



**THE DRINK TANK
ISSUE 173**

**THE HAPPY FUN
SMILE EXCITEMENT
EPISODE ISSUE**

THE COVER, FEATURING THE IMAGE THAT MAY BECOME MY NEW LOGO, WAS FROM MIKO, WHO I UNDERSTAND WILL BE LEAVING US FOR LA IN A BIT. I'LL MISS HER!

OK, So what's this issue? Well, it's going to be the same as usual...only with different stuff, including a very different piece from Taral Wayne and a piece from the excellent Mr. John Purcell! I've got a few small things too. I was going to do a long piece about my museum, but I'm tabling that for its own issue in the next few weeks.

And of course, there's St. George Spirits on Saturday and then Westercon!

This is also likely to be the last issue before Westercon, where I'm running the Newsletter and the Fanzine Lounge, and there'll only be two or three more before WorldCon. That's all until the Games issue, which is one I've wanted to do for a long time.

Of late, it's been a little tough. Summer is action-packed and that's meant not seeing Linda nearly as much as I'd like. We saw each other for a few hours each of the last three weeks, which is very tough. While I know we'll see each other much more starting this weekend with St. George Spirits and a BBQ on Saturday, and then a quiet Sunday, and then it's Westercon the next weekend, but if I've learned anything it's that we hardly see each other

at cons anyhow. But we'll be together and make the most of our time. These things are hard.

Another thing that is hard is Evelyn's habit of making my life strange. Yes, I still love watching the little beast, but she pulled an evil on me the other day and I've still not decided to forgive her mentally.

We went to a Garage Sale and I needed to get some stuff for the Museum from Mo (who did the art below). While we were gone, I gave her three dollars. When I got back to the car, She had a painting in her blue pen-stained hands.

"Did you buy a painting?" I asked.

"Yup" she said and showed it to me.

It was a Momma and Baby

Pegasus nuzzling in a clouded glen with a rainbow in the back. Evelyn insisted I hang it up at my house so she could see it every time she came over.

I told Linda about it.

"Chris, is this your way of telling me you're gay?"

I fumed for a moment and then noticed that there was a commercial on TV for a movie that I really want to see.

"I'm not gay, and though it won't help my cause, I really wanna see Mama Mia."

It's still up, right over my bed, making my room into a den of cutesy artsy stuff. Why WHY could it not have been a velvet painting? That would have been one thing, but a Pegasus family in a clouded glen with a rainbow...

WWWWHHHHYYYYY?????!!!!



A Parable of Faith

By the skeptic's prophet, Taral

A poor man was promised, by a Voice he heard in his head, that he and his family would have a rich Farm if he did as the Voice asked of him. He followed the Voice into the desert, league after league, far beyond the fecund agricultural lands of his people, until finally he thought he received a Sign that he had arrived at his promised Farm. (A hole in his sandal sole.) There he stopped and thanked the Voice. Then he sowed the seed he had brought with him, all that he could afford after he had sold his former home and furnishings. He watered the ground from a shallow saline pool



that was all he could find, and took turns with his wife standing before the sun to make shade over the seed. He watched. He waited. But didn't once doubt a rich harvest would be his. When harvest time came however, nothing had grown, because of course he had sown his seed in a desert. But he had Faith. So he scraped together all the money he could by selling his last humble belongings, the clothes off his back, and even what few services he could do for his neighbors (who were sensible camel drivers, not farmers).

He bought a small sack of seed and sowed it. Sure enough, nothing grew. Instead of the harvest he expected, there was only the hard scrabble. It was still a desert, after all. But Faith that learns by experience isn't really Faith. So he stole a little money from the camel drivers and bought an even tinier sack of seed.

After his back healed from the whipping they gave him, he sowed the few handfuls of seed he had bought with the tainted money. (It was pure enough, the Voice assured him, for it was for a Holy cause.) The end of summer came for the third time and just as you'd expect, nothing had grown. Not even a bitter weed.



The man had run out of alternatives, but the Voice insisted that if he had Faith all would be well. So he sold his oldest son into slavery. The camel drivers got a good deal and the man bought several sacks of seed that he sowed every Spring for several years. For several years at the end of every growing season there was no sign of any harvest.

He sold his second son. The

money from the puzzled but happy camel drivers bought several more sacks of seed.

Many more years of fruitless sowing of the desert followed, then he sold his last and youngest son. After that he and his wife took up relations once again, produced more sons, and sold each into slavery as soon as they were born. But still the desert refused to bloom.

Faith must never waver though, so the man kept at it all his life. When after many hard, desperate years, he died, his final son, the only one not sold into slavery, did as his father did, and raised sons that *he* sold as slaves to buy the seed to sow the desert. And he too waited for the Promised Farm to finally prosper, as was promised many years before. Though it was not his destiny to ever hear it himself, the son had Faith in the Voice too,

As did his last son, and the last son of that son, and so on for generation after generation.

A thousand years later, the last son of a long, steadfast line received the Promised Farm from the faltering hands of his father, and promised that he too would keep the Faith. But when his father died and he looked out over the parched and cracked desert pavement, he said to himself,

“Am I crazy?. This is a *desert!* Nothing will ever bloom here, no matter what any Voice in the head of some

distant ancestor said. How do I know it ever happened? Maybe my ancestor was a delusional schizophrenic. Haven't we waited long enough to realize it was just a foolish tale?”

