

The Stf Amateur 13



The Stf Amateur 13
October 2024

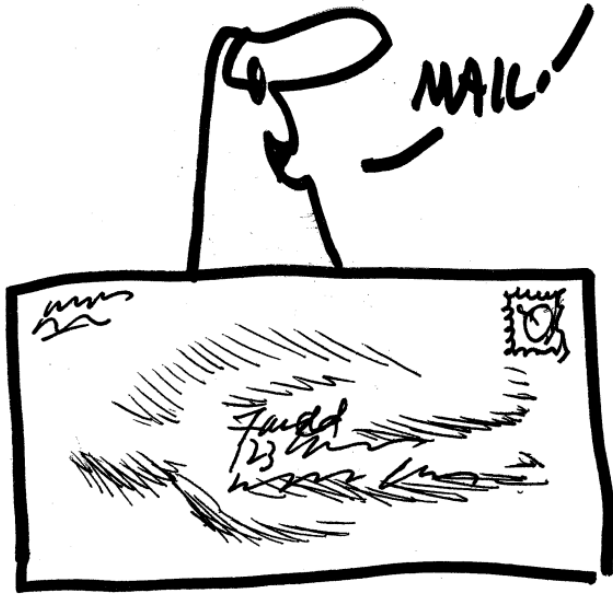
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You can learn more about cover artist Larry Johnson at <https://tinyurl.com/LarryJohnsonComics>.

The Stf Amateur is a bundlezine published by Blasted Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) 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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—William Rotsler

Cy Chauvin

Thanks for *The Stf Amateur* #12. I think I had a small chemistry set when I was a kid—I remember changing some blue-colored liquid to a blood red. More interesting were the crystals you could grow on coal (with drops of food coloring added, that was even more fun). I never had an electronics set, but we found discarded electronic parts behind some television or radio repair shop—lots of old vacuum tubes, metal wire, and metal struts. We had fun putting the parts together into our own creations—nothing actually worked—but it was fun to screw and unscrew. I don't recall a magic kit either. But we were fascinated one summer with a Ouija board. (It still seems uncanny how that worked, moving around on a board, with everyone—at least supposedly—just touching it with their fingertips.)

[Your story about metal wire and struts reminded me of Meccano and Maluvrian erector sets, K'nex building sets, and similar options. Meccano fostered its own community of enthusiasts—dare I say, fandom—which the company supported with *Meccano Magazine* between 1916 and 1981. If you've never seen an issue, many scanned copies are available at <http://meccano.magazines.free.fr> and perhaps elsewhere.—HR]

I've reread some [H.P.] Lovecraft, too, these past few months. And I've reread L. Sprague de Camp's biography of Lovecraft, too, which I've always found fascinating, and read before most of Lovecraft's

stories. I found the whole *Weird Tales* Lovecraft/[Robert E.] Howard/Clark Ashton Smith era fascinating, and it has always been disappointing to me that I don't enjoy the actual stories more. Clark Ashton Smith is especially frustrating. Lovecraft is better than the others.

[How do you find Smith frustrating? I enjoy much of the Lovecraft circle of writers, though his contemporaries and correspondents speak to me more strongly than later writers influenced by him. Regardless, even the worst Lovecraft pastiche can be amusing—and might pull you back to the source himself.—HR]

I got that issue of *Mythprint* that you reviewed, because I joined the Mythopoeic Society. I was surprised that their convention was coupled with Diversicon, but that was a nice touch, especially being in Minneapolis. But the fanzine was slim and without much substance, and most of the information about the upcoming convention had appeared in the previous issue.

[I felt much the same. The society's other publications—*Mythlore* and *Mythic Circle*—might be more intriguing.—HR]

Interesting question that you ask, “Do you go to libraries, or you are a bookstore person?” The last book I bought was from a library; bookstores (used or new) have disappeared from the eastern suburban part of Detroit. I would have to drive far into the city to get to a bookstore, or to a northern suburb. Libraries do seem to have a larger selection of books, and perhaps more of the odd books I crave. But the homogenization of books (like most else) continues at a frantic pace. And like you, I have so many unread books at home anyway, why not look there? Of course, the journey to the library or bookstore is part of the Quest—who thought that Quests by the reader were entirely contained within a thick tome with a map?

I especially enjoyed your review of *Comets! Visitors from Deep Space*. I like hard science, and you convey some of the enthusiasm for comets. I don't read chapters in nonfiction in order either, usually—I often get too impatient for what I know is ahead, especially if a favorite subtopic or newer information. If you read enough in an area, you already know the background information. That's rather the problem with being an armchair scientist—you know enough that the average library book on a subject contains nothing new. Some of the university press books are

better, with more detailed information (as you probably found). Sometimes they are too technical, and filled with my weakness, too much math. Thus are the problems when one becomes addicted to the “hard” stuff!

Thanks for the recommendations of *Railfan & Railroad* (I’ve subscribed) and *On Spec*, which I’m going to check out. While I still do have a model railroad in the attic, and took it out while my brother was visiting for some repair and a set up, it’s the real, large trains that are fun. A few years ago, we mixed both. We took a small tourist “short line” that ran from Clinton, Michigan, passing through park land and a camp of wild Indians (!), with its final stop in the street of downtown Tecumseh, next to a wonderful old-fashioned hobby shop, packed to the ceiling with huge model airplanes, trains, etc. It was the size of an old small town Woolworths. I didn’t buy anything (and I had a train to catch!), and it would be fun to go back. Hopefully, it’s still around.

[That sounds like a fun mixture, and I agree. If model railroading doesn’t push you toward becoming a railfan or trainspotter, perhaps you’re doing it wrong. I recommend investing in a copy of David Holt and Robert C. Van Camp’s *Guide to North America’s Tourist Railways and Museums* or *Trains* magazine’s *Tourist Trains Guidebook* to help scratch that itch as travel opportunities present themselves.—HR]

Your survey of electronic publishing ecosystems was eye opening.

William Breiding

[In early August] at supper, Gail and I were discussing the two versions of the film *The Fly*, and I realized that I’d forgotten to mention David Cronenberg, who has to be my favorite “horror” director. Quotes around horror because his later films straddle mainstream, existentialism, weird, and horror.

Of his early films, I’d vote for *The Brood* as giving me the best shivers and creeps. In his remake of *The Fly*, Jeff Goldblum should have won an Oscar. But you know how the Academy is about genre films—another example would be Val Kilmer’s performance in *Tombstone*, surely an Oscar-winning performance—no matter how good the films or the performances are, they just get the technical Oscar nods.

Of all the horror directors, only Cronenberg has remained consistently excellent. In his early films, I believe he had problems getting natural (non-stilted) performances out of his actors, but after his fine later works, I had to reevaluate my opinion to “perhaps this was his intention.” I see Cronenberg had a film, *The*

Shrouds, entered at Cannes this year, and there is a theatrical release scheduled for France in 2025 but not in the US. Hoping Netflix (to whom he’d originally pitched the film as a series and they declined) will pick it up for streaming.

[Your missive reminds me to return to the work of Cronenberg. It’s been a while since I’ve seen *The Fly* or *The Brood*—and *The Shrouds* certainly seems worth watching. He’s made so many good movies: *Scanners*, *Videodrome*, *The Dead Zone*, *Crash*, even *eXistenZ*. I’ve neglected his post-2000 work. Perhaps it’s time to amend that.—HR]

Garth Spencer

A dramatic cover by Verl Holt Bond, but isn’t it a bit sexist? Why is Grunt the Valiant topless and the leather jacket girl not?

You keep referring to “Ignorable Themes.” Please explain. Garth no savvy. Help.

[Ignorable Themes are an idea I cribbed from Lee Gold and the roleplaying game-related amateur press association Alarums & Excursions. The basic idea is that questions are posed for future mailings or distributions. If a contributor is looking for something to write about, they can choose to address the Ignorable Theme. It’s a good way to encourage apahacking if comment hooks don’t present themselves or a contributor doesn’t otherwise feel inspired to write.

I instituted the idea for APA-L after a couple of participants remarked that they didn’t find much on which to comment in a couple of distributions. Some APA-L contributors have picked up on the Ignorable Themes, and others haven’t. Adoption has been inconsistent, which is totally okeh. After all, the themes are ignorable. Recently, one of my readers commented that my Ignorable Theme writing is among their favorite material in *The Stf Amateur*.

Unfortunately, in recent weeks I haven’t had time to address the Ignorable Themes I, myself, offer. The last few have been quite excellent, but apahacking plods on, and one must proceed to the next ish.—HR]

I have taken the liberty of copying to *The Obdurate Eye* your advertisement soliciting illustrations for your bundlezine. Yes, that’s right, I’m going to run ads. Next inclusion on my list is for the [National Fantasy Fan Federation].

Your reviews in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #124 were interesting, but my attention was really caught by your short article on chemistry/electronics/magic kits. I am now inclined to think every child should at least get

the basics of physics, engineering, chemistry, and electronics—enough to remember the rudiments as an adult, and to know why not to mess with the car’s engine or the house plumbing or the power mains, unless they have a Red Seal trade certificate.

I wish I could locate sources for computer and electronic components in the Lower Mainland. The Vancouver FreeGeek society went out of operation, and the closest thing to it is exclusively devoted to recycling used computers for educational institutions.

[I thought the idea might resonate with you, given your past interest in maker spaces and similar activities. It’s an inspiring option even for adults, though that line of thinking hasn’t led to me diving back in yet, personally.—HR]

Interesting that you mention ham radio; it has been on my mind occasionally. My uncle (a retired naval radio operator) had a ham radio setup in our house. I sometimes compare fanzine fandom to ham radio fandom, partly because both fandoms motivate a devoted but dwindling subculture, and leave outsiders cold.

[Surely, sf fen have communicated via ham radio occasionally over the years. It seems like something that might have been picked up on at some point. I’ll keep my eyes open as I read fanzine back issues—and perhaps search the Fanac Fan History Project, efanzines.com, and the APA-L and LASFAPA archives for references.

I’m curious, though, are the Internet and social media the new ham radio, or are fanzines, or both? Fanzines seem to involve more tinkering, though the tinkering is different than that required by ham radio.—HR]

In *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #125, you identify the distinction between library patrons and bookstore patrons, or at least between the phases when readers go to one place or the other for their books. I seem to have followed your trajectory, and for the same reason. Now, the latest stage in whatever is wrong with me involves e-books.

In *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #126: Glad to see that *On Spec* is on the map!

[I recently received an email indicating that the printing of the forthcoming issue of *On Spec* was delayed because of cash flow, production costs, and grant funding schedules. Fingers crossed that their resources will loosen up sufficiently soon that the delay isn’t overly long—and that they don’t need to eventually move to digital publishing entirely.

Managing Editor Diane Walton indicated that they’re not begging for donations yet, but I’m sure any assistance would be welcome, should people feel so inspired.—HR]

I was interested to read what you had to say about Perry Rhodan and other German sf. It’s a curious thing, but your short description gave me more context than I have ever had before about the Perry Rhodan serial. Likewise, your sketch of the Laser Books publishing story.

[One thing I might have neglected to include in that thinking was the Ace Double line’s existence as a series. That is perhaps more important and influential than Laser Books even if both exhibited similar consistent design and editorial focus.—HR]

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #127 left me feeling a bit downcast. I thought I was so smart, coming up with original language nonsense, and here I see Matthew Mitchell has been outdoing me for years. Well, somebody had to. Post no bills. Offer void while supplies last. Not available in your area.

In commenting on *Vanamonde*, you mention Taral Wayne’s obituary again and wonder where his fannish library went. You may have seen Colin Hinz’s note in the latest *The Obdurate Eye* (September 2024), where he indicated what he has taken under his wing.

[I had missed his reportage on the *Facebook* and thank you for including it in *The Obdurate Eye* #43. It is good news indeed that Hinz was able to salvage so much—and that he intends it to “[wind] up in an official archive somewhere.” Wayne’s collection seems to be in excellent hands.—HR]

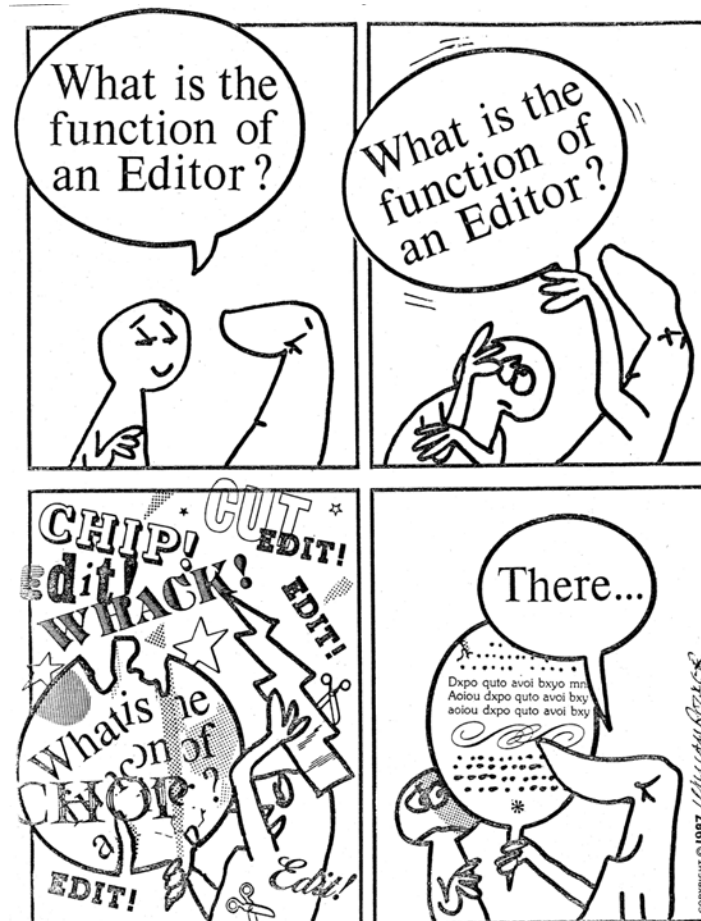
In *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #23, you commented to William McCabe about the distinction in zombie movies between the living dead who hunger for brains, and the living dead who just sort of stand there without minds. I might have said this before, but the distinction seems to lie between (a) original zombies as in Caribbean lore, the mindless dead raised by a houngan to serve him, and (b) zombies reconceived by some Hollywood director (I keep wanting to say Harvey Korman), with the fetish for central nervous systems.

Again, kudos on being an active citizen, mobilizing voters for the next election.

The United Fanzine Organization has a more inclusive definition than I had considered.

[It’s a pretty awesome group.—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; or via fax to 323-916-0367.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #129

Sept. 5, 2024

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

Last Week's Senryu

When newcomers call,
the registrar can offer
APA-L to them.

In late October, Derek LaPorte, registrar for the LASFS, emailed me to say that a recent guest of the club filled out a guest form indicating that they are an aspiring writer.

I haven't been able to attend a meeting since my 18 months as scribe ended, but I told LaPorte that I'd often message newcomers during meetings to inform them about APA-L—and to send them recent distributions as PDF teasers to pique their interest if they expressed curiosity.

That clearly inspired last week's senryu. As registrar, LaPorte can do the same, as memory and inclination allows!

Free LSD: Tripping the Cinema Light Fantastic

By Allen Callaci

In the 1980s, there existed only one sanctuary for stranded, carless, cable-equipped latchkey tweens to flee to after midnight on Saturday night. That twisted, late-night funhouse was the USA Network's *Night Flight*. *Night Flight* was everything MTV tried to brand itself: edgy, surreal, and subversive. While the execs at MTV's idea of a "revolution" was playing the video for Duran Duran's "Hungry Like the Wolf" at the top of each hour, the real revolution was happening every weekend down the dial on USA Network's *Night Flight*.

Night Flight was a hodgepodge of shows such as *New Wave Theatre*, where sheltered insomniac youth were blasted with 45 Grave, the Angry Samoans, and the Circle Jerks—and quirky shorts such as *Godzilla Meets Bambi*. Viewers were also invited to feast on a smorgasbord of cult films such as *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Stains*; *Suburbia*; and *Urgh! A Music War*.

It had been many a red moon since I'd pondered my *Night Flight*-infected youth. Watching Dimitri Coats's *Free LSD* felt like entering a cinematic time machine that instantly transported me back to my rabble-rousing *Night Flight*-watching days of yore. It is a perfect blend of intense music, ultra violence, and dark humor.

