and are open for discussion and additional information. I don't know that sf publishing is as dependent on the prozines as it once was, but I do know that I'd miss them terribly if they went away.

In fact, I'd continue reading back issues.

On a side note, does anyone know of any ongoing efforts to monitor and document the tables of contents of various prozines? *Rocket Stack Rank* (<http://www.rocketstackrank.com>) and *ISFDb* come to mind.

### Comments on APA-L #3072

In *Vanamonde* #1596, **John Hertz** recognized one of several Chinese Valentine's Days, as well as the death of Christopher Columbus. "Robert A. Heinlein, Threat or Menace?" made me chuckle. I've already shared your feedback with cover artist Mark Bondurant, who also submitted a one-pager for inclusion in this distribution. I hope to feature more of his covers in the future—and am glad you commented on his novels. He also sent the following, which I offer as an illustration rather than as an advertisement:



Your recommendation of Harry Warner Jr.'s *All Our Yesterdays* resonated with me. I'm about midway through the book now, enjoying it immensely, and learning a lot (see above). I played—and ostensibly play—the alto saxophone. In terms of classical saxophone, one can't go wrong with the work of Sigurd Raschèr. To be fair, your description of the Sad Puppies is fair. I was being politic, though I disagree with their point of view.

**John Hertz's** *Vanamonde* #1597 celebrated Memorial Day and Fleet Week in Long Beach, Calif. Not long ago, I expressed curiosity to my wife about when Fleet Week occurred in Los Angeles. When we lived in New York City, we could always tell because the ships would dock on the Hudson River and we'd see sailors throughout the city, mostly downtown. Los

Angeles is more spread out, so there's less visible critical mass—unless you're in Long Beach, perhaps.

Thank you for considering the fulfillment of my OC duties as valorous. The week I didn't contribute was indeed a doozy. Your encouragement to "look around" reminded me of something Barry Gold has said: "Run and find out." While I welcome political diversity in apae, I'm glad our conversations here are not contentious, which I've encountered in past years. In the National Fantasy Fan Federation, there's been an increase in occasionally disagreeable conservatism in recent years, which at one time led to some long-time members and leaders leaving the organization. I've remained involved but tend not to engage in political discussions when they arise.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #60, **Matthew Mitchell** reported on how he spent his Memorial Day weekend. Your tending to your outdoor space reminded me of helping clear Barbara Harmon's yard for Mary Cantor's memorial gathering. Thicker stalks can indeed be challenging and might require more sturdy shears, if you're unable to unroot them.

I enjoyed your comments on *The Stunt Man*, recent *Doctor Who* episodes—I'm still seriously missing out, and no American DVD release date yet!—and movie adaptations of novels and other works. My theory is that as special effects technology has improved and become more cost effective, our ability to adapt fantastic literature has also improved. In particular, I think we see that in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The literary provenance of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is indeed interesting. Arthur C. Clarke's 1968 novel was written in collaboration with Stanley Kubrick while he was making the movie, to be published after its release. The book was in part based on a number of short stories, including "The Sentinel," which was first published in 1951 as "Sentinel of Eternity." So it was an adaptation of a fix-up. That the novel—and its sequels—might have been later revised or retconned doesn't surprise me. A while ago, I read the run of novels—*2001: A Space Odyssey*, *2010: Odyssey Two*, *2061: Odyssey Three*, and *3001: The Final Odyssey*—but I remember little other than thinking the books became progressively loose as the series continued.

I'll share your—and John Hertz's—feedback with cover artist Taral Wayne. Perhaps Wayne reads your fanzine! I, too, am hopeful about the possible LASFS clubhouse. Charles Lee Jackson II has encouraged people to be a little more circumspect in their enthusiasm, but about a decade since we sold the previous clubhouse, it's about time!

**Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #762 recounted an early-morning phone call from the "clowns" at TriWest. That you got documentation of the next

year's worth of medical appointments sounds useful indeed! Is your Razor Shaped Object a... razor? How is it different from a "proper razor"? All that talk about shaving reminded me that I got a haircut early this week. It's been quite some time since my previous haircut, and my wife has been nagging me quite frequently, so it was high time. My previous haircut occurred Oct. 23, 2023, with others before that April 14, 2023; and Oct. 7 and May 27, 2022; so I seem to be maintaining two haircuts a year. Meanwhile, I've taken to shaving with a beard trimmer twice a week or so to maintain my facial hair length.

I'll share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez. I had to look up FOSS to realize it meant "free and open-source software," though that was close to my guess: free. And I've been a member of the Free Software Foundation! (<https://www.fsf.org>) Say, would you like to volunteer to edit and publish the newsletter (email Progress Reports, these days) for Loscon 50? Eylat Poliner is beating the bushes. Though your explanation is sound, it astounds me that you and Marty Cantor didn't often discuss pipe smoking. What's your current favorite blend?

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Los Angeles Times, Jan. 20, 1956

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**DAY THE WORLD ENDED**

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Los Angeles Times, Jan. 13, 1956



## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #118

June 13, 2024

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### Last Week's Senryu

Page count comes and goes  
Collation rack holds 12 sets  
Twice through feels better



—William Rotsler

### Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

#### *The Great Race*

I've been applying optical character recognition to the scanned back issues of APA-L and have gotten up to

#86 from June 1966. I'm also compiling a LASFS history calendar highlighting APA-L and LASFAPA issue dates. Last week, I read several editions of APA-L dated close to that week's Thursday. In #33 (June 3, 1965), Fred Patten reported on going to Warner Bros.' exhibition tour for *The Great Race*. I'd never seen the movie before, so I watched it while my wife was out of town.

What a delightful movie! Made in 1965, it's a fantasy featuring two sparring carnival daredevils: Professor Fate (Jack Lemmon) and the Great Leslie (Tony Curtis). Inspired by the real-world 1908 New York to Paris Race, the fantastic comedy documents such a race between the two daredevil escape artists.

Lemmon is deliciously unctuous as the bad guy Fate, and Curtis's portrayal of the upstanding rival is primly, properly perfect—from his clipped, proper enunciation to his ever-spotless white clothing (even during a food fight!). But additional cast provide the real allure.

Peter Falk portrays Professor Fate's sidekick and supporter, and Natalie Wood appears as Maggie DuBois, a fledgling news reporter and firebrand for feminist activists, including the wife of her reluctant editor.

Fantasy elements include the utilization of the Webber Motor Car Company-built Leslie Special and Fate's Hannibal Twin-8, which features hidden weapons and sabotage devices. A scene involving a snowstorm and polar bear offers much fun, and the competitors ending up stranded on a small ice floe was also quite humorous.

Another highlight featured Lemmon in a dual role as Fate and Crown Prince Friedrich Hapnick, deposed by the duplicitous Baron Rolfe von Stuppe (played by Ross Martin) and General Kuhster. At the end of the movie, the Eiffel Tower is destroyed. It's filmed from a distance, but keep your eyes peeled.

On the *Facebook*, when I posted movie posters and DVD covers, friends compared the movie to the 1963 *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. When I contended that *The Great Race* was the better of the two movies, Susan Rothman speculated that "[i]t has a more cohesive cast," perhaps because Lemmon and Curtis had already worked together on 1959's *Some Like It Hot*.

If you haven't recently—or ever—seen *The Great Race*, run, don't walk to do so. It's a delightfully daffy comedy with fantasy elements that made for perfect viewing last weekend.

#### *The Thief of Bagdad*

Turner Classic Movies recently aired the 1940 *The Thief of Bagdad*, which I'd DVR'd, so I watched it

last weekend, as well. The fantasy adventure primarily focuses on the trials and tribulations of Ahmad (John Justin), once the young king of Bagdad and now a blind beggar, having fallen victim to the machinations of Jaffar (Conrad Veidt, from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Man Who Laughs* [T&T #32]). He is joined by an astute dog, who is in reality Abu (Sabu).



*Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 10, 1956

Highlights include the mechanical toy-collecting Sultan of Basra and two tricky gifts from the sorcerer Jaffar: a wind-up flying horse and a many-armed dancer who slays the sultan. While trying to return to Bagdad, Abu frees a genie (Rex Ingram) from a bottle, earning three wishes that he uses to near their goal to

free the princess, with whom Ahmad had fallen in love before losing his sight. The search for and reclamation of the All-Seeing Eye is also visually excellent.

At the end, there's the Old King of the Land of Legend, a flying carpet, and a magic crossbow. Filmed beautifully in Technicolor, the movie won multiple Academy Awards, including for Special Effects (Lawrence W. Butler and Jack Whitney). The film was the first to use the manual bluescreen technique.

After production was moved from England to Hollywood, exterior shoot locations included the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Bryce Canyon, and the Painted Desert. At 106 minutes, the movie occasionally feels a little long, but it's gorgeous and very well done.

On the *Facebook*, in response to a selection of lobby cards, Bruce Richard Gillespie recommended that I watch the first, silent 1924 version of *The Thief of Bagdad*, starring Douglas Fairbanks. He described it thusly: "As brilliant as the later version, because of the amazing special effects that had to be invented for the film..."

Another one for the list!

### Ignorable Theme: Scientists

"Do you know any scientists? How often do you interact with them? What do you talk about?" While I know many computer programmers and technologists, as well as academics, I actually don't know that many scientists. Checking out my *LinkedIn* contacts (searching job titles for "scientist"), I find that one acquaintance is chief data scientist for an AI firm. I also know a senior data scientist at Universal Music Group and a doctoral student focusing on natural language generation at Pace University.

When I search job titles for "science," I find a few more: a social scientist focusing on research, a clinical science manager at a pharmaceuticals firm, and a professor of organizational psychology and science at a university in Switzerland.

Given my career, the work I currently do, and my employer, that's not too surprising—I'm heavy on data science—but it suggests that I could better engage scientists in my social circles. My science fiction activities could use a little more science, perhaps.

That made me think about sf writers who have also worked as scientists. A short list includes David Brin (astrophysicist), Gregory Benford (department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of California, Irvine), Carl Sagan (astronomer, astrophysicist, astrobiologist, cosmologist—and one-time novelist), Robert L. Forward (physicist), Poul Anderson (astrophysicist), Sir Fred Hoyle

(astronomer and physicist), Lewis Carroll (mathematician), Vernor Vinge (professor of mathematics and computer science), Isaac Asimov (professor of biochemistry), Sylvain Neuvel (linguist), James Tiptree Jr. (psychologist), Yoon Ha Lee (mathematician), and others, including Arthur C. Clarke.

I'll have to pay more attention to biographical sketches in the prozines! (T&T #117)

### Comments on APA-L #3073

Cover artist **Mark Bondurant** (APA-L #3070) contributed a one-page edition of *Mark's Somewhat Brief Natter*, which was a welcome surprise. There is no "covers rule" specifying that APA-L covers be previously unpublished. While we welcome first publication, we also welcome "idle illustrations"—and would celebrate future submissions from you. I'm glad you decided to contribute to our pages despite the challenges introduced by your stroke. Speech to text seemed to work quite well! Best of luck working on *Swamp Pirate Jack*.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #61, **Matthew Mitchell** commented on the prospects for a new clubhouse. If we're unable to secure this property—regardless of the reason—we now have momentum, which we didn't have before. The chances of finding another property have increased, which is heartening. My hope and expectation is that the LASFS continues to encourage and support online participation. Like you, I might not have gotten as involved as I have been able to during and after the pandemic if the focus was solely on in-person gatherings.

How hot does Mojave get during the day? Do you carry any cargo in those cargo shorts? Your review of *Pax Romana* piqued my interest. While I haven't read that series specifically, I absolutely adore the writing of Jonathan Hickman generally. I was unaware that Hickman was also an artist, and I honestly wouldn't have expected that. (An update on my surroundings: A precarious stack of APA-L back issues just toppled over, reminding me to continue scanning the issues that were published after Karl Lembke did his scanning but before I became OC.) In fact, I'd contend that Hickman might be one of the most interesting—or, best—comics writers currently. *Pax Romana* might be an exception.

Your response to the Ignorable Theme intrigued me. In my consideration of prozines, I didn't at all think about slicks that publish science fiction. The *Fancylopedia 3* entry for the term nods to "fanspeak purists" who might not consider non-sf slicks

prozines, but the two examples you mention—*Omni* and *Starlog*—might deserve my reconsideration!

Los Angeles Times, March 2, 1956

I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray. Having played the alto saxophone myself, I was thrilled silly when my son exhibited interest in joining the school band. He chose the flute because it wasn't heavy to carry and wasn't too loud. When he was in high school, he decided to learn how to double on the tenor saxophone, which didn't necessarily satisfy his grade-school requirements. I'm glad you took no offense from the misprinted characters. We shall address printing again in a moment!

My wife and I obtained a fertilizer spreader when our front and back yards were primarily grass. We've since redone the front yard utilizing less water-dependent locally appropriate succulents and no longer worry about the backyard. Your inclusion of the Sambo's image brought back memories. I don't remember much about the restaurants, which we probably only visited a few times when I was a child, but I remember their menus having a storybook aspect. By 1979, the restaurant had locations in 47 states. I don't remember where the ones we visited were located.

Eagle-eyed ellers might have noticed that a portion of the printing of *T&T* #117 was substandard. I changed the cartridge after my print run, and several even-numbered pages printed somewhat faintly. I decided not to reprint because it was my fanzine and because it wasn't wholly illegible. Had it been one of your fanzines, I would have reprinted, but for mine, my standards are lower. If you have difficulty reading the result, the PDF version is entirely legible.

**C.D. Carson** graced our pages with *Always Going Home* #47, a welcome return. Your recent estate sale finds and exposure experiments sound interesting! I'll share your feedback with cover artist Taral Wayne. Thank you for mentioning Auguste Comte's Religion of Humanity. The other example I didn't remember at the time was Alfred Korzybski's general semantics, on which I'll expand slightly in the lettercol for the forthcoming *The Stf Amateur* #10 in response to a correspondent. (I'll distribute that issue in late June or early July.)

Your mention of American Machine and Foundry's automated fast-food kitchen reminded me of automats, which resonate more strongly with order-taking touch screens. (The 2021 documentary *The Automat* is worth watching.) American's approach might have merit. Human beings might be—are, I'd say—the best interface for other human beings. Why deskill interpersonal communications?

I'll share your feedback with cover artist Jose Sanchez. Congratulations on the publication of *Blast* #1. I enjoyed reading it as a partwork. (*T&T* #106)

In *Toony Loons* #763, **Joe Zeff** recounted the

travels to and fro recent medical appointments. Why did the manager threaten to call the police? Clearly, you'd arrived at or after the requested check-in time. I would certainly bring it to the attention of the corporate parent. How do the new "special shoes" fit and feel? It must have been disappointing to feel like the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial near Pueblo was an afterthought. It pleases and amuses me that we continue to discuss L. Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth* at this late date. Perhaps it's time for me to reread it again!

I thoroughly enjoyed **Derek LaPorte's** *The Confectioner's Taffy* (*A Short*), which largely consists of the short story "The Confectioner's Taffy." What a delightfully dark tale! Even though I was tempted to correct one spelling—"keel" vs. "kill"—it was riveting. I appreciated the concept of candied corpses, as well as the unique marriage and living situation, the riddles, and the ending, which I didn't expect for a moment. Foo on him, I say! Your note at the end detailing the inputs for your writing process was also intriguing. I presume you shared the result on the Web site (<https://www.lunarwards.com/p/prompt-quest-2-the-gathering-starts/comments>), but I also think you should submit the story to a paying market.

Prompt Quest reminded me slightly of the Tolkien Reverse Summer Bang (<https://tolkienrsb.wordpress.com>), which I participated in a couple of years ago. (*Snow Poster Township* #6) I submitted the resulting story to the National Fantasy Fan Federation's short story contest but didn't win, place, or show. Given that I'm not submitting it anywhere actively, perhaps that story will end up in these pages, as well!

I was sorry to learn about your transportation challenges. May your wheels resume turning soon! I also read and enjoyed your brief reviews.



*Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1956

## Faculae & Filigree #32

June 14, 2024

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### From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

In recent months, I've been thinking about the first published examples of science fiction. (*Snow Poster Township* #16) I was recently inspired to read the first issue of the first sf magazine in America, *Amazing Stories*, which then led to reading the second. While I'd recently become aware of sf stories appearing in the story papers that preceded pulp magazines, I was surprised to learn that Hugo Gernsback had published sf in two other magazines before the advent of *Amazing Stories*. "For many years stories of this nature were published in the sister magazines of *Amazing Stories*—'Science & Invention' and 'Radio News,'" Gernsback wrote in the April 1926 first issue's editorial "A New Sort of Magazine."

Additionally, the first issue ends with a pullout box inquiring of readers: "Those who read the famous Dr. Hackensaw's Secrets in Science and Invention magazine, may be interested to know that we have on hand a great many of Dr. Hackensaw's manuscripts which have never been published hitherto. Before publishing these in *Amazing Stories*, however, we would like to have an expression from our readers as to just how they feel about these stories, and whether they would like to have more of them."

The *Internet Speculative Fiction Database* lists sf stories appearing in *Science and Invention* dating back to August 1920 and in *Radio News* dating back to December 1920. That gains us six years of published sf in periodicals predating *Amazing Stories*. Examples of Dr. Hackensaw stories include Clement Fezandié's "Dr. Hackensaw's Trip to the Moon" (*Science and Invention*, October 1923) and "What Hackensaw

Found on the Moon" (November 1923).

The first issue of *Amazing Stories* was largely reprints. It included the first of two parts of Jules Verne's "Off on a Comet," a translation of the novel *Hector Servadac, voyages et aventures à travers le monde solaire*. While an interesting tale of adventure and exploration, it's based on dubious science. A comet collides with the Earth, removing a sizable section of land to create a new planetoid that continues on an elliptical orbit. Quite a bit of text is given to various calculations of the planetoid's size and weight, so mathematicians might rejoice.

H.G. Wells's "The New Accelerator" also inspired an episode of the 2001 television miniseries *The Infinite Worlds of H.G. Wells* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #11). In that story, a scientist develops a serum that can accelerate the human experience a thousandfold. The results include a surprised dog, burnt clothing, and quite an appetite.

"The Man from the Atom" by G. Peyton Wertebaker features a vacuum-sealed protective suit that will grow or shrink with whomever wears it, equipped with buttons that enable them to grow very, very large or very, very small. The story is notable for its proposition that the makeup of the universe mirrors that of the subatomic realm.

George Allan England's "The Thing from—'Outside'" is a pleasant example of the outre. An invisible creature (or creatures) terrorizes a group of people in a remote cabin, resulting in disfigurement, insanity, and memory loss.

"The Man Who Saved the Earth" by Austin Hall is a little more straightforward. A heroic scientist on Earth sacrifices himself to determine how and why Martians are punching holes into the Earth, occasionally removing land mass—an entire mountain!—in a way not entirely dissimilar to "Off on a Comet" above.

And Edgar Allan Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" concentrates on mesmerism and the role it could play in communicating with an individual after they have died. The ending is delightfully surprising—and a shade outre similar to England's story above.

It's not at all a bad first issue, even to be read now, and you can't really go wrong with Poe, Verne, and Wells. The less familiar stories were originally published in 1919 and 1923, appearing either in *All-Story Weekly* or *Science and Invention*. The inclusion of England and Poe's stories adds a touch of the horrific, which surprised me.

Because only the first part of "Off on a Comet" was published in the first issue, I quickly read the second issue, as well. Dated May 1926, the edition

includes Poe, Verne, and Wells again—clearly indicating where the genre originated.

Frustratingly, Verne's "A Trip to the Center of the Earth" is also serialized, so read the third issue I must. A translation of the novel *Voyage au centre de la terre*, the first part is partly an Indiana Jones-like adventure story—the entrance to the underworld is in the volcano upon which a mountain's shadow falls—and an example of a geological exploration fiction. There's little of the fantastic in this first portion.