“No,” said the Voice in his head, the first time it had spoken since that first Farmer died more than a thousand years before. “Have Faith!”

“Fuck you, liar!” he said and went to the neighbors to ask for a job driving camels. He lived happily ever after, so far as mortals can ever expect.

But **his** son said, “Never mind him Voice, *I* have Faith!” And so he continued his ancestor's folly and sold many sons into slavery *Faithfully* ever after.

Amen.



PUSHING BUTTONS

by Frank Wu

Blacks, Hispanics, Whites, and Asians all have different buttons that set them off. So says a bounty hunter I met at a sci-fi convention. Well, my pal wouldn't actually label himself as a bounty hunter. But he used to track down people who skipped their court dates, physically “bag” them and haul them in for a reward. Sounds like a bounty hunter to me.

He said that the trick is to get the target to lose control and do something stupid so he's vulnerable to bagging. Over the years my pal learned that folks of different races had different triggers.

Once he was trying to bring in a big black guy, who was holed up, on the second floor of a building, holding a girl (possibly his girlfriend) hostage. Threats of extended jail time didn't work. Nor did the possibility that many people might die. But when my pal used the “N” word, the guy lost his mind. He got so angry that he threw down his gun and stormed out of the house unarmed, intent on beating my buddy to a pulp. Stupid. As soon as he was out the front door, an associate threw a sack over his head and in moments he was tasered and “bagged.”

The N word. That's what got him. Racial taunting doesn't work with Hispanics. You need to tell the target that you're going to fool around with

his girlfriend while he's in prison. None of that is effective on White people. The key is getting their friends to turn on them, which is surprisingly easy. My buddy knew the target was hiding in his mom's house. He checked it over once, twice. Nothing. Then he told the target's mom that she could lose the house if she didn't turn him in. It was a lie, but she immediately coughed him up. She told my friend that the target was hiding in his bed. He'd checked the bedroom, and he wasn't there. "No," the mom said, "you don't understand. He's *in* the bed." The target had carved out a cavity between the two mattresses, so he could hide between them unnoticed. Clever, but not clever enough if your mom is scared of losing her house.

In another case, my pal was interviewing the target's best friend. The guy wouldn't give up any information. Then my buddy told him: "You could go to jail for obstruction of justice. [Another lie.] And there you will have lots of dates with Big Charlie." That was the button. Perhaps there was no fear of God there, but there was certainly fear of dates with Big Charlie.

With Asians, the story is completely different. Shame is a big deal to Chinese people. Shame of not meeting expectations, of not having an education or job or girlfriend that's good enough. How do you bring in an Asian guy? You call him up. You

remind him he's missed his court date, and he apologizes and shows up for the next date. In a suit. Woe betide him if you have to speak to his parents.

I found it most interesting that racial epithets only worked with Blacks. I've personally been called all sorts of names over the years, even blamed for Pearl Harbor (which was orchestrated by the Japanese, and I'm Chinese). I've been told to "go back to where I come from," but Connecticut's too boring for me. Being called "Chinaman" or "Chink" or "slope" or "squinty-eyed" isn't enough to make me want to beat someone to a pulp. So

I find the sensitivity some have toward the N word fascinating.

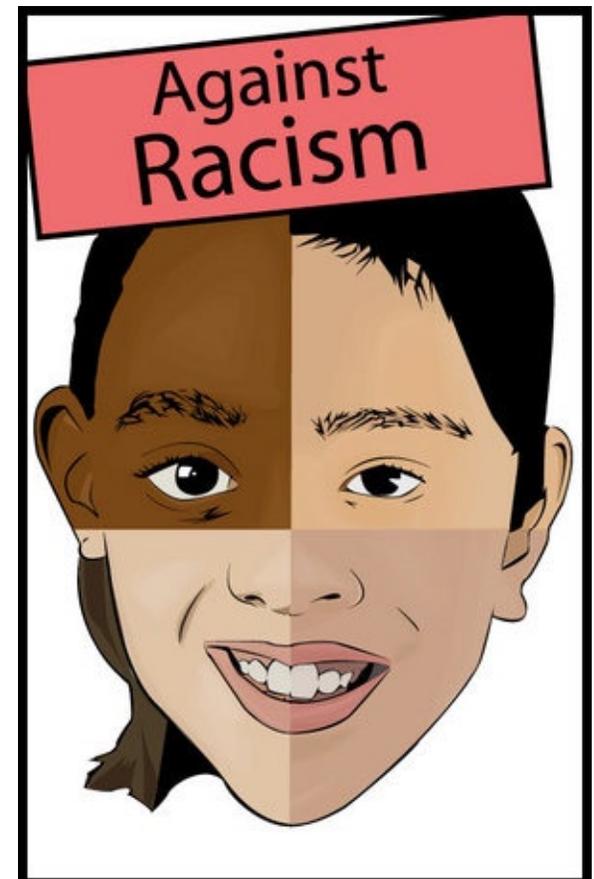
Over my lifetime, I've seen half a dozen changes in the socially-acceptable term for folks of African ancestry. It used to be ok to call them "Negroes". Then that became taboo, but the word "colored" was ok. Then there was a shift, and woe betide you if you said "colored," unless you were talkin' 'bout the NAACP. But it was ok to say "Black is Beautiful," or call someone an Afro-American. Then Afros went out of style, and we were supposed to say "African-American."

Now people have realized that it's exhausting to keep saying all the syllables in "African-American," so "Black" is ok again. Every once in a while I still hear an elderly person say "darkie," but that makes me cringe.