Perhaps the best way to describe *Free LSD* to the uninitiated is to have them imagine *The Blues Brothers* crossed with a Marvel multiverse film as directed by David Lynch. *Free LSD* is a meditation on destiny. The destiny in question is that of a lowly Los Angeles porn shop clerk played with an underlying sweetness by Off!/Circle Jerks frontman Keith Morris. In that universe, Morris is blissfully unaware that in an alternate reality he is belting out songs such as "Kill to be Heard," "War Above Los Angeles," and "Worst is Yet to Come" as the frontman for the jazz/punk fusion band Off!

The film is a passion project spearheaded by Off! guitarist Dimitri Coats, who wrote, directed, and co-starred in the film. The film can be seen as a long-lost avant-garde science fiction second cousin to *The Blues Brothers*. Similar to that film, *Free LSD*'s plot revolves around a spiritual quest to bring the band back together, features a slew of massively entertaining cameos along the way—including Jack Black and David Yow from the Jesus Lizard—and whose last act features a rollicking live show. But unlike Jake and Elwood, whose mission from God was to save St. Helen of the Blessed Shroud Orphanage from financial ruin, the musical mission in *Free LSD* is to use the music of Off! to "open the gates of human consciousness to all planes of existence."

In a burning rash of an era in which so much culture is pre-chewed and spoonfed to us in increasing doses, *Free LSD* is a much needed ointment.

While compiling the Upcoming Events calendar for the August edition of De Profundis, I initially skimmed past listings for Free LSD, certain it was a music documentary. Imagine my surprise when I realized it was a science-fiction movie—and my delight when I saw that a friend had seen it! It's rare that a movie addresses so many of my interests.—HR

The Ignorable Theme: Techno-Thrillers

"What's the relationship between sf and techno-thrillers? What examples work particularly well as both?"

Those questions were inspired by reading Bruce Sterling's *The Zenith Angle* (T&T #126), though the idea came up a couple of years ago related to *Mission: Impossible* and James Bond. (T&T #18) The concept

also piqued my interest while reading Michael Crichton's *Congo* (T&T #78) after seeing the movie (*Faculae & Filigree* #22). And Joe Zeff's recent discussion of J.D. Robb's In Death series, which are less techno-thrillers and more futuristic mysteries—a hybrid all the same—also resonated with the theme.

PREVIEW TONIGHT RKO HILLSTREET HAWAII and UPTOWN

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RESEDA RESEDA 18445 Sherman Wy DI. 4-0153	PASADENA HASTINGS DRIVE-IN SY. 5-3566	LA MIRADA LA MIRADA DRIVE-IN UN. 3-3111	GARDENA TWIN-YUE DRIVE-IN DA. 4-5127
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'ATTACK of the 50 Ft. WOMAN' AND 'WAR of the SATELLITES'

BEL AIR Drive-In FONTANA	DE ANZA Theatre RIVERSIDE
MISSION Drive-In POMONA	UNITED ARTISTS Theatre POMONA

Los Angeles Times, July 11, 1958

Before we consider the question, it might be good to define techno-thrillers. I view them as near-future, lightly technology-driven espionage or adventure stories such as those written by Crichton, Tom Clancy, Clive Cussler, James Rollins, Dan Brown, and Lincoln Child. The works of Ian Fleming might also fall under the category, though less explicitly.

In that sense, they are near-sf, mainstream sf, or thinly veiled sf—marketed as something else entirely that might resonate with readers who might not generally read sf as such. As seen in the above list of writers, authors can make a decent living writing something that's close to sf—while not qualifying, perhaps, as sf writers, flirting with the mainstream via an adjacent form of pulp literature, much of which I'd consider grocery store fiction.

At the same time, we can also occasionally see legitimate sf authors explore that territory, perhaps as a way to broaden their readership or to soften the edges of their sf. Sterling's *The Zenith Angle* might be one such example. William Gibson's more recent, less-cyberpunk fiction might also qualify. And Neal Stephenson's work as Stephen Bury (*The Cobweb* and *Interface*) might also align with the form.

The relationship is one of adjacency, occasionally overlap, and perhaps tendency, in which one form of writing migrates toward the other. While I am intrigued by writers such as Sterling, Gibson, and Stephenson trying adjacent styles closer to the mainstream, I might prefer works that are decidedly techno-thrillers and not examples of the mainstream distracting or luring authors I already consider worthwhile writers of sf.

In part, that's because I've largely not explored techno-thrillers as such. They've been the domain of my father, who's been an avid reader of Tom Clancy and authors such as Robert Ludlum, Frederick Forsyth, and John Grisham, who might be another step removed in the realms of more pure espionage thrillers and legal thrillers.

The relationship between techno-thrillers and sf might not be uneasy. Tom Clancy's Net Force and Net Force Explorers series are listed in the *Internet Speculative Fiction Database*. As are two Forsyth novels, many of Crichton's works, almost 20 Cussler books, and a number of Rollins novels. Brown and Child's writing is also included in *ISFDb*. In many cases, such works focus on an aspect of the supernatural or touch on lost worlds, time travel, or ancient aliens. The science utilized might be archaeology. There's also an occasional relationship with military sf, if the science concentrated on is military science.

Science fiction and techno-thrillers are definitely

cousins, even if sf fen might not readily claim them as such. In my book, rest assured, even the most stalwart trufen can read Clive Cussler without fear of shame. (Maybe don't do it all the time, though.)

Comments on APA-L #3084

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #72, **Matthew Mitchell** told a tale about frozen pizza, pineapple, and Aristophanes. While I neglected to discuss the Ignorable Theme last ish—and believe you me, I have things to say! (perhaps in the future)—I appreciated your comments on retiring from fandom. Interestingly, APA-L is not necessarily forever, though our back issues live on. Since last fall, Roger Hill and I have been trying to figure out why we can't easily extrapolate an APA-L distribution number from a given Thursday or LASFS meeting number. There were somehow 30-plus weeks unaccounted for in our current numbering, and we weren't sure whether the LASFS went on hiatus, APA-L went on hiatus, or both.

Earlier this week, I cracked the case. In early 1968, as Ken Rudolph—whom I met last weekend—was planning to relaunch *Shangri L'Affaires* (aka *Shaggy*) as a genzine, the LASFS voted to stop publishing APA-L. Its fortunes had been waning, or at least its participants were frustrated with their quality and quantity of conversation, and the club decided to free people up to help Rudolph with *Shaggy*.

APA-L ended with #180 on March 28, 1968 (meeting #1598), a couple of weeks after the club's vote to cease publication. But its death didn't last long, and APA-L returned with #181 on Oct. 31, 1968 (meeting #1629). Hill indicates that that agrees exactly with his calculator program that converts APA-L distribution numbers to meeting dates.

In fact, we've had a number of hiatuses, which Hill has dubbed haiti:

- a 30-week hiatus before #181—now identified
- a five-week hiatus before #2989 (the gap between Marty Cantor's time as OC and mine)
- a one-week hiatus before #3004
- a one-week hiatus before #3024
- a one-week hiatus before #3039
- a one-week hiatus before #3051
- a one-week hiatus before #3078

I'm sure the decision to shutter APA-L in 1968 wasn't made lightly, but I'm surprised it came to such a long end—though less than a year—so soon in its history. At this point, it seems inconceivable to decide to stop APA-L after almost 3,100 distributions. It

might not have seemed such a big deal in 1968. APA-L reportedly grew out of the demise of the previous incarnation of *Shaggy*; it makes some sense that it would make way for a new incarnation.

Regardless, I've helped make your point, given what I learned from applying optical character recognition to the archives. "APA-L is forever." I'm glad you found your way back to the LASFS—and that we met.



Los Angeles Times, July 18, 1958

I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson. Your remark on soccer fans reminded me of some football-related fanzines I recently came across. Football fans—at least in England—seem more similar to sf fen than sports fans do in the United States. Heck, they publish fanzines.

If I've read *The Difference Engine*, it was a while ago. I'll prioritize rereading it. Your comments on the Spirit and Will Eisner reminded me that Eisner also drew World War II posters (<https://tinyurl.com/Eisner-posters>) and educational military maintenance comics for *P.S.* magazine (<https://tinyurl.com/Eisner-maintenance>). Somewhere around here I've got a book of his *P.S.* work. I'll have to revisit it.

I hope that it wasn't too awful that I printed your email witticisms. As a body of "work," I quite liked how consistent interests and elements arose. Your recurring elements identify things you like or think are funny, which is charming. It surprises me that the North American Doctor Who Appreciation Society

wouldn't sell items to non-members at cons. They must not have needed to—or wanted to—sell everything they had on hand. Ooh! The Prancing Skiltaire also had a bulletin board system? BBSs were one of the first ways I ever got online even before college.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1607 recounted a meal of cold noodles at Suehiro DTLA. It's quite warm today, so that sounds delightful. Your sharing of recent letters of comment was a welcome element of thish. I'd welcome more in the future!

I'll share your feedback with cover artist Damon D. Brown. As far as I know, his cover was an original for APA-L, though inspired by the 2014 movie *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For*. A tenth anniversary cover, if you will.

Barbara Gratz Harmon emailed me this week to indicate that she's feeling spread too thin and needs to take another break from APA-L. Her other family responsibilities take priority, and I will continue sending her weekly distributions. When she's less busy, she plans to return, so I hope we see her again soon.

In *Toony Loons* #772, **Joe Zeff** reported on Bubonicon 55 in Albuquerque, N. Mex. I'm sorry that the con was a disappointment! I'm glad, however, that your blood sugar is "mostly back under control" despite the recent management challenges.

I don't think you've fafiated. You still participate in APA-L, and that, my friend, is fine fanac. I had to look up the reference to Nasty to which you responded. That was Matthew Mitchell's doing—and your comments made me chuckle. The Smell of Foul Ole Ron is legendary, indeed!

You had mentioned the futuristic nature of the In Death series. I was just slow to pick up on it. The fault is mine. I will see whether Spooner changes his sleeping location with any regularity. That's interesting!

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Los Angeles Times, July 18, 1958

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Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1958

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #130

Sept. 12, 2024

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

Last Week's Senryu

My job intruded
on fanac today, so I
collated quite late.

One would think that one slips fanac into the unutilized time left over after work, home, and family responsibilities. At this point in my career and with my son back at college, I increasingly find that my job intrudes on how I'd prefer to spend my time.

With a new manager at work—and relatively active, sizable projects—in the last couple of weeks, my Thursdays haven't been as flexible as they usually are. So I've been printing, collating, and preparing the mailing as late as 9-10 p.m.

That was a rarity when I was still serving as scribe for the LASFS. Last week, were I still scribe, I'd have had to print, collate, and prepare the mailing Friday morning—or after the LASFS meeting. I likely would have punted to the next day.

The Ignorable Theme: Podcasts

"Do you listen to any genre-related podcasts? What podcasts, audio dramas, or other listening do you recommend?" I do not listen to podcasts, though I've started listening to audio dramas that might qualify as such: *Impact Winter* (T&T #127) and now *The Sandman*—which I continue to enjoy.

In recent email correspondence with Ken Rudolph—which "[wa]sn't in any way a LOC, unfortunately"—he expressed concerns similar to my own. "Podcasts and Audible ... [are] one aspect of current media life that I've never warmed up to," he wrote. "[L]istening to spoken discussions, the stuff of podcasts, just doesn't do it for me. However, I was sentient in the era before TV (the 1940s and 1950s) when radio ruled with serials like *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* and *The Shadow*."

Why don't I listen to podcasts? I must admit that I was put off by them early in their more recent mainstream history. While I like science fiction and related genres, comic books, roleplaying games,

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Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1958

fanzines, Web discussion forums, online communities, and email mailing lists, I don't feel the need to listen to people talking about those things. (I also don't watch genre- or fandom-related *YouTube* videos.)

As a relatively speedy reader, I'd just much rather read than be "held hostage" by real-time audio and video beyond television, movies, and music. That said, I do like genre-related audio in the form of audio dramas, particularly in the form of old-time radio, so I'm not surprised by my recent interest in new audio dramas such as *Impact Winter* and *The Sandman*. I've enjoyed audio productions offered by the ZBS Foundation, Big Finish, and Games Workshop.

I much prefer the production afforded by audio drama and radio-like audio programming than an audio version of an email or Web discussion—Usenet over the Air. But there are still a lot of genre-related audio options available, either in the form of discussion-based podcasts or readings. I look forward to learning what you listen to, if anything.

Having said that, here's what I recommend:

Big Finish

<https://www.bigfinish.com>

Full-cast audio dramas "from the worlds of *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, *Blake's 7*, ... *Dark Shadows*, *The Avengers*," and other classic programs. Often features cast members from the original series.



Los Angeles Times, Aug. 1, 1958

Black Library audio

<https://www.blacklibrary.com/audio>

Games Workshop's full-cast audio dramas draw on the rich lore of *Warhammer 40,000*, *Warhammer: Age of Sigmar*, *Warhammer*, the *Horus Heresy* book series, and related tabletop miniature wargames. Some works are audio dramas, and some are audio books, which are less my speed.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

<https://archive.org/details/hitchhikers-guide-to-the-galaxy-bbcr4>

Before Douglas Adams wrote the book series, it was a 1978 series broadcast on BBC Radio 4. My wife would argue that this is the best way to experience the story. I cannot disagree.

Impact Winter

<https://www.audible.com/pd/Impact-Winter-Audiobook/B09PSLLWFG>

An Audible Original that started in 2022 that focuses on an impact winter caused by a comet colliding with the Earth—and the emergence of vampires from where they used to hide.

The Sandman

<https://www.audible.com/pd/The-Sandman-Audiobook/B086WP794Z>

A 2020 Audible Original adapting the comic book series written by Neil Gaiman. Each episode is basically an issue of the comic, which was a natural for adaptation. Better than the TV adaptation.

Star Wars trilogy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mTO-AzO5CM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3U5E06ZIMZ4>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkCfv_JkP6U

National Public Radio broadcast dramatizations of the original *Star Wars* film trilogy in 1981, 1983, and 1996. The first two series aired as part of *NPR Playhouse*. Approved by George Lucas, the series use original sound effects and music from the movies. I treasure my *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* cassettes.

ZBS Foundation

<https://www.zbs.org>

Largely active since 1970, ZBS productions combine nature recordings, sound art, and occasionally mystifying sf and fantasy storytelling. I recommend any of the Jack Flanders or *Ruby: Gumshoe* programs, which are available on CD, USB, or download. Two podcasts are also available: *ZBS in 3D Sound* and *Meatball's Meatballs*.

Audio-A-Go-Go

Here's a baker's dozen of additional speculative fiction- and media-related podcasts that I'm aware of—but have not listened to. I largely drew on a best of 2024 list from *PlayerFM*. Podcasts might be available on multiple sources.

The Arkham Files

<https://player.fm/series/the-arkham-files>

“Laughs, chills, and tentacles abound as this bumbling group of lifelong friends battle their way through the Lovecraftian horrors of the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. Professional sound effects, music, and editing add the full audio drama flavor to this actual play experience... .”

Clarkesworld Magazine

<https://player.fm/series/clarkesworld-magazine-science-fiction-fantasy-57047>

Science fiction and fantasy stories from *Clarkesworld Magazine*, which I recommend in its own right.

Decades of Horror: The Classic Era

<https://player.fm/series/decades-of-horror-the-classic-era>

“The Gruesome Magazine podcast about classic horror and sci-fi films from 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s”

Escape Pod

<https://player.fm/series/escape-pod>

“Original science fiction”

Final Girls Horrorcast

<https://player.fm/series/final-girls-horrorcast-2368090>

“Listen in as Aimee & Carly discuss horror, sci-fi, and thriller films that are currently available on your favorite streaming sites.”

Imaginary Worlds

<https://player.fm/series/imaginary-worlds-2300997>

“Imaginary Worlds sounds like what would happen if NPR went to ComicCon and decided that’s all they ever wanted to cover. Host Eric Molinsky spent over a decade working as a public radio reporter and producer, and he uses those skills to create thoughtful, sound-rich episodes about science fiction, fantasy, and other genres of speculative fiction.”