"Mesmeric Revelation" by Poe seriously echoes the previous issue's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." In this story, too, someone converses with someone in a mesmerized state, offering a transcript considering life, death, the afterlife, and the different "bodies" human beings might inhabit.

Wells's "The Crystal Egg"—also adapted for *The Infinite Worlds of H.G. Wells*, quite wonderfully—features a crystal that can be used to see and study an alien planet, perhaps Mars.

I have two more stories to read. Only one of those is an original piece. The other was reprinted from *Science and Invention*.



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*

This week, a friend and I watched this 1994 movie on video tape, the seventh outing in the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* series. There were two subsequent features and an anthology TV series. As a movie, *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* isn't very good. While the first movie—and perhaps the third—is worth revisiting, 10 years in, Freddy Krueger is a cartoon (figuratively!), his back story as a child killer who burned to death not at all addressed, and the dream world clumsily presented using computer-generated imagery (though there are a couple of scenes using bed sheets to good effect).

The movie is more meta than its precursors. In this flick, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is a fictional movie, the characters actors or crew members—including Robert Englund and Wes Craven cast as themselves—and Krueger targets an actress who was cast in the original movie, as well as her son. That should have been more interesting than it was, and Craven's discussion of how only storytellers can capture the contents of our dreams—while potentially important—falls flat. (The movie also considers whether horror movies can affect the mental health of children who are exposed to them.)

Regardless, various aspects of making a movie are represented. The protagonist and heroine dreams about a new model of Krueger's bladed glove attacking several special effects technicians, of which her husband is one. She is in discussion with a studio about making a sequel to the movie in which she originally appeared. (Robert Shaye, founder of New Line Cinema, also portrays himself in the movie.) And while trying to figure out how to defeat Krueger on his own turf, the heroine consults with Craven, who refers to the proposed sequel's script. The script comes up again at the end, following the climax, and viewers are left to consider whether the events in the movie had been predetermined.

The movie does include some noteworthy scenes. The playground scene in which the Final Girl's son stands on top of playground equipment reaching for the heavens is effective. I quite enjoyed the entry points to the dream world designed using bed sheets and other fabric. There were two: One in which the heroine falls/climbs into the coffin of her dead husband, and at the foot of her son's bed. And the scene in which Heather Langenkamp and John Saxon waver between portraying themselves and their fictional characters (Nancy and Donald Thompson) stands out. The portrayal of the dream world using CGI was awful.



Additionally, the movie overuses visual imagery involving Krueger's bladed glove tearing through fabric and moving toward its intended victim. That occurs in a car while the heroine's husband is driving, falling asleep at the wheel after work around 7 p.m., and in her son's bed. A hackneyed cliché at this point, and not at all suspenseful.

Fran Bennett's role as Dr. Christine Heffner is surprisingly forceful and perhaps the best acting in the movie. Her character—who considers whether the Final Girl is perhaps contributing to her son's mental state—was named after former MPAA ratings chief Richard Heffner as a jibe by Craven. Tracy Middendorf's character Julie, babysitter and friend, is a bit of a cypher. It's unclear why she's even there for much of the movie.

I watch a lot of stinkers, but most of them are worth watching. I cannot recommend *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* except for its meta nature. It's an oddity, potentially interesting but not important.

### Comments on LASFAPA #568

Whoever selected the cover—oh, Little Sin God... really?—was quite the wily wordsmith using the double entendre “willies.” I, for one, would not stick my willy into that popcorn bucket topper, no matter how much it looks like a Fleshlight. He who controls the spice brings on the little death, or something like that. (On the off chance that I am the Only Person who thought about that when I first saw the cover, I am so sorry. Oh, phew: According to the *New York Times*, everyone thinks that.)

In *Fool's Mate* #571, David Schlosser speculated that only the Steamboat Willie-era (there's that word again!) Mickey Mouse is affected by the copyright lapse. I think you're right. I appreciated your commentary on the “theoretical 25.” I don't know enough about math to understand the rest, but I'd like to! Your discussion of seat rows reminded me of my Morning Task, booking travel to Chicago and Wisconsin in early July.

The friends with whom we gathered in the Virgin Islands early last year (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #58-60) are convening in the Chicago area next month. One of the families lives there (fancy that!), and a few other families are gathering to spend a vacation week in the Windy City. Because of how close Chicago is to where my parents and sister live, Caitlin and I will share time between Chicago and Madison.

On a Saturday in early July, we'll fly from Los Angeles to Chicago and take an express bus to an Airbnb near where our friends live. We'll spend two nights there, gathering with the others for a cookout Sunday night. On Monday morning, we'll return to

Chicago O'Hare International Airport, to catch a bus north to Madison. We'll stay with my folks for five nights before returning to O'Hare by bus in time to catch our flight home.

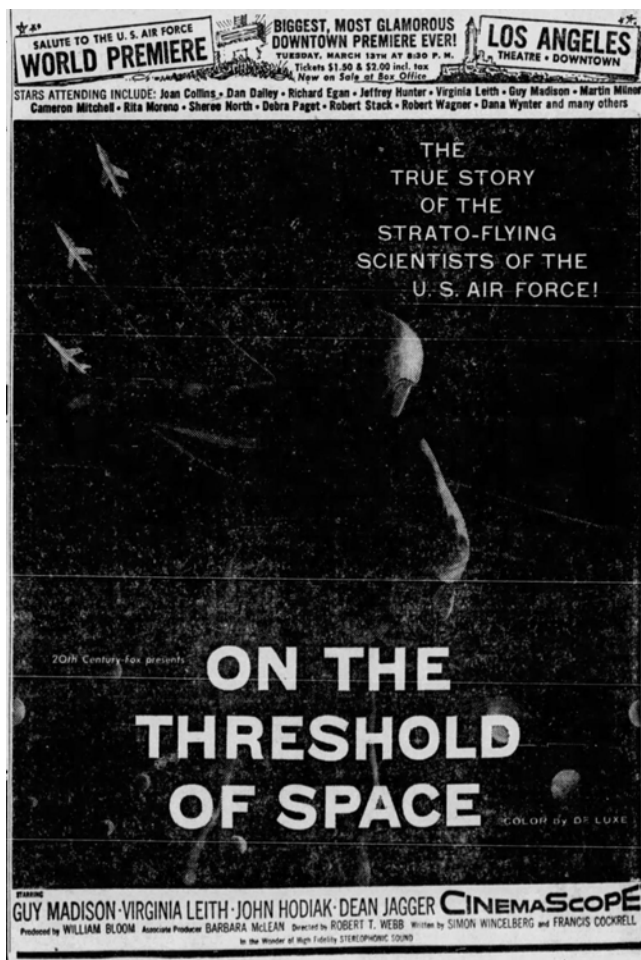


Los Angeles Times, March 16, 1956

It's the first trip I've planned in quite a while that includes so many different kinds of transportation: Lyft, airplane, bus, bus, bus, car, bus, plane, and taxi. We were able to book our Airbnb and airfare in advance, but the city bus is cash only and can't be reserved, and the Van Galder bus between the two cities—and states—can't be booked further out than a week of your planned trip. It reminds me a little of taking the Chinatown bus between Boston and New York City in the early 2000s. Fingers crossed we make all the connections, but the bus returning from Wisconsin before our flight is the only critical leg.

I had to look up “Scotch Bonnet,” and the pun was quite rewarding. I have now achieved LASFAPA #123

in terms of optical character recognition, and David Schlosser's scanned up to #144, so progress continues. For APA-L, I've OCR'd up through #86. Slowly but surely. The Southern Fandom Press Alliance mailing delays—and detours—you describe far surpass anything APA-L is experiencing, I wager. That reminds me, after I meet the deadline for this month's LASFAPA, I'll turn my attention to finalizing and distributing the 2024 edition of *Blue Moon Special*, a directory of apae. It's the first time the state of apae has been assessed since 2009, 15 years ago. When it's done, Schlosser will be one of the recipients, and he can include it in a future LASFAPA should he so desire.



*Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1956

I haven't read the YA expurgation of the book yet, but what I have read so far seems like a simplified, shorter version of the original work. No pictures that I remember, so not at all like the *Classics Illustrated* comic books. In terms of your juvenalia, I say: Inflict away. I'd love to read any stories you wrote during sixth to ninth grade, especially if they're sf or fantasy. I found my conception of the genres at that young age quite interesting and occasionally telling.

You know, I don't know that I've seen the 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* "not edited for TV." I'd presume that if I've seen it on video tape, DVD, or streaming—all three likely—it hadn't been edited for TV, but perhaps it had been! I'm sure to see it again and will make a point to seek an unedited version.

At this week's LASFS meeting, we held elections for the procedural offices of the club. Because deadlines have started to rub up against each other and I've fallen behind on All the Things I'd like to do, I decided not to run for scribe again. I will, however, continue to publish *De Profundis*. The good news is that Nick Smith was elected scribe, so I should be able to maintain a ready pipeline of minutes for inclusion. He previously served as scribe before the pandemic, so he knows what's going on. It makes sense that the cognitive tests kick in when you start using Medicare, as part of the annual exam. I apologize for asking directly how old you are, but I was curious whether it was an age-dependent thing or something else. In *Jules* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #109), they were applied to a specific character because others were beginning to Worry About Him.

Inquiring minds want to know: Who did you take to the burlesque show? The MooFO seems like a knickknack worth owning. How often do you turn it on to watch the cow rise and fall? Last Christmas, my parents got Caitlin and I a gift they thought we'd just love. It was an animatronic plastic cat covered in fabric and fur that, when turned on, waggles its fanny (American, not British) and plays a portion of a song similar to—if not—"I Like Big Butts" by Sir Mix-a-Lot. We received it gracefully but did not want it in our home. I was able to make sure that my sister, who loved it, took it home without offending my mom and dad. Similar to the Big Mouth Billy Bass singing fish, it was the kind of thing my grandmother would have adored. The MooFO is much more my speed, though I'm sure Caitlin would also object to it.

Since our return from Portugal, I've gone into the office 100 percent of the workdays in order to show my best effort in responding to the email I received while in Portugal that suggested I'd been coming in less than one day a week for the last three months. I'm pretty sure I'd been going in more often than that, even before Working from Anywhere, and the researcher in me wanted to see the data, learn how they defined "day," "office," and "in," and such—but living only two and a half miles from the office, I can certainly go in more often. So I have been, for an hour or two, longer if I can secure meeting rooms for my calls. Today, however, I didn't go in. Jonah's been home from college in Tokyo for about a month, and after spending that time with his mother, he's visiting



us for the weekend for Father's Day. I'll work from home for the full day today, and we just shared a lunch of falafel, catching up in conversation. It's good to have him home for a spell.

Did 45X incite resurrection? There might be a story in that idea! Also, that was a pretty fun, potentially racy *Arlo & Janis* strip. Fingers crossed for Arlo that Janis removes those sheep's clothing. It is, after all, a comic strip.

**Nick Smith**, newly elected scribe of the LASFS—Calloo! Callay!—contributed *Labyrinthine Lines*. My mailing was miscollated, the pages sequenced 2, 1, 4, and 3, but thanks to the page numbering, that was a problem easily solved. A friend of mine teaches at Chapman University, which I've long thought was one of the Claremont Colleges, but isn't. Regardless, I've never been there, to either place. Is the bookstore you mentioned the Claremont Forum Bookshop, home of the Prison Library Project? You certainly have been busy the last few months.

I'm glad you were able to get some reading in while on the bus and train. Richard Mueller's *Palmdale Must Be Destroyed* sounds interesting, as does the Robert E. Howard collection of fight stories. I haven't read any, but the idea reminded me of Jack Kerouac's "Ronnie on the Mound" baseball story, which I read recently. (*T&T* #116) The *Weird Tales* collection seems particularly interesting. Publication order! I also read and enjoyed your TV and movie reviews. When I was a boy, I watched a lot of the original *The Fall Guy* on TV, and while I don't think the movie is my speed, the credits and cameo do sound intriguing.

**Janice Morningstar's** *The Title Goes Here* shared some recent email woes. But even more sad and surprising was the "Bad News I Alluded to Over the Past Few Months," which I prioritized reading. I can't imagine your husband being fired for poor performance, or how that must have felt, though it seems that there were some workplace politics or something else going on. What a relief to learn that he landed at MetaMask.

In *Stabby Wisdom*, **Alan Winston** informed LASFAPans of a frustrating sinus infection. Good to know there's con crud even in the dance community. (That's a joke, folks.) You seem to be on the mend and back on the bounce, so that's heartening. When I lived in the Boston area, I think I only went to Tanglewood once, but I might be conflating it with another performance venue.

**Alva Svoboda's** *That Flagon Last Night* #257 expressed thanks to LASFAPans acknowledging his presence. To you, I say thank you for continuing to be present! I will send your regards to William Breiding

the next time I email him. He dominated the lettercol in *The Stf Amateur* #9, and yet I still somehow owe the man an email.

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Los Angeles Times, March 23, 1956

I enjoyed your commentary on the connections between Christopher Clark's *Revolutionary Spring* and Adrian Tchaikovsky's *City of Last Chances*. Does your library still charge late fees? So glad you experienced the Magnetic Field's *69 Love Songs* in live performance. It's a glorious recording, and Stephin Merritt is a wonderful songwriter. He also has a fannish connection: As the Gothic Archies, Merritt recorded *The Tragic Treasury: Songs from A Series of Unfortunate Events* featuring 13 songs inspired by the books in Daniel Handler's book series. The songs were originally included in each book's audiobook edition. Handler plays accordion. Sadly, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*' TV theme song, "Look Away," did not involve Merritt. All the same, that, too, is an excellent song.

Can you or David Schlosser send me a PDF copy of your fanzine in this? I'd like to include your 1971 APA-L artwork in APA-L for the benefit of others. What were the prompts you used for these presumably generative AI images? Remind me never to visit you in your home.

### On Dime Novels and Story Papers

In *All Our Yesterdays* (NESFA, 2004), Harry Warner Jr. touches on "prerecorded fandom," offering four pages on science fictional aspects of the dime novels, which came after story papers. According to the University of Minnesota Libraries' *Dime Novels, Story Papers, Series Books, and Pulps* online, story papers existed between 1850 and 1910. They were published weekly in serial form (similar, perhaps, to the more modern-day comic book *2000 AD*). Each issue included portions of five ongoing stories: romances, adventures, and mysteries.

Dime novels followed, from 1860 to 1915, and were paperback books that by the 1870s and 1880s had progressed from light romances for adults to adventure, mystery, science fiction, sports, war, and western stories for youth. Warner identifies the Frank Reade series as the best-known dime novels and says they "followed the dictum that Wells later laid down as the way to write science fiction: introduce one unfamiliar factor in a normal environment, and describe what results from the combination."

In the late 1880s and 1890s, the Boys Star Library included many sf novels featuring Jack Wright. An early example of space opera by Richard R. Montgomery appeared in the *Boys of New York* series in 1889, later reprinted in *Pluck and Luck* in 1901.

Some readers were fans of the dime novels, and there were even early fanzines. Starting in 1928, Frank Fries published 82 issues of a fanzine that reprinted Frank Reade and Frank Reade Jr. stories. Ralph P.

Smith also published the fanzine *Happy Hours Magazine* in the 1920s. Regardless, "[n]obody has issued a checklist of dime novels with science fiction and fantasy themes," Warner wrote in 1969.

An August 1926 issue of *Happy Hours* (#10) is available on eBay for \$124.50. An index is available online. (<https://readseries.com/HHBlist2c.html>) Perhaps more promising is *Dime Novel Round-Up* (<https://readseries.com/dnru.html>), a quarterly that was published from 1952 to perhaps 2022, if not today. Michael L. Cook's *Dime Novel Round-Up: Annotated Index 1931-1981* is available online. From that volume, Stuart A. Teitler's "Fantasy, Science Fiction and Lost Race Adventures in the Street & Smith paperback volumes, (checklist)" from #442 (July 1969) looks particularly promising. And Michael R. Brown has also written about sf dime novels by Joseph Lovece and the Edisonades, or stories about young inventors. (<https://thepulp.net/pulpsuperfan/tag/edisonades>)

*ISFDb* lists several examples from *Beadle's Dime Novels*, *Beadle's New York Dime Library*, and *Beadle's Pocket Novels*. I have a number of back issues in PDF form and will be seeing what I can track down. Can any LASFAPAns recommend any good sources about story papers and dime novels with sf content?



*Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 13, 1956

# Blue Moon Special

June 2024

**Blue Moon Special** (formerly *Active APAs*) is an occasional directory of active amateur press associations (apae) compiled and published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax—and Garth Spencer, 6960 Doman St., Vancouver, BC, Canada V5S 3H7; [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com). People involved in apae not listed who would like their apa to be included are encouraged to visit <http://tinyurl.com/apa-list> and submit details for inclusion in a subsequent edition. Deadlines are fluid. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication. Number of apae listed: 28.

## Belated Introductions

In the Before Time, when *Star Trek* was not yet made and the list of science fiction films was short, science fiction and fen were all about writing. In fact, quite a lot of fen were producing their own small magazines, usually on spirit duplicators or mimeographs, because there was no Internet and the postal system was a lot more reliable than it is now.

Still, the costs of copying and mailing each issue tended to add up, and fandom then was about making your own entertainment cheaply. So, some fen borrowed an idea from the original amateur press association, the National Amateur Press Association, mundane yet enthusiastic practitioners of do-it-yourself letterpress printing. Fen who wanted to talk with each other about the same kinds of fiction, films, or fannish affairs set up a limited-membership circle, each of whom regularly wrote a limited number of pages and made a limited number of copies, and sent their contributions to an Official Editor or Central Mailer to collate and mail out to all the members.

The Internet and rising postal rates have cut down mail-based fan publishing a good deal, and many apae have stopped publishing. However, a lot of fanzines are still going strong—many online—and there are a number of apae still operating, online and in hard copy. This is an incomplete list of current apae.

—Garth Spencer

It's been 15 years since the previous edition of *Blue Moon Special* (<https://efanzines.com/ActiveAPAs>), which set out to continue the proud lineage of the old APATALK discussion list and the defunct *New Moon Directory* edited by Eric L.

Watts. *New Moon Directory* was a tribute to Mike Horvat's *South of the Moon*, its predecessor. Just as Horvat gave his blessings to the launch of *New Moon Directory*, Watts endorsed *Blue Moon Special* in 2009 and continues to cheer on the effort. (He's on the recipient list!)

I wasn't able to maintain publishing my tribute to *New Moon Directory* with any regularity, and my apae directory efforts ceased. Last year, Garth Spencer (now official editor of eAPA) and I (now official collator of APA-L) began to correspond about rekindling a directory of active apae. Spencer was originally going to maintain a directory on the Web, and I was interested in rejuvenating *Blue Moon Special*. The resulting concerted effort draws on both of our work. We'll see if we can maintain this as an annish—at least more often than a 15 Yearly.

—Heath Row

## News and Updates

In response to a mailed copy of the submission form, we received a typewritten letter in mid-March from Erwin S. Strauss, former publisher of the libertarian-oriented apa The Connection. After a fall at Smofcon in December 2023, Strauss retired from publishing in January this year. His letter reported the following:

“I'm cutting back on my activities. In addition to folding [The Connection], I'm discontinuing my convention-listing column in *Asimov's Science Fiction* and limiting my con-going. Though I plan to keep going to a few nearby cons, my days of going to four cons on consecutive weekends (which I did twice last year) are over.

“As for why, it's basically Father Time. Every year, I find the logistics becoming more and more onerous, and the pleasures I derive get more and more stale and repetitive. Eventually, the game is no longer worth the candle.

