

# WELCOME TO CLAIMS DEPARTMENT ISSUE #4

Well, This one was delayed a while so I would have time to take the crappy version and make it craptacular with my new software. This is actually much better than the earlier one. This issue features a few pieces by the favourite artist of Miss M Lloyd, a young Australian who goes by Mooniichan. It also takes us to the largest city West of New York, Los Angeles, as M and I hit the road.



Art by Kate Kelton

## The City

Los Angeles. The City of the Angels. Oh how I love/hate thee. I've lived there, done some time in the city trying to make it, and have played in and out of town at least once every few months. In the 1990s, there was a girl I had a major thing for. Her name was M Heil, who is better known now to readers of The Drink Tank as M Lloyd. We had gone out a couple of times and when we both came out to the West Coast for summer of the glorious year 1997, but we pretty much figured to keep it friendly, especially since she had forgotten to tell her boyfriend that she had dumped him. This was long before I had the idea for Claims Department, but I still had a tradition of celebration for paydays. I always went shopping, and since I got my last pay packet on the last day of my job, I figured I should celebrate. And how better to celebrate than to take a little trip with a lovely lady?

Now, the most important thing about a payday treat is that you can't plan it too much. You can psyche yourself up about it, plan to give yourself something, but you can't make all the plans or you just ruin it. Lucky for me, I'm not the only freak who does stuff like this, as M has been known to be a little crazy (If you ever buy me a drink, I'll tell you the story of how she ended up in Vietnam on a whim). The phone call pitching this idea went something like this:

M: Hello?

Chris: Hey, it's Chris.

M: It's nearly midnight.

Chris: I know. We can still make it to LA in time for breakfast.

M: What?

Chris: I know this great place. Brilliant pancakes.

M: You're serious.

Chris: Yeah, I can be there in twenty minutes.

M: Make it thirty. I need to get dressed.

### ***M's Response: March 2005***

Chris is nuts. He called late at night (as I remember it, nearly 2am) and was bursting to head down to Los Angeles. Honestly, I'd rather have stayed in town, but he wanted LA. And I had broken up with my last boyfriend, though we ended up getting back together and eventually getting married. And if Chris ever tells that Vietnam story, I'll kill him.

That was what started the adventure to Los Angeles.

## *The Drive Down*

I showed up at M's place (which she called The Joint) about forty minutes later. She hadn't gotten dressed yet, so she was running around, half-naked, throwing things into a backpack. I'd packed a small bag, just enough for a day or two, while M seemed to think we'd be doing survival course work in the desert. The pack was just about the size of a five year old when she came out of her bedroom wearing what looked to be a five year old's t-shirt, probably specifically worn for my ogling pleasure. We hopped in the car and headed out for 101.

I had decided on 101 since it's a much prettier ride than I-5. It took a lot longer, but we had lovely views the entire way. M is a



conversationalist. She'll chat your ear off about just about anything. Her specialty is music and art. I'm a huge fan of both, so we mostly discussed Pop art and Alternative music. This was back in the day when Alternative music was still somewhat alternative and not played on every radio station. We had a bunch of old tapes, mostly local acts like Statue Man and Clubberlang and a few ska CDs that M used her adaptor to play through the tape deck. We were rocking out to King Diamond on a mix tape when we arrived in the city of Los Angeles.

Driving around a bit, I found all sorts of little places that I knew we would have to try when we got the chance. I had told folks that I'd be back by Wednesday, so we had a tonne of time. On the way down,

M had said that she would pay for the hotel no matter how long we stayed. Since she's the one with the Trust fund (and by that point, she was also pulling in 30 Grand a year), I had no problem with her providing the shelter. I am a modern man, after all. I said I knew the perfect place and we headed into Hollywood.

## *The Hotel*

There is only one hotel in Hollywood that I deem appropriate for me. It's the Hollywood Roosevelt, right across the street from the Chinese Theatre. It's where the first Oscar ceremony

### ***M's reaction: March 2005***

I admit it: I wore that shirt to drive Chris nuts. Part of my plan for the whole trip was to do just that, which I know makes me evil, but still, I was plannin gon having a fun trip and playing with Chris' mind is always a good game. He got me back though: the room was 250.00 a night.



**The Lobby of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel and site of first Oscars**

took place. It's also supposed to be haunted by the ghost of Marilyn Monroe. I stayed at the Roosevelt as a kid and I am a huge fan. So, I pulled us in and M ordered us up a nice sized room. Two queen-sized beds and a HUGE bathroom. Perfect. We dropped off our stuff, just long enough to marvel at how perfect the room was and how Hollywood High School seemed like a sprawling mega-opolis beneath our fifteenth story gaze. We ran out the door and out onto Hollywood Blvd.

## Hollywood

There's nothing like Hollywood anywhere. It's a tourist trap AND a lifestyle trap. More than one well-meaning Mid-westerner has come in search of a dream and either found it and became every stereotype that Tom Petty sang about, or missed it and became every stereotype that Guns 'n Roses sang about. Either way, it is a vortex. I had done a little time in LA back in the day, but broke out with the help of the fact that I couldn't even get the crap jobs that actors and writers fall back on when things get lean. Walking up and down Hollywood, you see crime, poverty and depravity brushing up against luxury, comfort and notoriety. It was no surprise to me that M had an LA network of friends, including a couple of directors who were starting to make a name for themselves.

