



**ISSUE 155**

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**Cover by Alan White**  
**To Taff, Perchance to Dream**  
**Logos from Steve Green**

Preparations are coming together and things are more definite. I'm excited in a lot of ways, though terrified in others. Flying is the big problem. I've got to take a direct flight because having to take-off and land more than once each would probably give me a heart attack-ack-ack-ack-ack-ack. That raises prices slightly (only about 7%) so there's my starting point. I'm landing on the morning of March 15<sup>th</sup> in Heathrow.

I'm going to be worrying about money a lot on the trip. I'll have about a grand of my own to play with while I'm out there. It's funny that I get a paycheck right in the middle of my trip. I love that! I've decided that at most I'm spending 3k of the Fund money. The flight will take up right around 1,100 dollars, leaving me 1.9k for the rest of the trip. Britrail pass? 400 from the fund (for the cost of a basic pass) and 260 out of my own pocket so I can do the First Class thingee since I don't

think the fund should be paying for my luxury, though the train pass is something that's useful. That brings me to 1.5k for the rest of my trip. \*Note\* I'm using k to equal 1000 and not 1024, so don't mention that, Mr. Smart Guy!

So, there's 1500 to work with on various things. At most. You see, I'm always trying to spend as little as possible. The less I spend the less I have to raise. I'm determined to leave the fund better off than when I was elected. That's the absolute minimum that I'm willing to do. The less I can spend on the trip to the UK the better. The more I can raise at Eastercon the better as well. So I'll be scrimping and saving on the trip. There's no way I'm going to let myself spend like a Saudi prince in Beverly Hills.

Which brings up another matter. Let's say I manage to make it out of England alive and have spent only 1500 or so TAFF dollars. As administrator I've gotta do a TAFF newsletter, which I'm going to call President TAFF's Bathtub (a name

conjured by the magical Andy Trembley) and that I'll produce somewhere

around 4 times a year. Now, I'm not a huge fan of sending out printed newsletters, it's a waste of paper and money, so I'm going to send out the first one a few weeks after my trip (after I've completed my report) with the full details of the TAFF expenses for the trip and a question: would you be willing to accept an electronic version of this publication rather than a paper version. Hopefully, every single person on the list will say 'Yeah, I'd much rather have an electronic version than a paper one, thanks!' but I pretty seriously doubt that'll happen. Electronic versions save money for the fund and allow for more folks to get a look at what TAFF does and how we work.

And on the subject, there's the matter of the Report. In a few weeks I'll be starting the pledge phase of TAREwriMo, the TAFF Report Writing Month challenge. I'll be sending out questions to every group I can find asking them to support TAFF by pledging a multiple of 30 and if I finish the TAFF report in less than 30 days, the Fund gets the full pledge. For every day over 30 I take, it's 1/30<sup>th</sup> off the total. Of course, some groups will just want to give a flat bounty (like SCIFI does) and that's fine too. The bounties on the Report are probably going to be the biggest source of fund replenishment I do. If you'd like to be a part of the fund, write [Garcia@compute](mailto:Garcia@compute)



[rhistory.org](http://rhistory.org) and make a pledge!

I did get some push-back from folks who think I should print and sell TAFF reports. I'm not a print fan, I'm not very good at doing print publications, and the costs, especially for what I have in mind for my report, are just too high. This may be a problem because I've been told that one of the groups requires a printed copy, and doing one printed copy isn't that hard, but trying to do 50 of them would be a major expense. I want to do colour, with photos, and it could end up being somewhere around 100 or so pages. Doing a printed version wouldn't be a good idea, but I now have to convince folks that an eReport is acceptable. I know there are folks who will not be happy with such a thing, John Hertz and Milt Stevens come to mind, and there will be others who will be happy with that path. The one reason I'm not going to change my mind on it is that I want every single person in fandom to be able to read the report if they want to. TAFF needs more exposure, and while a lot of folks might not seek out and buy a printed TAFF Report, there are a fair deal of folks who would read one for free on-line. Maybe it's exposure to casuals vs. expectation of hard cores and I'm leaning on the exposure side, but that's probably too easy an explanation.

There's a lot of decision making to be done and a lot of ways to do

them. I'll be looking for advice from previous administrators and from folks who care about TAFF over the coming weeks and months. I'll also be looking for art because hey, I've got a newsletter to do, these TAFF musings to fill The Drink Tank with and fliers to make up for auctions! This is an art-intensive process! If you've got stuff, send it my way!!!



**Letter Graded Mail  
Sent to [garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)  
by my loyal Readers  
Art from Lane and Rotsler  
And Now, Mr. Lloyd Penney**

Dear Chris:

The faster I go, the behinder I get. A familiar refrain from me these days. I have five issues of The Drink Tank, and while you pause, I will get caught up...right NOW!

**Someday, behinder will be in the dictionary! Five issues is a lot to LoC at once, but here we go.**

150...Ah, the corset issue. Dita von Teese was in Toronto a short time ago

to promote a fundraiser against AIDS with Elvis Costello, Criss Angel and Sir Richard Branson. She didn't look as good in the paper as here...

