



PIXEL

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AMDG

Editorial deadline for the next issue: **July 29, 2007**

“I would have written at the time, but I was too busy gestating.”

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(thejwo.deviantart.com)

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Notes From Byzantium

Eric Mayer

What would Walt Willis have made of the Internet?

Walt has been my favorite fanwriter since I discovered *The Enchanted Duplicator* and the rest of his work back in the seventies. Among other qualities, I admired the restraint in his writing, the grace, the thoughtfulness and the simple politeness with which he expressed his opinions. It was a contrast to the foul-mouthed, over-the-top adolescent posturing that was coming into vogue in portions of fandom. A contrast as well to my own usually clumsy attempts to address faanish matters without choking on a foot. I suppose in the world of the Internet, Walt's style would seem downright quaint. Somehow I can't imagine him getting into a flame war.

Or using emoticons.

Then too Walt's writing always felt studied to me. Polished. Maybe he just dashed it off but I had the impression he had pondered what he intended to say and rewrote until he was sure he'd said what he intended. On the Internet everything is instant. When you're on a message board or sub-

scribe to a list, if you take an hour to weigh who might have sawed Courtney's boat, the other list members are already debating whether Yngvi was a louse – and in between you missed the replay of the Staple Wars entirely.

That Walt produced a lot of faanish material seems clear, simply to judge from Richard Bergeron's 600 page collection of his work in *Warhoon* 28. But the Internet is voracious. Partly that is because it is so easy to distribute one's efforts. Press a button to upload. Also, it costs nothing to publish. And then, of course, there is the speed of publication. When I was putting out my perszine, *Groggy*, in the late seventies and early eighties, once it was printed it took a day to assemble the copies and get them to the Post Office. The fanzine would spend two or three days traveling to mailboxes. (Nearly enough time for stray gobs of hecto gel on the covers

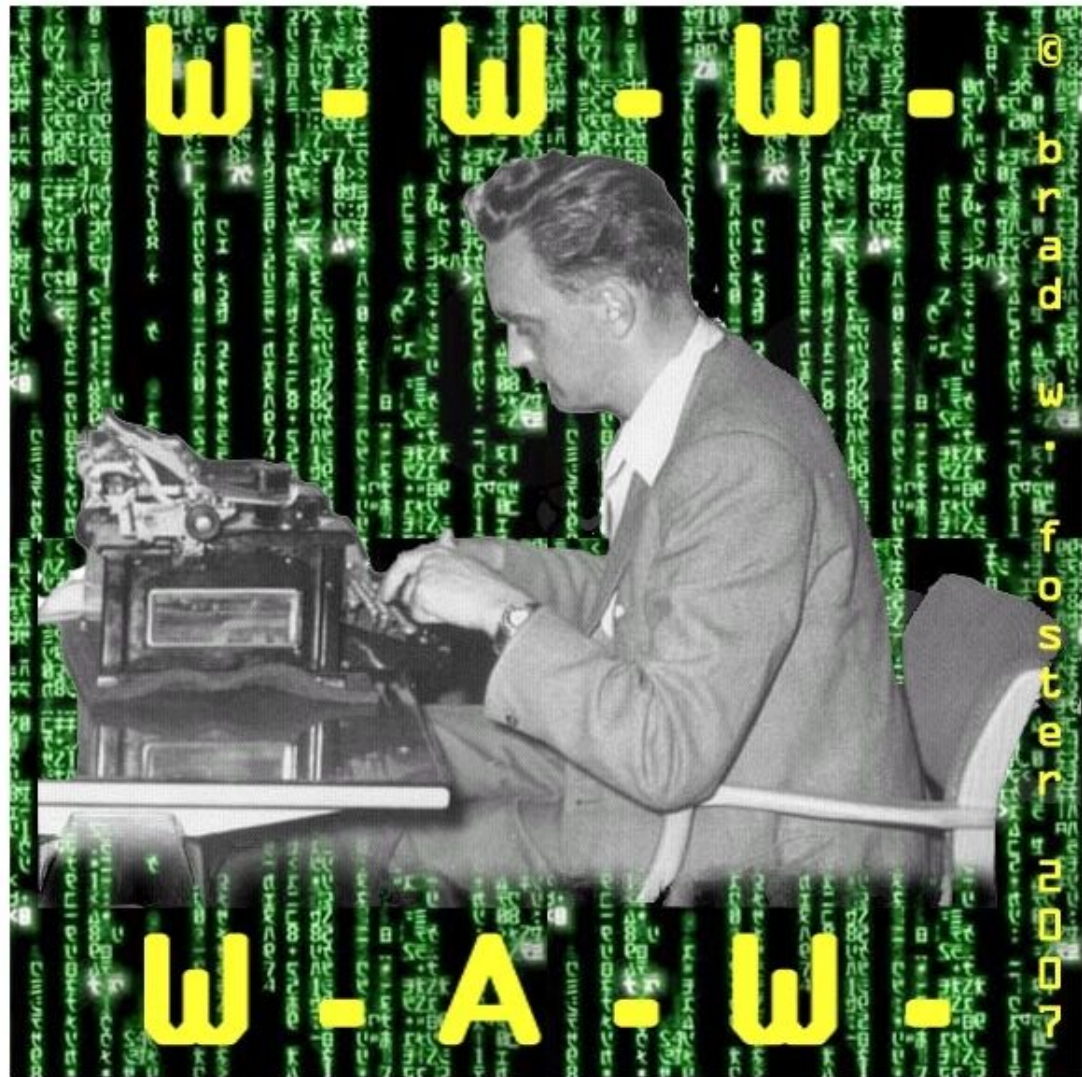
Illustrated by Brad Foster

to dry). Even those LoCs that might have been written and mailed almost instantly would be another few days crawling back to me. It was around a week before the first response arrived – nearly always from Harry Warner or Buck Coulson.

Now I can upload an entry to my blog in a moment and often have comments within minutes. And then it's time for a new entry. Or so Internet practice seems to dictate. But to be able to come up with something interesting to say, on demand, day after day, would take the talents of...well...a Harry Warner. Who, strange to say, chose to the end to limit himself to typewriter and snail mail.

Apart from being slans, fans are also perverse.

How many articles, or letters of comment, or fanzines, do we have in us? How many good ones? In the seventies, Donn Brazier kept *Title* on a monthly schedule for six years. That struck me as amazing, and welcome. There's a vitality to frequent fanzines that sporadic efforts can't match. You haven't forgotten the last issue by the time the new one arrives. Arnie and Joyce Katz put out *Wooden Nickel*, a one page



Today, among ezines, frequency is common. Chris Garcia published a genzine (*The Drink Tank*) on a weekly schedule for a year, and so did Joyce and Arnie (*Vegas Fandom Weekly*). How do you balance frequency and quality? Where do you find enough material? How long can you keep going before you run out of steam and inspiration?

I tried to inflict an issue of *Groggy* on fandom every four to six months. Because of printing and postage costs I limited it to six pages (one stamp's worth). I managed to squeeze in an editorial and an article, or maybe two short articles, and a few snippets. There was never enough room. So I wrote articles for other zines. Even then, there weren't enough zines that wanted my material for me to bother writing up all my ideas. (And Brian Brown and Eric Bentcliffe – my main editors – weren't slouches when it came to cranking out zines either.)