“I'm fully recovered now, but [my neck injury] involved three weeks flat on my back in a hospital bed, in a neck brace, with nothing to do but think about my life: past, present, and future. I also enjoyed rediscovering the pleasures of just lying in bed all day with no responsibilities. So I decided now was as good a time as any to cut back.”

As an intermittent participant in The Connection—my most recent apazine there was titled *The Wild Analyst*, which reached #8 in October 2022 (an unfinished #9 including partial mailing comments

remains unpublished)—I will miss the role The Connection played among apae. The Connection—and Strauss’s participation in fandom—helped bridge sf fandom and libertarian politics, as well as mundane zines and other self-publishing. May Filthy Pierre remain filthy even if The Connection is no more. Take a well-deserved rest from fanac for a time! (HR)

## Active Apae

### Alarums & Excursions

**Founded:** 1975

**Focus:** Roleplaying games and related subjects

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Minimum activity:** None. “It’s cheaper to contribute one or two pages than to get the apa as a non-contributor.”

**Membership:** The April 2024 issue included material from 21 people. Accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Printing costs \$1.75/page. Non-contributors pay \$2 and no postage; if you contributed to the previous issue, you only pay postage. Contributors receive issues for free, with no cost for postage. People can also buy back issues for \$2/PDF.

Subscriptions are not available. Postage is expected to increase in mid-July.

**Additional comments:** A&E is not affiliated with any gaming company. Contributors are interested in many different games. They are also interested in cultural and military history, fantasy and science fiction, rock music, military reenactments, movies, martial arts, murder mysteries, filksongs, science fiction fandom, religion, physics, astronomy, and a number of other subjects, all of which can be tied easily into roleplaying games if you take a sufficiently creative approach. The apa grew out of APA-L when roleplaying game discussion flourished in those pages.

**Contact:** Lee Gold, 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066; [lee.gold@ca.rr.com](mailto:lee.gold@ca.rr.com); <https://conchord.org/xeno/aande.html>

### American Amateur Press Association (AAPA)

**Founded:** 1936

**Focus:** Amateur (hobby) journalism

**Frequency:** A monthly bundle is sent to all members—except “same household” members.

**Minimum activity:** No minimum level of activity is required, though active participation is encouraged.

**Membership:** Currently 113 members; 120 copies required by the Official Mailer; accepting new

members; no waitlist

**Costs:** \$25 per year. A member in the same household can join for \$2 per year but does not receive a separate monthly bundle. A “scholarship” is available to help offset production costs. Contact [president@aapainfo.org](mailto:president@aapainfo.org) to learn more.

**Additional comments:** Letterpress is not required. However, many members do enjoy letterpress. A tutorial for Scribus, a free publishing software program, is available on the Web site.

**Contact:** Ivan Snyder, 1441 S. Ivy St. #1204, Canby, OR 97013-4369; [ivan.d.snyder@gmail.com](mailto:ivan.d.snyder@gmail.com); [treasurer@aapainfo.org](mailto:treasurer@aapainfo.org); <http://www.aapainfo.org>

### APA 247

**Founded:** 1990

**Focus:** Legion of Super-Heroes comic books

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Two pages every two months

**Membership:** 22 active members; copy count of 23; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Central Mailer maintains accounts for postage and shared costs.

**Additional comments:** Also discuss comic books in general

**Contact:** Julian Clarke, Flat 9, Woolwich House, 183 Lawrie Park Gardens, Sydenham, London SE26 6XJ United Kingdom; [apa247cm@hotmail.com](mailto:apa247cm@hotmail.com)

### APA-L

**Founded:** 1964

**Focus:** Science fiction, fantasy, horror, science, fandom, personal natter, Los Angeles-area fanac, and anything else others feel like writing about

**Frequency:** Weekly

**Minimum activity:** Officially, minac is at least one page every other distribution for those in the Los Angeles area, every third dist’n for those elsewhere in the United States, and every fourth dist’n for those elsewhere on the planet. Unofficially, we don’t currently monitor or track minac.

**Membership:** There are currently 12 people participating in or receiving APA-L. Our copy count is 15. Accepting new participants; no waitlist

**Costs:** There are no fees or dues, but participants maintain an account with the OC to cover their printing and mailing costs. Such funds are replenished as needed.

**Additional comments:** We’re always looking for fanartists to submit cover art. Cover artists receive

distributions to which they contribute. There are no minac requirements for cover artists. Other fanart and illustrations are also generally welcome. (Some illos might also be published in the OC's monthly fanzine *The Stf Amateur*.)

**Contact:** Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); [h3athrow@gmail.com](mailto:h3athrow@gmail.com)

### **APA-LSH**

**Founded:** 1992

**Focus:** DC Comics' Legion of Super-Heroes comic books

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Four collated pages in any three consecutive mailings

**Membership:** 19 active members; copy count of 16; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** No annual dues, but you must maintain a positive balance in your mailing account. \$5 opens your account. When the apa is full (at 50 members), there is a \$5 fee to join the waitlist.

**Additional comments:** Founded by Tom and Mary Bierbaum, and Bob Dobeisz; digital version available. Long live the Legion!

**Contact:** Todd Schoonover, P.O. Box 94, Coudersport, PA 16915-50094; [toddschoonover@yahoo.com](mailto:toddschoonover@yahoo.com)

### **Apaplexy**

**Founded:** 1984

**Focus:** General interest. Contributions can be about any subject.

**Frequency:** Every six weeks

**Minimum activity:** Two pages every other issue. The contribution can be pictures, cartoons, articles by other people, or their own writings. Members now send the Official Editor PDF documents, which are posted on the Apaplexy Web site.

**Membership:** 12 active members; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** None; Apaplexy went online in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Additional comments:** Every six weeks, a collation is held to put together the apazine, which is kept online in a private, secure Web site made accessible to all members. We hold a Zoom session, which has replaced in-person gatherings. We also have a private mailing list for members.

**Contact:** Central Mailer Sheila Brown, [sheila@computertamers.ca](mailto:sheila@computertamers.ca); Elizabeth Holden, [\[cm@apaplexy.ca\]\(mailto:cm@apaplexy.ca\); <http://apaplexy.ca>](mailto:fajrdrako@</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

### **Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association (ANZAPA)**

**Founded:** 1968

**Focus:** Science fiction, fantasy, and comic books

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Six pages every six months

**Membership:** 29 members; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** No cost at present; possible in the future

**Additional comments:** ANZAPA is now entirely PDF-based.

Bruce Gillespie: I was Official Editor of ANZAPA for 16 years from 2004 up to the advent of COVID-19. Mine was still an all-print, posted bimonthly apa of about 250 pages each mailing.

The arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020 (and the subsequent lockdown) made it immediately very difficult to send or receive paper contributions or send out paper mailings. I would have dropped ANZAPA immediately, except that David Grigg, computer whiz, worked out a way to do all-PDF mailings. Almost every member was willing to make the change. Also, about 10 people joined or rejoined, people who had been too lazy to publish print fanzines but who found it easy (and very cheap) to send PDF contributions to David, who then sent out PDF mailings.

Bear in mind that all the members, plus all the new members, were suddenly sitting at home. Many of them were retired anyway. The result is that our membership filled to near the limit of 30 (and is currently 29), each of whom began churning out lots of pages—so the mailings have averaged 600 pages every two months for the last few years. Most well-known Australian fans are in ANZAPA.

**Contact:** David Grigg, [obe@anzapa.org](mailto:obe@anzapa.org), <https://anzapa.org>

### **Cuneiform APA**

**Founded:** 2011 by Frederick Moe

**Focus:** Analog culture including but not limited to zines, printing, self-publishing, philosophy (leaning toward libertarian), low-technology living, media, and music

**Frequency:** Three times a year

**Minimum activity:** None

**Membership:** 10+ active members; copy count of 50; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** No dues, but money for postage is helpful

**Additional comments:** This apa is surprisingly active and robust. Going strong. Several members have rotated coordination of Cuneiform since 2011.

**Contact:** Jason Rodgers, P.O. Box 701, Cobleskill, NY 12403

### **Dapper**

**Founded:** 1992

**Focus:** Free/casual; Dutch based but English language

**Frequency:** Bimonthly in odd-numbered months

**Minimum activity:** One page every two issues

**Membership:** 11 members; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Costs include the mailing cost (from the Netherlands), administrative costs (including printing if not sending your own pages), and copy costs.

**Additional comments:** The full, long title is Dutch Amateur People's Press Energetically Reproducing.

**Contact:** Jan van't Ent, [vantent@hotmail.com](mailto:vantent@hotmail.com)

### **eAPA**

**Founded:** 2004

**Focus:** Fannish and non-fannish content

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Minimum activity:** One contribution per three mailings

**Membership:** Six people; copy count irrelevant (it's distributed as a PDF); accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** None

**Additional comments:** A monthly apa primarily for science fiction fans; an attempt to bridge the format and style of traditional paper-based apae with newer digital publishing formats. There are no dues for eAPA. Members are expected to email a PDF document to the OE by the first of the distribution month, at least once every other distribution. Activity can consist of either written or graphic material primarily by the member. The OE compiles the PDF contributions, posts the mailing on eFanzines.com, and notifies the members by email when the distribution is ready for downloading (generally on the second of each month). Membership is open to anyone. Prospective members should let the OE know by email that they want to join and will be expected to contribute to the next distribution. Mailings are password-protected, except for the annual "open" mailing in October. Members can, at their discretion, make their eAPAZines available to the general public on *eFanzines* as well, or through any other medium.

**Contact:** Garth Spencer, 6960 Doman St., Vancouver, BC, Canada V5S 3H7; [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com); <https://efanzines.com/eapa>

### **ERB-APA**

**Founded:** 1984

**Focus:** The writings, creations, life, and influences of Edgar Rice Burroughs

**Frequency:** Quarterly

**Minimum activity:** 50 copies of two pages (approximately 400 words) or more four times a year; exceptions can be made if a submission needs to be passed on

**Membership:** 33 active members out of 36 possible slots; accepting new members; waitlist undetermined

**Costs:** \$35 a year covering membership, participation, and mailing costs of one issue to each member

**Additional comments:** It's a fun and informative community. Entertaining articles by newcomers and those who've been ERB fans for years. We are celebrating 40 years of ERB-APA this year: 1984-2024.

**Contact:** Scott Stewart, 7770 Alondra Court, Citrus Heights, CA 95610; [erbsseditor@gmail.com](mailto:erbsseditor@gmail.com); <https://www.erbzine.com/apa>;

### **Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA)**

**Founded:** 1937

**Focus:** Open topics

**Frequency:** Quarterly

**Minimum activity:** Eight pages a year

**Membership:** Current membership is 17. Members submit 20 copies each quarter; that is subject to increase in 2024. Currently accepting new members; waitlist undetermined

**Costs:** \$10/year, likely to increase in 2024

**Additional comments:** The Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA) hearkens from a time when fan magazines (also known as fanzines, or shortened to 'zines) were reproduced via mimeograph, hectograph, or even with carbon-copy inserts. With more modern technologies, fanzines—and by extension, FAPA—photocopying is the usual method of reproduction. But what about that name, especially the "Fantasy" part of it? Remember, FAPA was founded in 1937. At that time, there was no distinction between fantasy and science fiction; they both fell under the genre of fantasy. Is FAPA all about stories, fantasy, or science fiction? No—and yes. FAPA welcomes writing from all genres, but generally, people who contribute are

writing personal essays and commentary. However, there has been some good fiction published through FAPA, too. Why should you join? Isn't it easier to email or blog? Well, sure. Publishing a fanzine, including all that goes into it—layout, content creation, reproducing, collating, and submitting—are all connections to an earlier time.

**Contact:** Ken Forman, 2234 MC 7055, Flippin, AR 72634; [kforman@att.net](mailto:kforman@att.net)

### **Greymalkin Lane**

**Founded:** 2022

**Focus:** Marvel mutant comic books, especially the New X-Men

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Three pages every three mailings

**Membership:** Two members; copy count of three; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Members share expenses; they are expected to maintain accounts.

**Additional comments:** Greymalkin Lane was founded at the beginning of 2022. The founding theme was all the Marvel mutant comics, with a particular emphasis on the New X-Men, especially the Chris Claremont and John Byrne 1970s-80s era. Yes, the proper spelling is “Graymalkin,” but key founders preferred to spell it with an “e.”

**Contact:** Carl Fishman, 3588 Plymouth Road #229, Ann Arbor, MI 48105; [carlfishman@att.net](mailto:carlfishman@att.net)

### **Interlac**

**Founded:** 1976

**Focus:** The primary focus is the Legion of Super-Heroes comic books. Other topics are discussed, and there are no content mandates.

**Frequency:** Bimonthly in even-numbered months

**Minimum activity:** Four collated and stapled pages in any three consecutive mailings (every six months)

**Membership:** 30 active members; copy count is currently 34; accepting new members; waitlist undetermined

**Costs:** \$10 to join, but need to top off an account periodically because shared costs (mostly postage) are assessed every mailing

**Additional comments:** None

**Contact:** Christopher Cavett, 2123 32nd Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212; [clcavett@gmail.com](mailto:clcavett@gmail.com); <https://protytwo.wixsite.com/interlacapa1976>; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/interlacapa>

### **Klordny**

**Founded:** 1981

**Focus:** The Legion of Super-Heroes comic books

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Two pages every two mailings

**Membership:** There are 11 members. The physical copy count is seven. (The others get digital copies only.) Accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Expenses are shared among active members. Non-contributing members pay \$4 plus their personal postage costs if they get physical mailings.

**Additional comments:** None

**Contact:** Carl Fishman, 3588 Plymouth Road #229, Ann Arbor, MI 48105; [carlfishman@att.net](mailto:carlfishman@att.net)

### **Los Angeles Scientifiction Fans' Amateur Press Association (LASFAPA)**

**Founded:** 1976

**Focus:** General

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Minimum activity:** Two pages every other distribution; two pages every third distribution for overseas members

**Membership:** Six members; current copy count is 10; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Dues are \$35 per year (covers all mailing and shared costs). A separate printing account is needed.

**Additional comments:** We'd love to expand again beyond the borders of California.

**Contact:** David Schlosser, 2041 N St., Eureka, CA 95501; [schloss17@suddenlink.net](mailto:schloss17@suddenlink.net)

### **Milwaukee Amateur Press Association**

**Founded:** 1984

**Focus:** Science fiction and general interest

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Minimum activity:** One page of new material per month

**Membership:** 10+ members; copy count of 15; accepting new members; waitlist undetermined

**Costs:** None

**Additional comments:** Our current members are all located in southeastern Wisconsin. We have had members from out of state in the past, although they have usually had a Milwaukee connection.

**Contact:** Gregory G.H. Rihn, 4718 W. Cleveland Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53219; [ggrihn@yahoo.com](mailto:ggrihn@yahoo.com)

## **National Amateur Press Association (NAPA)**

**Founded:** 1876

**Focus:** There is no focus, but NAPA but does have requirements for titling, dating, numbering, and identifying the publisher of each submitted journal or zine.

**Frequency:** Bundles of submitted papers come out monthly. *The National Amateur* comes out quarterly.

**Minimum activity:** No minimum level of activity is required.

**Membership:** About 85 active members; 95 copies for the Mailer; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** For the United States: \$30 per year Regular Membership, \$7.50 additional for other countries. \$2 per year for Family Membership at the same address as a Regular Member; \$8 per year for subscription to *The National Amateur* only; free one-time three-month Trial Membership to non-members.

**Additional comments:** Libraries and similar repositories can receive a complimentary subscription to bundles or *The National Amateur*.

**Contact:** William E. Boys, [Secretary-Treasurer@amateurpress.org](mailto:Secretary-Treasurer@amateurpress.org), <http://www.amateurpress.org>

## **N'APA**

**Founded:** 1959

**Focus:** N'APA, the National Fantasy Fan Federation's apa, mostly focuses on sf and related topics. Fandom in general. Anything and everything.

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** There is no minac requirement.

**Membership:** Membership is open to dues-paying members of the N3F. There are currently eight members; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** There are no costs for N'APA itself. N3F membership costs \$6/year to receive clubzines via email; dues to receive *The National Fantasy Fan* in print are \$18/year.

**Additional comments:** We'd be glad of any interest!

**Contact:** Jefferson P. Swycaffer, [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com), <https://tnfff.org/napa>

## **OWLHOOT**

**Founded:** "21 years ago"

**Focus:** The Old West in all its aspects: books, movies, radio, history, toys, comics, legends, etc.

**Frequency:** Quarterly

**Minimum activity:** Four pages every two mailings

**Membership:** 10 members; copy count of 11; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** \$12/year

**Additional comments:** We are a print apa.

**Contact:** Cap'n Bob Napier, 5601 N. 40th St., Tacoma, WA 98407; [capnbob@nventure.com](mailto:capnbob@nventure.com)

## **Pride Amateur Press Association**

**Founded:** 2018

**Focus:** Mutual love of comic books and comics-related entertainment, as well as other topics of interest to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** No set minimum activity

**Membership:** 13 active members; copy count of seven; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** Members must maintain a positive mailing account, which is used for publication and distribution. Costs are divided equally among all members.

**Additional comments:** Pride APA represents the union of two long-running, LGBTQ-themed apas focusing on comic books and pop culture. The first was Attitude n' Sin (or ATDNSIN: The APA That Dares Now Speak Its Name), created in 1988 by Andy Mangels with the assistance of Roger Klorese. This was in response to the first ever "Gays in Comics" panel discussion at the San Diego Comic Convention that summer. ATDNSIN is the longest-running gay comic book apa in existence. The Northstar APA (named after Marvel's first openly gay character) began in 1989 as a conception of Jericho Wilson and was first published in 1990. In the summer of 2003, the two groups decided to create a joint issue in the vein of the classic JLA/JSA crossovers. Later that year, they voted to permanently merge into one apa, but continued to publish using both names. In 2018, the remaining members voted to unite under a single name. Digital version available.

**Contact:** Todd Schoonover, P.O. Box 94, Coudersport, PA 16915-0094; [toddschoonover@yahoo.com](mailto:toddschoonover@yahoo.com); <https://www.prideapa.com>

## **Radio Enthusiasts APA**

**Founded:** 2023

**Focus:** All types of radio, media, and music

**Frequency:** Semiannual

**Minimum activity:** Once annually

**Membership:** 10; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** No cost; donations might be solicited if needed

**Additional comments:** None



**Contact:** Fred Moe, 40 Church St., Groveton, NH 03582; [radiothriftshopnh@gmail.com](mailto:radiothriftshopnh@gmail.com)

### **Rowrbrazzle**

**Founded:** 1984

**Focus:** Funny animals and anthropomorphics

**Frequency:** Quarterly

**Minimum activity:** Two pages per six months

**Membership:** 33 members; copy count of 40; accepting new members; waitlist of two

**Costs:** \$5 per issue. We maintain accounts. OE will print contributions for \$4 per page black and white or \$11 per page color.

**Additional comments:** I welcome inquiries from writers, artists, researchers, and actifans of funny animals.

**Contact:** Edd Vick, [eddvick@gmail.com](mailto:eddvick@gmail.com)

### **Slanderous Amateur Press Association (Slanaapa)**

**Founded:** 1969

**Focus:** Mailing comments, books read, movies watched, the space program, and personal activities

**Frequency:** Monthly

**Minimum activity:** None

**Membership:** Seven members; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** No dues; rotating Official Editor

**Additional comments:** Slanaapa is a paper apa and is always open to new members. It focused on science fiction originally, but now all topics are welcome. Originated by Bob Vardeman and Mike Horvat; late members include Frank Denton, Jerry Lapidus, and Bill "Swampy" Marsh.

