



DRINK TANK

©brad w. foster • 2009



ISSUE 201
GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG

Well, that was easy. The Fourth Annual Giant Sized Annual happened and it turned out better than I expected. Of course, there were hiccups (sorry Steve Green!) and there were some really good pieces that I got from. There's Brad Foster and Jay on the cover, photos from James Bacon and more!

This issue is dedicated to M Crasdan, who went into the hospital on the 1st, and is not in good shape. Get better, Girlie!

NOTES TO AUTHORS AND ARTISTS BY BOB HOLE

When submitting a manuscript use spell check. Grammar check is less necessary, but it can't hurt – it helps in catching your unintentional mistakes. And you can add your alien/fantasy words to your user dictionary so it doesn't stop every time you write Quagaarific.

When submitting a manuscript or image, use the suggested (or required) format as listed by the publication or venue you're submitting to.

When a publication or venue does not offer guidelines regarding format, use standard formatting or at least common sense.

When receiving a rejection, resubmit the piece somewhere else.

When receiving a rejection, know that the editor can reject the piece for any reason what-so-ever, including whim. They are by no means required to buy your piece – or anyone's.

When receiving a rejection, don't question the reasons for the rejection. No matter what they say, whether positive or negative it boils down to the fact that they just couldn't use your piece at this time.

When receiving a rejection, don't threaten the editor.

When receiving a rejection, don't question the editor's morals, parentage or intelligence.

When receiving a rejection there is no need to say thank you, but don't say anything else in front of the word "you" either.

Authors and artists should know that while there is no secret cabal of editors, if you mistakenly threaten or question an editor in other than the politest of terms this information will be making the gossip rounds. Sometimes the public ones. And then you're still welcome to write or paint or whatever all you want, but no one will ever want to buy your deathless prose or perfect picture.

No matter who you are as an author or artist, you're replaceable. 100% replaceable.

Because there are always more talented non-jerks out there.



CROYDON IN SNOW TIME

BY JAMES BACON

In Ireland we don't get much snow, generally we get rain, although when the UK has had very bad weather we would have it too, but not quite so bad, we had a bad one a few years back. So far, for the four winters I have lived in London generally the weather has been mild. This is also true for the summers. It used to get really hot, and I really did not enjoy hot London summers nights, but the last three have been milder.

I went to the Pub on Sunday, it was good, I haven't been for a while,



and it's nice to catch up. The afternoon had been normal, but then there was a slight dusting of snow. Then in the evening a really heavy amount fell, and it stopped. So as I set off, I wasn't too worried about the snow, I collected Croydon Fandom's Finest and the pub was merry to say the least. The snow fell hard again, and my drive home was convoluted. The usual route over a bridge blocked off, I didn't mind really, as I backed and went back the way I came, towards east Croydon station, but cars were dealing with the weather badly, and going was slow. I found some short cuts I know, but the underpass had been closed, so traffic was bottle necking. I got through all this, though and was home.

So on Monday, after it had been snowing quite hard all Sunday night, I awoke to much snow. My wife and her step sister, who are living with me, were already too excited for words. Nikita had never seen or experienced snow, and although I had taken Sim snowboarding in Val D'esaire, this

was only really the second time she had seen proper snow here, and it was really proper. The night before they were out in their night clothes.

The instructions on the Radio were to only travel if absolutely necessary. Now Sim can plug into the wireless and work from home, so she did. The train website for the operating company that serves Croydon had crashed. Live departure boards looked fictional, asterisks marking where trains were not definitely due, and because councils had seemingly failed to grit the roads to and from Bus depots, London Buses were not running.

I was off, otherwise, I would have made the journey, although I understand that on Monday some 25 staff called in unavailable to work. Crippled the service, it was cancelled. All the same, I would have made it in, I have driven in worse, and know patience and time are all that is needed.

So the wife and sister, built a snow man. They wanted a proper *Calvin and Hobbes* snowman, and not one I could crash my car into. The dogs loved the snow, and I took them for a walk, while the engineer made the perfect snowman. It wore them out quicker than normal. I returned and the snowman was progressing very

well, and I have to say when they built it, it was definitely the best snowman I have ever seen.

I was off work, such are shifts and I had things to do, and reckoned that I might walk into town and see if the post office and bank were open. To be honest, I like walking in snow and was not bothered if they were closed, so I headed into town, hoping to be back with some sausages and fresh bread rolls for a late lunch.

Around the corner from our estate, there is a large grassed area in front of some flats, here two couples were pushing a huge snow ball each. I took some photos, and asked if they had been drinking, not yet, they said.

Further on I saw a bus, I was surprised. As I neared, I could see men pushing the rear of the bus away from the pavement and a barrier. The wheels were spinning, it was slewing badly. I offered to help and did so. I realised as I tried with three other to push a bus, that it was an odd scene. I asked the man in charge if he had sand, no, shovels, on the way. As the wheel was spinning it was compacting the snow, then, with steam rising, it was melting it, only making the next bit even more slippery, as water iced up on the next bit of compacted snow. The bus was damaged, as was the



barrier, and one could only draw one's own conclusions. Any evidence was gone. I smiled.