Lightspeed Magazine Science Fiction and Fantasy Story Podcast

<https://player.fm/series/lightspeed-magazine-science-fiction-and-fantasy-story-podcast-sci-fi-audiobook-short-stories>

“Edited by bestselling anthologist John Joseph Adams, Lightspeed is a Hugo Award-winning, critically-acclaimed digital magazine. ... The Lightspeed podcast, produced by Grammy Award-winning narrator and producer Stefan Rudnicki of Skyboat Media, features original audio short stories 6-8 times a month.”

Octothorpe

<https://octothorpe.podbean.com>

A podcast about science fiction and fandom hosted by John Coxon, Alison Scott, and Liz Batty. It won the Hugo for Best Fancast in 2024 and is frequently held up among fanzines by Bill Burns on *eFanzines*.

PodCastle

<https://player.fm/series/podcastle-podcastle-podcastle>
“The Fantasy Fiction Podcast”

SciFi TV Rewatch

<https://player.fm/series/scifi-tv-rewatch>

“A podcast exploring science fiction television—past and present”

Simultaneous Times

<https://spacecowboybooks.com/category/podcast>

An effort by *eller* Jean-Paul L. Garnier, this Hugo-nominated podcast primarily features readings of short stories, including work published in *Worlds of If Magazine*.

The Twilight Zone Podcast

<https://player.fm/series/the-twilight-zone-podcast>

“Join Tom Elliot in the Rondo award winning Twilight Zone Podcast. A journey through Rod Serling’s classic television series. With reviews, interviews and readings from The Twilight Zone...”

The Weird Tales Podcast

<https://player.fm/series/the-weird-tales-podcast-2359904>

“Tycho Alhambra, a lover of the weird and bizarre, reads his favorite weird fiction stories. Lovecraft, Machen, Blackwood, Chambers. They’re all here.”

A relatively recent *Reddit* thread offers additional recommendations that might be worth checking out, given infinite time. (https://www.reddit.com/r/audiodrama/comments/18myn5i/sci-fi_podcast_recs_please)



Los Angeles Times, Aug. 1, 1958



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Dr. Giggles

This 1992 slightly comedic horror movie has all the makings of a successful franchise series but only resulted in one flick, which is surprisingly good. Largo Entertainment had secured an exclusive first-look deal to develop and produce movies based on Dark Horse Comics properties, and this was the first outcome of that agreement. Interestingly, a *Dr. Giggles* comic book wasn't published until after the movie was written and filmed, available in comic shops to line up with the film's release. That miniseries lasted just two issues.

The titular Dr. Giggles is the long-missing son of a town doctor who was stoned to death by the local citizenry and his patients after a number of his patients died, their hearts removed. His wife—his son's mother—had died of a heart condition, and the physician lost his mind. No one knew how his son, who'd assisted him during the fatal medical

procedures, had escaped the mob justice. The scene in which viewers learn how that was done is one of the most surprising moments I've ever seen on film. The movie is worth watching for that scene alone.

Otherwise, the movie echoes many similar movies. Dr. Giggles comes across as a bit of a more-vocal Michael Myers character. His basement operating room—in the leaking foundation of his father's former home and workplace—reminded me of Freddy Krueger's boiler room. And the movie's final girl, then-19-year-old Holly Marie Combs (who went on to act in and produce *Charmed*) resonates with the roles of oh, so many.

The opening scenes, in which Dr. Giggles escapes from the insane asylum in which he'd been anonymously housed and treated for decades, brought to mind Arkham Asylum from the Batman comics and movies. And the overall plotline—in which Dr. Giggles seeks revenge on the town that led to his father's downfall—is pretty standard stuff: One-by-one hunting and dispatch of characters unfortunate enough to come close to the antagonist.

Other aspects of the movie include a caring father and uncaring stepmother, a traumatized but sober police officer, a curious Black policeman, a young woman—the final girl—with a heart condition of her own, a wayward boyfriend, the town's teenage temptresses, an elevated location where locals park cars to make out and drink, and a carnival near the local school.

Additional scenes proved notable, including Dr. Giggles's waiting room—in a way reminiscent of *Beetlejuice*—and self-surgery in which Dr. Giggles removes a bullet lodged in his side. The movie features multiple catch phrases, neither of which really work. But despite the production's paint-by-number quality, it's neither too self-aware nor too silly to work well. *Dr. Giggles* was a pleasant surprise that probably should have yielded at least one sequel. I'm slightly mystified that it didn't.

Comments on APA-L #3085

In *Sirius Barks* #15, which arrived after deadline the previous week, **Beverly Warren** described technical difficulties. I appreciated the goals you expressed about participating in APA-L. I'm glad that you've chosen to mingle with us, and to explore the slower conversational pace afforded by apae as opposed to social media. I quite like that we write more, less often rather than less, more often. Our deadlines certainly help me write more than I might otherwise. And we are definitely participating in an activity that draws a straight line to the past, and to previous fanac in the Los Angeles area.

I've been thinking similar thoughts as I return to working on the *Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*. (T&T #74) It's been more than a year since I last put any concerted effort into that project, and it's turning out to be pretty cool, offering a healthy balance of historical sites drawing on the past of LASFS, as well as local resources that remain of interest and use to fen. I hope to publish it in time for Loscon this fall, and I'd welcome your contributions. If you'd like to submit entries for local authors and artists, clubs and organizations, conventions, historical sites, publications, stores and theaters, Web sites, and other options, I'd welcome your involvement. (<https://tinyurl.com/FanacGuidetoLACounty>) You can also just email me things you think should be included, and I'll flesh out relevant entries.

Thank you for recognizing the value of the inclusion of *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Authors* by Jon D. Swartz. I enjoyed editing that pamphlet and had multiple copies on hand that I thought might be enjoyed by others. Forrest J Ackerman certainly used pen names to good effect. According to his obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*, an issue of *Lavender Lifestyles*, and Jason V. Brock's *Disorders of Magnitude*, Ackerman authored lesbian fiction for *Vice Versa* using the pseudonym Laurajean Ermayne, assisted the publishing activities of the Daughters of Bilitis, was named an "honorary lesbian," and served as the first heterosexual guest of honor at Gaylaxicon.

I enjoyed your reportage on the Los Angeles Breakfast Club comic book-related event, which piqued my interest. I've yet to make it to a breakfast club activity, though it's on my short list. (That reminds me to add it to the fanac guide!) I hope that all of us weathered last week's heat safely. I'm quite relieved that today is substantially cooler than it has been in recent days. Did any of you feel the earthquake Thursday morning?

Matthew Mitchell's *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #73 reported that his son left a mobile phone on the train recently. Earlier today, I was talking to a co-worker about her accidentally leaving two mobile phones on an airplane during recent travel. There must be something in the water—or air. Nick's replacement phone is certainly tiny. Holy crow.

I agree with you that much of Michael Crichton's work—especially *The Andromeda Strain*—counts as sf as well as techno-thriller. Similar books and movies might include Robin Cook's *Coma* and Paddy Chayefsky's *Altered States* (both unfortunately left off the initial list of authors!). That opens up the realm of medical thrillers, as well, which I didn't fully explore. I will share your feedback with cover artist Jose

Sanchez.

Coming to the LASFS as late as I did, I never met Bruce Pelz, nor June and Len Moffatt, whom I hold in similar esteem. When I was spending time with Marty Cantor in his home, I often took note of where he stored their apae paper stock. It was labeled "The Moffatti." I thought you might get a kick of that news item about the *Blake's 7* Blu-ray release. In fact, I pretty much published it For Your Eyes Only. While compiling the first "Rabid Eyes" column for the National Fantasy Fan Federation in a year and a half, I was pleased to note that the show is streaming via BritBox. I'll let you know ifwhen the N3F publishes that column in one of its clubzines.

Your remarks on Canadian currency reminded me of their affectionate appellations of loonies and toonies. Oddly, I've never connected those terms with Joe Zeff's ellzine.

I didn't remark on it in last week's distribution, but **C.D. Carson** is offering his new pamphlet *Blast #2* as another partwork in our end pages. I look forward to reading the resulting chapbook as a whole upon its completion!

Los Angeles Times, Aug. 8, 1958



Snow Poster Township #18
 Sept. 13, 2024

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Administrivia: A Correction

The restaurant we ate dinner at while in the Chicago area in July (*SPT* #18) was in fact Al Bawadi Grill in Niles, Ill. (<https://www.albawadigrill.com>)

Fantastic Magazines

In my reading of back issues of various fanzines and amateur press associations, references to pornography—and such magazines—occurred more frequently than they seem to now. Fen were younger, perhaps. More randy. The connections between sf, fandom, and pornographic magazines were also stronger, in part because aspiring genre writers were making money on the side writing erotica—and because notable fen such as William Rotsler and Forrest J Ackerman were involved in the publishing of pornography.

The October issue of *Hustler* deserves mention, even if the reading of such magazines might be less common among current fen. As the October issue, it's lightly Halloween themed—consistent in recent years—offering two feature stories that might be of interest. One I'll merely mention in passing. John Blaylock's "Goth Goddesses" interviews a handful of sex workers involved in goth culture, related activities, and BDSM. While the article addresses "zombie porn"

and vampires, it concentrates more on gothic trappings and social media sex work than the fantastic.

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Los Angeles Times, Aug. 8, 1958

fiction similar to that of Haruki Murakami, Jonathan Lethem, and Ben Marcus. I wouldn't necessarily compare *Dear Cyborgs* to works by those authors, but it's worth reading—and suggests promising future writing.

Two Asian-American boys bond over a shared love of comic books—even collaborating on them—and the later search for the long-lost friend as an adult introduces aspects of “an alternative or perhaps future universe” that involves a team of superheroes, black-op missions, political activism, and a “mysterious cybernetic book of clairvoyance.” For the most part, Lim experiments with the form of the novel, blending straightforward narration, surreal action sequences, and flashback as exposition, drawing on pulp writing as well as progressive politics.

Before the book begins, the author quotes lyrics from hip-hop act Das Racist that cite “Wikipedia Brown,” which amused me. Lim describes reading comic books as “a sort of hedonistic, perhaps onanistic, act of defiance.” There's an adult comic titled *MunQu*, discussion of protest as religious ritual, “old-fashioned moral tales disguised as science fiction,” a secret vigilante superhero group called Team Chaos, a friend who's a “foundling extraterrestrial sent from a far superior civilization,” mind-control schemes, a space disease, references to mystery novels featuring Inspector Mush Tate, karaoke, fine art, “soft-porn fan fiction,” a raygun, Brownian motion, anime characters, energy bursts, True Random Number Generators, surveillance drones, comic book shops, and other elements of interest throughout.

In addition to the at-times surreal aspects of the fantastic, Lim's novel espouses anti-capitalist political views and posits that we're already in an early phase of cyborg culture. Automobiles, the Internet, and mobile phones suggest that human beings are already a form of cyborg. I was also intrigued by the author's concept of city ghosts, or remaining hidden and anonymous in dense urban areas, and comic book stores being one shared space with multiple entry points.

I am curious how non-genre readers consider this book. Is it a gateway text, or are the fantastic elements components of kitsch? It doesn't really matter. I enjoyed reading *Dear Cyborgs*, can easily recommend that you do the same, and I'll seek out other Lim work.

Hardwired by Walter Jon Williams (Tor, 1987)

At first, I thought that this relatively early cyberpunk novel was a fast followup intended to capitalize on the

subgenre's growing popularity. I'd never heard of Williams before. There are so many awesome cyberpunk elements present that while reading the opening pages, it almost felt like too much, all at once. Like a pastiche or near-parody. But that feeling quickly faded as I got pulled into the story.

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“HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER” and “TEENAGE CAVEMAN”

Los Angeles Times, Sept. 5, 1958

In part, that's because Williams is a very good writer. A Very Good Writer. When *Hardwired* was published, he'd already been writing science fiction since the early 1980s, later earned multiple Hugo and Nebula award nominations for his novels and short fiction, and even received a Philip K. Dick Award nomination. Despite his many award noms, he might have won only two Nebula awards for short fiction: the 2000 story "Daddy's World" (from the Constance Ash-edited anthology *Not of Woman Born*) and 2004's "The Green Leopard Plague." (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, October-November 2003)

The book is also excellent, despite my initial misgivings. The first in a multi-work series—including the novel *Voice of the Whirlwind* and two novelettes—*Hardwired* also inspired a 1989 sourcebook for the *Cyberpunk* roleplaying game. The world portrayed by Williams is that rich and deep.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 5, 1958

The novel features cybernetically augmented couriers who drive high-octane vehicles on elicit cross-country delivery runs. There are enhanced bodyguards and assassins equipped with internal prosthetic weapons. A computer programmer finds himself lost among the network's code after death, able to communicate with friends and compatriots over phone lines. An isolated corporate leader loses his sense of morality and decency as he strives to create his twisted vision of the future. And Orbital platforms and other celestial bodies have been

colonized, some by corporate entities that have attacked the Earth by redirecting meteorites.

The characters are very well portrayed, their interpersonal relationships and shifting loyalties intriguing, the technology fascinating, corporate shenanigans malevolent, and heroic attempts to organize the couriers in opposition to the forces they eventually realize they're serving are laudable. Even the portrayal of the protagonists—who lead hardscrabble and hard-won existences—as they determine who they can trust, open up to, and even love proved interesting. The tensions and stakes in the book are very real.

Regardless, there is a lot going on in the book. Some of it is detail, and some is in the foreground. The result is an intricately dense narrative that is surprisingly solid for an author I should have already had on my radar. As recently as 2022, Williams seems to have turned his attention to military sf and space opera—the Dread Empire's Fall series—so he's keeping his hand in. I'm sure that any book by Williams is worth picking up.

Comments on N'APA #271

I commented on **Ahrvid Engholm's** *Intermission* #143.5 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #21 as follows: "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."

Similarly, I commented on **George Phillis's** *The Murdered Master Mage* in *Emulators & Engines* #16: "Welcome back, George Phillis, with *The Murdered Master Mage!* (Hmm... that fanzine title seems familiar!) It was fun to read about your early fiction in roleplaying game apae, where your writing has gone since then, and your activities in the professional world and fandom. I look forward to future issues." I could've sworn you'd been somewhat recently active

in N'APA, but it was fun—and a surprise—to see you in *Alarums & Excursions*.

In addition, I commented on **Ahrvid Engholm's** *Intermission #144* in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella #22*: “In *Intermission #144*, Ahrvid Engholm seems to have overcome his computer difficulties, which must be a relief indeed. I enjoyed seeing you in the 2023 WOOF, which I recently commented on for the 2024 edition. And your name popped up in back issues of Wolf von Witting's *CounterClock*, which I just stumbled across while looking for information on English translations of non-Perry Rhodan German sf series. *CounterClock #4* was particularly of interest to me. I love the idea of pre-loaded e-readers—or even MP3 players.

“It's slightly amusing that the Eurovision Song Contest can also fall prey to—or employ—‘unusual voting patterns’ similar to those we've recently experienced in the Hugo Awards associated with the Glasgow Worldcon, and its precursor in China. The controversy does seem like a tempest in a teacup, far from Ben Foster of *Screaching Weasel* jumping off stage to punch a woman in the audience a dozen-plus years ago. (<https://tinyurl.com/Foster-punch>)

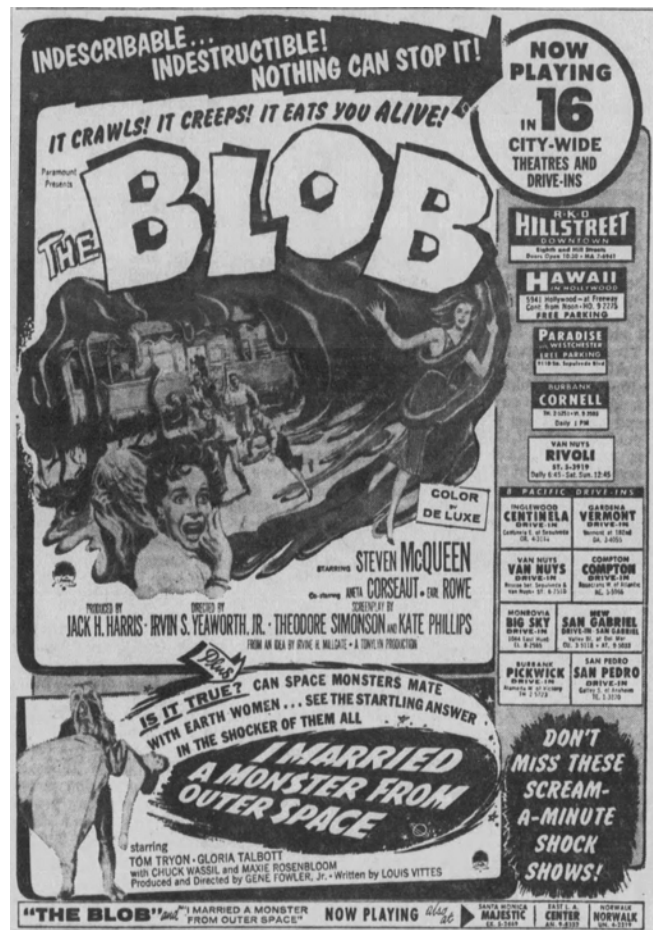
“That Joe R. Struly is a fine speaker, I've heard! I was saddened to read about Alvar Appeltofft and the subsequent scandals with the foundation. At least the fanzine collection ended up in the Royal Library. Thank you for sharing your *Locus* obituary for Bertil Falk. Ooh! Henry Grynsten wrote fiction? Alas, there's nothing listed in the Internet Speculative Fiction Database.