**Contact:** Dale Goble Jr., 517 E. Marion St., Stayton, OR 97383; [manngulch@wbcable.net](mailto:manngulch@wbcable.net). He'll direct inquiries to whomever's the current OE: Dale Goble Jr., Mike Horvat, Bob Napier, D. Gary Grady, Dan Willott, Dee Beetem, Jeff Frane, Bob Vardeman, or Jim McLeod.

### **The Southern Fandom Press Alliance (SFPA)**

**Founded:** 1961

**Focus:** Originally sf fandom in the southern United States, though now with geographically dispersed members. Science fiction, fantasy, and related subjects (*widely* related in many cases).

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Original content every other mailing

**Membership:** 18 people, 14 print copies required, plus PDF copies of all fanzines are required with 18 PDF copies distributed electronically. Accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** \$35/year for paper, \$10/year for electronic distributions, international membership by special arrangement

**Additional comments:** We have 18 members at the moment, with the bimonthly mailings generally in the 400-page range. We're a hybrid apa, with parallel print and electronic distributions. See the electronic version for a sample.

**Contact:** Jeff Copeland, 2824 Kulshan St., Bellingham, WA 98225-2345; [jeff.copeland+sfpa@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.copeland+sfpa@gmail.com); <http://bywaterpress.com/sfpa>

### **Spectator Amateur Press Society (SAPS)**

**Founded:** 1947

**Focus:** Science fiction and fantasy, fandom, and natter

**Frequency:** Quarterly

**Minimum activity:** Six pages (standard, single-spaced, or equivalent) of original previously uncirculated text material in every two consecutive mailings. Up to one page of art/graphics can be counted in the minimum six pages. Additional pages can include reprints, graphics, etc.

**Membership:** Nine members; limited to 25 memberships; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** None

**Additional comments:** SAPS is the second oldest extant fannish apa. Participants are mostly—but not exclusively—located in the Pacific Northwest; the membership is international in scope.

**Contact:** Burnett R. Toskey, 865 W. Chrysanthia Court, Oro Valley, AZ 85755; [brtoskey@hotmail.com](mailto:brtoskey@hotmail.com)

### **Stipple-Apa**

**Founded:** 1980

**Focus:** A small amateur press association originating in the St. Paul/Minneapolis science fiction and fantasy fannish community in Minnesota, doncha know. We talk about whatever is interesting: books, movies, TV, conventions, gardening, and travel.

**Frequency:** About every six weeks

**Minimum activity:** One page every other mailing

**Membership:** Membership is limited to 30 sentient beings. There are currently 13 members; copy count of 13; accepting new members; no waitlist. New blood is always welcome to join the party.

**Costs:** No dues is good dues! The production expense

fees are \$1 per person per issue for copying and mailing (a possible \$2 total). Accounts are maintained for postage and printing.

**Additional comments:** Stipple-Apa is primarily a print apa. Most material published in Stipple-Apa must be original. I will accept PDFs for printing contributions. I have made some concessions for a few members, such as one in Brazil where the mail service is bad. Good behavior is expected. The apa began when people on the waitlist for Minneapa decided to create their own apa. We have outlasted Minneapa! Contact the OOK (Official Official Koolaider), Jeanne Mealy, if you want a spec copy for your friends who like to write so they can join us.

**Contact:** Jeanne Mealy, 1595 Hoyt Ave. East, St. Paul, MN 55106; [jmealy-in-mn@comcast.net](mailto:jmealy-in-mn@comcast.net)

### **The Women's Periodical (TWP)**

**Founded:** 1982

**Focus:** TWP is an apa for British women and women who have a connection to British fandom.

**Frequency:** Bimonthly

**Minimum activity:** Two sides of A4 typescript or one side of artwork

**Membership:** 19 members; copy count of 22; accepting new members; no waitlist

**Costs:** £10/year plus additional postage costs for women not in the UK

**Additional comments:** None

**Contact:** Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, United Kingdom; [alison@kittywompus.com](mailto:alison@kittywompus.com)

**Note:** We also know that APA-50, the Esoteric Order of Dagon, and the Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA are active, but no listings were received. Maybe next edition!

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## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #119

June 20, 2024

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### Last Week's Senryu

I had some free time  
last night and couldn't explain  
it: No email sent!

Apologies to those others who receive APA-L via email for sending the PDF on Friday. I'd focused on catching up on LASFS minutes—still not quite caught up, but only a couple of week's behind now—and didn't understand how I still had so much time before the meeting, even after collating and preparing the distribution for mailing. Emailing doesn't take long, but I hadn't done everything I usually do.

### Cover Artists Speak!

In response to Matthew Mitchell's comment in *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #61, cover artist Tiffanie Gray emailed: "The title is *Tenacious Ants*—so, it could be. The piece was designed for No Ink 'Tober [also known as N'Inktober, No Ink-Tober, and other permutations], which is an annual artist event online. Random prompts, and then you see what you can do with them. I like the idea of the ants trying to recreate human history."

In response to C.D. Carson's passing remark in *Always Going Home* #47, cover artist Jose Sanchez replied:

No—not really. It would seem that [the writer] didn't really detain himself enough to actually study the sketch further. Maybe the color version would have made a clearer difference in his very short and not very well thought out statement.

For one, my Bigfoot specimen has longer arms in relationship to his legs and the rest of its body. His eyes are black, and the head has an almost pointed dome on top of it with a high and thick eyebrow placement as opposed to a regular person's anatomy (no matter how tall they might be). Bigfoots are just different. Their skin tends to be a pale to medium gray, and they are often reported by eyewitnesses—and there are [thousands]—to be between seven to 10 feet high in stature and seen all over the world. Again,

please note the background forest trees for reference.

All I would like to say is this: Do your homework before forming an opinion. Have the facts at hand, and things will run smoother for everyone.

The full, colored version of Sanchez's piece of art is reproduced below.



### Day Trip Report: Antiquarian Los Angeles

Inspired by Kim Cooper and Dick Blackburn's slim *How to Find Old Los Angeles: A Travel Guide* (Herb Lester, 2016) and several chapters in Jack Smith's collection of *Westways* columns *The Big Orange* (Ward Ritchie, 1976), I planned a brief exploration of antiquarian Los Angeles for a Father's Day outing with my wife and son last weekend.

Our first stop was Carroll Avenue in Angelino Heights, an early streetcar suburb still containing an impressive selection of Victorian homes constructed in the late 19th century. The two-block stretch bifurcated by Douglas Street includes LASFS member Kevin



Segall and Steph Rogers's J.B. Winston House, which they're currently restoring.



My favorite house on Carroll Avenue



The Winston House, a work in progress

A National Register Historic District, the neighborhood is just blocks away from the Hollywood freeway, but it feels like you're 150 years in the past.

We'd missed a recent collective rummage sale, but one of the homes still had a box of *The Old-House Journal* back issues on the sidewalk in front of it. The issues, from when the magazine was still three-hole punched for placement in a binder, featured articles on pocket doors and latticework.

Our next stop was the northern edge of Echo Park Lake, to see the exterior of Aimee Semple McPherson's parsonage, now headquarters for the Foursquare Church (<https://www.foursquare.org>) and location of a small museum focusing on the early 20th century Los Angeles evangelist and radio broadcaster—and subject of a controversy that involved a mysterious disappearance, perhaps an illicit love affair, and an initially triumphant return to the city after being found in Mexico.



The parsonage is closed on Sunday, so we weren't able to explore the museum—we'll have to go back!—but we were able to see the interior of the adjacent Angelus Temple (<https://www.angelustemple.org>). We then walked around Echo Park Lake, established in 1892, availing ourselves of the Swan Pedal Boats (<https://wheelfunrentals.com/ca/los-angeles/echo-park>) for a leisurely spin around the lake. The boats handle quite easily, and I highly recommend the experience. (\$12/adult for an hour rental.)

For lunch, we went to the nearby 24-hour Astro Diner & Coffee Shop, also known as the Astro Family Restaurant. (<https://www.astrofamiliyrestaurant.com>) My wife and son each had a salad, but I enjoyed a Reuben sandwich, French fries, and a slice of pecan pie, warmed, with vanilla ice cream, in honor of Father's Day. Originally a hamburger stand on the site as early as 1931, the structure has been a Googie diner since the 1960s. Its characteristic architecture is somewhat occluded by an outside dining deck built along the front of the restaurant, as well as by now





disorganization, but overall, Warner's book is an amazing work and an indispensable reference—as well as a strong introduction to the earliest days of fandom.

The structure and approach reflects the challenge facing most fan historians who seek to document global, national, or regional fandom activities: the availability of adequate documentation—perhaps improved at this late date, though Warner clearly had many primary sources at hand—declining first-hand knowledge of the time under consideration (which Warner definitely did not suffer from; he was there for much of this time period and shows up often as a participant and source), and whether to approach the subject chronologically or thematically.

Warner decided to consider the topic thematically, and then chronologically within each section, and the book is loosely structured chronologically overall, with a few chapters serving as milestones. Those include the opening section (“It is a Proud and Lonely Thing to Be a Fan,” which considers the earliest days of sf and fandom, including precursors to fandom, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, dime novels [*Faculae & Filigree* #32], H.P. Lovecraft, and other representative fen), a mid-text consideration of World War II and its impact on sf and fandom, and postwar prospects—serving as a vector toward Warner's subsequent volume, *A Wealth of Fable*, which focuses on the 1950s.

Otherwise, Warner explores various aspects of fandom, addressing its participants, their characteristics and behaviors; the role collecting, collectors, and collections played in fandom; the relationship between fen and pros; the first Worldcons and other conventions; controversies that occurred within fandom involving the National Fantasy Fan Federation, the Shaver Mystery, and the Cosmic Circle; amateur press associations; organized fandom—in the form of clubs—around the country and world; and fanzines of the 1940s.

It's an awesome document, capturing the decade in broad strokes while offering multiple rabbit holes deserving additional exploration, occasionally as passing remarks. Los Angeles is well represented throughout the text, as are its leading personalities, clubs—including the LASFS—fanzines, and notable locations. I was most impressed by how Warner documented so many local communities to some extent, not just around the United States, but also in England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and other countries. While the book largely focuses on the United States—see Rob Hansen's book *Then* (<https://fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN.htm>) for a parallel consideration of fandom in the United

Kingdom or Leigh Edmonds's recently released *Proud and Lonely: A History of Science Fiction Fandom in Australia 1936-1975—Part One: 1936-1961*—Warner does well to consider the topic globally, including discussion of the Big Pond Fund and other efforts to connect fen around the world.

The informal, loose structure, tangents, and occasional meandering feels very fannish and doesn't interfere with the book's purpose. It might very well be the best document we have of this decade in fandom—and one would be hard pressed to do any better 50-plus years later. And because the book is an introduction, the opportunity remains to focus on one particular aspect in greater detail—as represented by Hansen's *Bixelstrasse*, (<https://ae.ansible.uk/?t=bixel>) which focuses on Los Angeles, or Mike Ashley's multiple volumes about sf magazines.



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *Avengers: Infinity War*

While my son was with us for Father's Day weekend, he and I watched this 2018 Marvel Cinematic Universe movie before picking my wife up from the airport. I haven't really kept up with the MCU films, and even though I had this on DVD, I hadn't watched an Avengers movie since 2015's *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, of which I remembered very little.

This movie, in many ways, is the conclusion of a multi-movie build up embedded in the short post-credit scenes we've come to expect from Marvel movies. Thanos is in search of the six Infinity Stones, reminiscent of the 1991 comic book miniseries *The Infinity Gauntlet*. The Avengers have disbanded, the Hulk is terrified, and the heroes are hard pressed to stop the obliteration of half the life in the universe.

The movie is a bit of a confusing jumble. Almost everyone is in it: Doctor Strange, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Captain America, and the Guardians of the Galaxy. The scenes in which Star-Lord and Thor are jousting (figuratively, not literally) represent some of the friction that can occur when so many heroes are brought together.

The highlight of the movie, however, is the inclusion of the Black Order, the supernatural supervillains that serve Thanos. The Ebony Maw, in particular, is wonderful. I'm remembering a *Guardians of the Galaxy* crossover or miniseries featuring the Black Order, but I'm not seeing it in the *Marvel Database's* list of appearances. ([https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Black\\_Order\\_\(Earth-616\)/Appearances](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Category:Black_Order_(Earth-616)/Appearances)) I'll have to dig into my back issues to revisit the comics.

Peter Dinklage looms large as Eitri, king of the dwarves of Nidavellir, who crafted the Infinity Gauntlet and is tasked with forging a new weapon for Thor. While that leads to some of the most satisfying large-scale scenes and setting, the inclusion of *The Unworthy Thor* storyline only serves to compound the jumbled nature of the movie. That might be my biggest complaint about MCU films: They try to cram way too much into each flick.

Regardless, it's a fun flick that doesn't end well—setting up the 2019 sequel, *Avengers: Endgame*, which resolves the narrative. I haven't seen that yet, either, though I've experienced references to what occurs in subsequent MCU productions. In my case, the movie doesn't make me want to watch more MCU movies, but it does make me want to read comic books, particularly Jim Starlin's *The Infinity Gauntlet*, Jonathan Hickman's 2013 *Infinity*, and other comics featuring the Black Order. My first stop might be the

five-issue series *Black Order*, collected in 2019 as *Black Order: The Warmasters of Thanos*.

*Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1956

### *Gentlemen Broncos*

Even though I'd seen and enjoyed Jared and Jerusha Hess's *Napoleon Dynamite* and *Nacho Libre*, it took a Subgenius-related post on the *Facebook* to inform me of their 2009 comedy *Gentlemen Broncos*. The post that inspired me to watch the movie was a short video clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzxI052g6e0>) of what turned out to be one of two movies within the movie. The video was a delightfully silly homage to so many sf movies of the 1960s and 1970s, and in the end, *Gentlemen Broncos* includes plenty of interest to fen.

First of all, the opening titles embed the production credits in vintage sf paperback book covers that feature artwork by Kelly Freas. An *Art of the Title* interview with Jared Hess (<https://www.artofthetitle>.

[com/title/gentlemen-broncos](http://com/title/gentlemen-broncos)) explores their use of the artwork, includes that opening title sequence—complete with Zager and Evans’s song “In the Year 2525 (Exordium & Terminus)”—and depicts the original sources of each piece, which is a delight.



*Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1956

The gist of the movie is that a home-schooled teenager in Utah has been writing science fiction stories since he was 7 years old, largely inspired by the death of his father, who worked as a game warden. He attends a writing symposium while on a field trip, where he gives a copy of his story, “Yeast Lords,” to one of the guest writers, bestselling—but with career waning—author Ronald Chevalier. Chevalier is wonderfully portrayed by Jemaine Clement of *Flight of the Conchords*.

Desperate for a new idea, Chevalier decides to plagiarize the boy’s story, leading to the release of a new novel. One of the movies within the movie is presented as a fellow workshop participant reads the boy’s story in a hotel room and as Chevalier rewrites the book. The footage from that movie within the movie is absolutely glorious in all the wrong—and right—ways. I would watch the entire movie.

Unaware of the author’s plagiarism, the teenager also sells the story to a local filmmaker, another teenager, who proceeds to film his own adaptation, also substantially changing the work. That movie within the movie is less satisfying but is also excellent, reminiscent of many fan films.

In the end, the local production is screened, the original author is accused of writing fan fiction—and

eventually confronts the actual plagiarist, the bestselling author. The movie is a solid story of isolation and frustration, the transformative potential of literature, and the value of do-it-yourself media projects. It pokes quite a bit of fun at all involved but is also quite loving and appreciative of grassroots efforts.

Mike White, who co-wrote *Nacho Libre*, produced the movie and was also cast as a big brother-like character and love interest for the young author’s mother. White’s character also starred in the teenager-produced short film, offering a gleefully awkward portrayal of the hero of “Yeast Lords.” The movie doesn’t take any of it too seriously, but fen might see some of their younger selves in the characters. The flick is an absolute hoot.

### **Ignorable Theme: FIAWOL**

“Is fandom a way of life (FIAWOL), or just a goddamn hobby (FIJAGH)? How so? Has your opinion changed over time?”

While I currently invest quite a bit of time and energy in fanac—pursuing and maintaining friendships with other fen, publishing as a faned, and otherwise contributing to the documentation of Ninth Fandom, or whatever numbered fandom in which we might be (somewhere well before 199th or 200th fandom, I’m sure)—being a fan is not my master status. At times, I prioritize it over other responsibilities and activities, but it is not my only priority.

So I’d put it somewhere between Just a Goddamn Hobby and A Way of Life, well toward Just a Goddamn Hobby. (Regardless, I adore that Barry Gold’s license plate reads “FIAWOL.” Talk about a public signifier!) There are, however, aspects of fandom that I believe to be a way of life, actually or aspirationally in my case: curiosity, lifelong learning, an openness to others, an interest in exploration, investment in possibilities, and the belief that the world can be a better place—and that humanity can help make it so.

In the past, I’ve written somewhere (just imagine, me at a loss for a self-citation!) that I like sf because it’s often about smart, capable people working together to solve a problem. That might not be baseline human nature, at least in terms of current events, but it could be. That wouldn’t be a bad way of life: many hands making light work, and lifting all boats. That sounds like much more than a hobby.



**Patent Pending**

By Joshua Sky (© 2024)

After three weeks of emailing, vid-calling, and hustle, Sam finally finagled a five-minute meeting with his renowned employer, Anton Geyer, CEO of Intellect Ltd. He fidgeted in his silver suit, the only one he owned, then wiped a thin sheen of perspiration from his brow and tried to hide his nervous excitement from the receptionist.

Outside the large window rolled the green hills of the Midwest. Well, a holographic projection anyway. Intellect's real location was on Fifth Avenue and 38th Street, in Manhattan. Though the view appeared serene, Sam could feel the subtle hum of the city, along with the migraine-inducing pressure of millions of people struggling to get by, just outside the granite walls.

It had been ten years since he signed over the rights to his Mind-Patent. A pang of regret reverberated from the center of his head to the pit of his stomach every time he remembered what happened. He tried not to feel so bad about it, considering he was only seventeen when he signed his rights away, just a kid. What choice did he have, anyhow? University rates were—are—stratospheric, and Sam was bright enough to score in the ninetieth percentile on his high school assessment test. That's when a representative from Intellect made him an offer. He remembered how happy he was that day, not realizing how unhappy the decision would make him in the years ahead.

Intellect reps were willing to pay seventy-five percent of his college tuition and offered guaranteed job placement after graduation in exchange for his Mind-Patent, the ownership rights to his thoughts, feelings, and—most importantly—any ideas that could be monetized. In essence, Sam sold his soul for an education and employment. A pragmatic error that was unavoidable if he wanted to stand a chance in the modern working world. Ironically, the company that invested so much in him had gotten little return. During his six-year tenure, Sam hadn't come up with a single idea that wasn't shot down or generated a cent of income. So, Intellect demoted him from R&D and placed him in the acquisitions department, where he learned the patent trade, buying and selling the futures of freshman college students, hedging corporate bets on who might be the next Job, Edison, or Zuckerberg of tomorrow.

Now, here he was, moments away from meeting the most powerful patent holder in the world, the man who owned his rights, and a billion others—Anton Geyer, one of the wealthiest men on the planet. He'd

seen him from time to time, stalking down the hallways, looking forward, through each passerby as if they were a transparent wraith. It would be easy to discount Geyer as a shrewd Scrooge because he had so much when these days most had so little. But in truth, Sam didn't know a thing about him except what he read and whispered legends. They never exchanged a lick of dialogue, or even a nod of recognition.

But this was his chance. It was shocking that a man who seemed so untouchable might only appear that way because people were too afraid to approach him. After much scheming, all it took was for Sam to finally grow a pair and send Geyer's receptionist a simple email requesting an informational interview. The receptionist replied instantly, asking "What for?"