I started blogging, in part, because I missed composing the short bits of mundane observation I had created, more or less effortlessly, whenever it was time for a new *Groggy*. But within a few months of blogging, often daily, it wasn't so effortless. I'd written more snippets than I had for all forty issues of my zine. Dave Burton has been prospecting in my blog for most of this column. Every installment contains at least as many ideas as a typical issue of *Groggy*. I'm afraid I've started repeating myself. Or is that just the echo from my empty brain?

As a fan, what do you do when you have nothing written and nothing to say? Obviously, in the best faanish editorial tradition, you write about your dilemma. Then what?

Which brings me back to Walt Willis, who once advised that you could give even the most rambling essay a semblance of unity by bringing it full circle. How would he have handled the Internet? I can hardly imagine him, in his later years, tossing off hundreds of half-formed notes for lists. Or rambling daily in a blog. How many graceful columns could he have maintained for multiple weekly fanzines? Could *Hyphen* have been produced every week?

Perhaps more importantly, what if the Internet had been around in the late forties, with all its enticements to write more – faster, faster?

To shout to be heard above the crowd. With the myriad of obscure by-ways for writing to vanish down, in hurriedly keyboarded bits and pieces. Would Walt have written what he did the way he did?

If the Internet had existed when I got into fandom I – in my enthusiasm – would almost certainly have produced as much, for as many venues as possible, as quickly as I could. That's how I approached paper fandom. But crifanac was much slower in those days.

But that's just me. I can't say what Walt Willis would have done, or Bob Tucker or Charles Burbee, or any of the other of the writers I admire. Will the Internet produce fanwriters like those? Or kill off their kind completely?

There's no way of knowing. Any more than there's any way of knowing what Walt Willis would have made of the Internet, or what the Internet would have made of Walt Willis. •

Much Nothings About Ado

Lee Lavell

The Gallifrey Connection

Watch the skies, they tell us. Investigate Roswell. Beware of Area 51. And on and on. Or so the UFOlogists would have it. What are those lights in the sky? Surely they can't be just meteors. Didn't it take a very strange turn up there? And those lights in the swamp! Don't talk to me about St. Elmo's fire. I know spaceship lights when I see them. Does that person over there in the crowd who is wearing that old fashioned hat with the brim covering most of his face: from what can be seen doesn't his skin look awfully gray and aren't his eyes awfully large? And while I'm at it, I dreamed I was abducted into a space ship and examined by alien doctors last night – or was it a dream? They stuck needles in me and now I have this hole on my arm. Don't tell me it is from trimming my rosebushes yesterday!

So go the claims. So many and so varied and so ridiculous. Surely no one could take them seriously and yet they do. I mean they are so patently false, either created by people who are seriously disturbed or very clever at understanding people's

fears and marketing them for profit. Or maybe, just maybe, these are diversions from the actual truth, that they *are* out there but they don't want us looking in the correct direction.

Aha! There it is. And I have discovered a vast plot: aliens are actually among us and are gradually inuring us to their presence without our ever suspecting it. It is all so plain if one just looks in the right direction. And that direction is television, and more specifically the daytime serial, most commonly known as the soap opera.

What do soap operas have to do with alien invasions, you may ask, or even if you don't ask. I shall explain.

Anyone who has watched soap operas is familiar with this phenomenon: A character leaves town, or dies or sometimes just walks out of a scene. The next thing you know he or she returns (sometimes from the dead) looking completely different, blond to brunette, young to much older, and so on. Their character changes somewhat as



well. Everyone just accepts this. It's a recast, they say. HAH! I know better, and if you think about it, you will, too.

Where else have we seen this same phenomenon? It all starts in England, and a television show originating there called *Doctor Who*. The Doctor is an alien from the planet Gallifrey. These aliens have the ability to regenerate themselves if it is necessary. They change appearance, age and even personality while retaining their own identity. If this doesn't sound familiar to you then you are wearing blinders.

I contend that the aliens *are* here and have been here for a long while. They have just been biding their time as we grow used to them, accept them, and think nothing of this alien metabolism of theirs. The soap opera watchers of the world should accept them with no problem. And they have even occasionally invaded nighttime TV. Think of the two Darrens on *Bewitched* for instance. Were there really two of them, or just one who regenerated?

So, I say to you: don't watch the skies; forget Area 51 and Roswell. It will do you no good.

Watch your television sets, especially in the daytime! And for God's sake, don't walk into any old-fashioned British police call boxes!

Uncaught 22

The tragic shootings at Virginia Tech recently has reinforced in my (so-called) mind a suspicion that I have had for some time about police investigations and how badly botched some are. I am not referring to the fact that the guy was ignored by the health industries despite the fact that he had been diagnosed as "a danger to himself and others." Nor am I alluding to the fact that the school had no warning system in place for such emergencies. Those go without saying, even though much has been said nonetheless.

No – my concern, and it had been my concern for some time before this event, is the practice of the police to immediately jump to the conclusion that someone close to the victim is the perpetrator. This is what happened at Virginia Tech after the initial shooting and look what followed. The police were convinced they knew who had done it and were after the boyfriend to the exclusion of all others, thus giving a false assurance of safety to the University, and didn't realize their mistake until thirty other people were dead.

The police say that the percentage is high for the perpetrator to be someone close to the victim, but let's look at this more closely. The police arrest their prime suspect, someone close to the victim and stop looking for someone else. The district attorney tailors his case around the only evidence, if any, found. They get a conviction. The percentage goes up every time this happens. But have they been convicted because they are really guilty or because the statistics say they should be. The whole thing becomes a self fulfilling prophecy.

Now we are beginning to see some reversals of convictions thanks to DNA evidence. I wonder if this is reflected back to those statistics, though.

Sure, probably a lot of violent crime is done by someone close to the victim, but that assumption should never be made blindly and immediately or we could have such tragedies as Virginia Tech repeated. (The only one possibly grateful for the massacre might be the boyfriend, since it got him off the hook.)

So what we have here now is a "Catch 22." The more times a suspect close to the victim is arrested and convicted, guilty or not, the higher goes the percentage, reinforcing the statistic. Pretty soon it could come to no investigation at all. Just arrest someone close and put 'em away. •

Found In Collection

Christopher Garcia

This one only has a little to do with work and a little to do with fandom, but it's one of those stories that only seems to happen to me. There are at least three levels of coincidence in this one, so you might want to pay attention.

Let's go chronologically for the backstory. Millions of years ago, anthracite coal began being formed in the Northeastern portion of Pennsylvania from the remains of swamp plant matter. It was the purest, highest carbon content coal in the world. When European folks came to the area, they started mining it and set up cities where the miners who dug it from the ground could live. Some of these towns were impressively large, some even transcending the coal mining that was done there. One town which was largely coal-driven was Centralia.

In the 1960s, during a Memorial Day preparation garbage burning down at the town dump, a fire was started in one of the seams of coal that ran under the town. This fire just kept on burning no matter what they did. The fire moved along four fronts for years and there was a realization in 1979 that there was a problem when a gas station owner noticed that his gasoline was being pumped at somewhere around 170 degrees. That's not a good number. Eventually a kid named Todd Domboski fell into a sink hole and things started to change, leading to the town being de-

clared closed and a government-run buy-out happening, leading all but a handful of people to leave the town.

Like all good stories, some filmmakers discovered what was going on and decided to make a documentary about it. The team, directors Chris Perkel and Georgie Roland along with producer Melinka Godoy-Thompson, made a film called *The Town That Was*, all about the last people remaining in the town, including it's youngest resident, John Lokitis. They made the documentary over about five years and it was barely finished in time to get into the Viewer's Voice section of Cinequest.