“The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films grew out of the Count Dracula Society, founded by Dr. Donald A. Reed. Since 1972—a decade after the society's founding—the organization has organized the Saturn Awards (<https://www.saturnawards.org>) to recognize notable genre films. Last year, I was a paying member, which meant I could vote in the awards—and attend free weekend screenings not far from my home—but I'm debating renewing for this year. I didn't go to many movies and failed to vote last year.”

That brings me up to **Jefferson P. Swycaffer's** *Archive Midwinter* dated July 8, 2024, on p. 37. The first 36 pages of 88 in this edition were also reprinted elsewhere—in either *Alarums & Excursions* or eAPA. That means that almost half of this N'APA distribution isn't original work. I can understand and appreciate the benefits of placing fanzines in multiple apae, but that seems like a large amount to reprint. And here I was impressed by our page count this distribution!

Swycaffer remarked that “new writers are pretty much ruled off the turf, and have no path to

publication. Also, today, genre classifications are iron-bound and clichés are the rule. Take a look, if you will, at ‘Cozy Mysteries.’” I don't know if it's true that new writers have no paths to publication, but I do think that the economics of publishing—and the ability to make a living earlier in your career—might be more problematic. If anything, we have more paths to publication; they just pay diddly squat. Your comment on cozy mysteries made me think of the new hybrid form of cozy fantasies such as Travis Baldree's *Legends & Lattes* series. Are those gateway books to more fully fledged fantasy? Are they legitimate fantasy? Are they a way to sell books to readers who might not otherwise buy your books? Or is the Venn diagram overlap between fantasy and cozy readers big enough to matter? I wonder.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 12, 1958

Is writing for a shared-world tribute anthology the same as writing fan fiction? I wouldn't think so. It's a shame that *The Further Adventures of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* fell by the wayside. What did you end up doing with your submission? I recently learned—or realized—that Harry Turtledove lives in Los Angeles. It surprised me that I wasn't previously aware.

I enjoyed and appreciated your commentary on the comic book character Spiral. Her first appearance was in *Longshot* #1 (September 1985), so she's relatively new. Arthur Adams's work along those lines—*Mojo*, *Excalibur*—is pretty excellent. You can access a list of Spiral appearances at https://cmro.travis-starnes.com/character_details.php?character=1885. Most recently, she appeared in *Marvel's Voices Infinity Comic* #88-89 earlier this year. Those with the collecting bug, beware!

George Phillies also contributed *Ye Murthered Master Mage* #271, his usual N'APA fanzine. (Thank you for not just switching entirely to reprinting the same thing in both apae—your inclusion of *The Murdered Master Mage* makes more sense now.) Your commentary on fan fiction continues to intrigue me, my skepticism aside. I appreciate your outreach to current and former Neffers.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 12, 1958

You moderate a *Facebook* group focusing on “modelers building 12:1 scale models of Martian war machines”? That sounds awesome. Wait... did I miss the fan fiction you intended to include?

In *Brandy Hall* #7, **Mark Nelson** discussed a *YouTube* video titled “Top 10 Best Sci-fi Movies.” I tend to not watch videos like that because I can read a listicle so much faster—and because the lists are usually crud. The list you shared—*2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Dune* (2024), *Nope*, *Alien*, *The Terminator*, *Avatar*, *Blade Runner 2049*, *The Matrix*, *Inception*, and *Interstellar*—isn't that bad, but does raise some questions, as you indicated yourself.

First of all, nothing before 1968? Kudos, at least, for leaving off *Star Wars* or *The Empire Strikes Back*. I feel like the video suffers from recency bias, with some effort—but not much—to dig deeper. And some of the choices mystify me like they did you: The 2024

Dune? *Blade Runner 2049*? The less said about *Avatar*'s place in the storied history of sf cinema, the better. It's certainly not in the top 10.

Nope (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #73), however, is definitely worth seeing, even if it might not make the top 10. Thank you for turning me on to *Alone in Space*. I'll have to seek that out! I, too, am curious about Mr. Engholm's perspective. In your mailing comments, the phrase “Answers on a postcard please...” gave me much pleasure. I'll have to remember to use that myself.

When I went to college in 1991, every student—I presume—received a university email address. I don't remember having to do anything special to secure one, and I didn't study computer science. I continued to use it well after graduating, even using it to sign up for the *Facebook* before they opened it up to non-students. Other than bulletin board systems, my first experiences online were during college, editing email using emacs, and utilizing Gopher, Archie, Veronica, Fetch, and Usenet. I think I miss Gopher and Usenet the most.

Your mention of *Swamp Thing* and *John Constantine, Hellblazer*—I've also always called it *Hellblazer*—reminded me of DC's wonderful Vertigo comics imprint. I also quite enjoyed Peter Milligan's *Shade, the Changing Man* and *The Sandman*, which I've been rereading after watching a couple of episodes of the TV adaptation and listening to much of the Audible audio drama. In fact, I just finished the second Sandman collection, *The Doll's House*, so I've reread up to #16. It's still quite good, Neil Gaiman's recent controversies aside.

George Phillies's *Fan Fic* #2 yields the fan fiction I was looking for in *Ye Murthered Master Mage* #271 above. What program is that based on? Your remarks in *Ye Murthered Master Mage* suggested it's still on TV. If that is fan fiction, it's fan fiction I'd read more of. The show it's based on isn't self-evident, and it could very well be original fiction. I quite like the idea of telepaths in MI5.

In *Renovation and Innovation Letter*—R.A.I.L., natch—N'APA is joined by **Adrian Kresnak**. Why, hello, good sir! We first emailed in April, you sent a letter of comment to *The Stf Amateur* and submitted a short piece on electromagnetic fields—and now here you are in N'APA! Well done. You found your way to an amateur press association. What a pleasant surprise to see you in our pages.

That you cite Stephen Duncombe in your first ish earns you bonus points in my book. Welcome, also, to the N3F. You're participating in a straight line to history. If you're also a railfan, you might enjoy the fanzine *MarkTime*. It's available from Mark Strickert,

P.O. Box 1171, Rialto CA 92377; busnrail@yahoo.com. When I last wrote to him in May 2022, I was struck by similar interests in sf, punk rock, and transit. I haven't seen an issue in some time, so I need to catch up with him. Cy Chauvin is also a transit buff. We recently exchanged notes on *Trains* and *Railfan & Railroad* magazines.

Samuel Lubell's *Samizdat* #26 commented on the heat. It's been warm here, too, but this week cooled down a little, which was welcome. Similar to our discussion of cozy fantasies above, you mentioned romantasy fiction, of which I've also recently become aware. Another example of genre bleed and semipermeable membranes!

I appreciated your Author Spotlight on Joe Haldeman, an author I've never read, despite knowing about his series the Forever War, which also inspired a comic book and board game. I figure it's only a matter of time; I shall eventually read Haldeman.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 12, 1958

I'm a big fan of Robert D. Putnam and *Bowling Alone*, as well as his subsequent *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. When I worked as a media and online community organizer, his work inspired and informed mine daily. As did Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*. Your table of Worldcon participation rates is informative. Local con counts might also give us interesting metrics. Not to put you on the spot, but how does Balticon look over the last two decades? Being able to satisfy one's fannish yen online—at any time—hasn't helped matters, I'm sure. It used to be that you had to go somewhere to scratch that itch.

In *Brownian Motion* #9, **Garth Spencer** announced the death of Frances Skene. I never corresponded with Skene, but I've seen her name in fannish birthday calendars and cc lists for N3F mailings. Thank you for sharing your memorial and information about her activities and involvement.

"The Jade Ring" smacks of proper faan fiction, which I can get behind without hesitation. It's good to see the name Hrothgar Weems again. Not to mention my first exposure to the name Ernest Wolfgang Friedrich Siegfried Gunther Klaus Inger Stroheim

Hentzau Schleswig-Holstein Trishtrash-am-Wiesen von Ulm, which is worth the price of admission alone. Is this an example of couching what you've learned about con running in fiction? If so, write more!

Your comment to Jefferson P. Swycaffer that you "somehow gained an impression that fan feuds were forms of entertainment staged for fans, like hoaxes or student pranks, and not meant in earnest" made me wonder. I'm sure that some might have been meant in jest, but some throughout history seem downright vicious. Even today, the dislike exhibited and expressed by two particular older fen in various email lists—both of whom I respect—occasionally proves disruptive. I can't imagine that the grudges they must carry are playacting.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 12, 1958

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #131

Sept. 19, 2024

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Last Week's Senryu

Another somewhat
late night collating apae.
Now I get to read!

I've read—and am reading—several good books in recent days. I've been enjoying them so much that I've been reading relatively late into the night, upon waking, and even during short breaks during the day. Some of what I've been reading has been outside of our usual themes.

Inspired by the fourth season of *Slow Horses* on Apple TV+, I finally read the first two novels in the Slough Horses series by Mick Herron: *Slow Horses* and *Dead Lions*. My wife has read all of the books, including the novellas. The first two books are both excellent crime stories/police procedurals featuring MI5 agents assigned to a bureau largely considered the destination for deadwood and hapless failures.

The first novel tells the tale of the kidnapping of a standup comedian with political ties, and the second story explores the reawakening of a number of Soviet sleeper cells. *Dead Lions* might be the better book of the two. Herron's characters are quite interesting, as are their interpersonal relationships, and in the end, they turn out to be pretty effective agents despite their reputations and career prospects. Jackson Lamb, leader of Slough House, is particularly fun, and the streaming adaptation is excellent.

A couple of things struck me. I might recommend that you don't read too many of the books sequentially because Herron's writing, while not formulaic, does utilize recurring structures that are more evident if you read multiple books in sequence. He also uses the phrase "Jesus wept" multiple times—voiced by the narrator as well as by multiple characters. The phrase pops up three times in the first book and six times in the second. That's not overly distracting, but it's interesting that the phrase shows up so many times, used by different characters.

I'm also almost done with Sax Rohmer's *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu* (aka *The Mystery of Dr.*

Fu-Manchu). I reread a portion of *Brood of the Witch-Queen* (T&T #9) before remembering that I'd already read the novel, and abandoned it for the *Fu-Manchu*, the first such book. Racist character portrayals and Yellow Peril themes aside, the book is a gripping adventure story. Rohmer was an excellent writer, and it's evident why his work was so successful. According to Tantor Media's Web site, Rohmer was "one of the most widely read and highly paid magazine writers in the English language" in the 1920s and 1930s.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 19, 1958

Digging into the Archives

In recent months, I've been called on to explore the APA-L back distributions to assist in a couple of research projects. We now have all issues scanned except for a handful from 2022—#2983-2988—just before I became OC, and I've applied optical character recognition to distributions up to #210 in 1969. (Only 2,876 to go!) So in many cases, searching is still relatively manual and laborious.

In April, while I was traveling, I received an email from David Sooby, who's involved in the Web site *Known Space: The Future Worlds of Larry Niven* (<https://larryniven.net>). He was interested in improving the site's bibliographic record for a 1971 story titled "The Pastel Terror," which had reportedly been published in *Deck 6* #15. When he referred to the fanzine in question, Sooby found that it merely described the piece—indicating that it was published in APA-L. All we had to go on was that *Deck 6* #15 was published in August 1971.

It took me some time to prioritize going through the archives, but this week I found the item in question. The piece, an outline for a *Star Trek* plot Niven never tried to sell, appeared in Fuzzy Pink Niven's *Fuzzily* #91 in APA-L #312 (May 6, 1971). With Niven's permission, I sent the issue of *Fuzzily* to Sooby so he can update the bibliography.

I also recently heard from Bill Burns, who was interested in tracking down the rest of Bruce Pelz's Heicon report as published in *Nyet Vremia* (his APA-Lzine) in 1970. The first six installments are available via the Fanac Fan History Project, but nothing further. So far, I've been able to send Burns

the next few installments—some published with several issues in between—and hope to be able to complete the report for Burns and Rob Hansen.

And I'd previously missed an even earlier email from Sooby seeking information about Niven's "The Last Necronomicon" from APA-L #315 (May 27, 1971). Actually titled "That Was the Year That Was Dept.," the piece appeared in *Fuzzily* #94. Once I've completed today's APA-L tasks, I'll secure permission to share that with Sooby, as well.

Given our recent discussions about the life remaining in our fanzines and archives, it's somewhat serendipitous that these requests arose or were resolved this week.



Los Angeles Times, Sept. 26, 1958

The Ignorable Theme: Fanzines

"What is a fanzine? Are Web sites, blogs, email newsletters, and podcasts fanzines? Should they be considered such for awards?" The questions arose while I was voting in the Best Fanzine category for the recent Hugo Awards.

Of the six nominees, two were blogs, one was a Web site that led to a book, and one was a weekly ezine distributed via email. I reviewed and considered all of the nominees but chose to vote only on what I considered to be fanzines—the two "actual" or "traditional" fanzines and the ezine—rather than fan publications more broadly in any form. So I excluded the Web site and two blogs. The winner of the 2024 Hugo for best Fanzine indicates that other voters made no such distinction.

John Hertz's flier *About Fanzines* in APA-L #3080

offers a relatively wide-ranging definition of fanzines: "amateur publications by fans, for fans. . . ." He continues: "Until the rise of the Internet, it was understood that fanzines would be on paper. . . . Today electronic zines are published too."

Using that as a guideline, Web sites and blogs could qualify as fanzines, because they are amateur publications by fans, for fans. *Fancylopedia 3* offers the following definition: "a magazine published on a nonprofessional basis by a fan for the amusement of other fan." *Wikipedia* suggests "a non-professional and non-official publication produced by enthusiasts of a particular cultural phenomenon (such as a literary or musical genre) for the pleasure of others who share their interest." Merriam-Webster: "a magazine written by and for fans." And the *Cambridge Dictionary*, *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, and *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary* include variations on that theme.

What my point of view comes down to, I think, is the difference between "publication" and "magazine." While I am willing to let go of the traditional notion of a print magazine—I do, after all, work for Google—I think that the periodic nature of fanzines is important (which Web sites, blogs, and other forms support). But I also think that the unit of content is important.

In fanzines, as well as in magazines, the unit of content is the issue. Fanzines comprise periodic issues that each contain multiple articles. (Arguably, an issue of a fanzine could contain only one article, but again, the unit is the issue—not the article.) For Web sites and blogs, the unit of content is the article or post, effectively an article. Or, it's the Web site or blog. For books, printed or otherwise, the unit of content might be the chapter or the book itself—perhaps even the section if chapters are broken up under subheadings. Again, the unit of content is not by nature periodic, or issues containing articles.

So I found it challenging to rationalize that Web sites and blogs were modern equivalents of fanzines. I think they're something else. The questions then becomes whether it's still useful and interesting to maintain a Best Fanzine category—I'd argue yes—and whether it'd be worth considering the introduction of a new category, perhaps Best Fan Publication, which could include fanzines—but might do so to the detriment of the visibility of fanzines.