***She's a sweetheart too, though she never looks as good as she does in her photos.***

There are a number of (occasional) corset-wearing young ladies in local fandom, and while they enjoy wearing them from time to time, they do say they are the most uncomfortable when they aren't properly laced up. Too tight here, not tight enough there... Some conventions could use a primer on how to get into them, and how to do them up. They look good at Renfaires, too, but there, there is the expectation of something a little looser and lower cut. If I recall, the ladies who could trim themselves down to a 14-inch waist did so through artificial means, namely, I believe they had one or two pairs of their lowest ribs surgically removed. ***Some did that, but others simply had the right genes.***

I can see anyone wanting to look good in clothing in their own peer group. Years before getting heavily into fanzines, I was a costumer, and there was a community of people who cared. That community frayed at the edges, and when the politics got thick and heavy and smelly, that's when we got out. I remember masquerades where the dressing rooms were full of partially and mostly unclad costum-

ers, getting into their year-long or more creations. Some of the costumes looked they were applied with a brush, but we remembered Rotsler's Rules of Costuming to get us through and make us look good.

***I was reading old Costumers Quarterly and there were some great old costumes in there. Looking at the old WorldCon Masq photos, I wondered how some of those were legal!***

I am certain that the lovely Linda found other ways to get her revenge with you, Chris...

***I am certain she's going to get me back someday...but when?***

151...well, if you won't do them in order, I will! I've always had a good time with Spider and Jeanne, and have been to a few Beatles singalongs at conventions with them.

***I like his singing. I've heard him sing at a couple of cons.***

Hey, a short issue, so this might be a short response. The Smart cars are everywhere around here, but seeing we're supposed to be on the edge of a massive winter storm (even though the calendar says it's not yet winter), we'll see how these little cars do in a foot or so of snow.

***I love the SmartCar and saw one on the road yesterday. There is a Not-So Distant Future vibe to them that makes me think they'd not do well in those environments.***

We pervert religion and the



words of our holy books to suit ourselves. This explains our hatreds, our jihads, and our attitudes towards people we don't like. Christianity and Islam are books of love, yet some promote death, and others "hate fags". Nothing will show them the perversion of their beliefs, and we must tolerate them, but not give them the open forums that allow them to promote their beliefs as we say the same time those beliefs should be pushed aside.  
***It's the classic 'I have to let you say***

***what you think but I don't have to let you take the big stage' problem. Still, they'd probably learn a thing or two with a good beatin'***

152...Once again, congrats on a solid TAFF win! You know, I never did see that Eveready bunny cartoon until now...

***I like that one too. Espana does good stuff!***

Of course you thought you'd win. You had campaigned longer than anyone, and a number of potential voters know most of the other candidates, but not all. Interesting how few knew that Christian McGuire was the chairman of LAcon IV. It will be interesting to see how you do...I think one thing that keeps some people from going for a fan fund is not having a clear picture of what to do and how to manage the fund. That may not stop some people I know...Murray Moore is going for DUFF, and Yvonne and I are two of his nominators.

***I campaigned and had the distinct advantage of having run the previous year. I hope the race for DUFF happens as I haven't heard of anyone else running. I'm all for DUFF.***

153...I remember seeing Evel Knievel's jump across the Snake River canyon on ABC. I never really saw the reasoning behind this, and after a while, he just began to look like a tired old man who was still reaching for a little more stardom, and never quite making it.

But then, I never made ramp jumps on my bicycle the way so many of my peers did. They broke a few legs and arms doing it, and they were seen as heroes, at least for a little while. Guess I never saw the point. Maybe Robbie Knieval will take over and kill himself the way his father probably wanted to go.

***I'm one of those crazy folks who loves the Daredevils who risk their lives for no good reason. The peak for my kind was the 1920s and 30s, though Evel did make a comeback in our numbers in the 1960s. If only there were more dumb cowboys out there willing to risk it all.***

The photo of Taral and Paul Wilson was taken at Corflu in Toronto a couple of years ago now. I'd say Anticipation's choice of Taral as FanGoH is inspired, and I hope will signal a change in Taral's luck. I am sure that Anticipation's Hugos will have a fleur-de-lis in it somewhere...Torcon's was beautiful, and I'm sure Montréal's will have the same élan.

***I wish I could have been at that Cor-Flu. I can't wait for the Anticipation call for Award designs because I've got an idea...***

154...Oooohh, shiny cover... Greetings to Kristina Kopnisky, and I hope you're enjoying Consonant Enigma, but I'm enjoying reading it and responding to it. When it comes to Hugos, I think I'd go with something a little retro, and

THAT'S YOUR  
LETTERCOL:  
MY GOD, IT'S  
EVEN-EDGED!



just place a rocket on top of a handsome wooden plinth. Sometimes, I think the design of the base actually takes away from the centre of the whole thing, the silver rocket that symbolizes excellence in science fiction.