The Movieland Wax Museum is a great little place and a piece of history. I hadn't been there in years, so I gladly took M in and we walked around, mocking whatever we came across. M is one of the original Snark lasses, those uber-hip chicks with an acid tongue and a silver-lined brutality stick they wield liberally. She entertains when she is given something to attack. Her references were often as obscure and perfectly timed as mine, though she tended to go harder on things. I nearly plotzed in the Chamber of Horrors as she went off on a Denis Leary-esque tirade. Sweet Jesus, she was on that day.

After enjoying the museum, we walked around the shops on Hollywood. She bought us expensive cigars, I got us both hot dogs (and realised I had completely forgotten about getting us breakfast) and I filled our flasks with decent scotch. That is the beauty of Hollywood Blvd, you can get whatever it is you need and still surround yourself with the trappings of a Dream City.

We walked back to the hotel and M said she wanted to do some shopping. I knew this



little shopping area where you could find used books for dirt cheap. We hit the room for a bit and then hopped in the car and headed up Sunset Blvd. into West Hollywood.

There are a lot of jokes about West Hollywood, mostly centering around the fact that it has long been considered a gay community, which is apparent by all the rainbow flags one sees on the drive. The bookstore I knew was tucked away, almost hidden as if they didn't want people to find the horde of books they kept. This would also explain why the joint went out of business about a year later. You had to go through an alley between a Hair Salon and a restaurant to get to the small courtyard where the bookstore lived. It was a lovely courtyard with benches and a few all-weather couches to sit and have a read on. The place was called, as best I remember it, Courtly Books.



***M's Reaction: March 2005***

This place was a dump. A great dump for finding the jewels of fantasy. I saw copies of books that I had only heard of. They even mixed in fantasy criticism in with the lit. There were copies of PHILLIP JOSE FARMER CONQUIERT L'UNIVERS by Francois Mottier and a few other foreign titles that I had heard of and knew had never been translated. I spent all my time looking for nineteenth century fantasy while Chris roamed the entire store for some nugget or another.

I've talked about my theories of bookstores: the harder it is to get to the Science Fiction, the better the place is. Courtly was slightly different, as it was an entire store of fantasy with a splash of science fiction hiding among the Arthuria. The hard part was that everything was in alphabetical order by author in one single train that circled the bookstore. While not as difficult to use as the thrift store around Carlsbad, this place wasn't easy.

I found so many books that I couldn't easily choose. There were science fiction novels from around the world, including Lem in Polish, Russian, French and English. I searched a bit and found the one that I wanted, a book that I had been hearing about for years and years. Spider and Jeane Robinson's Stardance. I had always liked Robinson's prose stylings, though the first things of his I read reminded me quite a bit too heavily of Bobby Aspin. I figured that buying it here was a fitting way to go about it, since I thought I'd get a chance to read it on the way back when M was driving.

M bought a lot of stuff. Nearly Two Large worth, if I remember correctly. She got several of the original OZ books, which set her back quite a bit, not to mention some expensive German books. I just bought the Robinson's affair and a copy of Serving in Time by Gordo Eklund, yet another Laser Book I had yet to find. Even after we made our purchases, we milled about, searching for the hardest to find books that we knew about. I even found the tiny dog that wandered the shelves. I only wish the place had survived, as I went back a couple of years later and found that the store had become a Coffee Bean. Nicest Coffee Bean I've ever been to as well.

We headed back to the hotel, mostly due to the weight of our purchases and the fact that we were operating on less sleep than coffee. We got to the room and M headed to take a shower while I started in on the book.

***M's Reaction: March 2005***

Why the hell would anyone buy Stardance when there were treasures to be found on every shelf? He could have gotten works only published in very small runs for almost nothing (OK, a nominal fee) but instead he chooses a book that has a dozen editions and is available anywhere? Moron...