But even the N word has come back, especially if you're an angry Black man or a character in a Quentin Tarantino movie. I like the fact that they're slowly taking back the N word. The way that homosexuals have reclaimed "queer" and "gay" and "fag." That's cool.

As for myself, I proudly and publicly call myself a "yellow man."

Because, ya know, "Yellow is Beautiful."



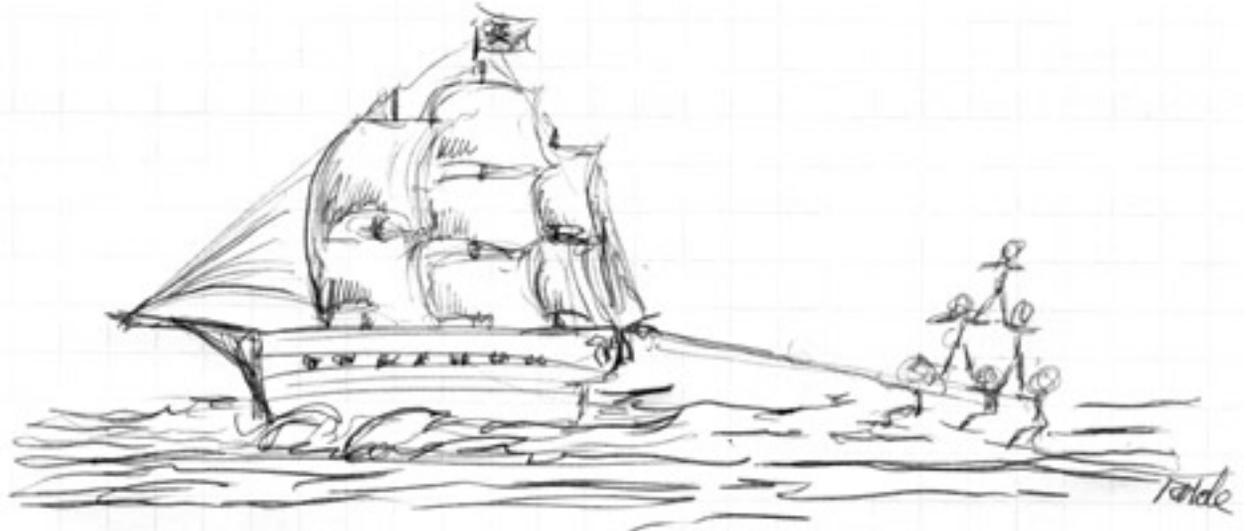
**LETTER GRADED MAIL
SENT TO GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG
BY MY GENTLE READERS**

Let us begin with Mr. Eric Mayer!!!

Chris,

Amazing cover. What a contrast. Was that the actual computer that went to the moon or one like it? What would Babbage have thought? One of the things that really bugs me about death is that I want to know what's going to happen and what we're going to discover. Hey, the Babbage engine would've required a much larger space craft and probably wouldn't have served much purpose anyway would it? **It's funny, Mike came to photograph the Apollo Guidance Computer for a friend and I asked if he wouldn't mind taking this photo. It's ended up a couple of different places and is one of the very few pictures of me out there (Very few compared to the amount of words that I put out). The DSKY, the piece I'm holding, did fly, though the rest of the ACG that we have is prototype.**

I wish I could see parrots in the trees. Neat pictures. Crows seem to be scaredy cats. Around here I see small sparrows chasing them. If crows are afraid of sparrows imagine what they must think when attacked by parrots! I once had cockatiels which I thought



looked like miniature parrots. They have mean beaks. And the male had a mean temper. Drew blood when I fed them. Just hope those parrots don't object to having their picture taken. **They're a loud and angry bunch. Almost anything'll make 'em start screaming. Especially wind. That's makes 'em really mad.**

It's great to read someone who likes modern art. When I was doing more art I tried some abstracts. No way. People look at an abstract and think it's easy. It is hard. I like realism fine, but art doesn't have to depict something any more than music does. (Actually, my ever-changing desktop wall-paper is now a Klee)

It is hard to conceive and execute. There have been people who have successfully sold children's paintings as abstract art (same

Art from the Magnificent Robert Hole!

with elephants, monkeys, etc) but the theory is deep and the ones who try and fail outnumber the ones that succeed.

Fascinating article about the Pollock painting. I was going to ask, how could someone have forged his fingerprint? And then you explained. That is all news to me. Yes, it is interesting if it showed what he didn't want. Of course, it's also interesting to see if what he didn't want had some value, how someone other than the artist would react to it.

Interesting issue. (Hmmm, have mentioned it was all interesting...)

Best,
Eric

Yeah, it was sorta slapped together, but I kinda liked it!

And now...Lloyd Penney!!!

Dear Chris:

Back on The Drink Tank bandwagon...and I'm two issues behind. Such as it always was, such as it always will be. There's a spell in there somewhere...let's get caught up. 170...Ah, Greco-Roman wrestling our gym teachers always failed to teach us. But then, I was a chubby and small kid, and I wasn't going to learn anything like that, nohow, especially when I was given a six-foot behemoth of a school football player to tackle. I was set up to fail every time. Give me smiling ladies to cuddle with every time.

I much prefer 'Rasslin' to wrestling, but what are you gonna do. I've got a ton of old-timey photos for it too!