***I like a little crazier design. I have to admit that Don Simpson's 2002 design was pretty cool too. I think Kristina deserves the Best New Fan FAAn award for this year. And Mo's cover was brill too!***

I'm going to wind it up here, and jump into some other news...you probably saw in other locs that I had started at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind on September 24, and that I was looking forward to a good long career there. I finally got my hands on a full-time job again, I had lots of incentive to do my best there and get through the three-month probation period. Well, I didn't. On December 12, I was called into a meeting room and was given my walking papers. According to my boss and his boss, I wasn't working fast enough (BS), and there was cutbacks coming for the new year, and last one in, first one out. More BS, because the job is already up on several jobhunting websites. I'm not sure what I did or what I didn't do, but I got a crappy present from the CNIB, and I am on the job-hunt again. I am determined not to let this spoil my Christmas or Yvonne's, and the resume is already out there to

several positions I saw.

***I'm really sorry to hear that. You could always come to California and work with me at the museum!***

And that brings me up to date, although 155 is probably already on the boards. Good luck with finding a new pad, and the best of Christmases and New Years to you and the lovely Linda.

***I wish the best to you and Yvonne and all the rest of the Canadians while you celebrate Canadian Christmas!***

Yours, Lloyd Penney.



# **I Am Legend**

## **reviewed by the**

### **Inimitable**

#### **Ed Green**

##### **with art from Bill Rotsler**

For those who haven't read Matheson's *I Am Legend* - you really should. It's a tale of the last normal man on earth; an everyman named Robert Neville who has no special training or skill. He just draws the luckiest (or depending on your point of view, the worst) hand in the Apocalypse.

It was also the first modern story to find scientific reasons for the existence of vampires. It works most of the time, and is scary as hell.

More so for those of us in the Los Angeles area, who will have a passing familiarity with the surroundings of the novel. Although having been written almost 50 years ago when Inglewood was another racially mixed bedroom community, instead of the proto-ghetto it is today, there are still images of a dead and deserted LA that are haunting.

It seems to be a serious injustice that IAL can't get made into a decent, thought provoking and \*scary\* film.

The history of this book making it to the big screen is scary in its own right.

When first released, the book created a stir in the movie making community. It is rumored that Orson Welles was interested in making version of the film! While a version directed by Welles might have been interesting to watch, his acting in it as either Neville or Cortman would have been difficult. By 1958, he had gained a fair amount of weight, and that certainly would have impacted the visuals of the film. But his ability as a director certainly would have created a dark and isolated film.

Eight years after the novel's publication, we have the first film adaptation, brought to us by American International Pictures. With a screenplay written by Matheson himself, it was originally slated to be produced by Hammer Films, but they dropped out fearing that the British censors would hobble anything they could produce, and it would lose money. Vampires might be many things, including being too scary for the English.

With a name change to *The Last Man on Earth*, it ended up being produced and directed in Italy by a joint American/Italian production team. Matheson's screenplay was still used, although he requested this name be pulled from the credits because he was unhappy with the way the production was going.

Even that didn't last, since his agent advised him that in order to re-



tain some rights, he had to have some stamp on it. If you watch the film, you'll notice a Logan Swanson as credited with writing. That's Matheson's nom de plume.

The film itself? Vincent Price, a very good actor was cast to star, along with several Italian actors. It was felt that Price's name heading the cast list would be enough star power to make money. Commercially, the film did okay.

Price himself was actually a reasonable choice for Robert Neville, although for some reason, the character's name was changed to Robert Morgan. His looks were fine, the age was right, his range as an actor fit, and nothing being asked by the script was beyond him. Even at the end of the film, when Morgan is being chased by the survivors of the vampire plague, none of the physical action is out of character.

But the film suffers from stiffness and oddly for a film about a man trapped every night in his home, a sense of claustrophobia that hurts the film. Morgan seems to be muddling through life, unsure of his future, grasping for some stability in the past. But there's no sense of a reason to survive. In the book, Neville was too stubborn. In this film, that element is missing. No connection is made with the audience.

There are moments when you do care about him (when he is watching an 8mm film of his daughter's last birthday party), but later on when he is (through flashbacks) dealing with her infection and final death, the scenes are unmoving. The right actor with the wrong director and script.

At the end of it, you really don't feel sympathy for Price/Morgan. There is no sense of \*why\* Morgan just doesn't leave the city and leave the terror behind. You almost feel sorry

for Price, but you can't make that final leap. The ending is closer than any other version to the book. Yet, it all fails to stir the viewer.

Charlton Heston's 1971 version (The Omega Man) was even further from the original novel, with the character of Robert Neville now becoming a full Colonel and Medical Doctor in the US Army. A scientist and an infantryman, armed to the teeth with modern weapons (and we're talking about Heston's teeth at that!) he is on a mission to survive. This is so much a 70s film that elements of it don't seem as terrible or likely when viewed 30+ years after it was made.

The plague that leaves him as the last normal human is the result of a biological missile attack against the US. Who actually attacks the US is glossed over, but it is clearly set up as spill over from a massive war between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (which was a distinct possibility back then. Both countries had several border clashes with each other during that time - with at least two of them involving thousands of troops on both sides).

The writers had background in biochemistry and English Literature. The husband and wife team felt the vampire threat had no credibility with the current culture and shifted to human plague survivors.