It's January and I'm at the chair and table section of the Computer History Museum. It's right in front of my cube, so it's no great walk. My curator Dag and I are sitting and chatting, and I'm drinking water. Dag says something funny and I do a spit take. I clean as much of the water as I can off the table and go and get some paper towels. When I get back, there's a film crew sitting in the chairs. One of them is a scruffy-looking guy in a baseball cap. I joke with them and finishing wiping off the table. That's that.

Cinequest is an annual film festival here in San Jose. I've been working with them in various forms for the last 7 years. Most years my buddies Steve Sprinkles and Jason Schachat come down and we're joined by other friends from all over the place. This

year, that didn't happen. In the early days of the fest, in my capacity as unofficial life-of-the-party, I sat down with a bunch of filmmakers and just started chatting. One was Melinka, a hilarious chick who produced a film in the fest called *The Town That Was*. The other was a scruffy-looking guy in a baseball cap who looked kinda familiar. He was Chris Perkel and he directed *The Town That Was*. I was really interested and we gabbed and joked about inappropriate topics for about two hours until they kicked us out and we had to go to the next bar. The next night, we did the same thing. Then we went to a cheaper bar and just hung out there every night. They were good folks, and we shared a love of bowling, pool and darts and that machine at bars that has Tri-Towers on it. We were joined by Georgie, the other director, and we had a brilliant time.

Somewhere along the way, I mentioned that I worked at The Computer History Museum.

"Really? I've shot there," said Chris Perkel in his ball cap and scruffiness..

"Really? When?" I said.

"Back in January."

"Really? I don't believe it. You must have passed by my cube," I said.

"YOU were the guy cleaning up after the spit take!" Chris said. We all had a good chuckle at that.

Sadly, the crew had left before the end of the fest, but it was great to hang out with them.

Flash forward. There's a guy named Jack Wood. He's a computer guy and a lover of chess and the like. Sadly, he dies and some friends of his, Mike and Carole Parker, are charged with getting stuff from his house and storage locker into good homes. One of

those good homes is a place called The Computer History Museum. I go down to the house and pick up a few books and other artifacts. We go through them and there's a lot of good stuff and a little bit of great stuff. There's a Fidelity Chess Challenger, the first computerized chess board, and a bunch of documentation for a system called the Dedactron which is on our Want! Want! Want! list. After a while, we go to the storage locker and start going through hundreds and hundreds of boxes. There's all sorts of stuff, including a box that would have been a vacuum tube salesman's traveling demonstration kit. I kept going through things and found the checkbook for the Marquette County Restaurant and Bar Association and a few other little things. There were computers, but they were almost all in bad shape.

While going through a box that mostly contained old newspapers there was a small light blue leather *something*. I thought it might be a microphone case, so I picked it up. It was a 1960's era cash-carry bag, the kind that tellers would put large sums of money into and carry to the vault and so on. It had a cute design of a 1960s bank on it. I read the name and was blown away.

The First National Bank of Centralia, PA

Now, there aren't a lot of people who would think anything of it, but it was a coincidence that I met Chris before the festival and it was a coincidence that I sat down with them and started talking and it was a coincidence that I love anthracite coal far better than bituminous. Then this happens and I realize it's one of those things that the movie *Magnolia* was all about: a multi-layer series of coincidences that don't really add up to anything but personal amusement.

And what else am I looking for? •

Being Frank

Peter Sullivan

A Month in the Drink Tank

The Rutles, it was said, were a living legend – “a legend that will live long after other living legends have died.” Christopher J. Garcia is probably the nearest equivalent in today’s fanzine fandom – if only because of his extreme youth. (Once upon a time, you had to be as young as Joel Nydahl to count as young, but these days early thirties will do fine.) Women fan editors want to be with him, male fan editors want to be him – if only (in both cases) to help get their issue count up. But how best to understand the man behind the myth? I can think of several ways, but instead I’m just going to review a month’s worth of issues of *The Drink Tank*. Since this is, ostensibly, a fanzine review column after all.

The Drink Tank 129 – 10 pages – 1st June

This issue was published from the Fanzine Lounge at Baycon, which Chris was running at the time. There’s a lot of art in this issue, mainly from people who appear to have stopped by the fanzine lounge and gotten drafted into action. As you would expect from such a method of recruitment, the standard varies from “5 year old with crayon” to excellent.

The issue starts with an article by Barbara Haddad-Johnson entitled “A Few Complaints,” before Chris gets into a longer piece about being at Baycon, focused on the Charity Casino and The Match Game SF. This latter item, run by Kevin Standlee, is rapidly becoming a regular convention panel game, based on the old US panel show of the same name (better know to Brits as Blankety Blank and to Aussies as Blankety Blanks). It sounds as if a good time was had by all (“and her name was...”) He also talks about running into other computer history people at the con – his mundane job being a curator’s gig at the Computer History Museum. (Although applying the word “mundane” to anything related to Chris doesn’t really sound right.)

Chris also talks about Baycon as a place to tell and hear stories, which is a good opportunity to wheel out the Tall Kinky Redhead joke (don’t ask, don’t tell). He also tells the tale of an encounter at Baycon between two people who have had the – erm – honour, yes that’s the right word, I’m sure of it - of having to proofread Chris’s writing in various publications. The issue ends with a couple of pages of Baycon-related thank-yous.

The Drink Tank 130 – 18 pages – 8th June

After the Baycon special, we get the post-Baycon special. Chris explains that the issue is an attempt to “get a view from a couple of different events and not just the one I attended” out of the many different conventions or other skiffy events going on over Memorial Day Weekend.

Bob Hole contributes a piece on Baycon, having been one of Chris’s co-panelists on The Match Game SF. And Barbara Haddad-Johnson writes about helping Chris out with the Fanzine Lounge, as a lead-in to Chris’s piece about the Fanzine in an Hour Panel. In practice, it took rather longer than this, as they only had the one laptop, but the results (released under the title *Poorly Conceived Awkward Silence*) are available at <http://efanzines.com/BayCon/>. This is a lead-in to a letter of comment on the aforesaid one-shot, from John Purcell.

Moving away from Baycon, Neil Baker reviews Celebration IV, a Star Wars-themed media convention in Los Angeles. This was his first Star Wars convention, and he focuses on the initial wow-goshohboyohboy factor of the dealers’ room and the autograph area at first, before talking about the panels and other events. Chris chooses to illustrate this article with a montage of photos of young ladies in Princess Leia Slave Girl outfits, which is of course a very Chris choice of illo. Chris then talks about the Masquerade at Baycon, and finishes off with some more photographs, this time of corsets (with female persons of the opposite sex in them, natch).

On to the letters, in which Mark Plummer writes about the fanish origins of the term “the usual” – as in “this fanzine is available for the usual (trade, letter of comment, contribution, etc.)” John Purcell contributes two more letters, with short items from

Bob Hole and Eric Mayer to finish off.

The Drink Tank 131 – 18 pages – 12th June

This issue opens with the exciting news that Chris has been given a batch of left-over Rotslers by Jerry Kaufman and Suzle Tompkins, sticking to the rules of Rotsler (even after his untimely death in 1997) that artwork should be passed on if not being used. The fact that this is such a big deal to Chris just shows how strong his links are to fanish traditions of yore.

The first article is a piece by John Hertz about Lee Hoffman. This is followed by an article by Frank Wu about his animated film “Guidolon the Giant Space Chicken,” and his trials and tribulations in re-doing a ‘Director’s Cut.’ James Bacon writes about Kurt Vonnegut in the context of the Glasgow-based Friends of Kilgore Trout SF group. This is the sort of fan history piece that would be equally at home in Peter Weston’s Prolapse.