His reply: "To ask him how he became successful."

The next day, he received a response informing him that she asked Mr. Geyer—and that he was unfortunately unwilling to meet. The answer was disappointing, but at least it was an answer. Twenty minutes later the receptionist gave Sam a vid-call. She appeared nervous, as though she had done something wrong, and told him to disregard her previous missive. Mr. Geyer would be happy to meet. Sam was astonished. The receptionist, or Victoria, as he would later learn her name, must have assumed that Geyer wouldn't be interested in meeting one of the worker bees and took it upon herself to reply on his behalf. Even Geyer's own assistant underestimated his generosity.

Whatever happens, Sam knew it would be vital to make a good impression and do it fast. He would only get one chance to make his proposal. He went through a mental index of every possible scenario he could think of, every objection Geyer might speak in regards to the pitch he'd so painstakingly prepared. A voice spoke, cutting through his thoughts. "Mr. Geyer is ready to see you," Victoria said in a neutral intonation.

"Thanks," Sam replied as he rocketed out of his seat. Failing to seem as casual as he would've liked.

"This way." She began to walk, her heels clicking against the black marble floor. She left her holo-computer on automatic to cover her desk.

Together, they entered a large hall that was quite cold. One side had an immense window that exhibited a different view-saver from the office—instead of idyllic green pastures, it displayed a close-up of the moon, an ivory-pocked orb against the blackness of space. The adjacent wall was lined with a regiment of framed Intellect Ltd. ads from past and present. The ads read slogans such as, "The future is in our hands," and "Mind if we invest?" Sam didn't feel like he was walking any longer, but floating.

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Anyone who had the privilege of entering Anton Geyer's office would be surprised to discover how minimalist it was. Sam had fantasized the interior to be chic, decorated with trinkets and inventions that stemmed from the legion of patents that Geyer owned. Instead, it was a small, square room. He couldn't tell if the back wall was a real window or not, but it looked out to Manhattan, which was raining. A dirty, circuitous trench composed of skyscrapers and tramlines.

There was only one decoration. An imageless poster that had this phrase printed in large black font:

#### TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED

One would think this adage was meant to be a reminder to Mr. Geyer. However, the way it was positioned in the room was so that, from Geyer's vantage, he could not read it. Only the people who walked by or peered inward could interpret the warning. All this information Sam gleaned in a microsecond as he entered.

Anton Geyer sat behind his desk, a tall fellow, wearing slacks, a mint-colored dress shirt, and a neon green bowtie. His face was long, like a horse, and he had a powerful jawline. Geyer raised his head as Sam entered and gave a warm, charming smile that tranquilized his nerves. He rose from his seat and swiftly offered a handshake. "Ah, Sam. Pleasure to meet you," he said with the crisp voice of a salesman.

"Likewise, Mr. Geyer," Sam returned, trying to match his positive energy. They shook hands firmly. Sam tried to balance his squeeze and wondered if it were the real Geyer he was meeting, or a robotic duplicate. Geyer had been rumored to be the target of several assassination attempts, from business enemies he made during his rise, as well as political extremists who believed that the Mind-Patent trade should be destroyed.

The two men stood there, waiting for the other to sit. A friend once told Sam it was customary to allow the interviewer to sit first, so he waited for Geyer. An awkward moment passed—and then Geyer rounded the corner of his desk and slid into the chair beside Sam's, motioning for him to sit. Automatically, he did so. It was a kind gesture of faux equality.

"Well, thanks for taking the time to meet with me. I know that you're very bus—" Suddenly, Geyer cut him off.

"You want to learn how to become successful." There was more than a hint of pleasure in his voice, as though Sam had asked him something he'd always

dreamt of answering.

Sam shifted, feeling somewhat guilty of his hidden agenda. Of course he wanted to learn how to become successful, but there was something greater at stake. He decided it would be wise to listen to Geyer talk about himself for a while. Afterward, when the moment was right, he'd slip him his pitch. Sam licked his lip, cracking a nervous smirk. "Yes. In a nutshell."

The next second, Geyer was off, expounding on his thoughts on what success took. "Well, first you've got to ask a lot of questions. Learning by rote isn't good enough, you have to understand why things work the way they do. Next, be positive. It's so easy to become cynical and think that my company sees employees like a bunch of cogs, but we don't. We take great care in observing what you do—and what return you bring to the company. Optimism and positivity can never be underestimated. Be a team player, help out your fellow co-workers, and always show up on time. I know all this must sound boring and you've probably heard it before, but these are tried and true ways of gradually rising from the junior level in a company."

Sam politely nodded at the end of each sentence, lending a thin, reserved smile. Geyer was absolutely right. His success rules were a total bore, and Sam read this treatise in many corporate-wide emails. Worse, the lessons didn't work. Maybe for the circumstances from which Anton Geyer arose, but not the context in which Sam was pitted. He toiled in a dead-end department, and it seemed that the only way to work your way up was to slit the throats of peers and kick the fingers of the people who gripped the rungs below. Two things he wasn't willing to do. He widened his grin just a little bit, trying to reject the poisonous feelings within.

"Is that how you became CEO, Mr. Geyer?"

Suddenly, Geyer let out a howl of laughter, gripping both arms of his brown leather chair. "Of course not. I built this company from the ground up. The rules are different when you take all the risk. The rewards are yours for the keeping, but so is the loss. And, of course, I came from an era when startups were legal."

"In this age, you are what you are. That's what they tell us anyway," Sam said.

Geyer scanned Sam's face. "What do you mean by that?"

Feeling found out, Sam decided to reveal his intentions. "Well, Mr. Geyer, I appreciate your advice, I really do, but there's something else I'd like to discuss... You are the largest owner of Mind-Patents in the world. I—I would like to make you an offer to purchase just one."

Geyer squinted, suddenly rising from his seat. He

walked behind his desk, clearly demarcating the lines of power, asserting his dominance in their negotiation. “And which patent is that?”

“My own. I would like to purchase the rights to my Mind-Patent back from you.” Sam leaned forward pensively, clasping his hands together. “Everyday, you buy and sell patents and derivative ideas and concepts. Through working at Intellect, I’ve saved up a hefty sum of money, and I’d like to make you an offer of five thousand credits.”

Geyer briefly meditated on Sam’s offer, then spoke. “The only reason you’d want to buy back your patent would be in the event you had an idea you wished to monetize. So, what’s the idea? You have me curious, Mr. Cites.”

“I’m not buying my patent back because I have an idea, but because I want freedom.”

“Freedom? I don’t understand what you’re talking about. You have your freedom. No one at the company is forcing you to do anything. The only thing we care about is if you come up with an idea that makes money. That’s it.”

“That’s it? That’s—that’s everything.”

“It still lies within the bounds of freedom. You’re free to think whatever you wish. What you actually do with your thoughts? That’s another story,” Geyer stated flatly.

“No,” Sam returned, somewhat regretting being so direct with Geyer, who now wore a subtle sneer. It didn’t matter—screw it—he had to get this off his chest if he was ever going to respect himself. “What you’re describing is pseudo-freedom. A peculiar kind of freedom, but at the end of the day, I’ll still have your grip wrapped around my mind. It’s subtle thought control. I’ve been self-censoring the voice within me because of the knowledge that you own whatever that pops into my head. It’s giving me a sense of... futility. What kind of freedom is that? It isn’t freedom. It’s intellectual ownership. My mind and, thus, who I am is your property.”

There was a quiet moment, and then Geyer rapped his hairy fist on the black table several times. Sam wondered if he was too honest, if this meeting would spell his termination. So what if it did? Saying what he said, out loud, to someone who had power made it all worth it.

“We paid your tuition, gave you a job, and this is how you speak to us? You were smart, and old enough to know what you were getting into. All our tools are at your disposal, including our prestigious name.”

“I was smart, but I lacked wisdom. I was too young to know what I was giving away.”

Geyer pressed a button on his desk. There was a click and hum of a machine turning on his holo-

computer. Multi-colored lights flickered, and the projection of thousands of files appeared, floating in mid-air. Geyer flipped through a series of folders until he landed on Sam’s. It bore his picture from when he was younger, more fresh faced. Below it was a row of bullet points.

“You seem to be a fine worker from what your superiors have written. You’re late from time to time, but not enough to terminate you.”

“Thanks,” Sam said weakly.

“According to my records, you’re selling yourself short. Five thousand isn’t nearly what we paid for you. I’m sure during your tenure, you’ve heard our motto. Here at Intellect, people are our greatest resource.”

“True. But how much of a fiscal return have I brought?”

“You’re right, perhaps we should merely recoup by firing you and keeping your patent.”

“... If that’s what you want to do. I can’t stop you... I mean, how would you feel if someone owned your thoughts?”

“Mr. Cites, I’m not in the freedom business, I collect intellectual property. How do you think I got into this industry? I was like you once. Working for someone else, thinking, that’s not the word, knowing that I had brilliant ideas. You’ll never get rich working for someone else. Too many people never realize that. Thank goodness. I hated the fact that another man owned me. So, I, like you, realized my true value and negotiated myself back from my previous owner and now major competitor, Neuron Inc.

Geyer glanced out the window, his eyes following a passing commuter tram. “Look not to others for power, but make your own power by being good at what you do... Now I’m on top. That’s how I know your true value. No matter how much money a mind costs, it will always be worth more than what it was bought for. Why would I allow a potential competitor like you to exist?”

“... I’m not here to compete. I—I just want to be free.”

Geyer took a long, shrewd look at Sam, trying to discern whether he was telling the truth. Though technology had come far, it was still impossible to read someone’s thoughts. For now, anyway. Just then—there was a buzz, and Victoria’s face appeared on the projector. “Mr. Geyer, your twelve fifteen is here.”

“Thank you.” Her image dissipated. Geyer flipped off the terminal. “My apologies, Sam, but I’ve got a meeting. Please, feel free to show yourself out.”

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The corridor outside Geyer's office felt colder to Sam than when he first passed through it. He felt a fog of emotions, a cross between regret and foreboding. In the end, he had failed. Now that Geyer knew his true motives and already refused his offer, there would not be a second meeting.

At least I tried, Sam thought. At least I was able to place a mirror in the face of the machine, and it recoiled because it saw the ugliness in its own reflection. He made his way past Victoria, deciding not to bother asking for a follow-up meeting.

"Mr. Cites?" she called out. Sam turned, walking to her red plastic desk.

"Yes?" He said, between tight lips.

"I believe this is yours." She slid him a piece of paper. Curiously, he lifted it off her desk. Sam had not held an actual document since he was a boy. Paper had become very expensive over the years. He read it carefully as he realized what he was holding: the certificate of ownership for his Mind-Patent. A physical copy, no less.

"Sign here," She said curtly.

"Wait." Sam stammered. "Mr. Geyer is selling my rights back to me?"

"Giving." She spoke with a hint of jealousy and handed him a digital pad. "Sign here, and at the bottom. Mr. Geyer thought you had spunk and is obliging you. But he wants to know, now that you've got your freedom, what are you going to do with it?"

As he signed, a giant grin enveloped his face. He felt like he was in a passing dream that was under threat of being pulled away the second he woke up. He returned the pad. "Is that all?"

"That's all," she said, as she went back to work as though he weren't standing there any longer. Sam tucked the document into his jacket pocket, but then took it out again and re-read the words. He closed his eyes and exhaled, feeling a giant mental chain unravel its grip from his consciousness.

Sam walked out the door and took the elevator forty floors down to an exit bridge. No one was on the expanse except for a few obese pigeons that drank from puddles left by the rain. The air was cool, and though the day was gray, Sam felt pleased. He looked skyward and could see a hint of the sun peeking down at him between thousands of jagged spires.

Finally, he had the opportunity he was waiting for. The chance to execute his big idea.

### Comments on APA-L #3074

Last week's distribution featured our first cover by LASFS member **Damon D. Brown**, who offered the artwork as a tribute to the 30th anniversary of *The Crow*, the movie adaptation of James O'Barr's comic

book series.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #62, **Matthew Mitchell** informed others of an air conditioning outage at work. Congratulations on encouraging your building managers to solve the problem quickly! This week got warm enough in my home office that I stopped wearing a zippered hoodie over my daily T-shirt. Your mentioning the death of a local attorney perhaps leading to new business reminded me of the death of a dear friend this week. Pat Moss, a wonderful man I knew through Scouts, died in his sleep of a heart attack early this week; I learned Monday morning, and it threw me all day. I haven't spent much time with him since I turned my attention to activities other than Scouting, and now I won't be able to. He was my age, so I'm considering our general mortality, but it's also inspired me to think about how I interact with the people I encounter through various activities and organizations—like the LASFS. We won't all be here forever; it's too easy to take each other for granted.



Los Angeles Times, April 13, 1956

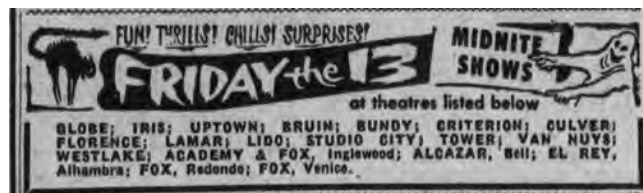
I will share your feedback with cover artist Alan White. I shall prioritize *The War of the Gargantuas* as I begin to explore the films of Russ Tamblyn. On the way home from work Tuesday, I swung by the Mar Vista Branch Library to pick up an interlibrary loan, and they had a copy of *Dancing on the Edge* on their New shelves. That was neat to see. Your identification

of the Ray Dennis Steckler aspects of *Monsters Crash the Pajama Party* and the Shirley Jackson similarities to Derek LaPorte's "The Confectioner's Taffy" is spot on, I think.

**John Hertz's** *Vanamonde* #1598 considered some milestones that occurred on June 10, as well as the Dragon Boat Festival. I wonder why the LA County Dragon Boat Festival (<https://www.losangelescountydragonboatfestival.com>) takes place in October! I will share your feedback with cover artist Tiffanie Gray. In addition to this, thank you for sharing the information about the Classics of SF at Westercon 76. (<https://westercon76.org>) I've read two of the three and have the third readily at hand. Interesting selections, all. While I won't be able to attend Westercon early next month—I'll be in Chicago and Wisconsin—I shall participate as a supporting member. Always worth doing, whatever the con, if budget allows.

In *The Winnower* #4, **Derek LaPorte** continued serializing his work in progress. I have an Ignorable Suggestion I'd like to make. Rather than reprinting the "words etched into the steel of a Trembler" before each portion, it might be helpful to open with a two- to three-sentence That Which Came Before or "Previously in..." synopsis to reorient readers. I shall take no offense if you choose not to, but I chose not to revisit the previous installment before proceeding with reading this chapter, and truth be told—I don't really remember what immediately preceded this. That's okeh, actually, and is in line with the mystifying element of the work, though it's increasingly familiar.

That said, I enjoyed the ascension with which this section began—the opposite of the descent to which I've become accustomed, which resonates with the protagonist's proposal in the past. I also appreciated that the switch didn't immediately spark the flame. Technology is fickle. Fragile. "Its scent was somewhere between death and ordure," is a wonderful sentence. The brief consideration of the relative value of people—and which tests best serve maintaining order—was intriguing. Perhaps we'll return to that. The sounds of the Grinder! I hope we return to that, as well.



*Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1956

## Emulators & Engines #15

June 21, 2024

*Emulators & Engines* is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com); 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to *Alarums & Excursions* 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.

### Solo Game Report: *Storm Weavers*

I didn't support this story-driven solo tabletop game during its Kickstarter, but plenty of people did. More than 2,500 backers pledged €130,686, funding the project in four hours. I bought my copy from Noble Knight Games just more than a year ago and finally got around to playing it over Father's Day weekend—and again on my vacation day recognizing Juneteenth.

It's a great idea, but I'm not quite sure how I feel about it. At its base, *Storm Weavers* (<https://otherworldsgames.com>) is an English translation of a Polish effort. Joanna Rozycka's translation of Pawel Dziemski's gamebook is pretty decent, though there are a few translation oddities rather than errors. I haven't yet encountered any translation challenges that lead to awkward game mechanics, but it did take my son and I a few reads to understand the difference between injuries and points of damage—there isn't any; the translator should probably have focused on points of damage rather than using the term “injuries,” especially because if you take more than three points of damage, you are pushed. At one point, we were wondering if you were automatically pushed after the third time you took damage, the third injury. That is not the case.

The game combines a relatively hefty gamebook—pages unnumbered because of the numbered gamebook sections—that seems to be about an inch and a half thick with tactical components: a handful of map cards numbered to relate to appropriate sections in the book, punch out game figures and stands to represent enemies, and a metal miniature depicting your hero, Thymin, a dwarven warrior. If you face one enemy in combat, no tactical elements are needed, but if you face more than one, you use the map cards and figures.

A few of the mechanics are somewhat frustrating. You—and enemies—can only move horizontally and vertically, not diagonally. And an enemy in an adjacent space that's diagonal to your character isn't actually adjacent, so you can't attack them. The combat mechanic is also interesting. You can take damage if you're hit—with armor class serving as a

damage sink—as well as if you attack, but miss. That also occurs for enemies. It speeds combat along a little bit, but makes attacking occasionally risky. If you miss, you might take damage, and the enemy still gets to attack you the next round.



Los Angeles Times, April 27, 1956

Thymin is pretty lightly designed in terms of character generation. You have two abilities: dexterity and wisdom. Each starts with a base of five during character creation, and you have four points to split between them. When my son Jonah first played, he prioritized wisdom (8) over dexterity (6) and suffered for it. When I first played, I split the difference for a dexterity and wisdom of 7 and fared slightly better. The second time I played, I adjusted Thymin to a dexterity of 8 and a wisdom of 6. That worked well for combat, which is dexterity driven, but my saving throw-like rolls suffered with the lower wisdom. (You need to roll 2d6 equal to or less than your wisdom to succeed.)

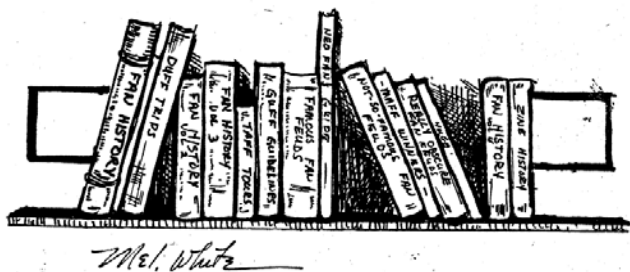
The book is broken into several sections: An introduction that serves to model game play and combat mechanics, and three distinct portions of the adventure—“Northern Border,” “Eirinn go Brach,” and a very brief epilogue before a World Guide. The game comes with three character sheets, and there's one in the book. The pencil that comes with the game has a very good eraser and the paper is of softer stock, so erasures are easily made, allowing for reuse of the character sheet.

How's the story? It's okeh. At first, the gamebook felt a little overwritten, and I was struck by how lengthy some of the text sections were, punctuating the combat scenarios. But as I proceeded, the writing became more gamebook-like. Thymin starts off serving in the Free Dwarf Company supporting King Ernan. Fomorian and wyles—which throw flame from their staffs—attack the company, and even if you slay the enemies before you, you are substantially injured and sent to the city of Udgard for healing.

There, you receive a message from your friend Zagorthor, who's imprisoned in his tower by a warlock three days north of the city. You can choose to head out to rescue him, but even though I've played the game for more than an hour or so now, I've yet to locate the tower.

I have engaged in several wilderness combat encounters as I try to make my way north through the snow and storms. I've fought wolves, Azazel the goat-horned guardian (who killed Thymin that session), werewolves, and hussies in a gully ("The Gorge")—perhaps the most interesting combat encounter. I've even rescued a portly merchant from several wolves at a dark tower, which allowed me to return to Udgard, where I could buy some armor (improving my damage-sink armor class) and a better weapon (giving Thymin a weapon bonus). But I failed to explore the underground tunnels beneath the tower because I missed my wisdom check and got frightened.