Neville drives through the streets

of LA, hunting down the members of the cult that calls itself "The Family" (a not so subtle nod to the terror that Charlie Manson and his "Family" visited on the streets of LA only a few years previously). Led by former local television newscaster Matthias (Anthony Zerbe) and all wearing robes, sunglasses and albino make-up. They cannot go into the light. They have a horrific and physical aversion to bright lights. It blinds them. Also, the plague has created a mental psychosis among them.

'The Family' and Neville play an often lethal game of hide and seek with each other. At night, The Family storms Neville's fortress with primitive weapons. They have strength in numbers and religious fever. During the day, Neville hunts them down, using not only modern weapons, but also a clear analytical mind.

The film also includes a six gun toting, leather jacket wearing, ex-med student biker, a 'Right On, Sister!' Black Woman (played by Rosalind Cash - a great actress), a clutch of orphans.

And Charlton Heston.

In the trilogy of SF films he made, Heston has said it was the least effective production of the three and the one he was most disappointed with. There are moments when his



performance is enjoyable. Heston, believing he is the last real human in Los Angeles, is bunkered in a multi-storied mansion. Surrounding by fine art, with food and drink to last for years, he spends lonely nights playing chess with a life size bust of Julius XXXXXXXXXXXXX.

But those moments are few. A scene where he watches Woodstock in a theater (in which he has to fuel the generator to run the projector) all alone, with a submachine in his arms, and quoting the dialogue as it happens, should be stunning. The set up is great, the actor can perform at that

level - but its the wrong movie for a man like Heston's Neville to be watching.

It is a wildly uneven film, with performances marred with poor continuity and set control (any movie in which the last man in Los Angeles is driving around the deserted streets of LA shouldn't have people clearly visible in the background walking in the first two minutes); the substance of the original work is lost. And, in yet another bit of oddness for this film, the score is written by Ron Grainer, better known as the man who wrote the opening theme for the BBC series Dr. Who! The score by way is, is one of the best parts of the film.

Neville is too damn mean and stubborn to leave the city. You don't feel sorry for him or his situation. You don't need to feel sorry for him. The end of the world isn't a disaster. It's a problem to be managed and solved. This Neville's biggest problem is that he knows what he needs to do. But, when he leaves the path, he dooms himself.

Of course, there's a reason to leave the path. Lisa's brother is infected with the plague. It's a matter of time before he will 'turn' and become just like Matthias and his group. But don't worry, this Neville's blood is the cure ("Good old 100% Anglo-Saxon, baby!" as Heston mutters while draining a vial of it). Having cured the kid,



he decides to leave town with his new charges. His plan for the Family is to declare victory, and let them die of the plague. That changes when the now cured boy decides to act as an unwanted mediator.

It doesn't end well. Things like that rarely do.

In the film that we see, little reference is made to the race difference between Neville and Cash's character, Lisa. However, in early drafts of the film, much is made of it. And questions are raised about whether society, whether mankind itself should be saved.

I suspect those scenes were filmed, but ended up on the cutting room floor. It seems that Hollywood itself can't quite make a movie involving the end of the world without a lot of things blowing up.

Warner Brothers, the studio that produced the film, had some odd input. At the end of the film, as Heston's body lies in a water fountain, in a crucify position, bright and perky music is playing. The studio insisted on that, so the audience would think of the ending as 'bright and upbeat'.

Further away from the original novel, it is actually a better film than "The Last Man on Earth".

Next we have I Am Omega.

Released in November of 2007, the film is directed by directed by Griff Furst. I Am Omega was produced by



The Global Asylum, a production company that has been known from time to time to release a film that now and then that has a plot, and has some actors that do not have large breasts.

The last normal human is named Renchard and is played by Mark Dacascos. Dacascos has an interesting history as an actor. Perhaps his biggest credit is as 'The Chairman' in the "Iron Chef America: The Series" I have listed it here as an expanded footnote. Going into further detail is pointless. It's a poor rip-off designed to piggyback the release in December of 2007 of "I Am Legend".

I've seen it. Its bad. And not bad in a 'wow, that was fun, cause it was bad' way. Bad in a "I saw it for free and I'd like some money back anyway!" bad.

We have however, now gone from Vampires to Bio-Warfare victims to zombies with this film. Apparently, vampires still are no longer hip.

The zombies get all the best lines (okay, best grunts) and pretty much remind you that George Romero could do

five better zombie movies on the \$200 budget this film had.

The road that the 2007 version of the book "I Am Legend" took was one filled with ruts, pot holes and deep divides. In an age where major studios greenlight projects designed to bring in big box office receipts, at the cost of acting in favor of more explosions, that this movie even got made is a small miracle. Over the years, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, Daniel Day-Lewis, Guillermo del Toro, Michael Bay and Ridley Scott were all been attached to this project at some time or other. Many fans thought that Kurt Russel should have been cast as Neville. Each had baggage or ideas that could have made for a fantastic film or a disaster.

In the book "The Greatest Sci-Fi Movies Never Made" by David Hughes, written in 1999/2000, he devotes a full chapter to the attempts at that time to make this current version. Among the concepts that Ridley Scott considered was the first hour of the film being shot without a single line of dialogue. If he really were the last man on earth, who the hell would he be talking to? Himself? A voice-over narration? Why?