Randy Byers plugs the new TAFF trip report available, written by Steve Stiles about his 1968 trip to the British Eastercon, which must surely hold the record (so far) for the most-delayed TAFF trip report. Then it’s into the letters, this time just one long LoC from Lloyd Penney, in which he foolishly asks for “an illustration of Chris Garcia in a cheerleader’s costume.” Be afraid. Be very, very afraid.

The Drink Tank 132 – 16 pages – 20th June

This is a themed issue, in which Chris talks about his fantasy of running his own TV network, and talks about the kinds of programmes he would have on. Going down to the level of a completed programme grid for the week. What’s interesting is how US-centric this piece feels to me. I feel that Chris’s writing is usually

fairly mid-Atlantic – not to say that there aren't US-specific cultural references, but that they are usually either things that we know about in Europe anyway, or obvious from the context. But, for a Brit reader (OK, for this Brit reader anyway), this was that rare thing, a Chris Garcia piece that was actually hard work to read. That said, I do like the idea of a “fish out of water” sitcom about a local car dealership trying to run a dance school. Would either be brilliant, brilliantly bad, or (perhaps even more interestingly) both.

Apart from that, there's a single LoC this time from Claire Brialey, with comments on the last ten or so issues. As they say, it's never too late to write a LoC. (Actually, I may even hold the record for this, since last year I looned a 1967 issue of Duggie Fisher's *ODD*. I would have written at the time, but I was too busy gestating.)

The Drink Tank 133 – 10 pages – 27th June

This issue sees a return to an ongoing theme that was prominent in *The Drink Tank* about a year ago, but which has taken more of a back-seat as Chris got more into the fannish mainstream with his abortive TAFF run in the second half of 2006. The doings of Chris's friends – including M. Lloyd, Jay and the Morel sisters – were a staple of *The Drink Tank* for much of late 2005 and early 2006. To the extent that *The Drink Tank* was on the verge of becoming something that I would have always assumed was impossible, or at least vaguely oxmoric – a group perzine. This time, SaBean MoreL writes about the group's current life in Finland.

Chris writes about the Monterey Pop festival, and also about looking at Movie Fandom fanzines. As with science fiction fanzines, there are apparently a few archives around, including

one held by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the 'Oscar' people. Do I have to put a little © or TM on that? Chris would know.) At least one movie fanzine editor moved into pro writing about movies - Leonard Maltin.

Leigh Ann Hildebrand writes “Five (overdue) things about Baycon.” The rest of the issue is a catch-up on the letters front. Eric Mayer responds to Chris's TV ideas from the last issue, as does John Purcell, with a second Eric Mayer letter finishing off the issue.

Meanwhile the very last page features, as requested by Lloyd Penney, a piece of fan art depicting Chris as a cheerleader. Better reach for the eye bleach, as the goggles, they do nothing.

Conclusion

And that's it for this month – at least so far. Chris has threatened another issue this month, this time from the Fanzine Lounge at Westercon. But if I can just get this finished and off to David in time, I won't have to review that one as well.

As for any conclusions, all I can come up with is the following. If you try to review five issues of a Christopher J. Garcia fanzine in a single evening, you will probably end up needing a stiff drink. Where did I put that bbeer... •

The Drink Tank (Christopher J. Garcia)

PDF, 8.5 x 11", frequent, various page counts.
<http://efanzines.com/DrinkTank/index.htm>

Pixelated

Readers

Eric Mayer

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I particularly like the cover and the Loccol logo. However, the latter does remind me a bit of the Xerox logo. Years ago, when I was living in Rochester, NY, where Xerox was headquartered, the local paper made a big deal of how much the company had spent for a new logo. I got onto the OpEd page with some pure fanwriting about that logo – a big X – which looked like it had been gnawed at by rats.

The font I used for the header last time (called Neurotoxin) is a “completion” of the font Xerox used for their logo.

Lee Lavell’s musings about prehistoric men were interesting. I gather that scientists estimate the build and facial features of Neanderthals by reference to the bones they find. I don’t recall reading how they arrived at hair color and skin color. Is there preserved Neanderthal skin or hair? (I doubt it.) I guess it would not be amiss to think of our ancestors as looking like us. Except, as Lee indicates, “us” (homo sapiens) includes people who aren’t

white. Yes, it can get very complicated. And here I’d always looked at those homely Neanderthals and figured they’d died out because the girls all preferred the handsome homo saps.

The maze-like house she describes sounds like someplace I wouldn’t mind living. I’ve never been too keen on modern boxes. The cottage we’re living in right now is too small to be anything but a box. I liked the house my buddy’s family lived in when I was a kid. What appeared to be a closet door in the kitchen was actually the servants’ stairs leading up to the second floor. There’s a large house near us that I’ve always been curious about. It was pretty obvious that bits and pieces had been built on to it over the years. The roof ran every which way. There were odd projections and doors and windows boarded over in strange spots. Last year the owners decided to renovate. But I’ve never before seen the method they used. Basically they constructed a shell of extra rooms all around the hodgepodge structure and pretty much

Illustrations by **Rennie Mackintosh**

roofed it all over. Now the house looks like a huge, square box. But inside...well...who knows what's inside. The last I saw the shell was going up and all the outside windows and siding remained in place. I like to think it was just left there. It'd be kind of cool to look out of the storm window in the kitchen into the living room and have the living room couch shoved up against the siding, next to the drainpipe.

The question Ted White poses – what is fanwriting? – is a question of the the most interesting sort, which is to say, one that has no right or wrong answer. “Fanwriting” is just a word. It isn't a real thing that exists independently of what we think about it. When I ask “what is fanwriting?” I am really asking “what is my definition of fanwriting?” Or, what is your definition of fanwriting? Or how do most fans define fanwriting? Or how do my friends, or your friends, or sercon fans or faanish fans, define fanwriting? Or maybe I am asking, how do I think fanwriting should be defined? Or what is a definition for fanwriting we can all agree upon? For each question there is probably a different answer. (And there are questions within the questions because how can we define fanwriting without first defining what is a “fan?” How we define “fan” alters the meanings of our questions about what the definition of fanwriting might be.)

Like Ted I haven't read much of John Scalzi's blog but have the idea that it is mainly about writing sf professionally, and I can't really fit something like that into any definition of fanwriting that suits me. However, I am not a typical Worldcon attendee. I imagine that typical Worldcon attendees might think that being a “fan” means being a fan of science fic-



tion in its various forms and who could blame them? Therefore writing by fans of SF about SF would be “fanwriting.” I suppose a SF pro's writing about SF, rather than his actual SF writing, could be considered fanwriting also. He would be functioning more in the capacity of a fan than a pro. Were William Atheling Jr.'s reviews in *Skyhook* fanwriting? I don't find the situation very satisfactory but that's just me. And if we are honest, I think we might admit that most of the votes Scalzi receives for best fanwriter will really be for his professional stuff, just as most of the votes Dave Langford receives will be for his Harry Potter work. I'm happy that Chris Garcia is representing what I think of as fandom.

I think one definition of fanwriting might be writing by a fan directed at a fan audience. That includes blogs aimed at fans, excludes professional work by fans aimed primarily at non-fans and includes writing in fanzines because fanzines are, by most definitions I'd think, produced by fans and for fans.