The game is fun enough that I'll likely play again, but I expect to die next session when I fight a couple of ice trolls. Their dexterity is so much better than Thymin's, even with the boost to 10 after successfully defeating the werewolves. I'm not sure the writing—or story—is interesting enough to want to explore the entire book, and the characters you encounter are pretty two dimensional. Regardless, *Storm Weavers* is an intriguing gamebook/tactical hybrid, and I'm glad that Dziemski sought to translate it from his original language.



## From the Reading Pile: Magazine Reviews

*Senet* #14 (Spring 2024)

After our discussion of *Senet* magazine in recent A&Es (*E&E* #14), I was thrilled silly to spot a copy at Kosher News in the Fairfax District when my wife and I went there recently for brunch at Canter's with a friend. The 76-page quarterly periodical is a bit dear, priced at \$23.75 as an import, but true to its cover subtitle—"Board games are beautiful"—the magazine is absolutely gorgeous.

In fact, Editor Dan Jolin was recognized as Editor of the Year—Independent and Art Director James Hunter was shortlisted as Art Director of the Year—Independent during the 2023 British Society of Magazine Editors Awards. *Senet* is a very well-designed publication, well representing the art and design of board and other games.

The Spring 2024 issue includes ample previews and reviews of games, including photography and artwork examples from game boards, cards, and other components. Of the games previewed, *Spire's End: Rangitaki*, a sequel to *Spire's End*, looks particularly promising. And the review section, Unboxed, provides coverage of *Age of Comics: The Golden Years*, which also piqued my interest (see below). *Endless Destinies: The Clockwork City* might offer options to solo players and enthusiasts of gamebooks.

Following a one-page letter column titled Points, there's a column by Tristan Hall on "Life After Crowdfunding," suggesting that *Senet* might serve game designers as well as players. But the well of the magazine—the longer features—proves most interesting.

Dan Thurot's feature article "Conflict of Interest" considers the Prisoner's Dilemma and the role it plays in game design and play, suggesting that the 1950 thought experiment "would change the face of board gaming." The piece remarks on *Diplomacy*, *Cosmic Encounter*, and *Dune* as notable examples. A sidebar discusses semi-cooperative games.

A 13-page portfolio of artwork by Weberson Santiago from Brazil also serves as an interview with and profile of the artist. His artwork is impressive, and the two-page spread is beautifully colored.

In honor of *Dungeons & Dragons*'s 50th anniversary, Matt Thrower reports on the roleplaying game's board game incarnations, including *Dungeon!*, *Lords of Waterdeep*, and others. Along the way, he takes a look at the Adventure System, miniatures and melee combat, and other roleplaying games that inspired board—and card—games.

Alexandra Sonechkina interviews David Thompson, co-designer of the *Undaunted* series,



which helped move wargames into the mainstream. The issue ends with a How to Play piece offering gameplay advice for *Hive*, and there are advertisements throughout.

*Senet* isn't just a magazine about games, though it is that. It also focuses on the experience of playing games, the history of games, game design, and the aesthetics of games. It's a more thoughtful read than *Tabletop Gaming*, perhaps its closest competitor.

The Summer 2024 issue is already available, and ordering issues online via <https://senetmagazine.com> is slightly less expensive than my newsstand find was: \$16 including postage, versus \$23.75. A four-issue subscription costs \$37 plus \$23 shipping, so you save a little bit on the per-issue cost. The magazine is only available in print.

### Card Game Report: *Comic Book Trivia*

Over Father's Day weekend, my son and I also played through Professor Puzzle's (<https://professorpuzzle.com>) *Comic Book Trivia* card game. Despite the company's assertion that it's the "world's most innovative designer and manufacturer of games and puzzles," the emphasis here is on cards rather than on "game," as the game is basically 100 questions printed on 50 cards. There weren't even any rules in the box. "Ask someone the questions," I guess. Regardless, Jonah and I enjoyed our time going through the cards—and the ensuing conversation. We laughed quite often while going through them..

The trivia questions mostly focused on mainstream comic books—the box includes the text "Do you know your Marvel from your DC?"—but there were a few surprises in the mix. We were both flabbergasted that we didn't know Wolverine's real name, for example. (Do you?) Additionally, there are a good number of questions focusing on movie adaptations rather than comic books proper, and we were occasionally thrown by questions involving actors, for example.

While we got a kick out of going through the cards, the deck has very little replay value. I'll likely repurpose some of the questions as quizzes in various fanzines before gifting the game to someone, mailing the cards to APA-L recipients, or using the cards as bookmarks.

Here's a pop quiz for readers of *E&E*!

1. Green Arrow patrols which city?
2. Originally, what color was the Hulk?
3. Over which eye does Nick Fury wear his eye patch?
4. Peter Parker lives on what street in New York City?

5. The Fantastic Four live in which tower?
6. What material is Captain America's shield made from?
7. Which of Flash's enemies uses reflections and deception to fool his opponent?
8. Which of these is not a DC Comics villain: Clock King, Swiss Army Man, Calendar Man, or Captain Boomerang?
9. Which superheroine was inhabited by the soul of an ancient Egyptian princess?
10. Wonder Woman's indestructible bracelets are made of what metal?

Send in your responses to ye olde faned, or address them in a fanzine of your own! In any event, that'll give you a sense of the kinds of questions included in the deck. I consider them among the best.



*Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1956

### The Ignorable Theme: Portraying NPC Alignment

"How do you show that an NPC is Good or Evil? Is it the same as Sweet or Nasty? I'm sure it's not the same as Pious or Impious?"

This Ignorable Theme came up at an interesting time. On the *Facebook*, in the OSR - Old School Roleplaying group, a participant recently posted sample artwork from the 2024 *D&D Player's Handbook* depicting orcs. It's kicking up quite a bit of

dust, and the post drew more than 225 comments over the course of five hours.



Los Angeles Times, May 11, 1956

While the discussion focuses more on the portrayal of creatures, monsters, or races in the game—and seems to primarily concentrate on whether *D&D* is still worth playing or has become too saccharine, its edges too smooth (“Not my *D&D*,” some say)—the comment thread piqued my interest when considering the Ignorable Theme.

Unless we’re focusing on races, species, or creatures that can be utilized as characters, traditionally, there have been creatures that are presumed to be inherently evil. There’s an explicit alignment assigned in the *Monster Manual* or similar book, though a reaction chart might dictate behavior more or less in line with their alignment.

Non-player characters, which might be more likely to represent the races available to players, might not be as cut and dried. As a DM over the years, I’ve

probably stuck to stereotypes as a form of shorthand too often, telegraphing their utility or danger. Good NPCs might initially be kind or helpful, speak clearly, seem upstanding or upright, and might otherwise act in stereotypically good ways in terms of dress, mannerisms, possessions, and so forth.

Evil NPCs, then, might be more likely to initially act or dress in a stereotypically evil manner. They might have sallow faces, arched eyebrows, or darker clothing. They might speak in an unctuous or hissing manner. They might have shifty eyes or otherwise seem like they’re not trustworthy. They might slouch! I shudder a little to think how many stereotypes I’ve utilized over the years as shorthand.

Unless a character has cast Know Alignment, it’s unreasonable to think that a party might be able to tell immediately who’s good or evil based on dress, mannerisms, posture, or other aspects alone. While I’m sure I’ve botched this opportunity multiple times, this realization, which seems almost silly, is somewhat liberating.

Characters—and players—cannot know whether an NPC is good or evil until they act or behave in a good or evil manner. Their actions are what matters. And even seemingly small, everyday actions might not be enough to determine whether someone is good or evil. At most, such evidence might suggest that someone leans toward good or leans toward evil.

I’m reminded of the prologue to Robert Jordan’s *The Great Hunt*, which features a clandestine meeting with the Forsaken Ba’alzamon that includes two Aes Sedai and at least one other Darkfriend who seems to be a noble or otherwise publicly trusted figure. Outside of that meeting, you might not know those characters are evil because they’re undercover, playing a long game, or otherwise not acting consistently evilly.

Good people can be sweet or nasty. Evil people can be sweet or nasty. I don’t think that piety comes into it much, but good or evil people can behave with piety, I suppose. (At least they do in the real world, occasionally hiding behind religion while acting contrary to their religion’s teachings.)

But I quite like the idea of no longer portraying NPCs in stereotypical manners. Maybe it’s the evil NPC who’s dressed well, seems helpful, and speaks persuasively. They show up on time. Perhaps the good NPC isn’t there when you need them, occasionally fibs, or pickpockets trinkets. There’s a lot of room on the spectrum of alignment, and at least in *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, an evil NPC could hide behind the law, while a good NPC could be misrepresented by their chaotic tendencies.

### Comments on *Alarums & Excursions* #583

In *Tantivy* dated May 3, 2024, **Lee Gold** reported that her publisher has decided not to publish her third Valhalla novel. I'm sorry to hear that, but I'm glad that you and Barry are pursuing self-publishing your own ebook. At least the book will see the light of day.

**Jim Vassilakos** and **Timothy Collinson's** *Traveller Play-By-Email* updated apans on Collinson's reversal surgery. I'm glad it went well and hope that your recovery is complete and not overly long.

In *Age of Menace* #229, **Brian Christopher Misiaszek** commented on Lin Carter's Thongor series. I've cataloged three among my books: *Thongor Against the Gods*, *Thongor in the City of Magicians*, and *Thongor at the End of Time*. I've yet to read them, the third, fourth, and fifth books in the series. I'll have to prioritize doing so!

**Spike Y Jones's** *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #453 speculated that online gaming—and perhaps its accompanying tools and resources—might not have flourished as strongly so quickly had the pandemic not occurred. That seems reasonable to me. In response to Patrick Zoch, he mentioned “Headset Fatigue After a Couple Hours of Gaming.” Even while working from home, I used to wear a headset for meetings. I just recently learned that my laptop's microphone was better than expected—and that I could participate in meetings without wearing earphones with a mic of their own. That's made an important difference in my work day, when working from home. I might have enjoyed Lee Grixit's Discord game more had I not been using the headset, though I still felt tethered to my laptop and chair for the four-hour play sessions.

Jones also considered whether *Dungeon Masters* who create their own adventures are still in the target audience for *Dungeons & Dragons*. That might indeed not be the case, with so much of *Wizards of the Coast's* focus on published adventures. I haven't assessed the state of third-party publications, but my general understanding is that that, too, concentrates on adventures, encounters, and the like rather than on alternative races or classes for players, or other DM aids. I have seen a good number of new spells and magic items, however, which I'm less interested in.

In *Reddened Stars* #32633-.8bit, **John Redden** asserted that “player success comes with their enjoyment of weaving the scenario you, as the GM, has laid out.” That seems to be a reasonable definition of success. Did they have fun?

**Mark Nemeth's** *The Seedling* #36 included photographs of cardboard tokens featuring player characters' key stats. I really enjoyed seeing those. How long ago was your first long-running group

active?

Congratulations to **Michael Cule** on becoming a great-uncle, as reported in *Mundus Vult Decepi*. I enjoyed your discussion of game master mistakes, particularly the worst examples dating back to the 1980s. I've ordered Mark Barrowcliffe's *The Elfish Gene* (Soho, 2009) to seek additional tawdry details. How did it feel to have a game you ran documented in a book?



*Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1956

**Peter Hildreth's** *Aragarth's Musings* reported that he and fellow apans Brian Christopher Misiaszek will be roommates at Gen Con. That sounds like a lot of fun. In *The Silent Temple* #32, **Dylan Capel** offered commentary on recent experiences playing *Tunnels & Trolls* and *Runequest*, which I enjoyed.

Thank you, **Lisa Padol**, for mentioning Leslie Fish's *Blake's* 7-inspired song in *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #392. You also asked about the generative AI-related artwork in Guilherme Moraes's *Press Start to Power-Up!!* (E&E #13) The play test document I've been using—ver 0.6.1\_beta (07.ABRIL.2024)—includes the following text by way of explanation: “The artworks are being done by AI just to make it visually cooler and will be replaced in the final version.”

While I haven't reached out to Moraes to inquire, my understanding is that the actual release will include original art. I don't know that the generative AI-created artwork served much function in the play test materials, but it definitely helped liven up the document, perhaps making it easier to read. Personally, however, I'm with you. There are so many artists and fanartists active and available that it's not really necessary to use AI-generated art in game materials.

I missed Lee Gold's question about using

AI-generated artwork for A&E covers but have appreciated apans' discussion of the idea. I feel the same in this regard: Unless an artist is using generative AI as a tool to do something truly original, I might prefer original human-created artwork. Two of the cover artists for APA-L utilize AI in their work: Alan White and Rev. Ivan Stang. In both cases, I think they're using it as an artistic tool rather than cribbing the work of other artists or merely aping an artistic style. White might be the best example of an artist using generative AI to pursue creative goals in an original manner. Your list of games that still include space for character art is impressive. My brush was, indeed, too broad.

When **Jerry Stratton** mentioned his "custom URL shortener" in *The Biblyon Free Press* dated June 2024, I thought I'd perhaps found an alternative to *TinyURL*! It made me chuckle when I realized he owned the hobo.es.com domain. The Carpe Librum book reviews tickled my fancy, especially your description of Lisa Goldstein's "Reader's Guide" in *Real Unreal: Best American Fantasy 3*, edited by Kevin Brockmeier. The Jack Vance, H. Rider Haggard, and Gardner F. Fox books also intrigued me.

In *The Dragon's Beard* for June 2024, **Patrick Zoch** shared a game report on playing *Age of Comics: The Golden Years* (see above). I really appreciated and enjoyed your description of the game, its game play, and various aspects of the experience. I also read and enjoyed your write-up of your *Marvel Super Heroes Adventure Game* session. I applauded the focus on original heroes rather than using Marvel characters in the game.

**Joshua Kronengold's** *Random Access* #296 discussed his "first post-50 shingles shot." I recently had my second shingles shot, roughly six months after my first (Jan. 8 and June 3). Contrary to your experience, I felt next to no side effects and empathize with your three days. I'm glad they eventually calmed down.

### Play Tips for *Storm Weavers*

I've been corresponding with Pawel Dziemski, author of *Storm Weavers*, on the *Facebook*. He offered the following ideas:

Don't neglect section 225. When your character dies, you might not actually have to stop playing—or start over!

When in Udgard, go to the inn, win gold from the orcs, and go to the blacksmith to upgrade your weapon.

Be sure to search the tower where you met the merchant.

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Los Angeles Times, June 15, 1956

## Telegraphs & Tar Pits #120

June 27, 2024

*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; [kalel@well.com](mailto: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 Senryu

A Blue Moon rising  
inflates the page count slightly.  
Apae doth abound!

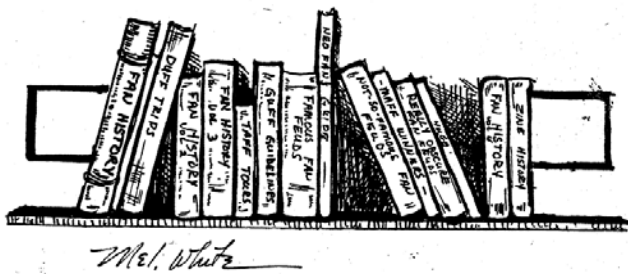
The 2024 edition of *Blue Moon Special*, a directory of apae compiled by Garth Spencer and myself, was included in last week's distribution—and is now available by the grace of Bill Burns at <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>. Previous editions are available at <https://efanzines.com/ActiveAPAs>.

Six of 38 apae in that edition—two of them mundane—are older than APA-L, and we remain the only weekly apa still going. Thank you for participating and helping to continue the weekly apahacking we've exhibited since 1964.

### Administrivia: Optical Character Recognition and July 11's Distribution

As I continue to alternate between applying OCR to LASFAPA and APA-L mailings and distributions, I'm now up to #100 for APA-L. That brings us up to mid-September 1966.

I'll be traveling July 6-13, 2024, and unable to print, collate, or mail a distribution Thursday, July 11. Rather than distribute a PDF-only edition that week, I'd like to take the week off and resume July 18. Next week's edition will mail as usually scheduled.



### From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

*The Flying Sorcerers* by David Gerrold and Larry Niven (Del Rey, 1977)

While scanning a handful of APA-L distributions

recently, I was pleased to see a reference to this 1971 novel in John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1506:

[Tim Powers's] latest, *Stolen Skies* (January 2022), contains fantasy and science fiction both. This may be defiant. . . . Stories like *The Flying Sorcerers* (Gerrold & Niven, 1971) where characters think they're in fantasy but are in science fiction, or *Rainbow Mars* (Niven, 1999) where characters think they're in science fiction but are in fantasy, are few.

I forget what inspired me to read this second printing paperback—other than Gerrold and Niven's joint authorship—but I'm glad I read it. It feels slightly on the long side but is a fun collision between fantasy and sf concepts as a stranded astronaut strives to make his way home from a world in which multiple impersonal gods, magic, elaborate curses, and a general lack of high technology seem to rule the day.

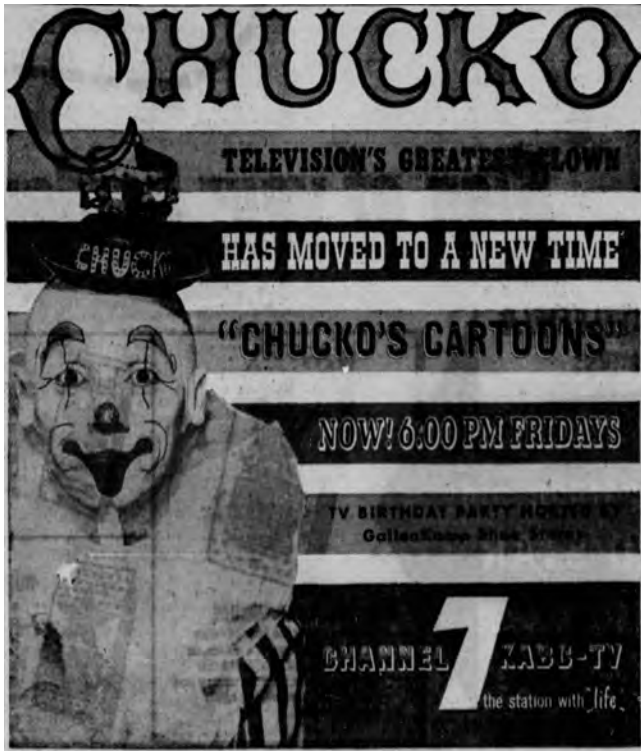
The novel is interesting for several reasons. The planet is located in a solar system in which there are two suns, and the ecology and weather are strongly affected by that. Shorelines vary, and there are flooding seasons in which the furred humanoid creatures—able to mate with humans, or at least the astronaut—seek higher ground (or tree houses) seasonally in order to survive.

The natives' interpretation of and response to the technology available to Purple, the stranded astronaut, plays an important role in the story. One of the scenes in which Shoogar, the village magician, attempts to curse Purple's flying egg—a landing craft—features vandalism so uninformed, malicious, and thorough, that I felt uncomfortable and sorrowful. Shoogar didn't know what he was doing, but he knew exactly what he was doing, and his actions effectively stranded Purple more fully, the craft made inoperable.

As Purple resigned himself to life among the natives, their social norms came more into play, and the visitor found himself locked in an unintended rivalry with Shoogar, whose position in the community was threatened by the rival "magician." Purple's presence led to an acceleration of industrialism and technological development as Purple worked with the natives to develop a flying machine to return to the north, where he might be better able to signal to his mothership. Specialized labor roles shifted, the concept of the production line was introduced, and monetary currency emerged.