Commercially it might have doomed the film, but I believe that with the right actor, it would have been so damn powerful to watch. At least until you realize that Arnold Schwarzenegger was attached to the project then too. In

the run up to the film, I read more and more about what was happening, and finally concluded that it was going to be, at best, a fair film. My reasons for this belief were many.

The script that is the spring board for this version, written by Mark Protosevich, has been on the internet for years, and was called the ‘best unproduced script in existence.’(1) I never agreed with that, because the second and third acts were standard action film offerings. Having read the Internet posted script, I found that lots of stuff blew up and the hero sailed off into the sunset. But the first act, set in San Francisco, was moody and chilling.

In Hollywood, the first script submitted is rarely the script filmed. As was the case here. At one point, John Logan was called in to write the script. Also available on the Internet, it offers a different, yet compelling version of this story. One of the interesting things is the use of Neville’s wife as a narrator. Its unusual, and a major twist from any version of the story we’ve seen up to now. I think this script is the stronger one, and small elements are in the film. This Robert Neville is smart, and very clear minded. Perhaps one reason I like the script is that Neville does things to survive that I had thought about doing on my own, if I found myself in that situation.

Then Akiva Goldsman became

involved not just as a producer, but scriptwriter. His involvement isn’t as clear, but you can tell he did some script doctoring.

Finally, you consider that it, in the studio’s eyes, it ended up as being another star vehicle for the bankable Will Smith, you can only believe that it was doomed to try to make money, over the first couple of weeks and not please many of the fans of the original book.

So, what did we end up with?

This is, sadly, not the story of Robert Neville, an every man living in the burbs of Los Angeles, slowly discovering the horrible reality of being the last normal human being. This movie is not the story of someone who is too stubborn to die, and too emotionally crippled to live. But, in the creation of his version of Robert Neville, Will Smith goes into the mind of the book’s hero. And he comes away with an understanding and a grasp of that man that we haven’t seen before on screen.

The movie is an amazing remake of the 1971 “The Omega Man”.

Okay, get past the thought, ‘why



did they have to remake that movie?” They didn’t have to. In this life, many things happen just because they do. Don’t waste time asking that question. They remade it.

And, they made a good film.

It is sadly not a perfect film. But it comes close to being a great film. When they get things right, it’s a film that keeps you on the edge. You are scared, terrified. When they fail to get it right, its clunky, noisy and distracting.

What works in this version?

Will Smith. As long as he’s by himself, or telling us the back-story through his flashbacks, his performance is solid. This is Will Smith as Lieutenant. Colonel. Robert Neville, MD, a big wheel in the US Army Bio-warfare Command and cover boy for Time Magazine. (2)

Ground Zero of this pandemic is in New York City, and Neville has the mission to fight the virus and find the cure. He sends his wife and daughter away, while remaining at his duty station. He reassures his wife that the right things are being done, and that he'll find the cure and fix the problems. He's that good and he knows it.

Except, he's not.

From the moment he makes that promise to his wife, the right things don't happen, or they don't work. In the distance, you can hear the hooves of the Four Horsemen. Right up until they trample humanity.

Now, a few years later, Neville is not just scared. Not just on the edge of sanity. He's over it. He has gone mad. He does a great job of convincing himself he's still sane. And, at the beginning, he convinces you too. But it isn't until you realize that he's crazy do you nod your head in the dark of the theater and say, "I get it. Of course, only a madman would do those things!" But later on, we see some of the reason for the madness, the loneliness, the fear that come over him.

When we first see "The Infected", the humans who did not die of the pandemic, it is through Smith's eyes. Smith follows his dog into a dark building. It's possibly one of the scariest scenes I've seen in any film. Not a single frame is what you expect. It's drawn out, it's painful, you sit on the

edge of the seat, not daring to breathe, not wanting to bring the evil on Smith.

Or yourself.

His reaction, and yours, is total, breathe stealing, silent terror. You know, just know, if you were in his place, you'd scream and die painfully, firing your M4 carbine until it was empty. He doesn't, which makes it more terrifying. It is the most effective use of the CGI monsters in the film.

A little later on in the film, when Neville is working on finding a cure for the virus, he makes a mistake. It's one of those mistakes that, in another film, would have people rolling their eyes that someone could be that stupid. But here, he makes that observation, that mistake, and you realize that what he has really done is committed the sin of Hubris, in the classical Greek sense of the word. Then, through the flashbacks, you realize that this isn't the



first time he's dealt with Hubris. The world may have paid the price for his earlier brush with it.

What else works?

In the original book, Neville finds a dog, and, near the end of his sanity from being alone, coaxes it into his home. After all that, he makes a heartbreaking discovery about the dog. In the Protosevich script, there's a dog that's Neville's companion. There's a great deal of business involving it. During that script the dog is attacked, and infected, by other mutated dogs. Unlike the book, the dog doesn't die, and makes a heroic third act appearance. Not in this script. Sam, a German Shepherd who is Neville's last link to his family, gets infected. Smith can't cure her. And she has to die. Sam's final fate is horrifying. Not just to Neville, but to those of you who watch it. Smith's anger when discussing God's part in the disaster is powerful, and you truly believe the fear you see in the other actor's eyes. If I had to listen to someone that crazed, I might shoot them.