Hello, Shaz! I used to take part in masquerades long ago, and some of them were at Worldcons. One thing that masquerades taught me is that you must accept your figure, no matter what you think of it, and drop your self-consciousness. Fans are a pretty forgiving bunch, and while Rotsler's Rules of Masquerades wisely suggests not to dress as a pixie if you weigh 400 pounds, a good costume can make size look good. If you've got it, flaunt it, and us dirty old men are looking, anyway. Flash a curve or two, and be proud of what you've got.

Damn straight! I'm going out and

buying a Speedo!

I also learned to appreciate good costumes, and the work that goes into them. Yvonne's a costumer, so I've learned to spot French seams, and how costumes are best if they fit like regular clothes. I learned long ago that assuming another character for a short time is psychologically healthy. You have to get out of yourself sometimes, and a vacation from the everyday reality is healthy. And, the hugs are therapeutic. Human contact and touch make us all healthier and saner.

I've never gotten too much into costuming. It's hard for me since pretty much I always feel like I'm done up in a fan costume!

An article on absinthe by someone named Mead? Serendipity there, folks. Absinthe was popular because it had a level of danger to it, like fugu in the sushi restaurant. I should ask Yvonne if Diageo makes any brands of absinthe...she works for Diageo Canada, just up the street from us, and Diageo makes Bailey's, Guinness, Johnny Walker and Gordon's Gin, among other fine drinkables.

Yvonne works for the Bailey's people, eh? I might have to pay a



From Espana Sheriff

visit!

Now that Hillary has thrown in the towel, it's a popular younger man versus old Grandad, let's go home versus a hundred years of Iraq. Doesn't take a PhD to figure out who's going

to win this one.

It's looking like Obama by 15 to 20 points, barring a really big mess. I'm figuring it'll be a interesting 4 years with a Demo Congress and Dem president. I really didn't like it the last time, but I was young.

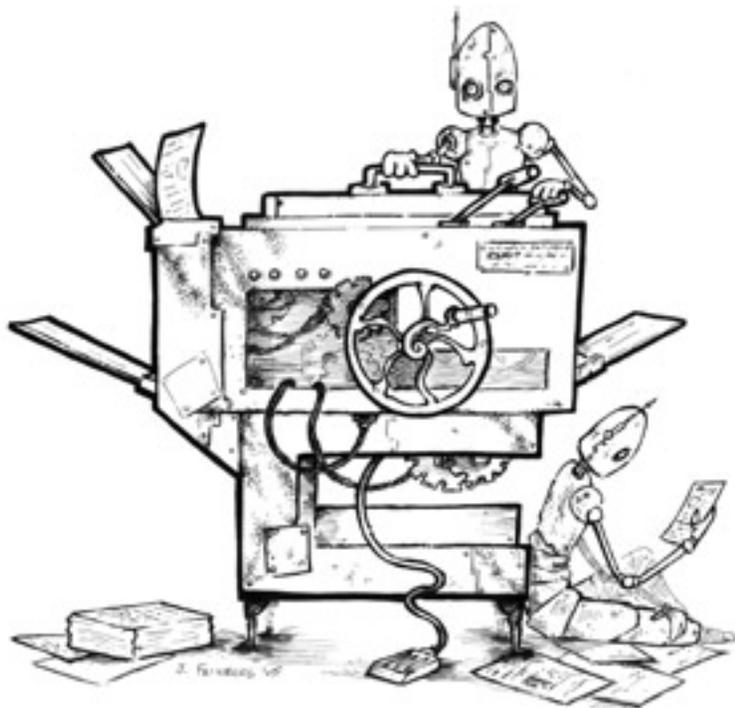
Intelligent and pertinent? Next time I have a week off, maybe... Anthologies are a perfect SF sampler, and I've been told by local authors that it is more difficult to write a short story than a novel. The great ideas come faster and more often, and it's easy to stop at the end of a short story, and pick up the next story when you have the time.

Short stories are fun. I really prefer them to novels, but that may just be because I've a short attention span.

I must send you a Joe Mayhew cartoon I have...the only fan artist who ever complimented me with a drawing.

Indeed you must!

171...That's a fanzine lounge? Doesn't look like any fanzine lounge I've been in before, but with a pretty lady in the



conventions in town, and Con*cept in Montréal.
Our Chris Knight is a movie guy and a fun dude.

Steve Stiles puts his finger on it...most Hugo voters are convention fans, rather than fanzine fans. I'm known mostly in Canadian fandom as a convention fan. Could this be the secret of my success in the future? Naaaaah...

Yeah, more convention voters than fanzine fans, though part of the is fanzine fandom shrinking away from the Hugos as well. In addition, I think

you'll be on the ballot next year with the games in Montreal. I kinda think that's when I'll fall off the ballot in favor of you!

The last League of Evil Geniuses party? Say it isn't so! What are we going to do with all those League polo shirts? I bought a new one just last year! Such flow of consciousness writing...writing exactly how you feel, and what you want, and who you love, or would like to love...it's good for you to get it out. An emotional cleansing.

I never got one of those shirts! Christian did a great job. The original version was left on the Lounge computer and I discovered it as I came in on Saturday morning

and was blown away! I found it to be perfectly in the tradition of the Drunken One Shot.

There is only one big comic convention in Toronto, the Paradise Comics Comicon. It's been going for five or six years now, but this year, it is on at the same time as the big media SF convention in town, Polaris, formerly Toronto Trek, mid-July. Let's see what happens attendance-wise with both conventions.