Bicycles, interestingly, had already been invented by two characters named Wilville and Orbur, the sons of Lant, who eventually becomes Speaker of his village. Those two names are good examples of the many tuckerisms that pepper the novel. The *Wikipedia*

entry for the book lists many of them, which include references to early sf writers, contemporaries of Gerrold and Niven, and other authors, as well as amusing outliers. For example, when Purple’s spacecraft crash landed on the planet, it killed a neighboring rival magician named Dorthi. The hot-air balloon (well, helium) constructed to return Purple to the north might be another nod to the writing of L. Frank Baum.



*Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1956

Gerrold has addressed contemporary reviews of the book on Amazon, some of which challenge the portrayal of women in the novel. Male natives are able to take multiple wives and don’t necessarily treat them well, but women, too, are swept up in the industrialization of the society. “[T]he book is a satire on the industrial revolution,” Gerrold posted on the *Facebook* in 2019. “Its portrayal of women as property is a satirical allegory about the cultural attitudes toward women—attitudes that changed when women were allowed to become a powerful part of the industrial workforce.”

I was unable to detect what had been written by Gerrold and what had been written by Niven, which I took as a good sign that their collaboration was sound. *The Flying Sorcerers* is a good read and—as Hertz indicated—a great example of what can happen when sf and fantasy meet.

***Thornhedge*** by T. Kingfisher (Tor, 2023)

While at the library recently to pick up an interlibrary loan—a book about comets, inspired by reading Jules Verne’s “Off on a Comet” in the first issue of *Amazing Stories (Faculae & Filigree #32)*—I picked up several selections from the shelves of the Science Fiction section to better utilize the library. While I’ve had a copy of Kingfisher’s *Nettle & Bone* for some time, I’ve yet to read it, and this novella—the first book she sold to Tor, but not the first published—serves as a wonderful introduction to her work.

*Thornhedge* is largely a retelling of *Sleeping Beauty*, which I didn’t know when I checked it out. While I’ve actively avoided reading modern retellings of fairy tales, I seriously enjoyed this book. The general gist is that a fey human character named Toadling has been entrusted to protect a young woman asleep in a tower. A wandering knight of sorts is intrigued by old stories about the tower and sleeping beauty—and seeks it out.

But the sleeping beauty is actually a malevolent changeling who, if wakened, could bring about the end of all life. The story explores the importance of stories, the allure and appeal of beauty, and the developing relationship between Toadling and Halim, our aspiring hero.

What I enjoyed most about the book was Toadling’s re-emergence into human society, her initial detachment and lack of knowledge perhaps stemming from the long stretches of time she’d spent in toad form. Kingfisher’s depiction of magic as an almost liquid force was also intriguing, as was the back story detailing Toadling’s life among the fairies and joint position in the fey and human realms. The idea that the mortail remains of malevolent changelings could negatively affect the landscape and world around them was also interesting.

The Epilogue of the novella includes an aspect of the *Ugly Duckling*, which suggests a return to the human realm, and perhaps further adventures or misadventures with Halim. All in all, a satisfying story easily read in an evening or two. Perhaps I shouldn’t so actively avoid retellings of fairy tales!

### **From the Reading Pile: Short Stories**

As a supporting member of the upcoming Worldcon in Glasgow (<https://glasgow2024.org>), I’m able to vote for the Hugo Awards and recently downloaded the Hugo packet. I won’t have time to read or watch everything by the July 20 deadline, but I plan to vote in at least the Short Story, Semiprozine, Fanzine, Fan Writer, and Fan Artist categories, given my interests. If I have enough time, I might also focus on the Novelette and Novella categories.



So far, I've read the Short Story nominations. They include "Answerless Journey" by Han Song, translated by Alex Woodend; "Better Living Through Algorithms" by Naomi Kritzer; "How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bath tub" by P. Djèlí Clark; "The Mausoleum's Children" by Aliette de Bodard; "The Sound of Children Screaming" by Rachael K. Jones; and "Tasting the Future Delicacy Three Times" by Baoshu, translated by Xueting C. Ni.

Song's "Answerless Journey," a translation of a 1995 short story, originally appeared in the 2023 Patrick Parrinder- and Yao Haijun-edited anthology *Adventures in Space*. It's a mysterious tale about two—perhaps three—astronauts who regain consciousness on what might be a spaceship. They don't remember who they are, what they're doing, or why they're there, and the story addresses the efforts they take to figure out what's going on, as well as the increasing tensions inherent in their situation.

"Better Living Through Algorithms" by Naomi Kritzer was originally published in the May 2023 issue of *Clarkesworld* (<https://clarkesworldmagazine.com>). A relatively near-future tale, it considers the impact that mobile apps and artificial intelligence might have on the health and happiness of people using them.

P. Djèlí Clark's "How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bath tub" first appeared in the January-February 2023 edition of *Uncanny Magazine*. (<https://www.uncanny-magazine.com>) Written in the style of Jules Verne or Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the story takes on the potential effects of unwittingly collaborating with a Captain Nemo-like character. Readers interested in decolonial sf might find the work worth reading.

*Uncanny* strikes again, represented by "The Mausoleum's Children" by Aliette de Bodard, which appeared in its May-June 2023 issue. The protagonist wanders into a protected zone, where she encounters armed drone guards while confronting memories of her past—and waking a previously undetected power.

Rachael K. Jones's "The Sound of Children Screaming" was initially published in the October 2023 edition of *Nightmare Magazine*. (<https://www.nightmare-magazine.com>) While I generally find *Nightmare*'s content warnings preceding each story distracting, this piece might actually warrant one. It considers the negative effects of ready access to firearms and multidimensional travel, bringing fantasy elements to a real-world political and public safety debate.

And "Tasting the Future Delicacy Three Times" by Baoshu originally appeared *Galaxy's Edge* #13 (March 2023). (<https://book.douban.com/series/>

43484) The three stories concentrate on the culinary experience, privilege, and virtual reality.

I won't tell you how I'd rank them or how I plan to vote, but they're all worth reading. So seek out the sources and consider checking out the periodicals on an ongoing basis. It intrigued me that *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, *Asimov's Science Fiction*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* didn't have stories included among the nominations.



—William Rotsler

### Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

#### *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*

I've been reading Frank Dietz's new book *Monsters, Movies and Me* (BearManor, 2024), and the first issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* he ever encountered was #48. In that issue, there's a monster parody comic story titled "The Monster from One Billion B.C.," so I—in a stretch of imagination—watched this 1953 movie featuring special effects by Ray Harryhausen.

The film is based on a 1951 short story by Ray

Bradbury, “The Fog Horn,” originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. It details the aftermath of a nuclear bomb test in the Arctic Circle that releases a Rhedosaurus from its icy state of suspended animation. The creature makes its way down the eastern seaboard of North America, afflicting ships at sea, a lighthouse, and at least one coastal community before it reaches New York City.

Much of the movie concentrates on a scientist who witnessed the dinosaur after the bomb test attempting to persuade others that what he saw wasn’t the result of a head injury or other trauma. He finally persuades an aged academic and his beautiful assistant (Paula Raymond)—but the creature reaching New York is evidence enough.

Harryhausen’s special effects are wonderful, from the initial visuals of the freed Rhedosaurus and its dramatic encounter with the lighthouse to its destructive presence in New York, where it cuts a swath across lower Manhattan, including Wall Street. The scenes at the end of the movie at Coney Island, where the Coney Island Cyclone fulfills a dramatic purpose, is delightful.

Raymond’s career was interrupted by a 1962 car accident on Sunset Boulevard in which the rear view mirror severed her nose. After extensive plastic surgery and recovery, she resumed acting, though she proved somewhat accident prone.



*Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1956

### ***The Ghost of Frankenstein***

This 1942 Universal picture, the fourth Frankenstein movie, was also featured in *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #48. That issue’s Giant Famous Monsters Filmbook offers an almost 30-page prose retelling of the movie, including multiple stills from the flick. In 1967, before the wide availability of video cassettes, DVDs, and streaming media, that might have been as close as you could get to seeing the movie in many parts of the country.

Starring Lon Chaney Jr. as the monster and Bela Lugosi as Ygor, it picks up where 1939’s *Son of Frankenstein* left off, the monster encased in sulfur. Villagers want to destroy Frankenstein’s castle, threatened by Ygor’s capering presence, and Ygor frees the monster to seek out the second son of the titular creator in order to reinvigorate the monster.

Instead, the second son decides to transplant a

non-criminal brain into the monster—frustrating Ygor to no end—attempting to compensate for his father’s creation. But Ygor doesn’t want to lose his best friend. Unfortunately, the brains are swapped, and the monster ends up even more dangerous than he was previously. At least for a time.

It’s not a bad sequel, though we’re ever more distant from the source material, and the pairing of Chaney and Lugosi works well. The scenes in which the monster interacts with the bullied little girl, Cloestine Hussman, are particularly effective, echoing more traumatic and emotionally effective scenes in the original *Frankenstein*. And the use of gas to asphyxiate various characters throughout the film is suspenseful.

The movie ends in a manner similar to its predecessors, though four additional movies were to follow. The flick gets its title from a scene in which the son of Frankenstein has a vision of his father, who imparts advice. In the Frankenstein family, the sins of the father certainly overshadow the accomplishments of his children.

### ***She Freak***

Also featured in *Famous Monsters of Filmland* #48, this 1967 exploitation movie was relegated to a single still image on the inside front cover. It’s one of the slowest movies I’ve ever seen, and I recommend it strongly to people who enjoy watching carnival workers set up and tear down carnivals, or walking through carnivals, their midways, and other attractions.

In fact, the movie was filmed at the Kern County Fair in Bakersfield. The opening scenes were filmed at the California State Fair in Sacramento, and additional footage was shot at the Ventura County Fair. At the beginning of the movie, the filmmakers thank West Coast Shows, a carnival rides and attractions company that operated from 1948-71 and was, at the time, the largest “truck show” in the United States.

Outside of that, the movie is mostly tease and little payoff, kind of like an actual Ten-in-One. An outright remake of Tod Browning’s 1932 *Freaks*, the gist of the flick is that a disgruntled waitress leaves her job to join a traveling carnival, where she works as a waitress. She dallies with a carnival worker—a “ride guy” who runs the Ferris wheel—and eventually marries the operator of the Ten-in-One.

After her ride guy lover stabs her husband to death, she takes over the business, displaying her distaste for the “freaks” in the show, including a little person named Shorty who told her husband about her affair. He and his fellow freaks exact their revenge on her, leading to the dramatic final scene—and the

photograph featured in *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

Despite the actual appeal of the mid-1960s carnival footage, *She Freak* is a pale shadow of *Freaks*. Though visually stimulating, the ending isn't as strong as that of *Freaks* or *Nightmare Alley*. (T&T #7) The movie premiered in Los Angeles as a double feature with *The Brides of Fu Manchu*. Intriguingly, the actors who played the bigoted female protagonist and Shorty pursued a secret relationship for nine years, even producing a son.

### ***The Sons of Hercules in the Land of Darkness***

I watched this while folding laundry last weekend. A repackaging of the 1964 peplum *Hercules the Invincible* (aka *Ercole l'invincibile*), the movie is a stitched-together two parter that aired as part of *The Sons of Hercules* syndicated television package. The series repackaged 13 Italian movies with a standardized theme song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVxkVD08ugA>) and voiceover narration contextualizing which son of Hercules was featured.

Starring ill-fated Dan Vadis as Ercole (aka Argolese or Hercules), this sword-and-sandal flick sends our hero on a quest for the tooth of a dragon. Encountering a witch who also seeks the tooth, Hercules succeeds. Upon returning to the king, Hercules finds that he and his people have been abducted by a neighboring tribe.

Accompanied by the comic relief survivor Babar, Hercules seeks to free the prisoners, thereby earning the hand of the king's daughter in marriage. There isn't much to recommend this movie. Vadis is relatively slow and lumbering as a hero, Babar's comedy doesn't adequately distract from that, and visually, there's little of interest.

Though the scene with the witch was dramatically lit, the dragon—a man in a rubber suit—fell far short of Ray Harryhausen's work in *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* above. Thankfully, the cannibalistic tribe of kidnapers resides in a mountain, an inactive volcano that proves more active at the end of the flick.

While Hercules emerges victorious in the movie, Vadis's life was challenging. After moving on to spaghetti westerns after the decline of sword and sandal, he was found dead in a car in the desert near Lancaster in the late 1980s, victim of a drug overdose.

### **Ignorable Theme: Fannish Signifiers**

"When out and about, do you wear or carry any signifiers of being a fan? How do people respond?"

The best fannish signifier, of course, is reading books—not ebooks—comic books, and magazines while in transit, traveling, or otherwise in public. Whenever I see someone reading a book, I am curious

what book they're reading and usually try to find out. You cannot do that with an ebook. And while traveling, I often buy *Mad* magazine reprints on the newsstand. During a recent trip, a fellow sitting across from us at the gate struck up a conversation about reading *Mad* as a result. We talked a while, and I handed him the magazine so he could check it out. That situation is an ideal outcome of reading in public.



*Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1956

I also tend to wear T-shirts that represent my fannish interests. Midweek this week, for example, I wore a Robert Crumb Mr. Natural T-shirt ([https://www.northernsun.com/Mr-Natural-TShirt-\(8388\)](https://www.northernsun.com/Mr-Natural-TShirt-(8388))) And on my black zip-up hoodie, my everyday outer layer for work—so I'm not just wearing a T-shirt when I go into the office—I am currently wearing two fannish buttons: "Frodo Lives" and "Gandalf for President." Those one-inch pins inspired a conversation with a hotel clerk working the registration desk during a recent trip. He considered himself a fan of J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* but hadn't actually read the books yet—he was a fan of the movies, however. That's entirely okeh.

At conventions, I wear an appropriate T-shirt, whatever pins are on my hoodie, and a propeller beanie—which also sports pins. At one Loscon, that inspired a fellow participant to state, "You're not John Hertz!" The pins on my beanie currently include *Star Trek*-, *Monster Bash* magazine-, *Doctor Who*-, *Vampiress Carmilla*-, Douglas Adams-, Batman-, *Fantastic Four*-, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*-, and

the Luna Project-related buttons. People don't tend to look too closely at the pins, but there's plenty there to talk about, should they do so.

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**2nd WEEK**

Los Angeles Times, June 22, 1956

Another fine way to represent one's fannish interests involves displaying items on your desk or in your cubicle at work. One clerk at the local Department of Motor Vehicles, for example, has decorated his work area with Batman paraphernalia. (*Faculae & Filigree* #27) He and I briefly discussed his interests while transacting our business. You can also consider bumper stickers and vanity license plates—or license plate frames. Barry Gold's license plate reads "FIAWOL," for example. (*T&T* #119)

Finally, there are home decorations—and online signifiers. During LASFS meetings, I often enjoy examining the areas behind Cathy and Dean Johnson, and Gregory Lipscomb to see what they have on display. And LASFS members often select Zoom backgrounds that represent or reflect their fannish interests. Those often become topics of conversation before a meeting starts.

### Comments on APA-L #3075

My favorite part of Rev. Ivan Stang's cover—other than the slight He-Man sensibility—is the watercolor-like wash in the sky and soil.

In *Sirius Barks* #10, **Beverly Warren** returned as an eller. Welcome back! I'll have to look for *So It Goes* in back distributions as I OCR them. While I never met your husband, Bill Warren, I've long been familiar with *Keep Watching the Skies!* and refer to my copy often. And I've enjoyed meeting you and spending what time with you I have, most recently at Marty Cantor's memorial gathering at Barbara Harmon's house. (That was quite a while ago!)

Your mention of hanging out with Forrest J Ackerman in the 1960s resonated with me. I'm also currently reading Orty Ortwein's *The First Geeks: Ray Bradbury, Forrest J Ackerman, Ray Harryhausen and the Founding of Science Fiction Fandom* (McFarland, 2024), which focuses on their friendship and early fandom in the Los Angeles area, including the Science Fiction League and LASFS. I'm glad you two moved to LA—and that a "life of indolence" suits you. Hurrah for the indolent!

While Barry and Lee Gold are no longer active in APA-L, I shared your comments with them. I can empathize with "drowning in stuff." Even though I'm a slightly less older contributor, my goal is to divest myself of my accumulated books, comic books, magazines, and other items before I need to do so. My hope is that it helps me get through retirement—whenever that occurs—without being an undue burden on my family later in life.

Thank you, John Hertz and Charles Lee Jackson II, for encouraging Beverly to rejoin our ranks. I look forward to her participation. And Beverly: I hope you

recover fully and quickly from your illness and surgeries—and that the LaserDiscs sell well!

**John Hertz's** *Vanamonde* #1599 updated ellers on the Worldcon Heritage Organization's acquisition of Forrest J Ackerman's Hugo for #1 Fan Personality. Rest assured that APA-L's cover artwork is submitted by its respective artists and published with their awareness and permission. While it might be true that APA-L cover art "ought" to be previously unpublished, that is not in fact a requirement, and as OC, I am quite open to reprints. I prefer unpublished work over previously published work. I also prefer reprints over clip art, images found on the Internet, or the lack of a cover. Hopefully, we haven't discouraged Mark Bondurant from submitting future cover options. I would love to feature more of his work.

I enjoyed and appreciated your remarks on your occasional reading of prozines and the value a good editor can bring. I'll have to seek out Robert A. Heinlein's *Grumbles from the Grave*. I'll share your feedback with cover artist Alan White.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #63, **Matthew Mitchell** detailed his Father's Day weekend, specifically Friday. Lancaster, eh? Maybe we can find where Dan Vadis, above, lived while in the area. Your comments on the Ignorable Theme make me wonder whether Fandom Is Just a Goddamn Hobby—while being a fan is a way of life, regardless of one's participation in fandom. That's intriguing to me. Perhaps its one's fandom that matters, not Fandom as an organized—or disorganized—institution. I'm glad you've returned from exile, and I enjoy your presence at LASFS meetings and in these pages mightily.

I will share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown. I hope he returns to our pages soon, too! When watching *The Great Race*, I was unaware of its relationship with *The Prisoner of Zenda*, though I picked up on the silent film similarities—at least in terms of melodrama. Do you remember the name of the Newport Beach movie theater in which you saw *The Thief of Bagdad*?

The winds of Mojave sound fierce! It's been getting warmer five miles from the ocean in Culver City. Some days are quite warm, and I appreciate the air conditioning at work.

And **Joe Zeff's** *Toony Loons* #764 updated ellers on his absence last week. What a surprise it must have been to realize you'd forgotten to replace your insulin vial. I'm glad the situation was so easily addressed and that you're on the mend. While your APA-L mailings have been arriving late, I'm glad you at least have a backlog for commenting. When Marcia returns to work at Safeway, what will she do?

Isn't cottage cheese good? I recently had some

myself after a long time—and I, too, had forgotten how much I like it. Like applesauce, I find it makes a wonderful accompaniment to meals that need just a little something more. I've long considered it a diet food—eaten by my mother when I was younger—but it really can be a treat. Trying putting a little paprika or cayenne pepper powder on it, if you like such things. Or, nutmeg.



*Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1956

Given your distance from opportunities to fully embrace life as an actfan, may you continue to grace the pages of APA-L. APA-LIAWOL! I debated including *The Lone Ranger* advertisement but consider the TV program a foundational aspect of my interest in genre. If I come across any advertisements for *The Green Hornet* when I get to 1966-1967—I started with 1957 and then went back to 1956—I'll be sure to include them.

For those of you who might be unaware, Britt Reid, the Green Hornet, is the grandnephew of John Reid,

the Lone Ranger. (I don't intend to fansplain, if you do already know.) That relationship dates back to the days of the respective radio shows, both written by Fran Striker. *The Lone Ranger*, set roughly 60 years ago, first aired in 1933, and *The Green Hornet*, set in the then-current day, debuted in 1936.