Fan-published books and chapbooks or pamphlets would also fall under Best Fan Publication, but not Best Fanzine—unless they offer periodic issues. Would the National Fantasy Fan Federation's series of fanbooks (fan handbooks) qualify as a fanzine? Perhaps.

There's already a Hugo Award category for Best

Fancast, established to accommodate podcasts, and encompassing episodic audio and video. Where do fan-produced music, films, videos, and audio dramas fall? Maybe not as many are made these days, but it might still be worth considering. Podcasts are by nature episodic, so the unit of content is the episode. Audio dramas could perhaps fall under podcasts—if made up of at least four episodes—but would fan music, films, and videos fall under Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form) or Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form)? Do they have a home? A *YouTube* channel could be embraced by Best Fancast.

A Best Fan-Produced Audio-Visual category might be warranted rather than just Best Fancast, but perhaps that already includes video blogs, which might be a form of fan film and video—any form of fan multimedia. Music, for example, falls under Best Dramatic Presentation. Does fan-made music?

The Hugo Awards definition of fanzine seems to support the unit of content being the issue: “This Award is for anything that is neither professional nor semi-professional and that does not qualify as a Fancast. . . . The publication must also satisfy the rule of a minimum of 4 issues, at least one of which must have appeared in the year of eligibility.” For Web sites and blogs to qualify as fanzines, one must accept that posts or articles are issues, rather than elements of an issue.

I’m not sure what the answer is, and my ideas might point toward new fan categories that obscure fanzines as much as—or more than—the current ones do. But I do know that it was very difficult for me to consider blogs and Web sites as the equivalent of a fanzine. (Posts and articles are not issues.) Best Fan-Produced Periodical and Best Fan-Produced Standalone Work don’t quite seem sufficient, even though I think the periodic nature of fanzines is what matters, as well as the issue being the unit of content. The volume of fan productions don’t seem to warrant an online, offline, and multimedia option for each of the above two ideas.

In the end, I think I’ve made this messier rather than more clear. That might be an issue.

“For the acclaimed film director James Cameron, AI is complicating his livelihood. ‘It’s getting hard to write science fiction. Any idea I have today is a minimum of three years from the screen. How am I going to be relevant in three years when things are changing so rapidly?’ Cameron said to Microsoft cofounder Bill Gates.”—*Business Insider*, Sept. 18, 2024



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

Piranha

Last week, a friend and I watched the 1978 movie directed and co-edited by Joe Dante, written by John Sayles, and executive produced by Roger Corman, *Piranha*. It was our farewell to summer post-Labor Day, even though fall doesn’t officially start until next week. The flick was clearly inspired by *Jaws*—a great July 4 movie—so much so that Universal Pictures considered preventing its release before Steven Spielberg commented on it positively.

The gist of the film is that a scientist (portrayed by Kevin McCarthy) continues his work genetically engineering killer fish after the closure of a military research facility. The usually freshwater fish can now survive in salt water, and delightful stop-motion animation suggests that some might even become limbed and able to move on land. A skip tracer trying to locate two missing backpackers (who went swimming in the facility’s pool) accidentally releases

the mutated piranha into the area's rivers, which threatens a youth summer camp and resort downstream past a dam.

The skip tracer teams up with a hard-drinking bachelor to warn those downstream—to save his daughter and help avoid injury and death—aligning with the military, which mostly seeks to cover up the reality of the situation. Barbara Steele is somewhat awkwardly cast as another military scientist. One of the military leaders has invested in the resort.

There are several notable scenes: the initial skinnydipping or night swimming scene featuring the backpackers, the death of a man on a dock with his dog, a young boy on a capsized canoe, and the opening weekend of the resort—managed by a character played by Dick Miller. Sayles even portrays a sentry in a bit role.

But the piranha themselves are the true stars, most frequently represented using animation or practical effects. The stop-motion animation, rare given its expense, doesn't quite live up to its promise. Regardless, the Ray Harryhausen-inspired work is a wonder to behold.

Overall, *Piranha* is a good movie, more than just a *Jaws* knockoff, and surprisingly well done given its relatively low budget. You can't really beat Corman and Dante with McCarthy and Miller.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 3, 1958

Comments on APA-L #3086

In *Space Cowboy's Accretion* #12, Jean-Paul L. Garnier remarked on recent podcast episodes and reading events. I continue to be impressed by the

number of authors featured whom I've never heard of nor read. Garnier's activities frequently introduce me to new talent—at least new to me.

I'm sorry to hear that August was so challenging business wise. It's good to see your reading of Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association publications, Rudy Rucker—a favorite!—and work by Jim Thompson.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1608 drew ellers' attention to the Hugo's fan categories. Why are we not active in the corners of fandom in which nominees we might not recognize are active? Why are they not active in ours? If people are merely voting for those who've received enough nominations—regardless of how widely known or active they are—I think you're right that it comes down to nominations. Something can't be on the ballot if it's not nominated enough times. A concerted nomination drive might be worth considering. I feel like the Best Fan Artist category might be even more confusing than the Best Fanzine category. I just don't see the artwork of so many nominees until it's time to vote. Again, increasing the number of nominations could address that.

The Loscon 50 Web site indicates that they're "no longer accepting program panelists," but if you've previously submitted the book discussions as programming (<https://tinyurl.com/Loscon50ProgrammingIdeas>), I'd follow up if no one's reached out to you to confirm yet. I just reached out to Eylat Poliner to doubly confirm the Fanzine Corner among the fan tables—we're set!—and she said that you should call her about the book discussions and other programming proposals. Kristen Renee Gorlitz would like to confirm the titles of your panels, which you can do by phone or mail. "Sooner rather than later," she said. So it goes.

I'd consider book series a la Nero Wolfe mysteries and Patrick O'Brian's novels as different from serialized fiction in the vein of that in periodicals (think stories serialized in multiple issues of *Analog* or *Asimov's*, the serialized fiction in *Pablo Lennis* or Derek LaPorte's contributions here, or the German Perry Rhodan periodicals—though published in the United States as books), but your mileage might vary. I think you're right that an author being a good writer matters, but some readers might appreciate serialized fiction—similar to film serials—more than other readers in terms of enjoyment and inclination.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #74, Matthew Mitchell shared good news about Nick's mobile phone. Serendipitously, I received a new mobile phone midweek. My wife had informed me that Google was offering a discount on Pixel devices this month, and I've been using my Pixel 3 for four

years past the end of Google's support and security updates. The discount cut the price of a Pixel 8a by \$100 and Pixel Buds by \$35, so I decided to buy a mobile that is not cracked in the corner, is perhaps able to utilize a SIM card and embedded SIM more seamlessly, and might otherwise work better than my unsupported mobile. So far I like it.

I picked the Ignorable Theme for APA-L #3090 before reading your ish, but I think fan names are different enough from pseudonyms that it won't be repetitive. Your nom de plume is impressive. There are so many ways to structure the name of a published author: Matthew Mitchell, Matthew Glen Mitchell, M.G. Mitchell, M. Glen Mitchell, Matthew G. Mitchell... Not to mention the Matt variants, including two M. Glen Mitchells, one for each. I've always used Heath Row because it's a good byline, but E.H. Row does have its appeal.

I will share your feedback on the *Free LSD* review with contributor Allen Callaci. My father gets irritated when he buys a book written "by" Tom Clancy with someone else, regardless of whether it's "with" or "and" the other author. Clancy died in 2013, so nothing can be co-written at this point. Did Clancy leave story outlines behind?

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1609 reported on the successful sail deployment of NASA's ACS3. I'll have to seek out the online images. Must be glorious. I will share your feedback with cover artist Joe Pearson.

In *Sirius Barks* #16, **Beverly Warren** celebrated the end of the heat wave. I've been enjoying the comparatively cooler weather, for sure, especially at night for sleeping. There's an sf-oriented hiking group? Perhaps I should include the Silver Hikers in the *Los Angeles County Fanac Guide*. Who is a good point person for me to contact to learn more?

The *Tesla* performance at Caltech (<https://pst.caltech.edu/events/opening-doors>) sounds promising. I'm looking forward to the cyberpunk exhibit at the Academy Museum (<https://www.academymuseum.org/en/exhibitions/cyberpunk>) and the *Sci-fi, Magick, Queer L.A.* exhibit at the USC Fisher Museum of Art. (<https://one.usc.edu/exhibition/sci-fi-magick-queer-la-sexual-science-and-imagi-nation>) It seems to be the season for such things!

Your news about the forthcoming book of reviews by Bill is quite exciting. I look forward to reading the book!

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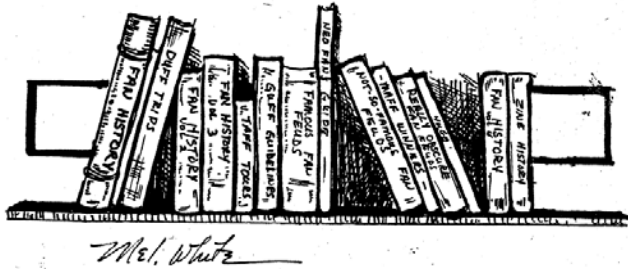
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Faculae & Filigree #35

Sept. 20, 2024

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From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Second Ending by James White / *The Jewels of Aptor* by Samuel R. Delany (Ace, 1962)

This Ace Double (F-173) was a very fun read. The novel by White originally appeared as a serial in *Fantastic Stories of Imagination* (June and July 1961). It focuses on a man who went into suspended animation, or Deep Sleep, in 2017, eventually awakening in 2308.

The situation to which he awakens is perplexing and increasingly concerning. At the age of 22, almost 75 years after the First Atomic War, he discovered that he had a rare leukemic condition, which necessitated his suspension until a cure could be found. He wakes to disaster.

I won't give away too much more of the plot, because it makes for effective reading, but the book concentrates on resource scarcity, service-oriented robots, and a drastically diminished human population. The roles and responsibilities of robots, as well as the limits of their abilities—and the potential for machine learning—is also addressed. White explores the very serious costs of human loneliness and the social outlets sought by our Rip Van Winkle.

The manner in which the protagonist figures out the situation in which he finds himself, the events that occurred while he was unconscious, and the options available to him are quite interesting. Once he charts a course that shows promise, he goes back into Deep Sleep to give the remaining robots the time they need to undertake certain tasks, and the time frame expands beyond the almost 300 years of his initial suspension.

He begins remaining awake for shorter and shorter

periods of time—and sleeping for longer and longer periods of time: thousands of years, perhaps longer. In the end, the book is about evolution, that of the human race, as well as the development of robots and related technology. *Second Ending* has a very long time frame. It's a fascinating read.

Before he was a professional author, White was a fan and contributed to two fanzines from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s after the publication of his first short stories and novels. He went on to write the Sector General series, which has been strongly recommended to me—but I didn't make that connection until well after reading this.

Delany's *The Jewels of Aptor* wasn't a reprint, first published in this Double. It was his first novel, and a very early published piece. His short story "Salt" appeared in *Dynamo* just two years earlier. Later editions are somewhat longer; *The Jewels of Aptor* was cut by about 15 pages for the Double.

At first, the novel seems like a fantasy. Civilization is at a stage close to the Middle Ages, and a young student and poet is enlisted to help a priestess of the goddess Argo. She is on her way to Aptor, a large, mysterious city, to rescue or otherwise reunite with her sister, another young priestess, who'd been kidnapped by followers of a rival god, Hama.

The author is adept in portraying the warring religious factions, concentrating on one character who turns out to be a double agent, as well as the exploration of Aptor—which turns out to be the near-ruins of a post-apocalyptic society. (A slight reminder of Terry Brooks's later Shannara series.) The scenes in which the group encounters and flees from large amoeba-like creatures are awesome, as is the revelation that they've been exposed to dangerous levels of radiation.

The Jewels of Aptor might not be the Delany work you're most familiar with—or that comes to mind first—but it's an impressive first novel. The skill Delany exhibits is a sign of what was to come.

It's a Double, so which one is the better of the two? I'd say *Second Ending*. Both are worth reading, but White's contribution takes a very long view of the future.

The Altar on Asconel by John Brunner / *Android Avenger* by Ted White (Ace, 1965)

Originally serialized in the April and May 1965 issues of *If*, Brunner's novel is a wonderful story about a group of brothers who return to their home world to depose colonists who've enslaved their fellow citizens. Their people seem to be involved in some kind of religious fervor, some volunteering to be sacrificed to the mysterious Belizuek, patron of the

religious cult.

Not entirely dissimilar to *The Jewels of Apor* above, the novel blends sf—the chapters leading up to the return to Asconel—and a comparably low-technology homeworld upon their return. Until it becomes clear just who—or what—Belizuek is, and where it came from. That was an excellent revelation, resonating with elements of *Doctor Who* and H.P. Lovecraft, though not as weird horror as that reference might suggest.

Written about a decade and a half into Brunner’s career, the novel is part of his Interstellar Empire series, which includes works published between 1951 and 2003. (An impressive time span for just six novels!)

On the flip side of this Ace Double (M-123), we have White’s *Android Avenger*, which was first published in this edition. It was his first novel that wasn’t a collaboration and, like part of *Second Ending* above, takes place in 2017. The United States has implemented a policy of Compulsory Sanity, and anyone who’s divergent in any way—even choosing to live off the grid as an urban homesteader—is at risk of being selected for public execution. Those executions are enacted by 1,000 of their fellow citizens, who each push a button to activate the electrocution.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 10, 1958

After an injury, the protagonist realizes that he has a metallic skeleton, he can heal quickly—and he occasionally blacks out, later learning that he’s killed someone using some kind of ray in his mouth. Somehow, he’s been unaware that he’s a killer android—and that someone is utilizing him to eliminate rivals and enemies.

Worried that he’ll be discovered as divergent in more than one way now—his thoughts already tending toward the dangerous—he tries to escape from being used as a pawn, to discover who’s controlling him—and why. He befriends and becomes lovers with a compelling independent woman who’s also involved in the conspiracy, but the most interesting part of the book takes the android avenger to Bleecker Street.

A lawless zone well downtown in lower Manhattan, the area is inhabited by the Bleeckers, a melange of “kid gangs” and “live people,” living in stark contrast—and direct opposition—to the more lawful, docile citizens. The scenes in which the protagonist joins an Agape of the Church of the

Brotherhood of the Way for dinner—and more—learning about Arthur D. Sampson’s *The Pledge of Peace and Brotherhood* and alternative modes of living are awesome. I particularly enjoyed that portion of the book and its utopian anarchy.

After reading the book, I emailed White to thank him for writing it, lo, almost 60 years ago. In his response, he indicated that the Bleeckers were drawn from his portion of a short story co-written with Calvin Demmon in late 1963. *Android Avenger* is an economical consideration of mental health, social conformity, government or police state oppression, and control. White even voices a possible thesis explicitly: “You want voluntary control.”

There are portions of the book that are somewhat confusing, but their inclusion serves a plot point, so I won’t address that here. Though momentarily requiring reorientation, they’re not overly perplexing and make sense in the end.

It’s a Double, so which is the better? As much as I enjoyed Brunner’s space-ranging religious sf adventure, White’s half stands out more intriguingly as strong near-future social science fiction. We probably need to worry about social controls more than we do killer androids, and the Bleeckers already exist in some cities. ReAnimus Press reissued *Android Avenger* in 2019, so it’s readily available.

Comments on LASFAPA #571

I have three apa deadlines in three consecutive days this week—a rarity—and LASFAPA is the second. So here we go, on the day of the deadline!

In *Wurlitzer*, our Little Sin Ghod and Lord High Counter of Legumes indicated that he doesn’t have LASFAPA #162 in his binders. While applying optical character recognition to the scans, I emailed him about not receiving that scan, and he *Wurlitzer*-slapped me. The gall! I’ll check the back distributions I salvaged from the LASFS storage to see if I have it, as well. Worst case scenario, it might be among the Marty Cantor materials housed by the University of California, Riverside.

Rich Lynch’s *It’s Still Rock and Roll to Me #3* expressed concerns about minac requirements. I’m not sure we’re in a position to be too strict about such things. In APA-L, at least, I’d prefer that people participate rather than require people to participate in a specific way.

LASFAPA archives are available to LASFAPA members and former members. We’ve not yet decided to make current or back distributions available more broadly—though we might decide to do so in the future. My preference would be to secure permission from all contributors still living, but that seems

daunting. I've emailed you the archive URL.