For the most part, how one defines fanwriting makes no difference. Fans will all read what they like and consider it fanwriting or not according to their own tastes. However, with the Hugo award for fanwriting, you have the possibility to “legislate” what constitutes fanwriting for the purposes of the award. Probably it is best not to even try – why shouldn't fanwriting for the purpose of awarding a Hugo be whatever those who award the Hugo say it is?

As for whether a mystery story can become fanwriting by dint of being included in a fanzine, I think not. At least not in *Pixel*. Even an SF story included in *Pixel* would probably offend most readers because *Pixel's* audience, I imagine, consists largely of fans who, like me, subscribe to the notion that fiction is generally not suitable fanzine material. There are, of course, parts of what

many consider fandom where amateur fiction is considered perfectly acceptable and then too there are always exceptions. Does Shelby Vick consider his *Planetary Stories* fictionzine a fanzine? Was the Victor Banis story Earl Kemp published in the last *el* fanwriting by virtue of being in a fanzine? Come to think of it, does everything published in a fanzine need to be fanwriting? Since I write some mystery fiction I might (though I wouldn't) see fit to present a mystery story in my fanzine (which doesn't exist) to show what I've been up to, in the same way another fan might write about, for example, his or her mundane job or vacation. I can see that a story presented that way might be suitable for a fanzine without actually being fanwriting. Of course, a fragment of a mystery story published in a fanzine as part of an article about fanwriting becomes fanwriting. (One of the reasons I haven't resumed doing a personalzine is that my life is that about the only interesting subject I have to write about currently is my mystery writing and I don't consider that particularly suitable material.) Now if Ted were to title the story...Topic A Returns...

Chris met Joyce Carol Oates? Who hasn't he met? I wouldn't be disheartened by Gardner Dozois telling me he doesn't like my voice. "Voice" is the buzzword of the moment. (Didn't even exist thirty years ago.) Since I've not cared for anything by Dozois I've ever tried to read, his opinion on voice doesn't interest me. (And no...I have never had a rejection from him...I think my days of sporadically writing SF had ended before he took over *F&SF*, if I've got that right) Maybe what Chris needs to do – professionally speaking – is attend an SF writing workshop where they teach writers the "voice" that's wanted currently by SF editors, but I expect Chris has as much interest in doing that as I would. If you're writing what someone else wants rather than what you want

what's the point? (If you say "the money" then clearly you're not aware of what sort of money is involved...) •

Joseph T. Major

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"Notes from Byzantium": On the problems of falling: Forrest J. Ackerman is in the hospital with a broken hip; at his age, that is particularly serious.

I suspect that the disappearance of merthiolate is explained by the popularity of other wound treatments that are more effective and less painful. However, our roomer, Grant McCormick, uses betadine on the wounds of his feet.

That bit about writing like Robert Benchley reminds me of his description of his four years at Harvard, which was something like he started to do class work, got up for a moment, and the next thing he knew he had just spent four years playing poker.

"Much Nothings about Ado"; Bjorn Kurten wrote a novel about Neanderthals. Unfortunately, it came out about the same time as *Clan of the Cave Bear* did. I believe they call that timing. His theory was that they were fair, too.

"The wisdom of the Jewish-Zen Buddhist Monk": This is from *Zen Judaism: For You, a Little Enlightenment* by David M. Bader (2002). GEVALT!

"Found In Collection": I bet Langford wins all the computer-writing awards, too.

Pixelated: Chris Garcia: Whose writing shows no promise. No problem: "I promise to not have Mr. Dozois fall from a great height onto a field of Hugos and be fatally impaled."





See? Is that so hard?

John Purcell: I remember *Nickelodeon*. Mostly for the silly essay about nobility. Like many fans, Reamy's desires far outweighed his abilities.

Dogs with their own iPods? Look out, you've just invented the new bobo status symbol. "My companion animal has his own iPod because I care."

Robert Lichtman: Regarding the former editor of the First Fandom bulletin: so that's what happened to Jim Harmon! I liked his books on radio, and we all recall the water-balloon incident with varying degrees of fondness, but after *Niekas* went dormant, he sort of faded away. •

Chris Garcia

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Well, well, well, Dave. You've done it again. This might be the best issue of *Pixel* yet. *Pixel* is certainly the best monthly zine going. No question.

But then again, it's not a very crowded field, is it?

I really enjoyed Eric's column. That should be no surprise, I always enjoy Eric's stuff, but this was even better than usual. I'm not 100% sure why, but it stuck with me. It might be that a few days ago, when I was watching Evelyn and getting ready to go to Evelyn's Mom's birthday party, my mother fell and dislocated her shoulder. I understand these things happen, especially to a woman with her conditions, but it was a sore reminder that constant vigilance is required. Of course, losing Kurt Vonnegut, my favourite writer, to a fall also reminds me of the dangers of the

unexpected drop.

I've only been stung by a bee once. On the foot. It was the last time I wore sandals outside for almost a year. It hurt like hell and I have been lucky enough to avoid stings for years, even when I used to regularly walk through a meadowy area that beekeepers used. They'd land on me a lot, but never sting. I heard about the disappearances from Yahoo News! and have followed some of the other sites that are covering it. It's interesting.

You know, the back and forth with the eyes thing reminds me of the Church of the Kidnapped Jesus from that Vonnegut book *Slapstick* where folks keep looking out for the kidnapped Jesus. I'm not sure why that reminded me of it. I guess I have KV on the brain.

I've never liked Robert Benchley. Or Dave Barry. I do have that problem with TC Boyle though. Every time I read something he's written, I try and write like him and realize it's so unlike me that I stop writing for at least an hour.

An entire hour?? That must slow down production of The Drink Tank considerably...

I'm a regular poker player. I've talked about it before. We had an Omaha Tourney not too long ago and I took second place. It was a showdown between me and my buddy Mark. I was the headhunter, knocking the most folks out for the evening. I even bumped my former roommates, Marin and Ryan, out on the same hand. I was vicious, but head-to-head is different than any kind of poker.

If I remember correctly, the scientific community was shocked when they first discovered that Neanderthal skin was darker. I can't remember when they found a frozen piece of Neanderthal

skin, but it was at some point in the Mid-Century. Robert J. Sawyer writes about Neanderthals a lot. I once called him the Neanderthal P.R. Man.

Nothin' funnier than Buddhist Jew jokes!

But then again, it's not a very crowded field, is it?

I always say the same thing: fanwriting is writing by a fan. If someone like Jay Lake or David Levine had been nominated for the Hugo instead of Scalzi, I wouldn't have had any thought that it was a bad thing. They're fans who happen to be pros. I've fanned with Jay and David, so I can attest to that. Scalzi I don't know well, but I'm assured that he is, in fact, fannish. Still, I'd rather the Fan Hugos be strictly for fen, but I'll settle for fans who are also pros winning it. I do love a good mystery story, and I love the bite at the end about Ted having a Hugo while Steve doesn't. It's a rough one, I admit. Steve certainly deserves a Hugo (he's won the Rotler, which is kinda like winning the Lifetime Achievement Oscar when you never managed to win the regular ones) and I think it'll just take a year when either the voting is on his turf or a year of increased visibility. One reason that Frank and Sue win is that they get seen by a really large swatch of fandom that doesn't necessarily read fanzines. I still think Brad Foster's got a great chance this year because of his new colour techniques.

Langford still haunts me. His name was dropped by a visitor when I made mention of one of my fanzines.