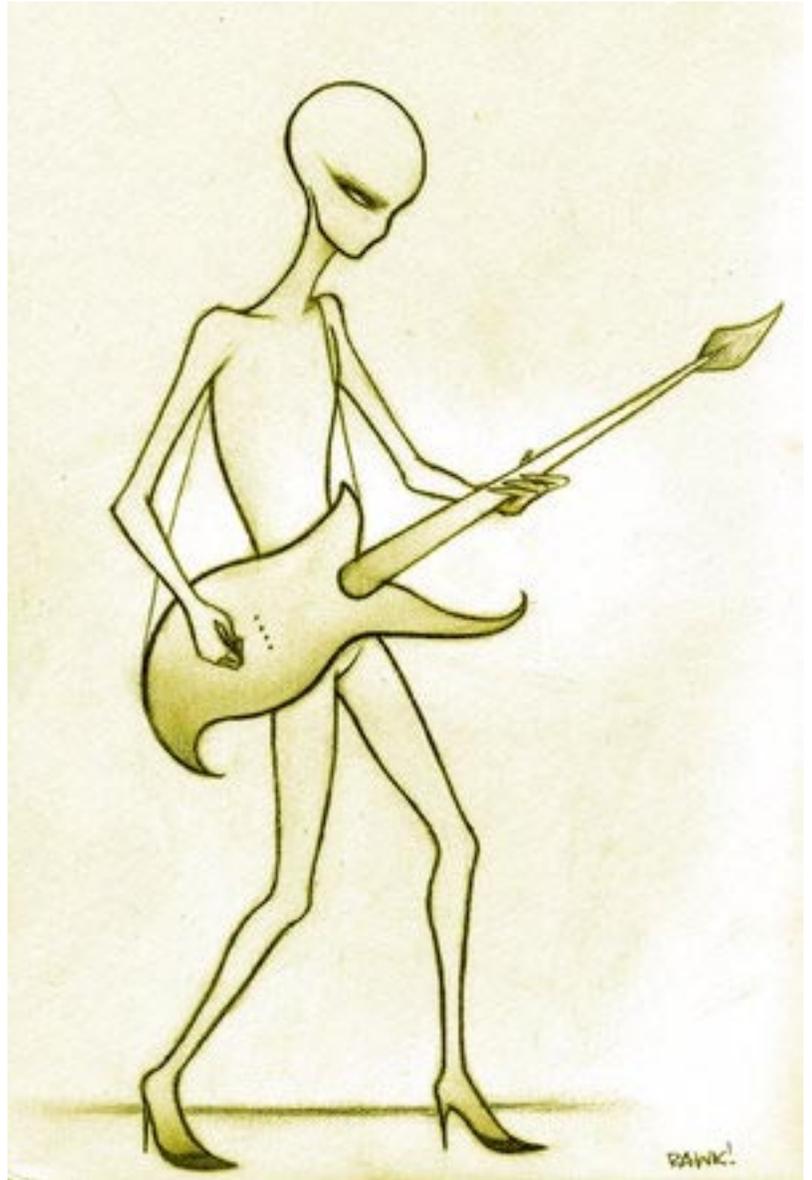
### ***M's Reaction***

Chris missed part of my evil ploy. I actually left the bathroom door open and the shower curtain drawn, so in the mirror of the bathroom, Chris should have been able to see me, therefore annoying him further, but Chris buried himself in that damn book. Such is the power of Science Fiction over Chris. He's such a stereotype sometimes...

Stardance is one of those books that's less about science fiction and more about the subjects it throws itself to. At times, Stardance is an excellent look at the politics and prosperity of modern dance and a pretty stern dressing down of the requisite body type of those who practice said forms. At other times, it's a treatise on the power of the media to create gods and monsters, often of the same people at the same time. Other times, it's a lifestyle novel, showing how tearing down the standing constructs of our predominant society would lead to freedom and a more positive power. And finally, it is a story of metaphysics and faith. It's deeply complex, rich and beautiful, as the story wraps around us joyfully.

The story is a brilliant one: Charlie Armstead is a former dancer who had to give it up because of destroyed knees. Shara Drummond is a dancer whose body type isn't what the dance companies want to see. Frankly, from the Robinson's description, she's a smokin' hotty. She has decided that she wants to dance in Zero G and she wants Charlie to video tape and edit her dances. This is the meat of the story, though there's much more once they get to space and start their work. You see, you can only stay in Zero or even Low G for so long before your body will be unable to adapt to live back on Earth (a theory which has been proven false, but I won't take issue with that). Shara's sister Nora is along too, though she's the one that has the dancer's body.

The descriptions of the three major important dances are wonderful and it's hard to figure out whether Jeanne, the dancer, wrote them using her muscle memory to invoke emotion in the prose or if Spider wrote his observations of Jeanne dancing. It's hard to tell who is responsible, but no matter, it's the best written part of the story. The power of Stardance is the ability to bring us into the dance through words. It's hard to get that response. I barely noticed the two and a half hours that passed between the time that I started the reading and the moment I realised it was after 8, we hadn't had dinner and we were in LA for Christ's sake! M, who had been reading ever since she got out of the shower, said she knew somewhere that would make me a happy, happy boy.



### ***M's Reaction: March 2005***

After failing to capture his attention, I figured Chris would enjoy an evening of Poker against me and a few friends. The thing I love about LA is that there are more card games than you could imagine, and one regular game was called the Hipsters Holdings in Beverly Hills. Hipsters Holdings is an house, an old house that used to belong to one of the friends of the Rat Pack. The legend

goes that the game started somewhere around 1960 and has taken place every Saturday night from that point on. My Dad, when he was a card hustler to work through college, used to play in the game. I played my first hands of real, for-money poker at Hipsters. I walked off with nearly a grand after a hundred and fifty buy-in. Not bad for an eighteen year old. I actually bankrolled Chris, but the real part of the night was to see if any of the folks that Chris loved so much, like Johnny Chan or Texas Dolly Doyle Brunson, were there. Sadly, they weren't.

I love playing cards. There's nothing better as far as I'm concerned. The house was small, but the front room had a table for what looked to be Texas Hold-'em. At least one of the players looked familiar, so I figured I'd do better inside. In the kitchen was Seven Card Stud, one of my games of choice. M bought me in and I sat down at a table full with producer-types. M said that a lot of actors pass through the game, though no one of any importance was there.