Yes...you're Number One...and I've read your writing. It's Number Two. (I am surprised a Prisoner reference hasn't gotten that kind of response before.)

I totally agree! What took people so long? The obvious jokes are the only ones I get, usually!

Hugs to Leigh Ann...great drink recipes. And no one got drunk enough to grab you. Well, they weren't trying (or drinking) hard enough, were they? You'll just have to whip up stiffer drinks next year, and I will end that sentence right now.

I've got a new drink in mind for the next Lounge.

A shame to end it on a sad note... I have read very little Bob Asprin, and I know some local fans wanted him as GoH at a local con. That wish will have to go unfilled.

I never read much of him either, but I've actually gone out and bought a couple of things lately.

middle, it must be a good thing! And that's 2:30am? Sleep is for the weak! You might as well call it Zinecon, and issue badges. Or at least ribbons.

I run very entertaining fanzine lounges, though it's Leigh Ann and folks who make them exceptional. I'll see how the WorldCon one turns out.

There's a Chris Knight in BArea fandom? Same here! Our Chris Knight has been the Ad Astra convention artist (con artist) for many years, and he lives just up the street from us. He and his lovely wife Emily (mwah! mwah! We all love Emily Strange!) are not only long-time fixtures at Ad Astra, but they are now also working other

All done, caught up, but there's another Sf/SF...don't you ever rest? Don't answer that one...take care, folks, and see you again soon, same Garcia time, same Garcia channel. Different Garcia zine. Bye for now
Yours,
Lloyd Penney.

I rest...I just know how to write while I'm sleeping (and I think it shows!)

Thanks, Lloyd!

And now, my hero...Christian McGuire!!!

Chris,
I'm reading forward in Drink Tank right now, as I don't want to fall behind. I was disappointed to learn that your Hugo odds-maker issue didn't have any information on how to contact fannish Bookies. You don't seem to be listed in any of the Las Vegas odds houses. Maybe next year? Or is it too late for a supplemental issue?

I will gladly take action on any of the categories. Other than that, I hear Kevin Standlee is also willing to make the book on these, but only in 20 dollar bills. The code word is "here's my pre-support for your worldcon bid." He'll understand.

I also enjoyed the varied reviews of CC26. As a helper in the

photography department I was able to traverse the entire convention and enjoy it pretty evenly from a volunteer and an attendee's eye. CC26 is the best convention I've been a member of in at least 10 years. I'd been recently pooh-poohing Lit fandom as tired and scraggly in comparison to the younger sensa-wonder I've experienced at Anime Los Angeles. At CC26, this energy permeated every corner of the Doubletree and the weekend. It can't just be credited to Kevin, as chair, but his vision and excitement certainly caught up a crowd of fans who brought out their best in making the convention a place to meet great people and hang out. The costumers themselves added their obvious love of subject and a desire to learn and share their craft and costumes. You can't go wrong with 600 women in corsets. I was surprised at the number of males costuming at the high level visible throughout of CC26. I will make a point of being at costume Cons of the future that wend their way back to the west coast.

What was that about 600 women in corsets? You should know better than to say somethign like that in the middle because that's all I'm going to focus on!

As an aside, I have volunteered to help out with facilities to one of the people who rumor has it will be bidding for a Costume Con in the near future.

I can stop any time I want.

I'll gladly help whoever it is too...as long as there are 600 women in corsets.

More later! Keep up the good wok (I had to do that as an homage to your style of fanzine publishing)!

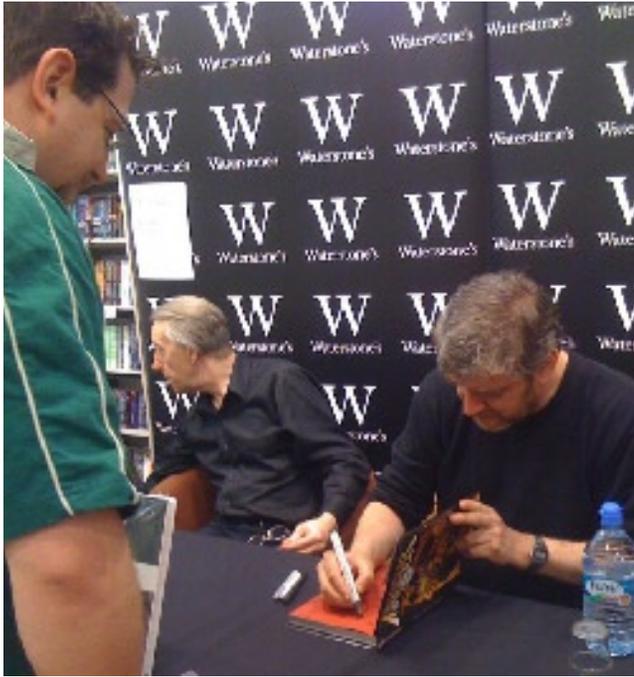
And I will see you in a few days!

Christian

Pasadena in 2010

A bid for Westercon 63





**STEVE DILLON, A SKETCH, A FLYPAST, THINGS FROM AFRICA AND PINTS IN A TRAIN STATION.
BY JAMES BACON**

It was a hard decision, I was off on a Saturday which is not that usual unless I book leave or am lucky, as I was and the wife of course who works a normal job was off, so what to do. I wanted to do something, not just relax around the house, so a trip into town as I call it was in order, town being the shopping parts of London.