Banana Wings 30 is a fun issue. I loved the way they used my article on running for TAFF and Claire's main piece really showed why



she's the best fan writing in the world today. The World, ya hear me? The WORLD! •

Robert Lichtman

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I continue to enjoy your photographic covers, and this one is no exception. And many thanks for the "h" you left out of the title of Ted's column. I have carefully followed your instructions about cutting it on the dotted line, but instead of pasting it directly on my monitor I have it reserved to the side in case I ever reread Ted's column. It probably didn't occur to you, but it also can be pressed into service as a handy letter for inserting in misspellings of "beer" and "good," among others.

You're right! "H" is the all-purpose fan character!

Eric Mayer writes, "I don't want to fear falling. I'm not sure how you tell when that time has arrived, except the hard way." I wasn't around for it, but I heard that my late mother took a nasty fall slipping while stepping off a curb in front of her house and broke her hip, requiring replacement surgery. Fortunately she didn't hit her head in taking that spill and went on to live another dozen or more years. But unfortunately she suffered from Alzheimer's for most of those years and no longer knew us. I had my own fall in 2001, slipping in mud and ramming my right foot hard into a raised curb, breaking my ankle in several places. Surgery installed several long screws and a metal plate, and I walk as good as ever – but ever more carefully.

He also observed, "Clover, which for a time was considered a luxurious and desirable ground cover, is now a hated enemy of

lawns, targeted for death by specially formulated herbicides.” I’ve never heard this, and wonder where Eric got his information.

Here in the Midwest, clover and its allies are not well-loved among the “my grass is greener than yours” set. I’ve pretty much let it take over my back yard for practical reasons – I think it’s attractive, and when it crowds out the grass it doesn’t need cut nearly as often – but this hasn’t endeared me to a couple of neighbors, especially the one who mows his lawn every third day, since it’s pretty invasive and he’s not particularly fond of it.

I enjoyed Ted’s latest twist on what constitutes fanwriting. He’s wrong that John Scalzi’s blog is “mostly about his pro writing and career,” and since like him I’ve never read anything by Scalzi I decided to have a look. That’s how I learned enough to make the above correction about Ted’s impression of Scalzi’s blog. It’s a pretty typical blog (if indeed there is such a thing), rambling on about this and that. I found it competent but somewhat boring, and certainly not the sort of thing that warrants a “best fanwriter” Hugo nomination in my estimation. Hastily leaving that aside, I want to add that I enjoyed the beginning to Ted’s mystery story and hope he carries on.

In his column Chris Garcia mentions the Apricot as one of the brand taken in by the Computer History Museum in a donation of antique British computers. And then he writes: “The donation was huge and there was a box full of documentation. The folder was labeled Apricot, so I opened it up. There were about 20 or so articles about the Apricot staring up at me. I was going to read them until I saw the name on the by-line. Dave Langford. The man had infiltrated the Computer History Museum, the last place I felt I could hide from his giant, moon-sized shadow.” This might have passed me by unnoted, but I remembered that in his article in

Trap Door No. 21, Dave’s former partner in crime (also known as Ansible Information) Chris Priest wrote in part about Dave’s software for the Apricot. That particular issue is lodged at Bill Burns’s Website if anyone wants to check it out.



Peter Sullivan notes in his review of one of Mark Plummer’s pieces in the latest issue of *Banana Wings* that “Those of us not in APA-L tend to get *Vanamonde* in various-sized batches, and Mark notes that he seems to have shifted from a universe in which *Vanamondes* arrive in batches of 5 to one where they arrive in batches of 10.” I was amused to read Mark’s musings on that because it happened to me, too, and in fact *Vanamonde* has arrived in multiples of ten issues on at least one prior occasion that I can recall. But having received the next mailing from John Hertz and it having reverted to the more customer five-issue allotment, I’m not going to write too much into this. Well, actually, I might—but I’m going to save it for my as-yet-unwritten letter of comment on that issue.

In the letter column John Purcell is reminded by Eric Mayer’s writing about glamor models that “Tom Reamy’s exquisite offset-printed fanzine of the mid-70s, *Nickelodeon*, which didn’t run for many issues...did feature brief pictorials of nude male and female fans. He was very democratic about it, too, having one of each gender per issue.” I’ve never seen *Nickelodeon*, but John’s comments reminded me of Alan White’s ‘80s fanzine *Delineator* also features photos of nekkid fans (and others). Also “offset-printed,” it’s a far from “exquisite” publication, having a rather scrappy look. In some ways it’s hard to believe it’s done by the same Las Vegas fan who’s been turning out some very attractive full-color

fanzine artwork in recent years. •

Reamy apparently published Nickelodeon after I gafiated last time, but I do remember his zine Trumpet, which was, if not the most exquisite, surely the most expensively produced fanzine at the time. Full color covers, offset printing on coated stock for the interior, etc.

Lee Lavell

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“Notes from Byzantium”: Ah yes, falling. Right now I have that fear. One of the things that has occurred during my recovery from eye surgery is that my depth perception is temporarily all wacky at present. A couple of weeks ago I went to brace myself on a counter while I bent down to pick up something and missed the counter completely. I went crashing, but fortunately fell into a clothes rack which cushioned the fall so that I was unhurt. I can’t say as much for the clothes rack however.

The disappearance of the honeybees is really quite frightening, considering what this can do to our crops. I wonder, is this happening to other members of the bee family, or is it strictly related to the homing instinct of the honey variety. Could this possibly be related to the massive increase in the use of cellular phones and microwaves? Or, could there be some relationship to the possible reversal of the Earth’s polarity? Is it our fault or nature’s fault?



What I gather from various reports I've heard is that it was initially thought that a particular mite that infests bees was to blame – it tended to suck all the fluids

out of its host. Then it was theorized that it was a combination of the mite and a virus that it carried. The last report I heard was that now hives are being found completely empty – not even any dead bees in them.

My belief is that all those 50s sci-fi films had it all wrong. It isn't our women the aliens are after; it's our bees.

“Whither Fandom”: What is fan writing? Simple. If you don’t get paid for it it’s fanwriting. If the subject applies to fandom it’s faanwriting. This could apply to all kinds of fan and pro writing. Why make things so complicated?

“Found in Collection”: Okay, we have Apples and Apricots. Any more fruit hiding in the computer basket?

“Being Frank”: Another excellent in depth review, but I still wish Sullivan would cover more than one fanzine.

“Pixelated”: To John Purcell: I hate to disturb you, but macular holes are not particularly age related. While in for one of my checkups there was another woman, several decades my junior, also waiting and moaning about how difficult it was being a teacher and trying to grade papers with a bubble in her eye.

Overall appearance: Cover: Arf, arf, yip, woof, woofs!

Headings: Interesting experimentations done. I especially appreciated the pixelated “Pixelated.” •

John Purcell

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For a little while, I was afraid that I had missed *Pixel* #14, then it finally posted to efanzines. As usual, a very enjoyable issue, David.

Eric Mayer’s column illustrates the aging of fandom fairly well. He states that he’s 57, and doesn’t worry too much about falling down yet. Well, I feel the same way, being a young pup of 53 who

is still running around at a decent speed. Then there's Chris Garcia who, at age 32 (I believe), is bouncing off the walls with reckless abandon. Then again, he's always like that, so I guess that doesn't count.

Or does it? Chris is a lot of fun to be around, and he reminds me of my youthful fan days. Ah, the passage of time is inevitable. The main thing about aging fandom is that we are still here and still having fun with our hobby interest. To me, that is the most important thing, and I doubt if anybody will disagree with me about that.