Playing cards can be nerve-racking, but this was butter. I played my hand, folding most times after seeing my first three and raising big when I had something. After about four successful routes, I changed it up and bluffed. I played for a few hours, maybe until midnight, when M, who had taken a seat at one of the other tables, called me in and told me it was time to go. Despite playing very smart and winning a fair number of big pots, I came home with less than seven hundred. Still, just enough of a win to feel good about myself.

**M's Reaction: March 2005**  
Chris played some good cards. He's always had a nice method for playing. I call it being crazy, but he calls it art. History will decide.



I woke up somewhere south of noon, but not much. M was already awake, reading Automated Alice on top of her covers wearing her Andre the Giant nightgown. As soon as my eyes were open, I grabbed Stardance and kept on reading. By this point, I was thrown into the second half of the book and started to find myself completely brought in. The group, minus Shara, forms a dance troupe and that group continues in the footsteps of Shara and co. It's an excellent portion of the book, especially when they are asked, as a unit, to go forth and try and make contact with a red sort of space mite. That's the best way I can put it. They do their thing and the book unfolds beautifully at the end.

The book was far-better than I had expected and I can see why it won the Hugo. The fact that Shara had become God-like on Earth was that she was a dancer, that she had exposed the world to something new and beautiful and had done so amazingly well. That's a message I can get behind: one of the world getting a new sort of culture through television. I've always said that TV is a great carrier of culture for those who would seek it, but honestly, most folks don't want to find it, so they ignore what's there. It's nice to see an SF writer who at least sorta agrees with me.

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### ***M's Reaction: March 2005***

Chris woke up and started reading. I had been up for nearly an hour plotting how best to enrapture him with me. I figured being on top of the covers, legs bare and knee cocked just the right way would do it. Sadly, it didn't work as he just read and read. Damn him!

### **The Movie**

The afternoon would be one of those times when I knew I could somewhat impress M and still maintain my dignity. I had read that there was a big screening of perhaps the finest,

though far from the best, science fiction film ever made. I could only be talking about the one, the only, 2001: A Space Odyssey.

The screening wasn't until 7ish, so we loafed around, hitting Amoeba Records. We searched and searched, finding more music than either of us could have possibly wanted. M went directly for the Canadian Pop vocalist section. I, on the other hand, headed towards the back where the audio cassettes lived. They had a huge number of the dying breed, and since I only had a tape player in the car, I figured I'd buy a few things

for listening on the ride home. I picked up Kind of Blue, likely the greatest single Jazz album ever recorded, and a copy of Elvis Costello's Spike. Searching the aisles took forever, but by the time M came to whine that she was ready to go, I had picked out the most important album: the one that we'd listen to for nearly 2/3 of the trip home

### ***M's Reaction: March 2005***

Chris is such a woman. He shops like a lady looking for that single cartoon of milk that doesn't expire until Judgment Day. While I went through all the CDs and records the store had, he only managed to look through one room, and he complained that I dragged him away before he was finished!

We headed to the theatre, one of those old giants they brought back to life in the mid-1990s. This place was great, as there's only one theatre in San Jose with a screen anywhere near the same size. There was a good sized line, but this is where being sneaky helps. I had M go in to use the bathroom when I figured we had three to four minutes before the show started. They let her in, and I held on to her ticket. When they let us in, I had told M to get in the front of the line of folks moving in and get the good seats. I then handed the guy at the door both mine and M's tickets and told him that my girlfriend was in the bathroom. He tore them and I joined M in the best seats in the house.

We chatted a bit before the film. I had seen a good amount of it back in my 'Gotta see all the Classics' days, but I had never finished it. It's one of those movies that is not the best thing to watch on the small screen. As we settled in, I started blabbering



about how awesome Stardance was and M started talking about her recent encounter with The Lovers. The Lovers would later go on to become one of my all-time faves, but that wasn't until my big PJF phase starting about 2002. The lights went down and 2001 came to full glory.

There are a couple of schools of thought when it comes to 2001. Many SF fans say that it's a pretentious piece of film that does nothing for them. There are others who say that it is an almost spiritual piece of science fiction. Then there's me who believes that it's a movie that is slow but thoughtful, dense yet peaceful. Watching it on a big screen, you quickly find out the ultimate reality of 2001 is its grandeur, the power of the experience. Everything in 2001 is huge. When they want to show that HAL is learning how to read lips, they simply make the lips fill the whole screen. It's meant to be massive, and on that big a screen, you can understand why.

The opening of the film is beautifully obtuse. As I see it, it's all about man achieving new forms of intelligence. A bunch of monkeys sitting around a watering hole, a little later, one uses a bone as a tool. WOW! Something new!!! This leads to the most imitated scene from the film: the tossing of the bone that turns into a space station. This lead in, which takes forever in human terms, though I imagine to Stanley Kubrick he was working at a laser's pace, brings us to a science fiction film. It's a long way to go about it, but it's beautiful in the way it all happens.

There are odd things that you realize as you watch. There's no dialog for the first half hour. There's not much dialog at all, really. The music is all beautiful classical work, or ear-splitting electronic sound and it's breathtaking in the way it melts into the visuals. There are more than a dozen constantly referenced interactions between shot and music in the film. It's so effective. There's no way to recapture the effect of the giant screen and the sound in a home theatre setting. The Also Sprach Zarathustra segment is likely the most famous use of music in any film ever.