On Saturday there were a number of things on. Up in Nottingham was a Phillip K. Dick day in the university. It seemed a little too heavy duty for my liking, reading of papers and the like which has all the

hallmarks of turning a subject that one likes into something too much like school to be honest.

It was a full day event, and even with the promise of beer and Bladerunner in the evening, I thought it was too much and not something I had heard anyone talk about, less mention they were going, so it got crossed off the list.

ZZ9 (thats Zed Zed Nine, as in Zed's dead, baby) Plural Z Alpha, the Official Hitchikers Guide to the Galaxy appreciation society were having their Beeble Bear picnic. It was arranged to meet quite close to where I work, Lancaster Gate Tube station, but 600 metres from Paddington and then after a traditional half an hour, I expect those present would head off towards the Peter Pan statue in Kennsington Gardens and relax, play games, eat a picnic and set up deformed teddy bears to enjoy a drink and usually they all head off for a beer.

It's quite good craic and rather relaxed. I have been to a few, not a huge amount of them and I know at one stage many people I know would be there, but for some reason it was not really what either of us were looking for, not sure why. Perhaps it was that no one had mentioned it really, and I am not as into ZZ9 as I once was, it's been through the ups and downs, and sometimes it's a very political organisation be times. I once

wore a second hand British Army ex Northern Ireland issue flak jacket to a ZZ9 AGM.

So that was not really for us either. It's hard when there is just too much to do really.

So I knew there was a slew of comic signings going on in London, as on the 7th of June Brian Boland, Dave Gibbons and Sean Phillips were signing in Forbidden Planet. This was a comic book signing line-up from the Gods arranged to promote a new book titled Studio Space.

I wasn't able to make that one, as it clashed with the British Science Fiction Association AGM. No need for Flak jackets here a much more sedate occasion. I was impressed with Conway Hall, the location of the BSFA AGM, situated near Holborn, in the heart of London and yet it was the quintessentially British location somehow. The hall was built and owned I presume by the South Place Ethical society, a free thought organisation which advocates secular humanism. Now there's a mouthful. I suppose it's also from a time and a Britain where George Orwell would write 1984, now how would such a novel be received.

Someone mentioned the British Communists were meeting next door. Conway Hall is a series of rooms and was very nice and we had one that comfortably sat 50, although

there was no bar, which I found as a downside, but that was OK as I brought some cans and no one objected. Geoff Ryman gave a reading of some very odd mundane fiction, although he seems to see mundanum as a bit of a game, wish he'd mention this to his zealots of boredom. It's interesting that he doesn't seem to think that animorphism is a trope and that by badly grafting a shared inherited memory science idea onto the characters its suddenly mundane cutting edge fiction. It wasn't to my liking.

Also Peter Weston gave a talk about the origins of The BSFA, based on writings which had appeared in *Prolapse* and a considerable amount of research he had carried out in doing so. There was a discussion about the BSFA, it had a tag line, but to be honest, it lacked direction and purpose and I felt it failed to achieve its potential, there were some good people on the panel, but it didn't get there. The best part was Peter Weston speaking to Farah Mendelssohn who was in the audience about the reduction in Horror publishing, his response was brilliant.

This day, which was a good one, but like the BSFA panel, failed to actually do what it was meant to. The actual AGM was rammed into quite an unsuitable half hour slot, and this year there have been more changes than

ever in the association, and one would have thought that the organisation would have lived up to what the new president had said in the morning, about the association being a listening one. Ah yes – Stephen Baxter is the new Prez, now Mr Clarke is dead and I think he is a cool choice; he is very nice and didn't mind being called el Presedente.

Lunch and afterwards were in nearby pubs of good character, and a lunch of Ham, Eggs and Chips washed down with Cider as I chatted with Peter Weston about science fiction, Leeds Fandom and lots of cool stuff was the highlight of the day I expect.

So this all clashed with the Forbidden Planet signing and even though I really really would like to meet Brian Boland perhaps one of the finest comic artists the UK has produced, I was resigned that I wanted to go to the association that for some inexplicable I cannot leave.

So the week previous I had the crisis of having a Saturday off and too much to do, so when I also found out that Steve Dillon and Bryan Talbot would be signing in Waterstones on Oxford Street, this seemed to appeal to the wife as something we could do while doing other things about London. Now the signing was scheduled for



2pm in Waterstones, a British book chain, in Oxford St. It should be noted that Oxford Street in London is the main shopping street really, especially for fashion and department stores and tourists. It's got over 300 shops and is always really very busy. Waterstones have two shops, one quite near Charing Cross Rd famed in its own right for bookshops and Helene Hanff and the other up the other end quite near to Marble Arch. They are about a mile and a quarter apart from one another.

So we jumped a train at East Croydon, that goes directly to Charing Cross station, which is really quite handy for the west end of London.

Luckily as we arrived, I got to see the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight fly over head, an Avro Lancaster

with Supermarine Spitfires and two Hawker Hurricanes (I think), Merlin engines roaring a strangely guttural yet refined sound, propellers slicing the air and over they went. Amazing machines, the likes of which at one time fought hard to protect what we know as freedom.