Lee Lavell raises a very good point in that early Sapiens should be the dark-skinned ones if they were the ones that came out of Africa. As she intimates, correcting such a world view would probably bug the Dickens, let alone the Darwin, out of a lot of people, requiring them to adjust to the new way of thinking. It is doubtful that their old views would go down without a fight. Still, this is an interesting question that I think has been raised before. Unfortunately, for a lot of people it would completely ruin their accepted view of Things As They Are, which is a shame. The modern-day human animal can be such a narrow-minded critter.

I really liked Ted White's mystery cum fan fiction. While not exactly fan Hugo material, it definitely illustrates the point Ted makes: anything that is pubbed in a fanzine can be considered fan-writing, which is understandable. As Claire Brialey argued in *Banana Wings #30*, context is everything, which makes perfect sense. We fanzines fans continuously contextualize ourselves and enjoy doing so. I am not complaining since the result can be some very fun, entertaining writing.

Like the kind that Dave Langford writes. Dave is easily one of fandom's more gifted writers, and the context of knowing that and being exposed to his work makes Chris Garcia's "Found in Collection" this issue a lot more effective. Plus, knowing that Chris is up

against Dave for the current Hugo Award for best fan writer makes the ending even more appropriate. The context of the background knowledge that we veteran fanzine readers bring to an article brings that reading to a level of enjoyment that newcomers to fanzines wouldn't have. This doesn't necessarily mean that neo-fans won't enjoy it. Far from it; this just means we have more fanzine experience and knowledge than a newcomer to fanzine fandom. They will get there someday.

This also means we're getting older. So we vets better be careful when we're schlepping stacks of zines around from room to room in our over-crowded homes or apartments, otherwise we might fall down, crushing ourselves under the weight of our fanzine collections.

No, I really don't like this getting older deal. Time to cryo-freeze myself. •

Lloyd Penney

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13...It is painful to finally realize that you will not be what you always wanted to be. What did I want to be? A journalist, an editor, a science fiction writer, a publisher, a Hugo winner. None of that is going to happen now, but still, I'm not all that disappointed because I have taken some comfort in the successes I have had, and I will enjoy that. Just had my 48th birthday, and my 24th wedding anniversary. There's two milestones I will mark as successes.

Vegemite as a terrorist weapon? Well, with some of the brainiacs who work for Homeland Security, I can barely imagine they'd think that, and act upon it. Don't think of it as a foreign food, just as something you haven't tried



before. I have tried Vegemite!, and that's enough, thank you.

Lee Lavell had to go through what I went through in December 2006...an eye operation that was probably more gory-sounding than it really was. I've already written much about it, but it proved to me that as I age, my eyes are more fragile than you might imagine. The separation of the retina from the back of my eye was repaired, and so far, clean bills of visual health from my ophthalmologist. (It was recommended to me that I get that contraption illustrated on page 9...I didn't, I just laid down on the couch a lot. I can do that...)

Having read issue 14, I will not say anything about the missing h on page 10...I would hope that the more you write, the better you'll get, no matter what you're writing. The back-slap of egoboo when your byline appears in print, the prod of pride in seeing something you've written in print, and more. I'm not saying I'm a great writer, but I dare say I'm better today seeing how much I do write. Practice makes perfect, I hope, over time.

The line-up of Chris Garcias on page 17...to be honest, none of them looks like the CG we know, unless the colour photograph is the giveaway. Rumour has it that he's going to shave his beard off? If that rumour doesn't exist, I'd be happy to start it right here.

Just last weekend, Yvonne and I were in Dallas for the annual International Space Development Conference. Amazing how many fans are helping out...it's just as I thought it would be. Leave it to the fans to run an efficient show, and leave it to the space activists to come up with the programme. Ben Bova was there, and it was a pleasure to see him again after all these years, and I saw Dr. Steven Squyers, the lead scientist on the NASA Martian rovers, receive the Wernher von Braun Award from the National Space Society for his work on the project, and for seeing through a project

that has gone on much farther than anyone had every thought possible. And, of course, we met up with John Purcell up from College Station, and we had a great time talking and stuffing our faces at the Buffalo Wild Wings Bar and Grill just around the corner from the convention hotel.

14...Standing up is no problem, it's the getting there that is sometimes the biggest feat. Yvonne and I take fish oil capsules and glucosamine-chondroitin tablets to keep our knees working, but still, I can sound like a bowl of Rice Krispies and milk when I get off the couch...snap, crackle and pop. And, ouch sometimes.

Context is all...are we talking fanzines here, or going back a page to the cross between Judaism and Buddhism? Maybe context is nothing, too. I don't suppose the Buddha ever pubbed his ish...

The fortieth anniversary of the release of *Sgt. Pepper's* was on June 1. The thirtieth anniversary of the release of *Star Wars* was on May 25. Feeling old? I sure am...

I listened to Sgt. Pepper's 4 or 5 times on June 1st. I can remember the first time I heard it; it still sounds pretty good to my old ears.

The font used for "Pixelated" here is the font that Xerox uses... downloaded that one a long time ago. I'll probably have no use for it, but it is neat to have all those fonts...

I tend to collect fonts. There are over 3,000 on my hard drive (only a couple of hundred actually installed) and a couple of thousand more sitting on a CD. I only use a handful for an issue of Pixel, so there's no real reason to have all those fonts on hand, but I tend to operate under the "You Never Know"



philosophy.

Lee, Yvonne's childhood was just the opposite. She was a chubby baby, and her mother immediately put her on a diet, just at the time when a child needs those calories to grow and mature. As a result, Yvonne's had weight problems all her life, and her metabolism is negligible. As she gets older, it's gotten old to lose weight, but now that she has those various food allergies, it's gotten a bit easier. Wahoo...

I am looking forward to John Purcell's interview with James Halperin. Looks like he outright purchased the Warner fanzine collection to assist with a book. I'm not telling tales out of school, John, am I? It may enhance the anticipation for the third *Askance*...

Joining First Fandom...well, I sent out an e-mail to Joan Marie Knappenberger, asking for information on membership, and she is yet to respond. I'll see what the organization can do for me. If I like it, I'll stay on. If not, well, I had some fun anyway. I did receive an issue of *Scientifiction* some years ago, and I did respond to it... someone else with FF who is yet to respond to me. I'll give it a chance... •

Claire Brialey

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One of the things I most enjoy in fanzines, one of the things that strongly reinforces the sense I really value about being part of a community, is when fanzines talk to one another. And since one of the fanzines that *Pixel* #14 was talking to is ours, this seems like a conversation I can't stay out of any longer.

Ted White mostly has it right when he summarises my starting point (in *Banana Wings* #29 and #30) for defining fan writing as 'Context Is All', although in part what I was saying is that I would prefer not to have to define fan writing since, outside the context of fanzines (whether paper or electronic), this leads inexorably to trying to define 'fan'. Ted and the metafictional Steve Stiles in that column easily uncovered the downside of the context argument, i.e. that if fanzines define the context of fan writing then any writing published in a fanzine qualifies. And yes, that includes a shopping list or a mystery story. But this is why I wouldn't claim solely that Context Is All; it is just a starting point, and the next step is just as easy. Being published in a fanzine should probably rule in any piece as fan writing; but once you've established the field – and whether or not you choose to include some other pieces peskily published somewhere else – you can then apply your own personal quality judgments. As it happens I have published a shopping list in a fanzine more than once, albeit as part of an article about something else, and I hope I was not alone in considering those pieces more interesting and better written than the shopping list by itself. And so, personally, I would say that I find Ted's recent fan writing on the subject of fan writing or indeed fan art better than his recent fan writing that is the opening hook for a mystery story – but that's just my personal view, and partly about what I like to read in fanzines.