If Kubrick and Clarke had left 2001 as the story of the Monolith on the moon, the ship and HAL, that would have been an amazing film, a complete story that is thoughtful and intense, and much shorter. They didn't, however, and at times the added bits are a bit ponderous...OK, a lot ponderous, but they also add a level of awe. The stargird section of the film, perhaps the most heavily debated, is breathtaking on such a large screen. The message behind it is impressive as well. I once attended a lecture by David Stork, likely the world's top expert on 2001 and the author of HAL's Legacy. He said that he would gladly explain the ending to the crowd gathered, but anyone who wanted to remain of their beliefs, or didn't want the movie spoiled, should leave and head to the reception. Most of the crowd left and David did twenty minutes on it and I was amazed. I won't print it here, but I might do it in a future edition of The Drink Tank. Let's just say that I missed about 4 layers to it.

The film is difficult to watch if you're one of those explosions and car chases types. I have been known to go to movies specifically to watch things 'plode, but I was dragged into the film when I saw it saw big, when the music and the sound was so surrounding and the impact of every one of Kubrick's choices was at its fullest.

We left the theatre, where M exploded into a round of questions and I tried to answer them as best I could. I loved it, she was less sold. In fact, she was far from sold that this was one of the greatest and most important movies of the 1960s. I made the point that science fiction film is among the trickiest, with a hairline





fissure running through that can allow a film to be a masterpiece or a another kind of piece with very little action to either side. While she likes SF, particularly the Star Wars movies, she had trouble with the concept of slow-moving SF. I told her to never read Dhalgren. We debated it over a long cup of coffee at some little place around the corner from the theatre. She made her points ('My God, it was so boring half the time') and I made mine ('Maybe, but it was IMPORTANTLY boring'). We headed off to a show at a little club. It was a Ska band that I enjoyed, and

since they were the headliners, we were just in time for their set. After the show, we walked back, chatting and laughing and basically having a far better time than we ever had on any of our dates.

### M's REACTION

Here's my take on the night of the big film going and dance party. He drags me to that molasses-on-a-cold night movie which I will never come around to enjoying, then he debates me over coffee trying to make me say I love what I really hate, and then he follows all that up by taking me to a ska show where it's crazy and people are dancing, literally, on the tables, on the bar, and everyone is having a gay old party to the fast and furious rhythms. I will give him this: Chris knows how to show a girl a seriously conflicted good time.

Mobtown, a great little band, was fantastic and the crowd was nutso. I'd never seen them, and I haven't seen them since. They play way up beat traditional ska. If you're not familiar with ska, think old school reggae sped up with blaring horns. In fact, many of the top reggae artists of the 70s and 80s, from Bob Marley and Peter Tosh to Jimmy Cliff and Toots and the Mayalls, were originally ska groups. It's a lot of fun and we danced (called in the World of Ska skankin') for their full set.

Back to the hotel, where sleep hit me like a grand piano from a high window in a Silent Comedy.

### The Music

Waking up around 10, I had beaten M to the punch and I got the shower first. I prefer to shower with music, so I grabbed the port tape player that doubles as my travel alarm clock to this day, and popped in my tape purchase. I popped it in and hopped into the shower as the opening riffs started. The song that followed was

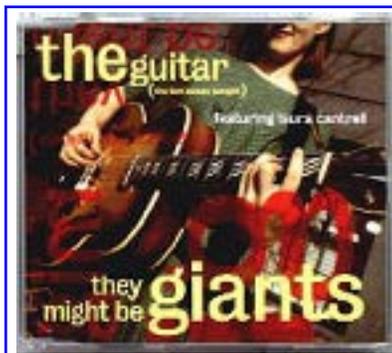


‘Dig My Grave’, a rollicking fun punk-infused song that led off the album Apollo 18 by the pranksters of the songwriting intelligencia They Might Be Giants.

They Might Be Giants are a band that is really two guys named John. John Linnell and John Flansburg formed TMBG back in the early eighties and had put out several great albums by the time Apollo 18 came out in 1992. I had probably heard most of the album back in my Emerson days, since many of the folks on my floor were huge fans, but I had never sat down and listened to the album all the way through. Here are a couple of hints: don’t listen to it in the shower, as it will make you move and I managed to slip. Also, get it on CD, as the shuffle mode is exceptionally cool on this disk.

They Might Be Giants’ style is somewhere between comedy and folk with just a touch of the Rock ‘n Roll that the kids are so nutty over these days. They swing between musical styles swiftly, often hitting two or three genres with a single song. There’s a playfulness to their music, much like the jam band Phish uses, only they reign it in to make albums that are more or less marketable to various markets. There are large numbers of TMBG fans that are young (3-7), in high school, on college campuses, and who are big time music fans. I fall into that last category, as I can listen to an album and pick out what the Johns had been listening to while they wrote their songs.

Apollo 18 starts off with the rocking ‘Dig My Grave’ and follows that up with the song that I believe has the best opening of any piece of modern rock (until The Magnetic Fields released i in 2004, but that’s another Claims Department).