This was followed by various formations of everything from what looked like private jets (King Airs) to heavies such as the Hercules, VC 10 and Tri-Star refuelers, E3-D Sentry and Nimrod to the Tally Ho's of Tornado's and Typhoon II's. All quite impressive. Lots of them, with a few moments interval between formations. I wondered what was on and of course realised it must be the Queen's birthday and within about five minutes around one o'clock they were done. So we wandered up to Waterstones, taking our time, in no rush, we had time in hand and we went a bit of a convoluted route, walking across Trafalgar Sq, as there was a Thai thing on and eventually found ourselves by the Waterstones. We were a bit early, so I adjourned to the Starbucks next door to utilise the facilities. While I was walking back I met Bryan Talbot and we chatted as we walked. His work *Alice in Sunderland* was in the last six in the BSFA award this year, it was piped and *Brasyl* won the award, but it is a piece of sequential art that all comic and fiction fans should check



out.

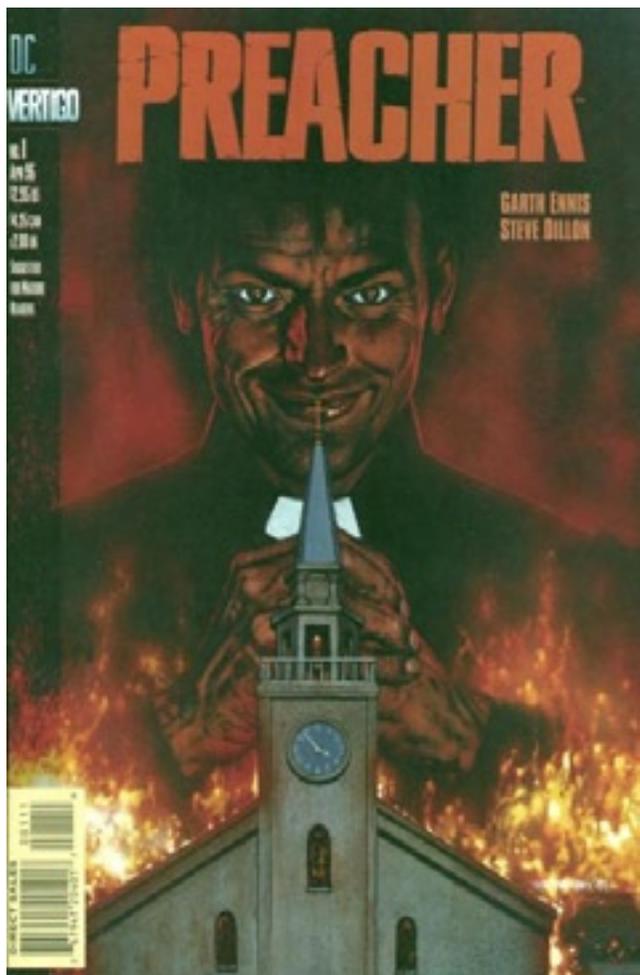
I wondered how his next project *Grandville* was coming along. This is an awesome anthropomorphic steampunk detective-thriller. The main character is a Badger character, Detective-Inspector LeBrock of Scotland Yard. From images I saw, he is well armed and it looks very authentic, Talbot's expertise and attention to detail of this era being something of renown. So I wandered into the shop and caught up with the wife, who was browsing books. I am lucky I do feel

and I bought Studio Space. Now this is a nice book, really well presented. Some 320 pages long, it looks at a total of 20 comic artists and where they work, how they started, how they work and their work in general. It's a much broader book than I expected, but I have so far enjoyed it.

The writer Joel Meadows was also there for the signing and we got chatting. The queue wasn't long, although the first chap had nearly every Steve Dillon comic one could imagine so the queue wasn't going very fast.

He also had quite a bit of Bryan Talbot stuff, so Bryan was busy signing. I hung back, there was no rush at all really, at this stage there were six people in the queue and I was in no panic. So the next guy along also had some comics to get signed and then asked if Steve would do a sketch in his Studio Space book. There is a blank page opposite the beginning of each chapter, so it's perfect. I had gotten Bryan to sign my book and the second issue of *Luther Arkwright*, its my favourite cover really and the folks behind were getting Mad Hatter sketched in the inside cover of *Alice in Sunderland*. Steve was drawing away, and in good form.

Then I got to speak to him. Now he remembered me which was nice, as he was GOH at an Octocon about fifteen years ago, that I ran and he



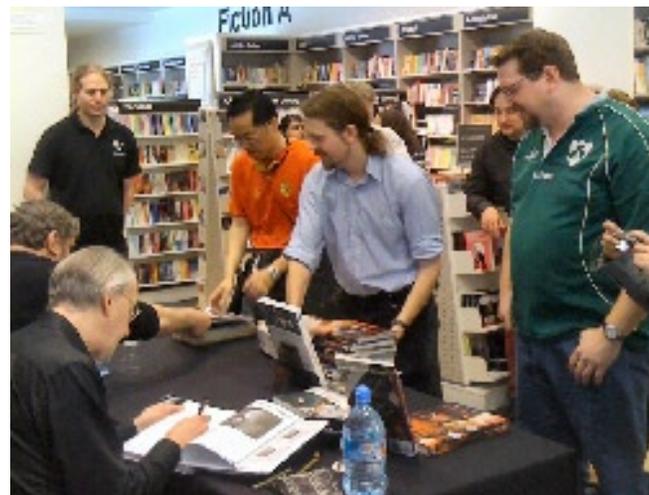
lived in Dublin and was a regular at conventions. He was also the first or second person to draw me a sketch, ever.