Neville's final confrontation with the Infected works. Not the build-up to it. The explosions and the gunfire are the standard formula. But, in the basement of his home, in his lab, there is no last minute redemption for Neville. Hubris is indeed what has come for him, and it is Hubris that he fails to see even at the end.



Do you feel sorry for him and his final fate?

Yes, of course you do. He wasn't in his right mind. How could he see what was going on?

I think, finally, what really works is that you believe Smith as Neville. You believe it for so much of the film, that when you lose that connection with him, when he has to deal with other normal people and take you away from his world, the air goes out of it.

What doesn't work?

The CGI is as clunky as I've

seen. Apparently this was a decision by the director, who wasn't pleased with how the human actors were working out. That decision was late in the process, and it looks it.

The motivation of the 'leader' of the infected is clear. What isn't clear is his intelligence level. He can't be an inhuman killing machine and still manage a couple of tricks that he does. But the film never really shows anything more than an animal cunning. It doesn't quite work

I get where the director was going with it, but I'm not sure other people will. Most of the people reading this review will get it, I'm sure. But it's a little muddy for the traditional, non-fannish viewer.

Part of what doesn't work are the details. The movie might just be 'too hip for the room'. There are things going on in the background that are never explained. If you get them, they bring a raised eyebrow. "They were doing that? Oh my God, it was really, really bad!" Very impressive stuff, but it gets lost.

In the movie "28 Days Later", the point where the movie loses its edge and its charm (if a movie about killer zombies can have charm) is when the cast is expanded. There's an X point where there are too many people to support a good story. And it's the same here. Once Smith is no longer alone, the film suffers. This isn't the fault

of any of the actors, or, I suspect, the director. It's just the script. It builds to a certain level of tension and it isn't sustained when other normal people appear. And even in those parts, there are some amazing moments delivered by Smith.

Smith's reaction to Sam's death after the scene in the lab is lacking. The emotion, the anger is spot on. Smith wants to, needs to lash out. He does, with intent to die in the process. But, the choices made by the director turn the scene into an action film set piece.

Finally, the length of the film doesn't work. Either part of Smith's time alone in the streets of Manhattan should have been trimmed (which I think would be a mistake), or there should have been another 15 minutes given over to Smith's interaction with the normal people who show up. The final location we see in the film smacks of the cheery music in "The Omega Man". Or perhaps worse. There, the music pulled you out of the mood. Here, the final scene glosses over what it meant to be the last man on earth.

Finally, at least one reviewer has said that Smith's performance is Oscar worthy. I'm not sure. I think this is more a case of Smith doing such an amazing job carrying the film, that you lose any real idea that he's performing. He just is Neville. Is that Oscar worthy? I don't know..

Through a few lucky breaks, I got in for an early and free screening. Walking in, I was thinking that I paid the right price. I didn't. It is worth a first run ticket price. When the DVD comes out, I'm getting it. It will be interesting for the usual bonus features you get these days.

The initial reviews have come out, and whether the critic hates it or loves it, the almost universal comment is that two thirds of the film works. That hasn't stopped the movie going public. As I am writing this, the initial box office for the weekend is just a shade under \$80 Million dollars. That is a new record, not just for Smith, but for films in general. So, at some level, this film is about a legend.

While I'm still waiting to see a true version of the novel "I Am Legend" on the screen, this film will work rather nicely for now.

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(1) Any script referenced here is available on the Internet. And they have been for years, so I don't believe any of the writer's are being ripped off or upset about them being online. A search engine of your choice should find them.

(2) A brief note/rant here. I wish someday, someone would be smart enough to ask the short ton of technical advisors how the military rank system actually works. Someone as 'good' as Will Smith is supposed to be,

isn't going to be a light colonel. In the military, people listen to Lt. Cols, but they don't always pay attention. If he were a hands on guy, he'd likely be a full colonel. Seeing birds on someone's shoulders inspires most service people to take serious mental notes. If his talents were more toward running a lab, he'd be a one star general. Generals get full, undivided and immediate attention, they move in the lofty arena of politics at that point in a military career. When a general officer shows up, things are serious. It's a minor nit, and just mine, but it does grate.

And since I've sidetracked, let us discuss the safety implications of hiding hand guns and hand grenades in a work station desk drawer, just rolling around loose.

First, you're the last human in New York. The old carrying concealed weapons laws are pretty much null and void. Feel free to strap one to your hip at all times. It means it is where you need it, when you need it. And it will get cleaned fairly often.

If the laws still bother you, hold an election and change the law! If you can't convince yourself that it's a good idea, well.

Now, about the grenade? Grenades are nasty little things that Hollywood has managed to convince 98% of the US population are much more effective than they really are. Honestly,

they don't toss 20 bodies hundreds of yards across the countryside. However, being close to one will kill you in a very sure way. And being in the same room with one when it goes off is ugly. But a personal kind of ugly, not a carpet bombing kind of ugly.