### *M's Reaction*

I do love They Might Be Giants, and Apollo 18 is my third favorite of their albums. I particularly like the song The Guitar (The Lion Sleeps Tonight), which uses reworked portions of the song The Lion Sleeps Tonight. Chris didn't even mention it. Bad Chris.

Someday Mother will die and I'll get the money  
Dad leans down and says my sentiments exactly  
You son-of-a-bitch, I palidrone I

Read that set of lyrics again.  
It's a sort of stew of concepts delivered with utter precision and a tonal quality

somewhere around the vicinity of belt sander. But it's genius! You can't leave the shower having heard it and not remembering it or humming it all day long. It's got a hook that'll pull you along and not let go. That's good song writing.

The album changes gears on you in an instant, hardly staying the same from one album to the next. Songs like 'She's Actual Size' and 'Turn Around' are easily classifiable as Accordion Rock. There are songs of exultant joy like 'My Evil Twin', 'See the Constellation' and 'Hall of Heads'. There are songs that just careen off into nowhere but they force you to party like it's 1995. It's just one of those albums. TMBG is one of the bands that lead the way in Educational musical appreciation, as they have since their first album, and here present a song called 'Mammal' that has become utterly useful for me in my trivia life as providing the name monotreme and explaining the things that make a mammal a mammal.

The highlight of the album for me is Song 17, better known as 'Fingertips'. It may actually not be a song, it might be 21 songs. Basically, the guys made 21 very short songs that total up to about four and a half minutes. Some of the songs are quite short and silly, like 'Please Pass the Milk, Please' or '(What's) That Blue Thing (Doing Here)'. These are mixed with great songs like 'I Don't Understand You' and 'Something Grabbed A Hold of My Hand' or 'I Walk Along Darkened Corridors'. It's a great presentation, a chance for the guys to use the snippets of songs they'd never finished in a single tight package. It's a great tune.

My shower lasted at least 42 minutes, since I had the autoflip on and listened to both sides. I was most impressed and after I dried off, I left the player playing for M while she showered. I read Eklund's book while M showered. It was everything I love about Laser books, just fun enough to make me forget that they were shoddily made, hastily written and beautifully covered.. After she got dressed, we packed up and headed out for our next stop: Las Vegas.

The time in LA had been great, and Vegas would prove to be most entertaining, but that's another edition of Claims Department. Let me say that I've never had more fun loosing a grand, getting tossed out of a casino, and running from the cops. It was all M's fault too. As we drove out of LA towards Sin City, we listened to Apollo 18 and talked about 2001. I still hadn't convinced her of it's greatness.. Gotta love a captive audience.

That's all for this issue. I want to give great thanks to Mooniichan for allowing us to use her art and for the great cover work she did. I want to thank M Lloyd for her nice Reactions after I sent her the text last month (and it's indeed a good thing you didn't succeed in your little ploy, Missy Jane). Next time will tell the tale of booze, a book, movies and a CD on the road to Santa Cruz. That will feature my look at what whiskey goes best with Shepard's Pie and historical fantasy and what the power of good lyrics is as you wait for the tow truck. Beachside fun and the art of Kyme Chan awaits you sometime before the end of July in Claims Department 5: The Voyage Home!

JAN 28, 2009



### The Details

- The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel is located on Hollywood Blvd, right across the street from the World Famous Chinese Theatre. You can usually get dirt-cheap prices on the speciality sites. <http://www.hollywoodroosevelt.com/> is the site for more information
- 2001 is available on DVD, VHS, Beta, LaserDisk and you can find it on eDonkey and those type of things. It's best watched in the theatre. 2001 won the Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo in 1969 and was up for a lot of other awards. It's frequently shown at the various rep screens around the US and Europe.
- Stardance is available in a lot of different printings over the last 28 years. The one I read was the first paperback edition. You can also find two sequels, Starseed and Starmind. They also did a single volume called The Stardancers that combines the first and second book. Stardance, the first 2/3 or thereabouts of the novel version, won both the Hugo and the Nebula. I've read it but only once and in the original magazine it appeared in.
- They Might Be Giants are a great band. They have about 9 full-length albums out. If you're only gonna buy one, make it Flood, their record from 1990 with songs like "Birdhouse in Your Soul", "Minimum Wage" and "Particle Man". It's arguable that TMBG started to go downhill when they turned into a full band in the mid-1990s, specifically with the album John Henry. They've had some flashes of brilliance, including the theme song to the TV Series Malcolm in the Middle.
- Courtney Books is dead and gone. The Hipsters Holding Games have moved out of BH and are now held in an actual casino.

*Claims Department Issue Four was written by M Lloyd and Christopher J. Garcia. Chris did the layout. M read the first draft and made her little comments in an email back to Chris which was even more brutal than the ones that got printed. Any of M or Chris' words are reprintable in any form anywhere with or without permission. Got something to say? Well, each reader is 4% of the total readership. Email Garcia@compu terhistory.org or send a letter to 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View, California, 94043. Muy love to Mooniichan for the Art. Muy Muchos Gracias!*

**Letter Graded Mail**  
**Sent to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)**  
**or 1401 N. Shoreline, Mountain View CA 94043**  
**LJ: johnnyeponymous**

*First off, a couple of notes from Etobicoke, Ontario's Own Lloyd Penney on Claims Department Issue #1*

Dear Chris:

See, I am catching up on things. Now, I've got the time to write a few comments on Claims Department 1. Gimmickzine? One-shot? Not sure what you mean here.