I've only attended my five-year high school reunion. I misbehaved, drinking too much, staying out all night without touching base with my parents, and returning to the hotel the next morning almost late for a brunch with family friends, hungover—basically doing all the things I didn't do while living at home. It's a little embarrassing. I've since apologized to my parents—at the time I didn't think it was that big a deal, but they were quite worried—but I think that put me off reunions. Now that I don't drink any more and am older, wiser, I'm sure it'd be fun, but there we go. I haven't gone to any college reunions.

I read and enjoyed your piece on the 2017 solar eclipse. My wife and I enjoyed this week's moon, especially Saturn's visible closeness in the night sky—I sent a photograph to my sister—and the lunar eclipse, which I caught the end of during my weekly movie night.

In *That Flagon Last Night* #259, **Alva Svoboda** shared some generative AI experimentation: a graphic novel in verse. Terraforming a sentient planet? Oof.

Alan Winston's *A Pearl Beyond Price* shared natter on recent dance and travel—including contracting COVID. Almost 20 days! Geez, I hope you've recovered fully. Though it's a bummer you weren't able to come to Los Angeles, that seems like the right choice to make.

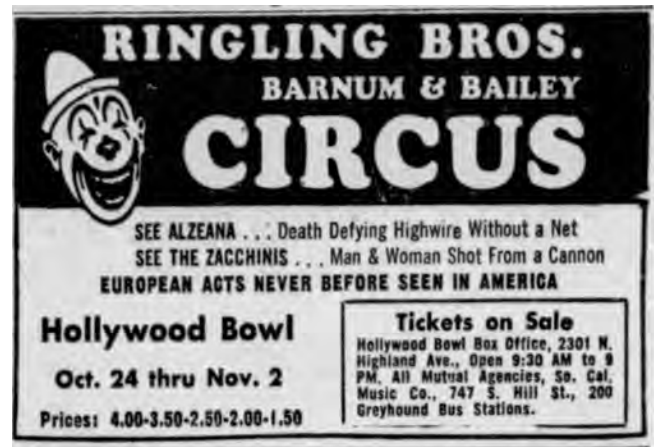
In *Labyrinthine Lines* dated August 2024, **Nick Smith**—in appropriate page order this distribution!—updated LASFAPans on LASFS real estate activity. I'd not yet read that the inspections proved problematic, but that, too, seems like the right choice. I'm sad to have missed your museum talk! If you prepared notes, you could... publish them. I'd be interested in the other movies addressed, as well as the themes you identified and discussed.

Initially, I misread your remark about the LASFS Worldcon staff as "they don't know what they're doing." Imagine my relief when I realized I'd misread that. They know what they're doing! Hopefully, I'll be able to participate in LAcon V in 2026. That seems an awfully long time away. Luckily, we have Loscon coming up in a couple of months!

Your comments on Science Fiction Book Club selections intrigued me. I imagine that at one time, being selected meant something, but in its current form, most of the books and monthly picks—when I was still a member—seem like random genre selections of the current Book of the Month Club. The SFBC also currently offers many non-genre books, which dilutes the idea a little. I canceled my membership, even with credits unspent, because the likelihood of my continuing to amass credits without

ordering books seemed high. Besides, I wasn't always reading the books I received.

I've added the 1968 *Luana* to my list of movies to watch. I've fallen out of the practice of maintaining that list. That was the first entry I've made in four months. Lack of recommendation aside, it sounds up my alley. You also mentioned four novels about the Black Plague. Do you remember their titles? It's a curiosity that they were all published around the same time. I wonder if there was a catalyst.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 10, 1958

And **David Schlosser's** *Fool's Mate* #574 mentioned making color copies at work. Do you have a black-and-white printer? Lee Gold does, so Alarums & Excursions is always black and white. When I became OC of APA-L, I had to buy a printer. While I bought a color printer, I economized and bought a simplex printer. For the uninitiated, simplex printers can print only on one side during a print run, while duplex printers can print on both sides. So I need to print the odd-numbered pages first, turn the printed pages over, often reorganizing for appropriate page sequencing, and then print the even-numbered pages.

That hasn't been too much of a hassle, though it does take some doing and attention. The biggest challenge is when C.D. Carson submits pamphlets formatted for printing. I used to reorient the pages before printing, which meant I needed to figure out how to orient printed pages for second-side printing—printing test copies so I avoided overprinting errors. Last week or so, I realized that I shouldn't reorient his pages but just print the files as is. Um, duh?

I guess I've never been fired either, though when I left Squidoo, it was after a year. We'd agreed to a year before checking in to see how it was going, and my employer had determined I could move on. I sure felt fired, even though I wasn't really satisfied by the work either. It made sense to leave and was about as graceful an exit as I could hope for. He agreed to

continue to employ me until I found something, as long as I was actually looking. That didn't continue for long, and I soon left to join Doubleclick.

Schlosser has made impressive progress with his return to scanning. I've now applied optical character recognition up to #171, and he's scanned up to #303, so I have my work cut out for me. The APA-L archives have been utilized well this past week as I've assisted a couple of research efforts on behalf of David Sooby and *Known Space: The Future Worlds of Larry Niven* (<https://larryniven.net>), and Bill Burns and Rob Hansen. The archives are tremendous resources.

When I go to New York City for work next week, I'll likely take my work laptop but not my personal one, but we'll see; I might take both. But when I went to Wisconsin to see my folks, I knew I wouldn't have time to work on apa and fanzine stuff, so I didn't. When we travel to Portugal, I take both—especially if I'm working part of the time. Thank you for explaining “Collate, Collate, Uber Alles,” and “Pulling a Gunderloy.”

I cannot wait for your Worldcon trip report. Next ish is going to be a doozy!



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 17, 1958

Emulators & Engines #17

Sept. 21, 2024

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On the 2024 D&D *Player's Handbook*

I wasn't going to buy it. Really, I wasn't. I haven't purchased a fifth edition splatbook since late 2023 and am quite sure that I have plenty of materials on hand for decades ahead of awesome gaming. But I got pulled into the commercial and commemorative spirit of the 50th anniversary of *Dungeons & Dragons*, buying multiple sheets of the postage stamps (*E&E* #16)—which are fine but not overly impressive; still worth supporting so it happens again—signing up anew for *D&D Beyond* (I'd previously let my subscription lapse), and securing early release access to the online *Player's Handbook* and following printed version. I honestly couldn't wait.

The book arrived unexpectedly mid-month, and I flipped through it that very day, making a first-level Aasimar sorcerer named Beigwamil Oldazir, selecting the ræespecies and class by rolling a d10 and a d12. I also randomized the alignment, altering the result to be more appropriate for an Aasimar character. A friend is starting a campaign this weekend, and it looks like I'll be able to join in. It'll be my first time playing at an actual table since before the pandemic—other than running games at a Strategicon event last year. (*E&E* #3)

I find the new *Player's Handbook* absolutely delightful. It made me want to play the game, which I believe is its primary purpose. That's exactly what it should do, and everyone involved in its making should be proud. Anything that gets more people seated at gaming tables online and offline is good for roleplaying games, in part because it might inspire and bring in people who are interested in running games as well as playing games. So I've found much of the online conversation about the new PH somewhat confusing.

Most people who are upset about the new edition seem to be upset about its aesthetics, which in turn seems to communicate disagreement with the growing representational diversity of the game in its visual elements. (In part mirroring explicit efforts to diversify the people drawn to the game.) Much of the conversation focuses on the artwork, which is glorious

throughout. I've seen critical remarks about species portrayal (orcs look too friendly, too Latinx, and too western), gender portrayal (a woman rogue shouldn't have curly hair or a nose ring?), and some amount of tone policing (characters and NPCs look too happy, shouldn't be smiling, and the game isn't gritty or grimdark enough).

Some of the artwork offered as examples of the above concerns only work as examples when considered in isolation—rather than in the broader context of the artwork throughout the book generally. Do critics have concerns about the artwork generally, or with specific artists? The majority of the artwork doesn't seem to reflect the concerns raised by most vocal critics. Why are people wasting time debating whether a particular character or NPC in a specific piece of artwork should be smiling?

Such concerns don't seem to be problems with the game or the *Player's Handbook*. The solution doesn't reside in changing how the PH is produced—but the kind of Dungeon Master or players with whom you share your tables. Want to play a grimdark campaign? Do so. The aesthetics and tone of the game's artwork don't determine the aesthetics or tone of what happens at a table.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 17, 1958

It might, however, affect the expectations of newcomers, and that might be the primary problem that the most vocal critics have. My perspective is that the new PH as it is might very well bring in more young players, more people who haven't played D&D—or other roleplaying games—before, and more people who might not have even considered themselves the kind of people who play roleplaying games. There's nothing wrong with any of that. I see only upside. More players leads to more games, more tables, more DMs, and more fun to be had by more people.

So this might be a problem with openness to newcomers. Do outspoken critics not want more

owning any core rulebooks, and still creating and playing fun characters with friends and classmates—perhaps as part of an after-school program, a club, or at a drop-in center like the Hero Workshop (<https://www.heroworkshop.org>) in Culver City.

This volume concentrates on the fauna of *Dungeons & Dragons*, organized by habitat: “Caverns & Dark Places,” “Forests, Mountains & Other Terrain,” “Moors, Bogs & Boneyards,” “Oceans, Lakes & Waterways,” and “Mountain Peaks & Open Sky.” Each creature featured—featured creature?—details Special Powers, Lair, Size, and player advice along the lines of dos and don’ts. Each section also includes at least one narrative Encounter description and a legendary creature. There are also more expansive sub-sections focusing on giants, vampires, and dragons.

I am not a younger reader or new player, so I didn’t find the book that useful or interesting—though I recognize its utility for the target audience of readers. I enjoyed the Encounter pages most of all, appreciating the short fictional approach to representing game play, as well as the follow-up questions.

The final section of the text, “Using Monsters to Tell Your Own Stories,” points readers toward the game. After posing a series of questions focusing on the who, what, when, where, how, and why of *Dungeons & Dragons* sessions, the book also steers readers toward local gaming stores and demonstration sessions, as well as a subsequent title in the series: *Warriors & Weapons*.

While I might have previously considered the D&D *Starter Set*—such as *Dragons of Stormwreck Isle*—the best introduction for new, young players, this book series might make an even better introduction. Instead of focusing on game mechanics, it concentrates on the aesthetics of the game, the promise and potential of game play—and inspires the imagination. That’s a wonderful outcome.

At the local bookstore Friday, I saw a copy of Anne Tool’s *How Not to Get Eaten by Owlbeats* (DK, 2024), which seems to take a similar approach. There are also other books for younger readers, including the *Dungeon Academy* series, a Little Golden Book, a Step into Reading *Honor Among Thieves* tie-in, and others. Such books might be too low-level for apans—but would make wonderful presents for children.

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Los Angeles Times, Oct. 17, 1958

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Los Angeles Times, Oct. 24, 1958

The Ignorable Theme: Good GMs

“What makes a good GM?” Thank you, John Redden and Joshua Kronengold, for posing the question! In addition to newer books such as Justin Alexander’s *So You Want to Be a Game Master* and James D’Amato’s *The Ultimate RPG Game Master’s Guide*, other system-neutral tomes have addressed the question over the years, including Gary Gygax’s *Master of the Game* (Perigee, 1989) and Phil Vecchione and Walt Ciechanowski’s *Odyssey: The Complete Game Master’s Guide to Campaign Management* (Engine, 2013).

In the Gygax chapter “How Is Mastery Measured?”, the co-creator of *Dungeons & Dragons* outlines multiple aspects that might represent a good GM: mastery of game mastership, rules, systems, adventure scenario and ancillary materials creation, campaign milieu creation (the primary focus of *Odyssey* above), RPG systems expansions, and the creation of RPGs themselves.

Personally, my experience has been that the last two aspects are the least important—and I look forward to reading Gygax’s book to see how he expands on the other aspects. My commentary thish will largely draw on my personal experience as a player and GM—as well as as a hike leader.

Table stakes or basic requirements for a good GM are that one **understands and can apply the rules** of a given RPG or system. Players sharing a table with other experienced players can often rely on each other to know a given game and its mechanics, but that is primarily the role of the GM. That ability will come into play in other aspects of the GM’s role.

It is also the job of the GM to **prepare for game sessions**. Scheduling and other logistics—location, tools, and snacks—can fall to players, as well, but it is the GM’s responsibility to prepare adventures, adventure hooks, and broader ongoing campaigns. What options are available? What plot hooks exist? Once a plot hook is taken, is the GM prepared to run a scenario? Is there a module or adventure outline available? Do they have what they need to pursue side treks? Can you readily portray NPCs and creatures? Has the GM acquainted herself with any needed materials, or developed them herself?

It can also fall to the GM to **provide most or many of the tools** required for a session. Do you have the stuff you and the players need for a given session? How object-oriented is the game going to be? Theater of the mind sessions might require few supplies, but a good GM will bring any needed graph paper, tactical mats, tiles, non-character miniatures, and any other tools needed. They should probably bring their own

dice, though dice are unlikely to be in short supply. If the GM needs to use something, they should probably bring it.

All of the above is background, however, and the **most important role** of the GM during sessions is to

- create and maintain the shared story space
- share, unfold, and hold the story at hand
- offer players opportunities to perform, shine, excel, and do cool things with their characters
- offer players challenges, risks, and rewards for their characters
- adjudicate rules-oriented outcomes
- provide an opportunity for co-created, collective fun

Those responsibilities are largely social in nature—and require preparation. Good GMs blend drama, performance, and theater to create and sustain a setting and mood that can encourage and inform character actions and player involvement. They reveal compelling stories in which players can choose to participate. They manage any tactical or technical requirements of game activities. And they take care of the table.

The best GMs I've experienced are somewhat similar to good hike leaders outdoors. Being a good hike leader is different from being a good hiker—and you need to prepare and behave differently. Good hike leaders prepare in advance, accounting for most eventualities and possibilities. They bring everyone with them, leading the hike so the most and least experienced hikers alike in the group can have a good experience. They bring the 10 essentials for outdoor activities, keeping the group's health and well being in mind as well as their own. And they're flexible, able to roll with changes and opportunities as they arise.

They're soft when they need to be—perhaps cutting a hike short if it's not as much fun as expected or becomes dangerous, or someone experiences a physical or equipment malfunction. (Perhaps leading to a group of adventurers barely surviving to live and strive another day rather than pursuing a Total Party Kill.) And they're hard when they need to be—more important outdoors than at the gaming table—offering enough challenge that the group is stronger at the end than they were at the beginning, and being a strong enough leader that fellow hikers take you seriously in dangerous situations.

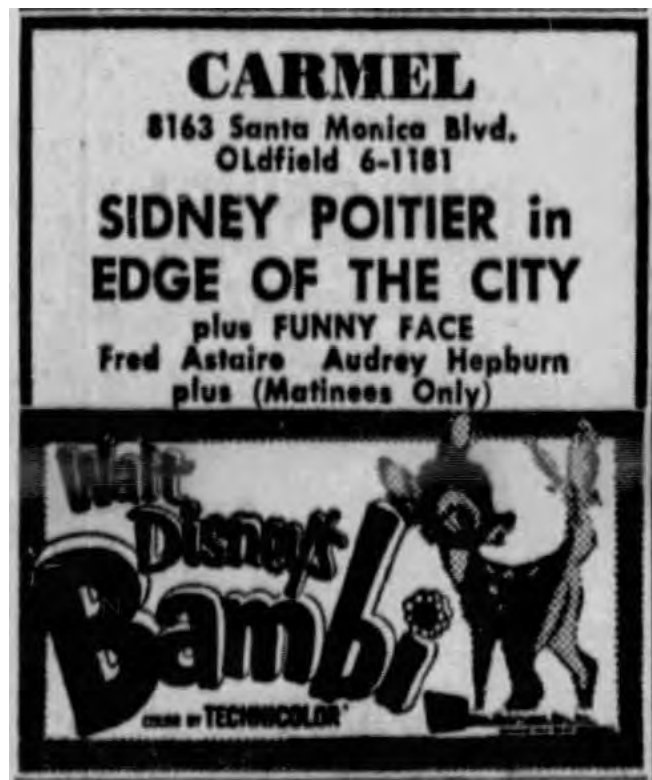
And they do so in a way that encourages participants to want to join in on the next activity based on the fun they had during the present activity. A GM's plan and intent is not the most important element at the table. A single game session or

campaign is not the be-all and end-all. Will you see your friends again? Will they want you to GM again? Will they show up to the next game session? It's important to think about the game—and the people at the table—for the long term.