And thanks to you and Peter Sullivan for the #14 review of *BW*, too. More generally, it's good to have Peter's column providing further connection with other fanzines. I hesitate to lament the lack of much fanzine reviewing these days, since we don't currently run a regular review column ourselves and haven't had even an irregular one for some while either; but US fanzines seem



to do more of this sort of thing, and frequently-published fanzines such as yours and John Purcell's *Askance* are probably best placed to keep up with the whole field, including even more frequently published titles as well as leisurely quarterly endeavours like ours.

I was also pleased to see Peter's review of Peter Weston's *Prolapse* in #13. But it was interesting to see Eric's take on it in a subsequent letter as not being e-fanac because it's published on paper too or, perhaps more pertinently, first. Part of Peter W's intention in this is to get engaged response, which he didn't feel he was getting (for his own definition of engagement or, indeed, response) when he published simultaneously online and on paper. In Eric's case, at least, that seems to have backfired; but *Prolapse* (like Peter's most notable previous title, the mighty *Zenith/Speculation*) otherwise succeeds in boasting so stellar and extensive a letter column that most other fanzine editors covet responses from the names on the WAHF list alone. Peter S comments that a purely e-fanzine format would permit a much longer letter column that included many of those WAHFed contributions, but suggests 'the need to edit down to space means that the overall standard of material is higher'. I think that's accurate but also think it's about the overall balance of the fanzine, ensuring that there's always quite a bit of new material to help generate response and contribute to the ongoing conversation, rather than giving proportionally more space to the response itself. Given that *Prolapse*, as a fanzine focused on fannish history, will inevitably spend a lot of its time looking back, I think that Peter W has made a deliberate decision to ensure that the letter column discussion of previous issues doesn't overwhelm and eat the rest

of the fanzine (RECURSION: see recursion). After all, if any particular topic generates a great deal of response it's likely to provide fodder for a specific article – as happened in *Pixel* when Ted chose to use his column in #13 to respond to some issues arising from Dave Locke's interview with Eric in #12.

When I started reading *Pixel* #14 I realised that I must have missed #13 and had I read further into #14's letter column at that stage I would have realised why and been warned off at least part of it again. Eyes are the subject about which I am probably more squeamish than about anything else; we have several fanzines and books around the house which Mark has carefully labelled up with notes telling me never, ever, ever to read specific sections, and I think #13 is lost in Mark's study awaiting such labellings in the context of Lee Lavell's column. Too late for me, unfortunately. Once I realised what I had barely avoided reading I quickly paged through the text – but there were *pictures!* Aagh aagh aagh. I am glad to note from letter columns that Lee's operation has evidently been a success, though.

Like Ted in #13, I wouldn't take issue with quite a few of Eric's comments in #12, as much as anything because I think that Eric implicitly identified a significant point that's relevant to all writing: consider your audience. Fan writing is one of those activities in which, even if you don't personally know everyone in your audience, you do know the community to which you all belong. (Although your own knowledge of that community will undoubtedly change over the years, even while the community changes itself.) Maybe we come back again to context, in this case the context of the reader as much as the writer; maybe that's why it's perfectly possible to write successful and popular fanzine articles which are fannish primarily because of their publication in a fanzine and

their authorship by a fan rather than for any specifically science fictional or other fannish content.

Writing non-fiction professionally for a newspaper or magazine, say, you will also know the sort of community, the demographic, for which you're writing although you are unlikely to know many of the audience personally at all. My presumption about writing fiction professionally had been what Eric indicated: that even within a genre such as SF, crime, historical fiction etc., you can know considerably less about the interests and preferences of your wider audience or most individuals within it, and thus cannot and should not aim to be writing directly to them – and indeed it's a rare author, or authorial voice, that seeks to address readers directly very often. Nonetheless, I suspect that Eric's comments about fan writers who '...simply repeat the same mistakes that have garnered them praise before. ... there is no reason not to keep doing whatever works for your chosen audience' could also be applied to a number of formulaic but nonetheless rather successful published novels.

I also wouldn't take issue with quite a few of Ted's comments in his follow-up column. Writing is a skill, and it can be learned, and by doing it and studying other people's writing you both practise and learn more. As Eric implied and as others have commented since, if as a fan writer you're not aiming to become a professional writer, there seems little problem in the fact that these disciplines call for rather different styles and tones. And if you are, or are aiming to be, a professional writer, then you will doubtless be all the more able to deploy different styles and tones anyway and should be able to judge what's appropriate for whichever audience, and in whichever context, you're writing. That does seem to be borne out by the range of contributors to fanzines, including

Pixel of course, who have succeeded in both fields – some of them simultaneously.

But I would also agree strongly with the implication of Ted's article and further comments from other correspondents: just because you're not a professional writer doesn't mean that you will write badly, nor most definitely does it mean that you should be satisfied with doing so. Unprofessional and non-professional aren't the same thing. I need to be able to communicate effectively in writing as well as orally at work, and I do so in a style rather different from my fan writing; as it happens, I'm considerably more confident about the quality of my 'professional' written work than I am about my fan writing, which I always want to be better. But, notwithstanding Ted's measured comments about acceptable and constructive criticism, for me this is a hobby and if I refused to be satisfied with anything other than perfection it would be a hobby I pursued alone rather than actually being part of this community. Because of who I am and because of the contribution I want to make to this community, I instead aim for excellence and have to be satisfied, all too often, with adequacy; I hope I catch anything less good than that – the 'writing that in almost any other context would be considered poor' that Eric disdains – before it gets released into the wild.

I note from #13 and #14 that Chris Garcia feels he is being stalked by Dave Langford, whose influence has now extended outside the realms of fandom and into Chris's Real Life. I'm happy to be able to pass on to Chris a powerful piece of British fan lore which helps keep Dave's presence in proportion; this is a technique developed some years ago to stave off the permanent



demise of British fan activity once it was realised that Dave's fan writing would often send strong fans cowering into gafia since they knew that they just couldn't do it like that. What Chris needs to do is to take two big spoonfuls of Marmite a day: one to be swallowed first thing in the morning, and the other rubbed into the beard just before going to sleep at night. (Fans without beards have to substitute as best they can by smearing the Marmite liberally onto their chest.) The effectiveness of this remedy is perhaps best demonstrated by what has happened when our Marmite stocks have run low or been contaminated; one significant Marmite famine occurred during most the decade following the publication of Dave's TAFF trip report, *The Transatlantic Hearing Aid*, in 1985, with an impact on other European TAFF trip reports from which we're still recovering.

Eric again, or any Australian readers, may be able to inform us whether Vegemite performs a similar function; I tried it once and I'm not prepared to risk it again, even for the sake of improving my fan activity. I realise that in the light of the preceding discussion on hobbyism and/or excellence in fan writing this reveals my feet, or taste buds, of clay, but I shall have to settle for sustaining my fan activity in a primarily British context. Maybe we've finally hit on the difference between fandom on different continents; I don't know anyone who likes both Marmite and Vegemite – for all that I know a number of people who dislike both.

I should add that the cover of #13 was absolutely stunning – I love looking at clouds – and the cover of #14 just as striking. I think the design and look of your covers is one of the best demonstrations of something where e-fanzines can easily surpass most paper fanzines. Just so long as you don't print any more diagrams of eyes... •



David Burton