*The Gimmick of taking a trip somewhere and writing it as a sorta SerFannish Review Trip Report Thingee (As M referred to it the other day). It'll be around for a while (I've got a bunch of issues already written and ready for lay-out!)*

Great cover! Might as well be me at my desk, whichever desk it might be. Always too much to do, never enough time, never enough cooperation from the boss, and always too much interference from co-workers. They hand me work, and no matter what I may have at my desk, they always have something much more important for me to do. Of course, that tells me that my work has little or no importance.

*My Good Pal Steve Sprinkles did the cover and it was the first of his drawing to be used in any zine. I thought it was a great cover (and after I overran a few extra, some folks ended up with Issue One's Cover on Issue Two!)*

I've never been to a Westercon, and it's not likely I ever will. No one's ever told me what they are like, and what to expect from them. Could you? I used to live in Victoria, just north of Seattle, and in '78, I was looking forward to going there with the family. My grandmother made a surprise visit to Victoria, and my folks decided to take her to Seattle, and they asked me to stay, with the usual parental consolation that "you'll go the next time". That next time never came, and how dare I be pissed? Never did make it there.

*Take whatever the largest local Con is, then ramp up the ambitions about 20% while decreasing the membership a similar 20%. That's Westercon, whcih makes for a good time, usually.*

One project I worked on some years ago now may soon see the light of day, and other clichés. go to [www.sectarianwave.com](http://www.sectarianwave.com), and look at what will be available for sale in the next year or so. Space opera lives! Trying my best o keep up with The Drink Tank, and I might be caught up, who knows? Probably not. Sign me up for The Drink Tank Special Edition, and I will respond, one way or another. Issue 2 is in the mail? Not surprised. Take it easy, and see you next eFanzines download.

*Since you wrote this letter, four editions of The Drink Tank have appeared, you've received two issues of Claims Department, I've finished three more and I've written two others. You'll be caught up soon though, as there'll be a slow down right before the Chess Issue.*

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*Now, back on the West Coast, Jerry Kaufman has a few words to say on Issue 2.*

Thanks for issue 2 - lots of food and drink for thought here. I read *Dangerous Visions* at the time it came out, even bought the manuscript for "Aye, and Gomorrah..." at Nycon III. (I still have it in a manila envelope in a box somewhere.)

*And you better keep it there! It's probably a hundred times safer in that envelope than anywhere else. Now I officially envy you, Jerry!*

I remember that a lot of the criticism and praise of the book matched your comments. The same stories you commented on got much the same sorts of comments at the time: certain stories tagged as weak or obviously written to shock, others genuine contributions to stretching possibilities. Responses to Harlan's commentaries - I can't remember exactly how most people felt. However, I've heard that the hold-up on publishing the final volume has been, in part, that Harlan wants to write forewords to everything and hasn't ever finished that chore. *I suspect Harlan is a little too busy figuring out who to sue next to worry about writing the intros. Looking*

*over the older commentary, yeah, there's a lot of similarities to what I've written, though anything more recent seems to treat the anthology as if it were written on Golden Tablets by the Archangel himself.*

As for copyright issues and Harlan's stance: darn, I thought I'd have something trenchant to say. I think that writers should have strong copyright protection, but not perpetually. Copyrights for popular writers are becoming corporate assets, and I don't think that is, or should be, the purpose of intellectual property. Since Harlan himself is a producer of such property, and not a huge company, I'm much more sympathetic to him than I would be to Disney. On the other hand, he took on AOL for things that are not really under their control unless they become censors and devote huge amounts of time to.

*You know, as a conservative in many things (with the notable exceptions of abortion and Gay Marriage), I should love copyright, but I really find it to be an annoyance. Everyone should have access to all forms of information (and all books are information) so I think they should be available to everyone on the net as a way of keeping us from falling back into the old days when you would only have the ruling class with access to books and other works.*

I'm listening to Le Tigre's *This Island*. I really like the way it rocks, and the textures of the female singers' voices. Some of the lyrics are pretty biting, as well. I saw the video for "T.K.O." once, and picked up the album on the strength of it. No cello, though.

*Le Tigre is great. I got hooked when a friend lent me This Island. Such a great group.*

Sounds like you developed quite an attraction to Ken - too bad she lives elsewhere. Very apropos that you saw *House of Wax* - was it being shown because of the current remake?

*It seems that's what they do, like they showed the original Ocean's 11 right before the release of Ocean's Twelve.*

I have a hard time taking anything with Vincent Price too seriously. I always thought he was quite mannered and I could seldom get into his characters. But you've piqued my curiosity and I hope to see HoW sometime. (I don't intend to see the current version. It got poor reviews, has Paris Hilton in it, and isn't a remake, really - the reviews suggest it took the name and the "people covered with wax" idea and built a different plot around it.)

*While Paris Hilton keeps me away, Eliza Cuthbert draws me near, since she's somethin' to look at and a fine little actress. It's a shame they mess around with classics like they do, but they've been saying that since they started remaking the Silents as Talkies in the 1930s.*

I laughed aloud when I read your comment about Lloyd Penney.