Since it was decided that shovels were the order of the day, I went on my way, West Croydon Bus station was deserted, and the shutters were down on the Train station. The tram lines were somewhere under compacted snow, and even the sign for the Tram Replacement Bus was now defunct and horizontal in defeat to the weather, but there were people about.

Forbidden Planet, one of the two comic book shops in Croydon was open, surprisingly, and people were going in and out, but many shops were closed, as was West Croydon Post Office. They didn't have *Flood* by Stephen Baxter.

Groups of kids were about playing snow ball fights, which seemed well natured and energetic, and I even saw one woman in cross country skis, who obviously thought she had a solution. I soon overtook her, my heavy duty railway issue steel toe cap boots proving just as rugged.

The bank was closed, but the staff did wave from inside, which was friendly. The main post office was also closed. A child was sledging down Church street, which

has a bit of a hill, and usually would have trams. The whitgift centre was open, and I went in, Waterstones was doing business but they didn't have any copies of *Flood* by Stephen Baxter, which I was looking for, neither did Notting Hill branch the previous week and the library's two copies are loaned out. Demand.

I went to Sainsburys, I wanted to get enough food for about three days, as we are off to South Africa this weekend, and hadn't done our usually big monthly shop.

The shop was very busy, but this was deceptive. There were really long queues because they had no staff, there was no shortage of food. I got chatting to a couple of lads, a manager and store hand, and they explained that they are usually in Victoria, but



strange, there were no police, or street sweepers, or anybody, just folk briskly making there way, collars up, woolens on, heads down.

The bus was gone, but had left one hell of a mess. I saw a snow plough fronted truck, spreading grit on the main road, it was doing a good, if solitary job. Traffic was single file and solid.

live in Croydon, as did most people there, and the staff of the shop, who live elsewhere, couldn't get there. The word sustainability and travel costs sprung to mind, like how many people could transfer to the workplace closest to where they lived I wondered.

I found some bargains, and loaded up, I measured as I filed my haversack and had about twenty kilos of foodstuff, but I hoiked it on, and was off. The shop was closing, it was 3pm, and the whole centre was closing, going from mildly deserted to ghost town in a matter of minutes. Anyone who could make it had done so for the morning shift, so that was the end. I had made it just in time.

I walked back at my own pace, and as if on cue, nearly all the shops were closing or had closed. It felt

The lads who had been building a snow man had finished, it was huge, maybe ten feet tall, if not more, and they and some gathered friends were enjoying a couple of cans. I was very impressed and told them so.

Many snowmen had joined the fray, and I saw another three on the way home, as well as a snow chair. Of course, it was at this stage that I found our own snowman had been nicked, and Tim, always on guard across the road, told me some kids had lifted off the bits, I didn't mind really. It was a very good looking snowman.



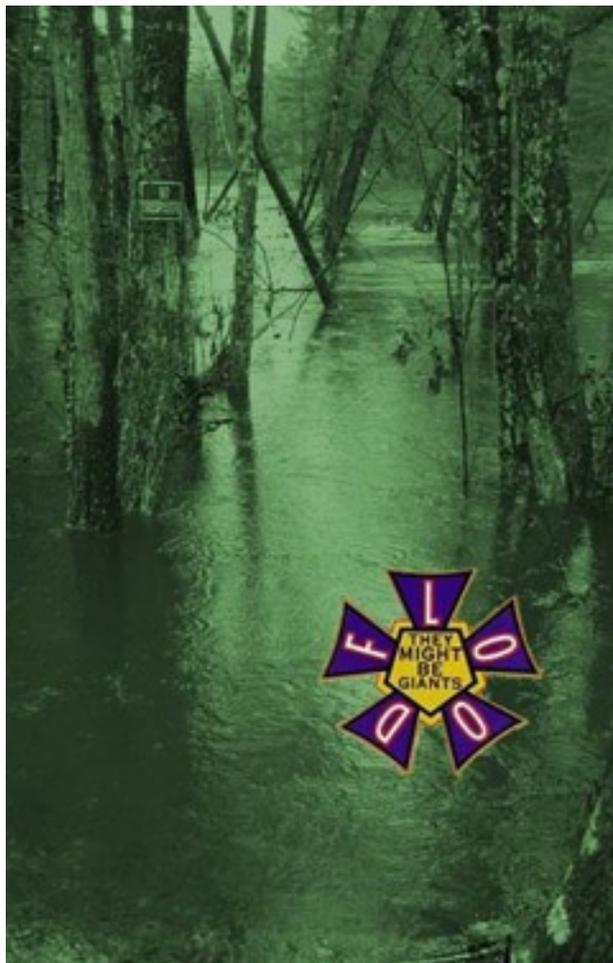
Once home I had some hot chocolate made from the provisions, and tucked into hot sausage sandwiches, with fresh crusty rolls.