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**And now another LoC, this time from Eric Mayer! with Art from Bill Rotsler and Chris,**

Wow, reading Drink Tanks 153 and 154 really made feel old. Well, actually reading Frank Wu's intro to his interview with Taral was what did it.

One of the best fanartists around didn't know the word twiltone! Time has really moved on.

***It usually does, doesn't it?***

The interview was fascinating. What a good idea to discuss particular works of art. Frank's not only one of the most interesting of fan artists but one of the most interesting writers as well. Having been away from fandom for a long time I missed a lot of Taral's work -- or actually maybe not since much of what's shown was done out-

side fandom. Fanartists today have far more scope in that they can produce just about anything, in any medium, and never mind worrying about doing only art that can be reproduced in black and white fanzines, and preferably by mimeograph on...um...twiltone... **Yeah, look at what Brad Foster's done the last couple of years in colour.**

I winced at Taral's encounter with George Barr. Some professionals do get a little too full of themselves. Years ago I encountered a fan who had just had a fantasy novel published. She was talking about writing with a bunch of people and when I mentioned something or other I was grappling with, she looked at me like I was a bug. "Maybe you can't write," she said, and immediately turned her attention to someone else. Well, gee, thanks. I can't say it was very helpful but I certainly never forgot it. Of course, what's funny, is that you can never tell what people will eventually do and also tastes vary. I've never cared much for George Barr's stuff although I'm sure technically he's very competent. I'd prefer a lot of Taral's work.

***I can't think of anything that George Barr has done, but I can say that M has a story similar to that writer encounter, but it was with a well-known fan (and one that I'm fond of!)***



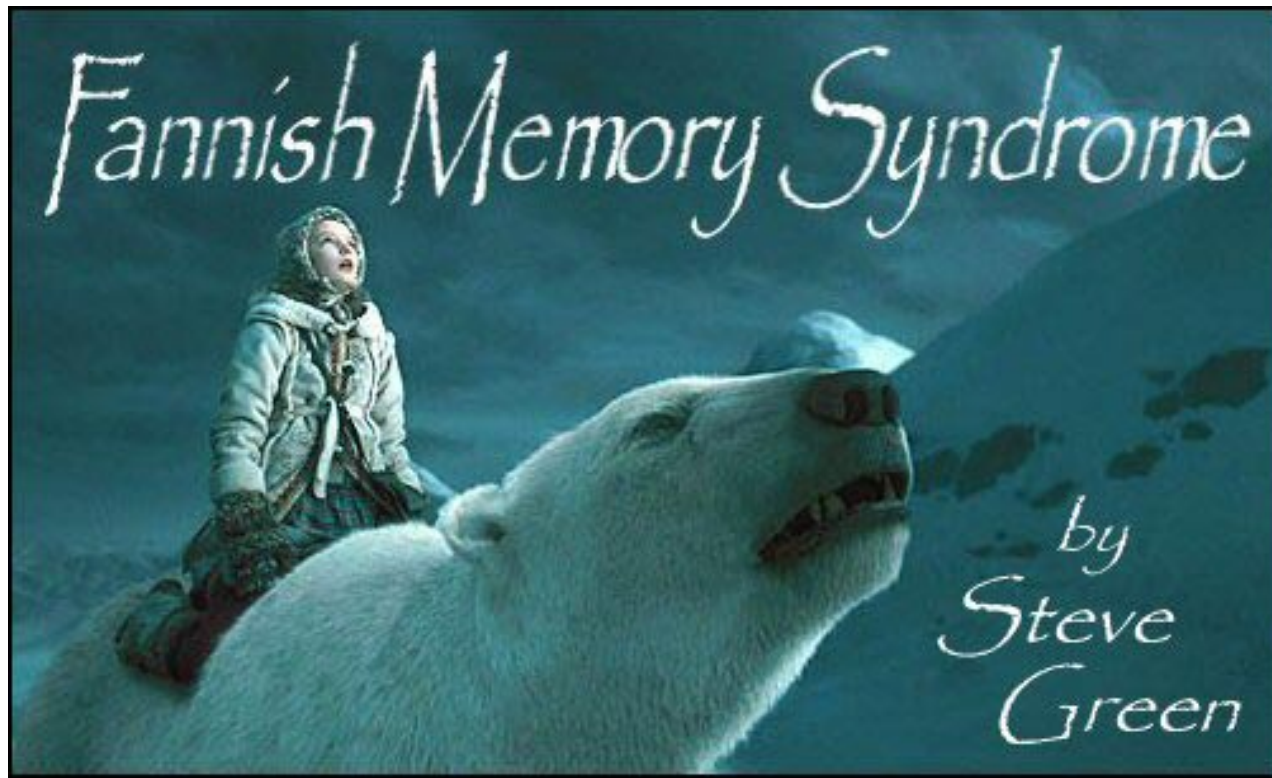
good but the artists don't end up with much pay. The profit was split equally between the writer, penciller, inker and publisher and I think we all got around \$75. As the writer I'm sure I had the best pay rate because it must have taken a lot longer to draw and ink the book than to do the script. For a while the publisher managed to live off his comics by cranking out a bunch of titles a month. All the tiny checks were enough since he was living in what was essentially a plywood box in the woods. ***I think you should write up your time doing the comic for the Third Annual Giant Sized Annual issue of The Drink Tank. It would fit right in!***