*As long as one joke works, the entire fanzine is worth it!*

Yours,  
Jerry

*Thanks Jerry. Let's continue down towards the Mexican Border and stop in Wine Country and the words of The Wizard of Glen Ellen, Robert Lichtman.*

May 13, 2005

Hi, Chris--

I was pretty surprised to find CLAIMS DEPARTMENT No. 2 in my mailbox last week, but quickly got interested in reading about your visit to my neck of the woods. If you can make it to Sonoma from Mountain View in "about an hour and a half," you must be really sailing along! Or perhaps you left in the middle of the night when even the traffic along Highway 1 through San Francisco was nearly non-existent. Be that as it may, here you were -- and you even managed to mention my name.

*Always ready to drop a name when the subject calls for it.*

However, I hasten to say that I've never "experienced the perfection" of writing LoCs from one of the many local wineries. As a bonafide \*resident\* of Sonoma Valley, I seldom go to wineries at all. The last time might have been back in the early '90s when Pam Wells was the TAFF delegate. My favorite among them is definitely the old Buena Vista Winery out in the country somewhat northeast of the Plaza, where the

architecture and ambiance more than makes up for my general disinterest in wine. (This is not to say I don't occasionally enjoy some, but mostly in the context of a restaurant meal with friends.) The Valley of the Moon Winery, which is just around the corner from where I live, is one I've never visited, and although things may have changed in the past couple decades (during which its facilities were extensively remodeled) the skinny on it back in the '80s was that its wine wasn't very good.

***The wine's still not very good, but the setting is pretty. I really liked both the wine and the atmosphere over at Buena Vista. Gorgeous old building and pretty good wine to boot.***

Which other of the "couple of the Glen Ellen wineries" did you visit that day? There's a tasting room in the old Grist Mill building on Arnold Drive (across from where the Jack London bookstore used to be) that's currently for an Eric Ross Winery (according to the local phone book), and that's the next nearest to me that has detectable premises (others are listed in the book that I've never noticed). There's also the Mayo Family Winery on the extreme north end of Arnold Drive past the volunteer fire station (I pass it every day on my way home), the Benzinger Family Winery on the road up to Jack London State Park, the Wellington Vineyards in the backyard of the local elementary school, and the Arrowood Vineyard & Winery on Sonoma Highway (which I pass every day on my way to work).

***I've tried all of those at one point or another. I liked Eric Ross quite a bit. The old Jack London Bookstore was a fave of my Pops back in the day. Wellington and Arrowood are two of my 'Bring the Friends Around' spots in Sonoma.***

Also, on page 1 you say that you "knew there were two wonderful bookstores in Sonoma itself," but you only mention the one that to me is the most wonderful, Chanticleer. I don't know just when you made your visit here, but as it happens I always take a walk around the Plaza and parts of the surrounding streets following my infrequent haircuts at the little barber shop just down Broadway from the Plaza. I remember seeing that copy of DANGEROUS VISIONS in the window on one of those walks. If the store had been open at that time of day (I go in early morning in order to be the barber shop's first customer whenever possible) I might have bought it instead of you, thus eliminating a major thread of this fanzine.

***I think this trip was 2004. I went to Sonoma a lot in 2004. I know that barber shop too.***

People who live in the Sonoma Valley definitely don't expect Mary's Pizza Shack to be anything near "high dining" -- it started in the late '50s in a shack on the Sonoma Highway outside town and now is a small chain with stores all over the county (and elsewhere) -- but as you say it "is a clean and dependable place" to eat.

***I wish, pray and make offerings every day that they'll open a Mary's in San Jose, or at least on the Peninsula so that I can go and have my Giant Meatballs. They are so tasty. I've heard it described as the Wine Country version of McDonalds because they are everywhere up there. Three in Sonoma Proper alone!***

I seldom eat out in Sonoma Valley, but my favorite restaurant is the Ranch House, a Mexican restaurant out W. Napa Street not far from where the highway turns and goes to the north. It got its name from the signs on its original location, no longer in existence, down Broadway near Watmough, in a building that had previously been a barbeque joint. The owners were operating on a shoestring and couldn't afford to change the sign. Their specialty is their prawn and mushroom enchiladas and burritos ("enchiladas de camaron" and "burrito de camaron"), which I almost always have when I eat there. I highly recommend it to you.

***My Darling Girlfriend Gen loves The Ranch House. I don't know when we started going there, but it was so good that we skipped a night at Maya to eat there again. There are a couple of other very dependable Mexican places around Sonoma, with a great taqueria right next to the Sonoma Cinemas.***

You might also want to try Taste of the Himalayas, tucked back in one of the little courtyards of shops on East 1st Street. It's a melange of Tibetan, Indian and other cuisines from that part of the world. I haven't eaten at that one, but they have other restaurants in San Francisco and in Berkeley and both of them are excellent (with a slight tilt to the one in S.F., out on Lombard Street near Scott).

***Now that is something I must try. I think I walked by it while I was doing volunteer stuff for Cinema Epicuria (which pretty much everyone in the festival world thinks they should rename Cinema Valley). I like Tibetan Food, though a lot of Indian cooking doesn't quite get along with me.***

Best wishes,

Robert Lichtman