That requires **flexibility and improvisation**. Sometimes a good GM needs to let go of what they've planned and follow the cues, interests, and desires of the players. In the end, however, it comes down to **invoking players' sense of wonder**. If a GM is able to offer players cool places, things, events, challenges, items, creatures, enemies, opponents, opportunities, dangers, and rewards—in a somewhat internally consistent manner—and knows a game well enough that the mechanics aren't interruptive or distracting and know a story well enough that it can unfold somewhat smoothly, the people at the table will likely have fun and want to return.

As a corollary, the worst GMs I've experienced either don't prepare or prove inflexible when things don't go the way they intended or planned. Bad GMs care more about their experience, the sanctity of the adventure, and their position as GM than they do about the experiences of the players.

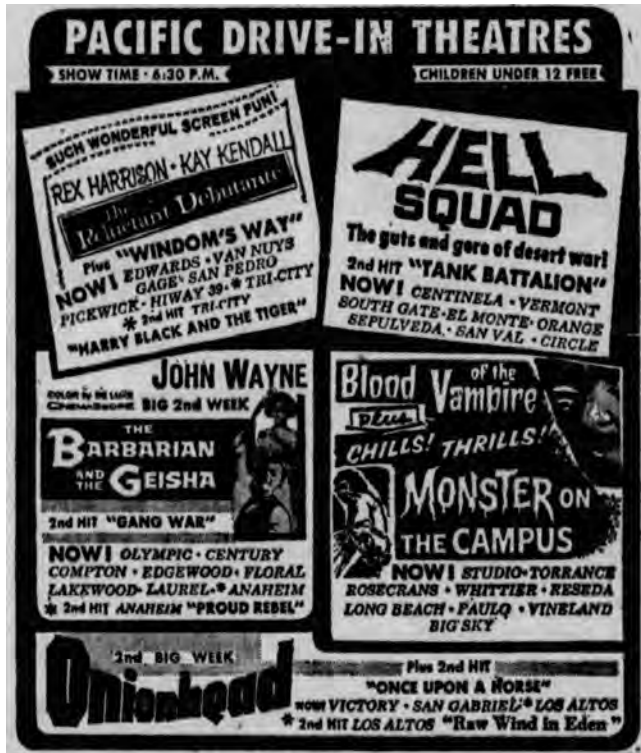
The best GMs want and try to create enjoyable experiences for the players at their table.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 24, 1958

Comments on Alarums & Excursions #586

In *Tantivy* dated Aug. 5, 2024, **Lee Gold** mentioned A&E's anniversary month. Happy 55th anniversary to this awesome amateur press association! I've enjoyed my participation and appreciate all of you. Your remark on the gold medallion trees reminded me to see if they're still in bloom—though more than a month later, I've likely missed them. Your comment on COVID numbers resonated with me. At least two of my co-workers recently contracted COVID, and a fellow LASFAPAn tested positively for almost 20 days. My wife and I recently got our boosters and flu vaccinations, and I've yet to contract COVID. Last night, we went to see a double feature of *Purple Noon* and *La Piscine*—both excellent—at the Aero Theatre in Santa Monica. We were two of very few people masking in the theater. We still mask in small enclosed spaces and in crowds. And if Caitlin puts her mask on, I put mine on.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 24, 1958

Pedro Panhoca da Silva's *A Collective Gamecomics: Kuala* (2021) brought to mind Jason Shiga's Adventuregame Comics (<https://zarfhome.com>), which you might enjoy. There are two of the interactive comic novels so far, *Leviathan* and *The Beyond*, and there seems to have been a precursor: *Meanwhile*. Print versions are also available. I've appreciated Shiga's previous minicomics but have yet to check out these books. A couple of years ago, *Comic Book Herald* interviewed Shiga about his

approach to interactive comics. (<https://www.comicbookherald.com/jason-shiga-interview-on-adventuregame-comics>)

In *The Silent Temple* #35, **Dylan Capel** informed apans of a job change. I'm sorry to hear about the unpleasant experience with your previous employer and hope that the new gig brings only the best and brightest. Your citation of Raymond Chandler's definition of a hero is compelling! It begs the question: Can one be a hero in a comfortable, safe environment?

Michael Cule's *Mundus Vult Decepi* shared some frustrating experiences related to the Worldcon in Glasgow. I'm sorry that your travel was so challenging and that it took so long to enjoy the convention. Given your trip prep, it seems that the travel experience overshadowed the actual con experience. I'm curious what you thought of the portions of the con that you were able to experience and enjoy.

I read and appreciated **Clark B. Timmins's** *QUA AE7KL* #108, which focused on mapping. Two party roles that seemed relatively common—or at least encouraged—in earlier editions of D&D were the caller and the mapper. As a DM dating back to 1983, I think I required players to maintain their own map only briefly. As you indicated, while player mapping introduced interesting opportunities for error and wanting to explore the empty spaces, it wasn't logistically feasible over time from a time perspective. Now that there's such a tactical element to more recent editions, we seem to have abandoned the overall, general map approach for an immediate setting approach, at least in public play. That orients the game toward combat encounters rather than exploration and navigation. I'm tempted to think that secret doors and rooms are less common in 5E, as well. Your selection of map-oriented comments from early issues of A&E and rulebooks was fascinating.

In *Age of Menace* #231, **Brian Christopher Misiaszek** reported on the death of his mother-in-law. I condole with you and your family, sir. May her memory be a blessing. My mother- and brother-in-law arrive near the end of this coming week and will stay with us for a couple of weeks. I will value my time with them in her memory. I enjoyed your con prep on GenCon 50. That you had to buy another suitcase while there made me chuckle.

Jerry Stratton's *The Biblyon Free Press* dated September 2024 mentioned "Square Pegs and Round Holes" in *Dragon* #165. I'll have to dig that out! In *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #395, **Lisa Padol** remarked that Joshua Kronengold forgot to pack shirts. Perhaps he, too, needed an empty suitcase. A&E had an impressive representation at Worldcon.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #132

Sept. 26, 2024

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

Last Week's Senryu

The deadlines amass.

Time is ever so finite.

So: One more apa?

Last week I had three apae deadlines in as many days: APA-L on Thursday, LASFAPA on Friday, and Alarums & Excursions on Saturday. That doesn't happen often, but when it does I feel the bite of deadlines. On Saturday, I submitted my contribution to A&E about 15 minutes before the 5 p.m. deadline.

While my apahacking doesn't yet feel like it did leading up to my pulling back from so many last time, I'm mindful of letting too many fanac demands stack up. Generally, tight deadlines—and the risk of starting to miss deadlines—makes such fanac less fun and rewarding. It starts to feel more like an obligation than a kick. This is all about chasing the kicks.

Regardless, across those three apae, I still managed to hack out 15 pages over those three days. Hopefully, that doesn't result in crudzines. We shall see! I am particularly aware of that this week because I'm thinking about adding one more apa to my roster: CAPA-alpha, which focuses on comic books. Fellow eller Ed Buchman is a participant.

I continue to read and enjoy comic books, occasionally addressing relevant titles in my various apazines. I've been feeling the need for a less sf-oriented outlet in which I could more generally consider comic books as I start to work my way through the collection in order to release what I've accumulated back into the wild.

CAPA-alpha looks like a good home for such writing—to augment my involvement in the United Fanzine Organization—and we'll see if one more deadline proves problematic.

On the Bite of Deadlines

I also feel the bite of deadlines today—and this week. My workload at work is quite large, and I'm hustling to make good progress on my primary project before going to New York City for several days next week.

Traveling this coming Monday and the following Friday, I'll be in New York from Monday evening through Friday morning. At a global gathering of insights and research professionals, I'll be demonstrating the project I've been working on for the last year—and hope to make more progress to show during that event. We're well poised to launch in the next month or so, and this event offers a unique opportunity to promote the effort, recruit more participants, and position the work with this important audience for launch.

My mother- and brother-in-law are also arriving for a two-week visit this evening. (My wife just left to pick them up.) When we discussed which one of us would pick them up at the airport, I crossed my fingers—though I would have graciously gone to get them. I love both of them very much, and I'm grateful Caitlin was able to go to the airport for them. Her birthday is in a couple of days, so this weekend will be full of love and family.

So, this is a snapzine. No book reviews, no Ignorable Theme—and I have something to say, too!—and no distribution comments. It just struck me that next week's distribution won't be printed, collated, or mailed until Saturday, most likely. If materials arrive after the Thursday deadline (but before I begin that work), they'll still be included.

Digging into the Archives (cont.)

I continue to accelerate the application of optical character recognition to APA-L back distributions—now up to #277 in September 1970—in part to help find some items for Larry Niven and David Sooby, and Bill Burns and Rob Hansen. I've paused OCR'ing LASFAPA for now in order to focus on APA-L, and it's likely that that work also bit into my actual apahacking. It's work worth doing!

In APA-L #248 (Feb. 12, 1970), Dan Goodman's *No Harm in Asking* poised a series of interesting questions that we might find interesting discussion fodder even 54 years later. I enclose a reprint of that contribution following this snapzine. To learn more about Goodman, refer to his *Fancylopedia 3* entry. (https://fancylopedia.org/Dan_Goodman) *File 770's* 2020 obituary for Goodman and John Hertz's memorial from *Vanamonde* #1389 are also worth reading. (<https://file770.com/tag/dan-goodman/>)

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #24 Sept. 29, 2024

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An Attempt at Self-Definition

I am what I am.

- I am what I avoid.
- I am what I believe.
- I am what I buy.
- I am what I communicate.
- I am what I consume.
- I am what I create.
- I am what I desire.
- I am what I dislike.
- I am what I do.
- I am what I dream.
- I am what I drink.
- I am what I eat.
- I am what I feel.
- I am what I focus on.
- I am what I forget.
- I am who I fuck.
- I am what I give.
- I am where I go.
- I am what I hate.
- I am what I have.
- I am what I hear.
- I am what I hope.
- I am what I idolize.
- I am what I ignore.
- I am what I imagine.
- I am what I inspire.
- I am what I learn.
- I am what I listen to.
- I am what I love.
- I am what I make.
- I am what I mean.
- I am what I need.
- I am what I plan.
- I am what I pretend.
- I am what I produce.
- I am what I project.
- I am what I read.
- I am what I reflect.
- I am what I refuse.
- I am what I reject.

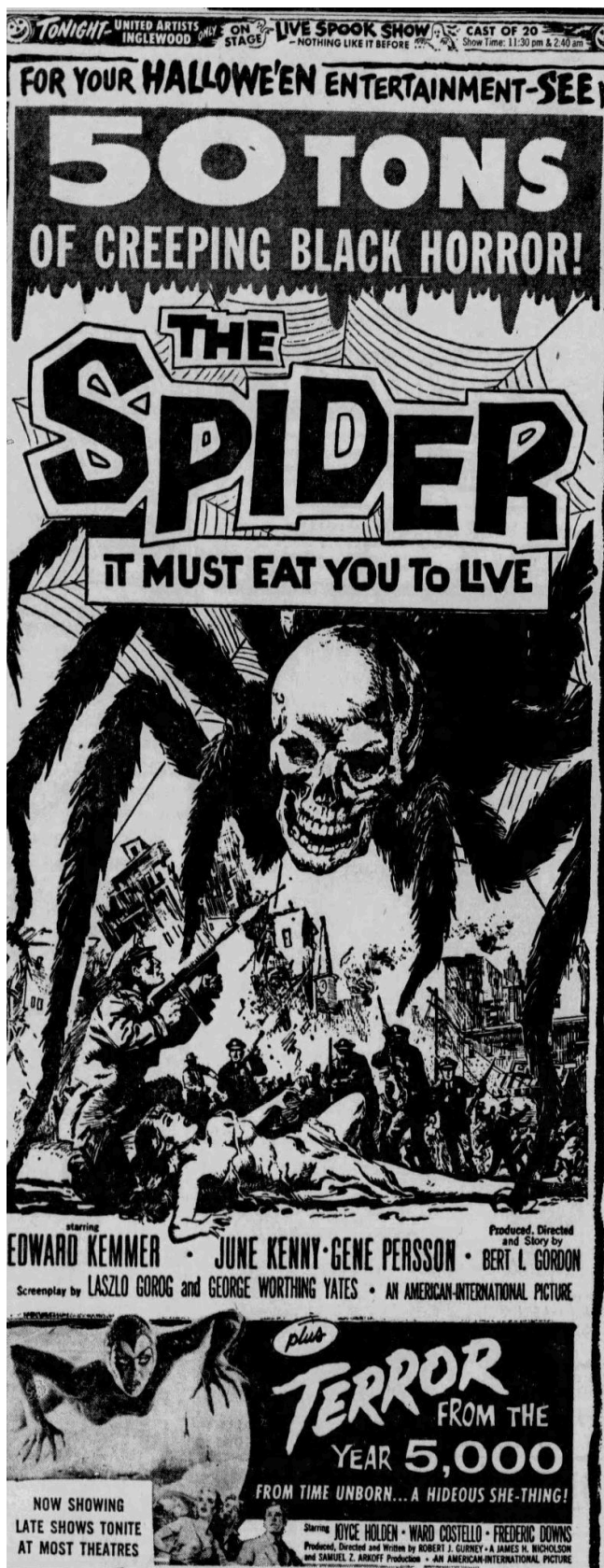
- I am what I realize.
- I am what I say.
- I am what I see.
- I am what I smell.
- I am what I taste.
- I am what I teach.
- I am what I think.
- I am what I try.
- I am what I understand.
- I am what I value.
- I am what I visualize.
- I am what I want.
- I am what I watch.
- I am what I yearn for.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 31, 1958

All Agog for Catalogs

Last week or so, I received a couple of interesting catalogs in the mail. Given the international roster of eAPA, I am curious whether your home countries offer similar sources for fannish diversions. The Sept. 27, 2024, catalog from Edward R. Hamilton Bookseller Co. (<https://www.hamiltonbook.com>) offers 68 pages of new arrival bargain books. While other catalogs (*Faculae & Filigree* #12) are organized by topic, the organization of this edition is relatively light: nonfiction, fiction, DVDs and Blu-rays, and CDs and vinyl. I was pleased to see there's also a graphic novels and comic strips catalog. (<https://www.hamiltonbook.com/catalog/c.pdf>)



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 31, 1958

While there are multiple science-related books available in the nonfiction section, a few items stood

out: a *Star Trek Daily Calendar*, Bill Kimberlin's memoir *Inside the Star Wars Empire*, Mark Voger's TwoMorrows title *Zowie!: The TV Superhero Craze in '60s Pop Culture*, Andy Burns's *The Art and Making of The Stand*, Fantagraphics' graphic biography of Johnny Appleseed, and several books focusing on fannish media such as *The Flash*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Star Trek: Discovery*.

Multiple items—prose and comics alike—stood out in the fiction section, focusing on Atlas sf comics, James S.A. Corey, cryptozoology, various DC and Marvel comics, Donald Duck, fairy tales and mythology, ghost stories, Edgar Allan Poe, romantasy, Sherlock Holmes, J.R.R. Tolkien, and H.G. Wells.

The Fall 2024 catalog from Radio Spirits (<https://store.radiospirits.com>) also arrived in the mail. The catalog includes a new *The Green Hornet* release, and the rest of the catalog features recordings of *Dimension X*, *X Minus One*, *The Green Hornet*, *Suspense*, *The Witch's Tale*, *The Weird Circle*, *Inner Sanctum*, *Lights Out*, and similar programs. The DVDs included featured a four-DVD documentary titled *The Center Seat: 55 Years of Star Trek*, a film adaptation of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and a *Captain Video* collection.

When perusing such catalogs, which I appreciate receiving, it's often as much an exercise in commercial curiosity as it is an effort to not buy anything. I enjoy seeing what's newly available and checking out what's particularly inexpensive, but I don't need to procure anything new in addition to what I already have. So I sometimes use such catalogs as inspiration for what I'll listen to, read, or watch next—as guides to direct exploration of my existing collection. If that's what it is.