Also interesting to read about Taral's foray into comics. His explanation of how the retailers and distributors and the printers siphoned off most of the money reminded me of when I scripted a B&W comic from an indie publisher back in the late eighties. It was great fun and sold a few thousand (at \$1.50 a copy) which was pretty

I'm glad to hear that Taral is going to be the fan goh at the Worldcon. It's a well deserved and overdue honor. I can't say much about what's gone on in the past few decades but during the time I was involved in fandom Taral's work was certainly well liked but even so I got the feeling he didn't get quite the credit he deserved. He wasn't quite in with the in crowd, with "hip fandom" as he referred to it in the interview. Good for him anyway. And congrats to you also on that TAFF win. I don't know what I'm going to do if I start finding myself on the same wavelength as TAFF winners and Worldcon gohs though.

Best,  
E

***Hmmmm...I wonder if I'm in Hip Fandom. I think on one hand I might be, especially with the folks I hang around with in BArea fandom, but I'm not sure if Big Time Hip Fandom would claim me. And I'm shocked that you're on the same wavelength as a TAFF winner and a WorldCon GoH. I mean, I'm weird in a way that the proudly weird don't want to be weird, and Taral's a damn talented man. I'm not shocked that a talented writer like yourself would find himself thinking like a talented artist. It's only those of us who trade on our non-talent that are harder to think like!***



**To Portsea Island**, just off England's south coast, for the traditional yuletide gathering of the South Hants Science Fiction Group. Although I've spent most of my life 150 miles to the north and consider the Brum Group my fannish alma mater, I've maintained strong links with this disparate tribe since I first crossed its path one December more than a quarter-century ago.

This year's festivities are being hosted by Jeff Suter, former editor of *Periphery*, whose London flat I coincidentally crashed in the night before that very first encounter, sharing his lounge with Steve Lawson

(launching a friendship most recently evidenced by his presence on the Novacon 37 committee) and a colleague of Jeff's then-girlfriend (who sought to preserve her modesty by undressing with the lights turned off, unfortunately forgetting about the electric fire she was silhouetted against).

For such a small and informal organisation, the SHSFG has proven surprisingly productive. As well as a clutch of personalzines and newsletters – *Death Rays*, *Cyberspace*, *The Terminus Borealis Times* – it also organised four conventions between 1988 and 1999 at King Alfred's College in nearby Winchester, whilst the 1997 Eastercon

can effectively be regarded as Wincon IV.

Whether the group will ever attain such heights again is debatable: the inevitable greying of the core membership, coupled with general geographical drift, means it's unlikely to become the fannish pressure cooker it once was, though I've a sneaking suspicion we shouldn't close the book on Wincon *just yet*.

**Thence to Port Solent**, for the newly-released adaptation of Philip Pullman's fantasy novel *Northern Lights*, *The Golden Compass*. Ann and I joined by Peter and Anne-Marie Wright, their daughter (and our elder god-daughter) Rachael, plus Novacon's one-man video programme, Dave Lally, who's killing a few hours before catching a train back to London.

I suspect I now know how those film-goers feel who come fresh to the latest instalment in the Harry Potter franchise: much of *Compass* is thrown onto the screen at breakneck speed, characters are barely given space to establish themselves (Dakota Blue Richards and Nicole Kidman deserve a special mention for their efforts to give add depth to their own roles) and the entire enterprise eventually tips over into a tsunami of digital effects before the curtains close over an invisible "To be continued". I plan to listen to Pullman's own audio adaptation of the novel over the next couple of weeks, so

maybe it'll make more sense then.

Surprise highlight of the evening: an extended trailer for this year's *Doctor Who* special, "Voyage of the Damned". Difficult as it was to judge from the barrage of clips, it may well be the best of the three so far – and the shots of the starliner Titanic looked astounding on the big screen.

**Finally**, my slavedriver of an editor is letting me off the leash for the holiday period, so I'll just take this opportunity to wish everyone here all the best for 2008. Although this latest incarnation of "Fannish Memory Syndrome" has tended towards a diary format, I'm always interested in hearing your suggestions for topics to discuss; I can be reached at *ghostwords [at] yahoo [dot] co [dot] uk*.



**Well, there's stuff coming up for The Drink Tank. The first part will be the next issue called Chris' Little Thing. You'll understand when it happens, trust me. It is my way of making up for a serious wrong I did to Miss Leigh Ann.**

**After that, the big deal becomes the January 31st issue of The Drink Tank called The Third Annual Giant Sized Annual which will have the theme of It's a Fanboy Planet after all.**

**I wanna thank Steve Green, Ed Green (who I believe is unrelated to Steve Green, though I could be wrong) and of course Eric and My Man Lloyd. We must remember TAFF and as soon as the numbers from the Administrators I'll run them with a deep analysis that will make you go 'Oh Yeah!'**

**Next week there will probably not be an issue of The Drink Tank, but the week after, there's more for sure!**