Incidentally, there's a Lone Ranger Fan Club (<https://thelrfc.org>), of which I am a proud member. (Well, I just recently renewed. I'd let my membership lapse but recently came across a 2022 mailing.) There's also a group on the Facebook. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/197726660344343>)

Growing up in southern Wisconsin, my earliest fannish experiences beyond reading comic books, discovering self-published comics by way of Jules Feiffer's *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, and playing *Dungeons & Dragons* were watching television. My friend Brett introduced me to *Doctor Who* on PBS during the Tom Baker years. Even before then, I enjoyed *Shock Theater* hosted by Rick Felski as Toulouse NoNeck on WISN (12:30 p.m. local time Saturdays in 1983), and I fondly remember Sunday morning's TV lineup, which included *The Adventures of Superman*, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, *The Lone Ranger*, and I thought *The Bowery Boys*—but 1983 TV listings suggest it was just the first three from 8-9:30 a.m. local time Sundays. In any event, I could hardly ever watch *Shock Theater*, and I could only watch *The Adventures of Superman*, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, and *The Lone Ranger* if we didn't go to church, so that was catch as catch can.

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Los Angeles Times, June 29, 1956

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Los Angeles Times, June 15, 1956



## The Explosion Containment Umbrella #21

June 28, 2024

*The Explosion Containment Umbrella* is an apa commentzine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; [kalel@well.com](mailto: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.

### Nonfiction for Science Fiction Readers

By Cy Chauvin

You might well ask what kind of nonfiction science fiction readers prefer. Of course, books about science. But just any kind of science?

Obviously, books about astronomy and physics have always been popular. But other branches of science are less so. Isaac Asimov was a biochemist and tried to include chemistry in some of his sf, but chemistry in itself never interested me.

More broadly, it is the unexpected science that interests me. The insight gained from left field. The exceptions to what is generally perceived to be normal. Or branches of science new to us. Science working where we don't expect it.

And then, nonfiction about books. How much more basic?

Another thing I've noticed: I rarely buy nonfiction books, but instead borrow them from the library. It is rare for me to love a work of nonfiction, but easy to be "interested" in it. I will also skim or even skip portions of a nonfiction book, but I never do that when reading fiction. I also think of biography as another category altogether (which it is), so it is not covered here. But it seems to have traits of both nonfiction and a novel (I suppose because it tells the story of someone's life). I don't usually like it when authors include themselves in nonfiction, unless they are an actual scientist working on a project. But if they are just an amateur visiting a scientific site, their narration usually is superficial and obvious.

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***Improbable Destinies: Fate, Chance, and the Future of Evolution*** by Jonathan Losos (Riverhead, 2017)  
As I mentioned, I often skim through nonfiction books, especially if they are not narratives, and just read what interests me. That is what I did with this book.

The author makes the point that convergence in evolution (which means the parallel evolution of

certain characteristics or types of animals) is not unusual, but common, perhaps the norm. This convergence is indicated in such examples as the native dingo (marsupial dog) in Australia, caffeine-producing plants that have evolved three times, and the similarity between eyeballs in octopuses and humans. Convergence is a dominant pattern in evolution. In Australia, the marsupials have evolved to fill niches that are similar in looks and habits to placental animals elsewhere: moles, flying squirrels, and groundhogs.



Los Angeles Times, June 15, 1956

Then Losos jumps over (or rather I jumped over) to a discussion of extraterrestrial biology and what it might be likely to bring. He quotes these predictions of what that intelligent life might be like from biologist Edward Wilson:

Be terrestrial [land based] because the development of technology would have required harnessing a transportable form of energy, such as fire. Be large because large brains are needed for neural processing necessary for great intelligence. Rely on visual and auditory systems for communication because these are the most effective ways of transmitting signals over long

distances. Have a large head mounted at the front of the body. The head would be big to contain the large brains, as well as the sensory organs used to survey surroundings. Have jaws and teeth for procuring prey, but not overly large ones. The social cooperation required for a species to develop advanced civilization would guarantee that prey capture and defense were accomplished through cooperative means and intelligence, rather than by simple brute force. Possess a small number of limbs or other appendages, with at least one pair with pulpy tips for sensitive touch and manipulation.

The point is that convergent evolution in various places on Earth means that carbon-based life on other planets is likely to evolve into similarly shaped and functioning life on other planets. Just when I was beginning to doubt my faith in 1950s science fiction! We can still look for humanoid life forms in outer space.



*Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1956

***Tales from the Underground: A Natural History of Subterranean Life*** by David W. Wolfe (Basic, 2001) There is more life down there, underground, than we all suspect. A group of microbiologists went down into the deepest mine in the world, the East Driefontein gold mine in South Africa, more than two miles deep, and found microbes in a black vein of rock, believed to have been laid down by an ancient reef. The temperature of rock surfaces at this depth was 140 degrees Fahrenheit! Many of the microbes

“breathed in” iron oxide (rust). Others exhaled methane (“natural” gas) as a waste product.

Wolfe makes the point that many scientists now believe that life on early Earth originated underground rather than in the shallow oceans. In the oceans, they would have been exposed to meteorite bombardment, volcanic eruptions, and intense ultraviolet radiation (there was no ozone layer at that time).

Of particular interest is Wolfe’s discussion of “lithotrophs” or “rock-eaters”, which live off of the rocks themselves. “They obtain their carbon from carbon dioxide gas in a process that is similar to photosynthesis in some ways. However, unlike plants, lithotrophs are in the dark, so they derive their energy by stripping off electrons from the atoms of inorganic minerals in the surrounding rocks, or from hydrogen atoms of hydrogen gas in the environment.”

Also amazing is the revision to the “tree of life” made by the discovery that some bacteria-like creatures really are not—genetically—like bacteria at all, and as distinct genetically as we are—so that scientists now have a new branch of life for them: Archaea. (The three major branches are Archaea, Bacteria, and Eukarya—the latter including all animals, plants, and fungi.)

Still another is the intimate symbiosis between nearly all plants and a type of fungi. The delicate, super-thin mycorrhizae of some types of fungi provide subterranean corridors that transport minerals and moisture between plants and fungi, and penetrate farther and deeper into rock than the plants’ own roots can. The book becomes less interesting when the author writes about prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and burrowing owls, which all suffer from habitat loss, simply because it’s a much more familiar story.

Think what Daniel F. Galouye, author of *Dark Universe*, could have done with this information if he had it available when he wrote his novel 40 years before the publication of Wolfe’s book.

***The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900*** by David Edgerton (Oxford, 2006)

Don’t you enjoy it when, in a novel about an invasion by aliens with super weapons, someone revives an ancient technology like a boomerang and then wins the day? This book was mentioned in passing in Jo Walton’s *What Makes This Book So Great*, but not actually reviewed, and that’s how I found out about it. It is a nonfiction book that offers a counterhistory to what is usually offered about new inventions like the steam engine, airplanes, nuclear power, and the Internet, and how those inventions have radically changed everything. Instead, the author offers

numerous examples of how all of those technologies took much longer to take effect and describes how the older technology has not gone away.

At the beginning of the book, Edgerton cites the case of NASA's X-43A space airplane going to Mach Seven in March 2004. He offers the information that "every few weeks between 1959 and 1968 B-52's took off... with three X-15s under their wings. Once high up the X15s fired their rocket engines and were flown by twelve 'research pilots' in pressurized space suits, reaching Mach 6.7 and touching the edge of space."

More interesting yet are the many examples of more ordinary day-to-day technologies ("things") like washing machines, stoves, refrigerators, etc., that do not essentially change. In some cases, the exact same models are manufactured decade after decade. There are also interesting examples from the Third World, or as Edgerton prefers to call it, the poor world, such as the rickshaw, still in use. He also mentions H.G. Wells and George Orwell!

***Life on Mars: What to Know Before We Go*** by David Weintraub (Princeton, 2018)

This book details the history of the search for life on Mars, from the first astronomers with telescopes until the Mars rover Curiosity. I found little that was new to me, except in some minor details.

Weintraub explains, for instance, how scientists determine if meteorites are from Mars—by comparing gas bubbles found in the rock with gas from Mars, by comparing isotopes of oxygen, and the X-ray spectrum of the rocks. He eventually debunks the famous Allan Hills 84001 meteorite from Mars with the fossils, along with all the reports of methane on Mars. (You eventually get quite tired of methane.)

Perhaps the most important insight contained in the book is how the expectation of finding life on Mars has influenced the scientific process. Because we expected to find life on the planet, the seasonal darkening of the planet from equator to the poles had to be vegetation, the dark lines across the face of Mars had to be canals, the tiny worm-like formations in the meteorite were fossils, and the methane emissions are the result of life. In fact, the search for life might prevent humanity from bringing life to Mars (or at least delay it), which is my disappointment.

By the way, the author does seem to know his science fiction, citing a number of authors, including a Greg Bear short story about Mars of which I'd not heard before.

***The Soviet Space Program: First Steps—1941-1953*** by Eberhard Rodel (Schiffer, 2018)

This is a very well-illustrated book about the

beginnings of the Soviet space program, which—according to this account—received tremendous help from the German rocket scientists that developed the V-2 rocket in Peenemünde. The rocket was actually referred to internally by the German scientists as the "A-4."

In October 1946, more than 5,000 German rocket experts in various specialized areas were taken against their will to the Soviet Union. The usual postwar pictures of Berlin and other areas in Germany show such terrible destruction that you can't imagine how anything functioned, yet a large number of specialized factories were still operating—and I don't mean just underground slave labor camps.

The Soviet scientists were aghast at and envious of all the precision equipment and scientific apparatus the Germans had, which they took to develop their own rocket program. The German scientists also made a number of helpful proposals, even though they were forbidden to talk to each other—and Moscow then forbade the Soviet scientists to make any more references to "Germany" in their reports!

Unfortunately, this book is appallingly translated, or perhaps it was appallingly written and needs to be rewritten in English. Perhaps it is too specialized, as well. I found it at my local library.



*Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1956

***When Books Went to War*** by Molly Guptill Manning (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014)

Recreation for soldiers was very limited during World War II, and one of the few options that were portable and relatively inexpensive was reading. At first, groups organized book drives, but the books were mainly hardcovers. Not only were not enough collected, but they were not of a convenient size to be read by soldiers in the field.

Soon, a program was set up to produce a wide variety of books in a convenient size for soldiers. Those were new paperbacks, produced wider than taller, with two columns of type and stapled bindings. Paper rationing was in effect, so that restriction had to be factored in as well. (In 1943, publishers were allocated only 37.5 percent of the paper they used in 1939.) The Army Service Editions (ASE) were designed to fit into a soldier's hip or breast pocket. Sizes included 6 1/2 inches by 4 1/2 inches, and 5 1/2 inches by 3 3/8 inches. The books were printed on

printing presses used for magazines, two on each page, one above the other, then sliced in two by a horizontal cut.

Interestingly, one of the companies that printed them was Street & Smith, which published *Astounding Science Fiction* (now *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*) and other pulp magazines. But in terms of science fiction, what was published was mostly ordinary: H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs (some Tarzan books), and Edgar Allan Poe. The three exceptions were *Donovan's Brain* by Curt Siodmak, *When Worlds Collide* by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer, and *The Dunwich Horror and Other Weird Tales* by H.P. Lovecraft. Other horror titles included *Frankenstein*, *Night Life of the Gods* by Thorne Smith, and a collection of ghost stories by M.R. James.

I was surprised by the inclusion of Lovecraft, because I thought he did not become popular until much later. A couple of books by August Derleth were also published as ASE, although those appear to be mysteries. One of the most requested books was *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith, about a 12-year-old girl growing up in a boarding house in Brooklyn—perhaps not what you might expect soldiers to request. But they were homesick.



Los Angeles Times, June 22, 1956

### Comments on eAPA #242

The caption to Jose Sanchez's cover for this distribution reminded me of the Topps 1959 *Funny Monsters* and 1973 *Creature Feature* trading cards. Both paired either colorful drawings or black-and-white photos from Universal monster movies with occasionally inane japes and quips. You'll die laughing!

I was a little late to do so, reading eAPA just now rather than when it first arrived, but I reached out to William McCabe on the *Facebook* and sent an email to the Birmingham Science Fiction Group to see whether any local members have been in touch with him lately. (I heard back from Theresa Derwin and

Carol Goodwin, who indicated somewhat recent contact and activity online.) Mr. McCabe, I hope you're on the mend!

In *Sorry, I'm Sick*, **William McCabe** described his then-recent health concerns. By now, I hope that whatever healthcare or surgery needed to occur has happened, and that you're well on the way to recovery. It sounds like a frustrating situation, especially with the weekend and bank holiday.

**Ahrvid Engholm's** *Intermission* #143.5 reported that he's been in touch with Åke Schwartz, publisher of Sweden's first fanzine. What a wonderful experience that must have been! I'm sorry to hear about your computer woes—how has the solution progressed?—but I'm glad you were able to publish this half-issue. Because what an issue it is: All History Corner.

I enjoyed Schwartz's first-person account of his early fanac, especially because he and his friends didn't have other fannish friends but subscribed to *Häpna!* and *Galaxy Science Fiction* and otherwise pursued books and movies of the time. The content of the issues as detailed suggest a solid balance of fannish science content, short fiction, and UFO-related material, which makes sense given Schwartz's later involvement with UFO Sweden. Have you seen back issues, or scans thereof? Fanac.org might be interested.

In *Wild Ideas* #48, **Henry Grynsten** considered the amount of science in science fiction, as well as the utility of the phrases "speculative fiction"—which one fellow participant in the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society and APA-L prefers—and the older "science fantasy." I remember seeing and enjoying the 1997 movie *Cube*, which was notable at the time for being a Canadian production.

I agree with your contention that pursuing assistive technologies in an overly active fashion could be dangerous. "When we don't have to do those things by mental power, we will lose it and become even more dependent on technology until it will be a rare talent to remember faces, for example," you wrote. I already find that to be the case at times. Say a person forgets which actor played a role in a movie. How long do we spend trying to remember before looking it up online? I often try not to look something up for as long as I can, utilizing various memory hooks to try to release the memory. My suspicion is that we're decreasingly able to do such things. Why learn—or know—something if we can look it up quickly and easily?

One of the things my wife and I have been enjoying about the Netflix series *Ripley*—based on the writing of Patricia Highsmith—is how much long, drawn-out time is spent on the often neglected

logistics needed to clean up after a crime. Sometimes, the character Tom Ripley just sits there, looking around the room, thinking about what to do next and perhaps seeing something else he needs to tidy up. That attention to detail, while not quite “eating meals, WC visits, shaving,” adds a lot to the story, as well as viewers’ sense of the character.

Your exchange with Garth Spencer about the expectations of parents resonated with me. Now that my son is 20 and attending college in Tokyo, navigating the changing parent-child relationship has been somewhat fun and frustrating. My wife and I are still figuring out how to parent an adult child, but the situation is no longer what it was when he was living with us and still in high school or younger, for sure. In addition to the role that nature and nurture play in a person’s development, people also become who they are on their own, sometimes regardless of parenting. We don’t always choose to apply what we’ve learned.

In the main essay, “Science Fantasy,” Grynnsen drew on a list of sf themes from *Wikipedia*, reminding me of my own work trying to categorize sf. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #20-21 and #117) Since starting that effort, I’ve found that Jack Speer developed a Decimal Classification for Fantasy Fiction, which Alastair Cameron expanded with his Fantasy Classification System. Samuel D. Russell’s *A Decimal Classification of Fantastic Fiction* also approaches the challenge. If I continue to pursue my effort, it’ll be to update the prior work of those contributors to include themes that might not have existed in the 1940s or 1950s, rather than come up with my own.

In any event, our fellow eAPAn considers the role of pseudoscience or speculative science—or technological development—that isn’t necessarily evidence based, suggesting that the result is more fantasy than sf. He does so focusing on a handful of topics—superintelligence, advanced civilizations, interstellar travel, first contact, and conscious robot—that he then cross-references with the initial list of themes.

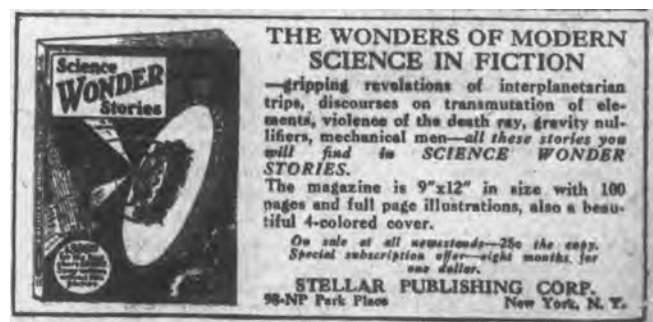
While I found the piece interesting, I wonder, perhaps, whether we’re taking the genre too seriously. Is plausibility the standard against which writing should be judged? Who makes that determination: scientists? Is there a centralized board of arbiters or experts? (I know you’re not proposing such.) What if something previously thought implausible turns out to be plausible given future scientific and technological advancements? “As science fiction was largely born out of a mistaken idea of unlimited progress, sf will turn out to be based mostly on fantasy,” you wrote. Is that—the end basis—such a bad thing? (A slightly

more interesting question to me is, where did the idea of unlimited progress come from? Who benefits from that?)

At the end of the piece, you yourself suggest we shouldn’t take sf so seriously. Do we? I don’t think that sf readers or fen think that sf is entirely predictive—or educational—any more, despite the genre’s early focus on both. Regardless, media coverage of the genre, as well as journalistic writing about scientific and technological developments, continues to focus on that predictive aspect. “Such and so has moved outside the realm of science fiction.” Perhaps the presumption of prediction might be antique. Otherwise, your essay is logically consistent internally. If you accept your premises as true, the outcome is reasonable.

Garth Spencer’s *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #222 caused me to return to *MeWe* for the first time in about two years. The National Fantasy Fan Federation encouraged members to get involved there instead of on the *Facebook* at one time, but my interest and involvement waned. People seem to still be there! So I’ll check out *Across the Fandomension*. I’ll also look for the *Discord* channel.

Good luck as you continue to work to revive the Canadian Unity Fan Fund and con connections. (I knew my advice was not overly helpful.) At least 2025, next year, is in the future. That’s helpful. Your remark that “people will have to migrate uphill, more than northwards” reminded me of David Gerrold and Larry Niven’s novel *The Flying Sorcerers*. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #120) In the book, they do just that, seasonally.



*Los Angeles Evening Post-Record*, Oct. 9, 1929



# 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). Official UFO Website at <https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com> and the United Fanzine Organization Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tfrags>. Newsletter \$3.50 for non-members, \$20 for 6-issue subscription.



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**THE TRIUMVIRATE, VOLUME 3** (\$7.00 on Amazon.com, or PayPal \$7.00 to david.oliver.kling@gmail.com ) David Kling's absorbing sf/fiction zine includes a rare old comic strip from Steve Keeter and Steve Shipley – "The Mexican Beer Bandido" is politically incorrect, but was made during a more naive and innocent time (the 1980s). Also included: "Crimson" – Kerry Perdy's gripping story of a downed airship pirate and her adventure under a rain of blood; Larry Johnson's "Hands On Experiment", and much more!



**THE TRIUMVIRATE, VOLUME 4** (\$7.00 on Amazon.com, or PayPal \$7.00 to david.oliver.kling@gmail.com ) David Kling's "Journal of Fantasy, Science Fiction, & Horror" continues! Included "Ghost of a Chance," in which a man is led into a surreal world by his father's ghost; Robert Henry's "The Boy in the Wood," a magical adventure in a forest setting"; David Kling's own "Whispers from the Abyss," in which "a cosmic exploration turns dark." Amazing sf/fantasy adventure providing hours of great reading!