While you might not be able to cost-effectively utilize such American sources where you live—shipping can be quite expensive!—I'm curious about similar catalogs or retail outlets in Canada, England, and Sweden. Are books sold as remainders where you live, too?

Old-Time Radio Around the World

More importantly, did Canada, England, and Sweden have radio programming along the lines of old-time radio in the United States? Has fandom arisen to surround such radio shows? How strongly were sf, fantasy, and horror represented among more mundane dramas, comedy, and other programming before the advent of television?

In England, given the existence of the British Broadcasting Corporation, programming might have been slightly different than old-time radio in the United States. Regardless, *Internet Archive* offers

BBC adaptations of John Wyndham writing such as *The Day of the Triffids*, *The Kraken Wakes*, *The Chrysalids*, *The Midwich Cuckoos*, and others. The BBC also adapted Alan Garner's *Elidor*, *The Weirdestone of Brisingamen*, *The Moon of Gomrath*, *Boneland*, and others. There are also adaptations of work by Algernon Blackwood. What I'm most curious about—I think—are programs such as *Orbiter X*, which broadcast 14 episodes in 1959. I can only imagine how much radio history was lost due to the BBC's penchant for not archiving recordings.

Similarly, I know nothing about Canadian radio history. There's a Canadian Vintage Radio Society (<https://canadianvintageradio.com>) "dedicated to preserving the history and technology of antique Canadian electronics." The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced *Vanishing Point* in the 1980s and '90s, adapting short stories by Ray Bradbury, Roald Dahl, Evelyn Waugh, and other writers of the fantastic. It was preceded by the more horror-oriented *Nightfall*. And the late 1970s brought *Johnny Chase: Secret Agent of Space*. I'm curious whether the CBC produced earlier examples of sf, fantasy, and horror programming. Garth, how much did such radio programming play into Canadian fandom, if at all?

Henry and Ahrvid, in Sweden, did Radiotjänst's P1, P2, P3, or P4 ever broadcast sf-oriented programming? *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* indicates that Sture Lönnerstrand wrote a radio play, as did Pär Rådström, whose *Varför svarar du inte* was broadcast in 1962. Did either of you watch TV4 Science Fiction much when it was active? I can hardly believe that that television channel only lasted from 2008-2012.

I'd be interested in learning about any old-time radio-styled programs, as well as early sf TV history in your respective countries.

Comments on eAPA #245

The cover to this distribution featured a photograph of the Museum of Vancouver and H.R. MacMillan Space Centre. That looks worth visiting! In the Official Organ, our official editor posed several interesting questions: "Why is there air? Where does dust come from? Will there be fried chicken in outer space stations? Who is the one more trustworthy than all the Buddhas? Wenn ist das Nurnstuck gott un Slotermeyer? And what about Mary Sue?" I decline to attempt answers, though the menu of space stations does intrigue me. That query reminded me of Astronaut ice cream (<https://astronautfoods.com>), which I first encountered as a child. Our OE's quip about "Radio Free Fandom, 666 Hz on your AM dial," resonated with me given the discussion of old-time

radio above.

William McCabe's *In the Meantime* Part 3 reported that his recent medical tests came back "normal." I hope that that helps lead to an improvement in your health! I've seen Kaliane Bradley's *The Ministry of Time* displayed at a local bookstore, but I haven't read it yet. Is it any good? I tend to enjoy A24 productions, so their being involved in the forthcoming BBC show seems promising.

I was interested in the controversy and sequence of events you detailed: "Apart from the title, there are certain similarities in the plot etc. between [a Spanish TV program] and the BBC show so there are claims of plagiarism. The BBC says they didn't rip off the Spanish show because they're working from the book not anything else. Nothing seems to have been said about the book plagiarising the TV show."

Various *Reddit* threads suggest that the producers of the Spanish program have challenged other time travel-related TV shows before (i.e. *Timeless*)—and that the novel might have first appeared on *Archive of Our Own* as "RPF polar exploration fanfiction."



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 31, 1958

Your comment "if you've got a list of the ones you've got, send it to me and I'll see if there are any more done already" probably relates to *Brumble*, which I'd remarked on in *ECU* #22. Searching *The Fanac Fan History Project* for your full name—"william mccabe"—I find almost 65 results. They seem to be mostly *Brum Group News* back issues. The *Brumble* issues available via *Fanac* include #1-5. If there are more issues scanned, I'm sure they'd be interested. There don't seem to be any scanned issues of APA-B or The Organisation available, so that seems worth pursuing at some point.

In *Wild Ideas* #51, **Henry Grynsten** addressed identity and consciousness. Your joke that you didn't know Stephen King wrote nonfiction made me chuckle. I know you were commenting on my remark about his novel *Cell*, but he's also written nonfiction as such: most notably *Danse Macabre*, which is a wonderful survey of horror, and *On Writing*.

Additional nonfiction is listed at <https://stephenking.com/works/nonfiction/index.html>.

Your exploration of the self-contained aspects of consciousness was interesting. My wife and I will celebrate our 16th anniversary in mid-October. In recent weeks, we've been struck by how frequently we make a joke or say something just before the other might have said the same thing—or something similar. We're still far from transient depersonalization or transient identity dissociation, but I think that long-standing relationships perhaps help develop some form of shared consciousness. Empathy and knowledge of another, combined with experience with how they tend to respond in certain situations—and other shared experiences—might result in an exhibited form of prediction. Though I've never mistaken myself for her even for a moment.



Los Angeles Times, Oct. 31, 1958

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #146 included a Worldcon report! How many times did you have your bag checked as you left and returned to the venue? Once you were inside, were there subsequent bag checks? Your comment on the dearth of second-hand book tables struck a chord with me. I've even noticed that at smaller, local cons. Part of the purpose of cons is to introduce people to new things they should explore—and help them find such things readily to enable that exploration. In the past, if I learned about a new (to me) author or book, I'd then hustle to see what I could find in the dealer's room. The used book tables are always the first place to go.

I was also intrigued by your remarks on programming. I've never worked on programming for a con, but there do seem to be a lot of panel

discussions—I think it's a way to include as many people as possible in the programming. I like your idea of thinking about programming in terms of panel discussions, single-presenter lectures or talks, visual presentations, short films—rather than just a film room—demonstrations, readings, and other approaches. I also like the idea of a fan program. It might complicate the role of programming volunteers, but one could probably determine what percentage of the overall program you wanted to be in a specific format, and then assign content and speaker ideas to those formats. Rather than make content types content tracks, topical tracks could include different content types. In any event, when I go to Loscon this fall, I'll try to remember to look at it through this lens.

Your consideration of the propeller beanie in History Corner was a delight. In late September, I went through a box of hats in our hall closet to make room for some new scally caps I recently ordered, and I saw that the propeller beanie I received as a new Google employee had broken. There was a time when every new Googler—aka Noogler—was given a Google propeller beanie. I don't know whether the practice continues. The one I'd received 16-plus years ago was packed in the box pretty densely, and the propeller had snapped in half. I think I have another one that I later procured, and I've also purchased one (not a Google-branded one) more recently to wear at cons. That one, produced by Interstellar Propeller (<https://propellerheadhats.com>), is a true beanie and doesn't include a visor brim. I've adorned it with various fannish pins and badges, and in Los Angeles, pretty much only Jon Hertz and I wear them.

Your examples of faan fiction were enjoyable. What a kick that ALHASH is an acronym for "Arnold Layne Had a Strange Hobby." Other than references to the Pink Floyd lyric, I can find only two references online, one in *Svenssongalaxen*, and one in a *Flashback* discussion forum thread titled "Svenska författare som varit sf-fans." Mr. Grynnssten, this latecomer would love to learn more!

In *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #225, Garth Spencer updated eAPAns on his efforts to reinvent the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Your conundrum is clear, and Fran Skene's recommendation to take a break this year seems sound. It buys—and bides—you some time. (You could even take 2025 off.) According to *Fancylopedia 3*, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund is "[i]nspired by TAFF and other similar fan funds, but this one is to promote unity and foster personal communication between fans of the Western and Eastern regions of Canada. The boundary is defined by the Ontario/Manitoba border. Since 1988, the sponsored trip has usually been to 'Convention,'

where the Auroras (formerly Caspers) are handed out, which is effectively the Canadian national convention.”

CUFF is relatively new, starting in 1981 and reviving in the late 1980s, so any change wouldn't upend too much history. I'd stick as close to purpose as possible—and let go of what's problematic. So the most important thing is to “promote unity and foster personal communication between fans of the Western and Eastern regions of Canada.” If Convention is now held online, perhaps CUFF could fund a recipient's online participation—if they desire such financial assistance. But it looks like Convention hasn't been held since 2019.

So, if not Convention, another con within Canada. That's where you've been focusing your efforts. You've shared stories about challenges finding another con willing to host a CUFF delegate. Perhaps the hosting is a problem worth letting go of. Rather than work with con runners to host a delegate and include them in programming, maybe CUFF merely funds participation of a Canadian in a Canadian con—of the delegate's choosing—to which they'd be hard pressed to travel to without CUFF monies.

When someone applies, they could indicate which con they want to participate in. That would still help bring those in eastern Canada west—and west, east—and enable a recipient to participate in a con they might not travel to otherwise. You'd lose some of the benefits that come from hosting—increased local presence and involvement—but it could still help a Canadian go to a con they wouldn't be able to otherwise.

If that doesn't work well, we begin to let go of the trans-Canadian aspect of CUFF, though the fund could be retooled to foster unity between Canada and fandom more broadly. That seems to be what R. Graeme Cameron recommended—and still doesn't stray too far from the purpose, though it builds global fan relations rather than Canadian fan relations. Again, what con does the delegate want to participate in? Do they want to go to Corflu? Worldcon? A fannish con in the United States? Another con globally?

You might find that Corflu, Worldcon, and other con runners are more open to hosting a CUFF delegate in the furtherance of global fandom unity. I could see Loscon hosting a CUFF delegate—from anywhere in Canada, perhaps more interestingly from eastern Canada. I could see Boskone hosting a Canadian, perhaps from western Canada. CUFF delegates—always Canadian—would help bring Canadian fandom to the rest of the world and bring the world back home. But the con they go to no longer needs to be held in Canada.

If delegates are hosted rather than participating, you'd still need to identify, select, and work with a hosting con. If that continues to prove problematic, you could swing toward funding participation rather than being hosted. If a hosting con has been identified and secured, CUFF would fund a Canadian's participation in a specific con that would host them. If such a con isn't secured, the delegate could select which con they participate in, but not be hosted.

Opening CUFF up to fund participation in cons globally does rub up against the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. So maybe the focus becomes cons in North America, cons in the Americas, or cons within Canada—regardless of whether delegates are hosted or only participate as a member.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 7, 1958

Thinking this through as I write, a non-TAFF approach might look like this:

Canada-centric

- Host cons are sought in Canada
 - If a host con is secured, applications are to be hosted by that con
 - If a host con is not secured, applicants can specify which Canadian con they would use CUFF monies to participate in
 - A Corflu or Worldcon held in Canada would qualify
- Canadians apply to be CUFF delegates
- A CUFF recipient is selected
- That delegate then attends a con within Canada

Americas-centric

- Host cons are sought in the Americas
 - If a host con is secured, applications are to be hosted by that con
 - If a host con is not secured, applicants can specify which Americas con they would use CUFF monies to participate in
 - A Corflu or Worldcon held in the Americas would qualify
- Canadians apply to be CUFF delegates
- A CUFF recipient is selected
- That delegate then attends a con within the Americas

The opportunities for flexibility—assuming there's no shortage of CUFF delegate applicants—seem to be in terms of whether delegates are hosted by or participate in a con, whether delegates determine which con they participate in, and the country in which that con is located—limited to the Americas so CUFF doesn't bump up against TAFF. I continue to think the east-west aspect has merit and value, so some consideration to distance traveled could still be given. (For example, western Canada to eastern United States, eastern Canada to western United States, and any Canadian to Mexico, or Central or South America.)

To address your questions specifically:

What function do you think a fan fund carries out, by assisting a fan to travel to a convention? There are three functions: Bringing a fan from outside the area of a given con to the con, hosting and showcasing the fan as part of the con (this seems to be the most challenging aspect given the difficulty securing a host), and the fan bringing what they learn back to their home fan community.

[W]hat representation does one fan community need to give, or receive, from another? This might also be changing as organized fandom continues to evolve and fanac moves online, which might redefine our understanding of what purpose cons even serve. If there aren't enough fannish cons that offer to host delegates, your intuition to consider other cons was sound. But if you can't identify willing hosts, that side of the value exchange falters. Delegates become participants rather than guests. That might still have value if applicants and delegates want monetary support to travel to and participate in cons they wouldn't otherwise.

Should CUFF be organized to represent Vancouver fandom to Toronto, or Toronto to Halifax, or Ottawa fandom to Calgary? Yes, if Canadian fen still want that. This question makes me ask whether

we need to let go of the idea of cons as the destination. Maybe any city or area in which there is a critical mass of fen becomes the destination. Delegates don't go to a con, but to a club meeting. Or a series of dinners. Or travel to meet a number of fen in another part of the country, regardless of whether there's a con. CUFF could fund travel from Vancouver to Halifax to meet with other fen, if there be fen. It's a less-structured approach, but might still have merit.

[S]hould it represent anime fandom to gaming, Star Wars fandom to gamers, costumers to fanzine fans or conrunners? I wouldn't necessarily approach that programmatically, but if you adjust CUFF so Canadian delegates choose which con they participate in—if they're not hosted—it'd happen naturally, perhaps.

Do we have other functions to perform, if some fan groups are out of contact with each other? Again, if Canadian fen still want that. As organized fandom evolves, the importance of clubs and similar structures might also become less important. There are still areas in which there's a critical mass of fanac: cons, fanzines, fen. I think the purpose of CUFF is to facilitate exposure of fen to aspects of fandom that might not be proximate. CUFF could send delegates to communities in which there's organized fandom such as a club. The number of clubs is diminishing. But without some sort of organized fandom *there* there, it starts to feel like fannish tourism.



Los Angeles Times, Nov. 14, 1958

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 Official Newsletter of the United Fanzine Organization features articles, artwork, and more from co-op members.



THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY #11 (available for only \$10 PayPal to jecarrales@yahoo.com, or send to email marisolinskikitity@gmail.com, or contact Joe Ely Carrales III via FB Messenger) Characters created by

Ryan Howatt and Ken Bailey join the adventures of Mari and Niko, as our heroes leap into a portal to another world and find themselves involved in a strange war! Humor, magic and more in one epic comic. The New Peoples Journal is an added treat. Also: check out that gorgeous cover by Trish Ellis!



The Stf Amateur 9

THE STF AMATEUR #9 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230, or, PayPal to kalel@well.com or @Hrow . Outside US rates inquire via email. Free PDF Available @ <https://efanzines.com/HR/index.htm>).

Keith Row's absorbing apazine continues. A highlight of this issue is a series of back and forth correspondence between editor Heath and William Breiding. Much more is included, including talk about fanzines, sf movies and tv, and a gorgeous front cover by Larry Johnson.



The Stf Amateur 10

THE STF AMATEUR #10 (\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row) Reviews of SHE FREAK, GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR, and other sf/fantasy/ adventure films are a prominent part of STF #10. Lots of engaging apa comments, and a visit to Antiquarian Los Angeles (with color photos) are highpoints.



stf amateur 11

THE STF AMATEUR #11(\$6.00 postpaid from Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230) Of especial interest to sf/fantasy fans, Heath examines the BUCK ROGERS: 2429 newspaper strip, with numerous reproductions of artwork, ads, and the strips themselves. There are many comix and zine reviews, including TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS!, THE IMPROBABLE GIRL AND THE WONDER KITTY, and other United Fanzine Organization titles. STF #11 is a satisfying read and highly recommended.



TACITURN 4

TACITURN #4 (\$10 from Kurt Erichsen, 2539 Scottwood Ave., Toledo, OH 43610-1358. Also you can order this book on www.amazon.com/stores/Kurt-Erichsen/author/) Beginning with two amazing covers by Dan Burke and Brad Foster, this anthology title features some of the finest talents in the alternative press, and includes classic comic stories along with new material. Featured are strips by Larry Johnson (a magical Lew Brown adventure), "Valerian the Barbarian" by editor Kurt himself, Neil Riehle's "The Incredible Time Saving Device" and much more!