I have a number of pages of *Preacher* I bought them from Comic Art Dealer Albert Moy, who is based in New York. I also have a couple of amazing Judge Dredd panels, including one set in The Emerald Isle, the Dredd version of Ireland in the future and also a double page spread from the werewolf

storyline an absolute classic. He is definitely one of my favourite artists and until recently I could boast I had everything he drew, having original *Warriors* and some odd Marvel UK bits gives me the edge, but more recently apart from the Garth Ennis *Punisher* series, I have missed a few items. He is working on *Wolverine Origins* at the moment.

So we got chatting and it was really nice to catch up and to see Steve doing what he does so well, draw. I had a *Preacher* number one, sadly already signed by the other two creators involved and a *Punisher* graphic novel to get signed. I asked if he wouldn't mind doing a sketch in my sketch book instead of in the Studio Space book, he was absolutely cool, and noted it wasn't mental busy. I asked for a *Preacher* and he took his damn time doing the nicest Jesse Custer ever. He had run out of pencil, so I gave him mine and he was just very cool and relaxed.

Steve was talking about a plan that has been on the back burner for some years now, *City Lights*, it was advertised to be released to coincide with the tenth anniversary of Vertigo comics, which was five years ago now, and still no sign. Steve explained that Garth Ennis, who would be writing this story, wants to re write it since he has been living now in New York for a while and that has changed how he reckons



the comic should feel.

Joel was super and was talking about some future projects and plans, another Studio Space book perhaps, but also other projects. Soon enough I had a sketch, comics signed and my head full of future comics that I must buy and we went on our way. We bussed it back down Oxford St and walked down Charing Cross Rd.

Orbital comics, one of the best shops in London was having a signing as well, I was just going to pop in and browse and even said to the wife that I'd be only a moment, but when she heard there was a signing, she was resigned to a longer wait and joined me. Down a narrow Dutch set of stairs into a massive basement we went and Sim sank into a huge brown leather sofa, that is there just for that reason. I browsed and saw that the comic on sale and being signed might not be my cup of tea so called it a day and we

continued.

We popped into a couple of bookshops on the way down Charing Cross Rd., of course it's nothing like it once used to be, but then nothing ever is, is it, but we still found a few bargains. Sim wanted to buy some bead material, she makes these cool book markers, using beads and themes and she likes a book marker to match her book, so she went to Neil's Yard a nearly secret type of place, accessible by two lanes, which opens up to a plethora of cool and trendy little shops and cafes and bars.

I went to Forbidden Planet while this book marker stuff was going on and found another signing. Gary Erskine was signing *Dan Dare*, but I had already had my comics signed by Gary at the Bristol Expo, so I was cool. There was a bit of a rearrange of their graphic novel section and I checked out the bargain shelves. Their SF section is the best in London in fairness and I was surprised to see that the Alternative History Section has been shrunk to make way for quite a large Paranormal Romance Section, something that has suddenly occurred everywhere I go. Not that WH Smiths and Waterstones have alternative history sections, but suddenly they have quite substantial Paranormal Romance sections.

I hope they sell. More fans hopefully.

After browsing and noting a load of books I want or should keep an eye open for, we met again, called into a few more book shops and headed towards Covent Garden for a beer in a South African Bar. On the way we found a candy store, selling sweets and chocolates from America, Mainland Europe and from Down South (Oz and SA). Sim was very pleased and I was stunned that at last I found somewhere that sold Baby Ruth Bars even at \$2, it might be just worth it. I also found Cadbury's Lunch Bars, the closest thing in just fine goodness that I can find to Baby Ruth, but these are from South Africa. We are trying to be a bit healthy, so pried ourselves away and suffered beer with huge men from Africa and some Bil Tong, which is a bit like jerky but



nicer. We were slowly winding our way south towards the train station home.

On the way, as well as popping into a stamp shop and looking at some nice first day covers, we listened

to some of the music being played, in protest outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. It was once a fine tourist office, now it is rather more secured and bunkered, the posters inside showing age and lack of love. Outside, a variety of Musicians were playing and there was much singing and dancing on the spot. There is a disaster we are all just watching happen. We contributed some money and signed the petition and hoped that folks could go home.

It's grim, unlike other protests, they have posters of the injuries people have suffered, in the last week or so, it's really shocking, but that's the power of the interweb.

It was a good day and we had another pint in the pub in Charing Cross Rd. Train Station waiting for our train to Croydon. I love drinking in Train stations, it's like drinking at a convention, combines a number of things that make me feel comfortable. I was also just so content with the sketch, that I was super relaxed and just enjoying the evening.

While we were in one of the bookshops, where we got the man to put his copies of Brasyl in the widow. (er that won an award you know, I heard on the internet) we also heard that Terry Pratchett was signing at Foyles, but not the big one on Charing Cross Rd, but over at their smaller branch on the South Bank. Sim had

mentioned there was much going on over on the south bank and under a bridge there, there are a load of book sellers, selling second hand books on

long wodden tables, but we had done enough and it was time to head back to suburbia.

Just too much to do in this city.



This shot of an early 2007 Psychotronic Film Festival is featured on the Psychotronic Film Festival Yahoo Group site. People to note: That's me in the corner, that's Jo Rhett next to me, Espana turned around to look at the guy in the fez, The Queen of Trash next to her. Ken and Jerry are two rows behind me, Dave Clark is there somewhere too. I went to the most recent Psychotronic, the last at the regular venue, and was blown away by a horror film from the American Dental Association, the Living Desert from Disney and an office safety film that felt like The Happening.