SHOPPIN' FOR MUSIC

BY BOBBY SCHAEZLE

Let's skip ahead to my freshman year in high school, first period Biology. Someone (I think it was Shawn), lent me Flood, by They Might Be Giants. I had spent Jr. High pretty apathetic about music. I had stuff I liked -- REM, B-52, Talking Heads -- but grunge was just starting to take over the airwaves and, with a few notable exceptions, it never did much for me. It also didn't help that Live 105 rebranded that year; not to sound all 14 and angsty, but I was pretty disillusioned with the radio. So when I heard TMBG for the first time, I was thrown for a loop just by how different it was. It was like walking into an Asian grocery store for the first time and realizing there's all sorts of crazy vegetables in this world that you've never even heard of. It wasn't just different, though, it was also good; I knew I wasn't going to be able to hear more of this kind of music just by listening to the radio (though, to be fair, Steve Masters did play Twistin' pretty regularly for a little while). I immediately made a copy of the tape for myself -- by this point I even had a boombox with high-speed dubbing.

Man, I listened to the shit out of that album, I'll tell you what. I was spending hardly any money on music at this age, but before I was even tired of it, I found myself back at The



Wherehouse shopping for more. This time, however, the store was at Stevens Creek & Stelling, and the album was Apollo 18. Unlike the Back to the Future soundtrack, Apollo 18 was pretty much the best thing ever. Shit, I liked it even more than Flood. I liked it so much, that two weeks later I bought Lincoln and Miscellaneous T. Looking back, this newfound enthusiasm for alternative music could have easily set off a chain of events that would have

resulted in me blowing all my disposable income at the record store for the next four years. The only reason it didn't was because, after burning through the collected works of They Might Be Giants, I didn't actually have anything else in mind that I wanted to buy. So unless another friend was randomly going to tell me about some album they liked, the only music I would ever know was what I heard on the radio.

I'm going to digress for just a moment to say a few words about the radio. If you're a band and you're really proud of a song you've recorded and you want to share it with the world, FM radio seems like just about the least flattering way to have your music heard. It'd be like if someone painted some exquisite landscape, and then hung it up in Times Square next to some Coca-Cola sign. College radio isn't much better either; just replace Times Square with one of those beat-up old bulletin boards and the Coke sign with a flier for some guy looking for a roommate. Don't get me wrong, this isn't meant to be a tirade against broadcast radio either. It's just always seemed unfortunate to me that the most efficient method of introducing music makers to music listeners is also sort of inherently...well...ugly.

Anyway, after finding out about They Might Be Giants, it was hard to have any real confidence in the ra-



dio anymore. It seemed like I didn't have much of a choice, though, because that's how everyone else I knew was finding their new music. Then, the summer after sophomore year, I started doing Comedy Sportz High School League. This is when I started hanging out with Garcia and Jordan and Sarah and a slew of other people that all had considerably more diverse tastes in music than I ever did. They went to shows at the Edge, they hung out in record stores, and they had cd collections that were all over the map. From Garcia I got the Bosstones and Fishbone and a bunch of great ska. Jordan had all 10 (later 15) volumes of Rhino's New Wave Hits of the 80s collection! This was also when I finally started getting into punk somewhat, having had a couple failed attempts in the years prior. I was having my own

personal rock renaissance, and, not unlike the actual Renaissance, it had a dark side. I had become what Da Vinci first referred to as a "music leech"; I copied tons of music off my friends, having very little of my own to offer in return.

If leeching music off your close friends is enough to make you feel little guilty, then leeching music off thousands of people on the Internet should make you feel really guilty, right? Well it doesn't. Most people would argue that this is due to the anonymity factor, and there's definitely something to that, but it was more than that for me. When I first started pulling music down off the net, I didn't just not feel guilty, I actually felt a little bit proud. I'll do my best to explain. During my senior year, most evenings after school were spent on the MUD, talking to people I'd met online. This was still 1994, well before trading music online was a viable option (I was using a 2400 baud modem). What the Internet lacked in copyrighted music, it made up for in large communities of nerds...and these nerds knew about nerdy things. Rookie was the first one of us to find out about mp3s...or at least he was the first one to talk about it on the MUD. Upon hearing his description of the technology, my reaction was, "hey those kinds of compression ratios sound great...but no one's actually going to bother digitizing all their music."

I certainly wasn't at least. Most of my stuff was still on cassette; since my car only had a tape deck, there was never any point in getting copies on CD. Napster came along just about the time I was finishing up my last year at De Anza. The guys on MUD talked about it a bunch, but I was still living at my folks place and using dial-up internet (now on a 56k modem at least). It wasn't really worth checking out until I moved up to San Francisco State, where I had broadband in my bedroom. I never actually used Napster though, believe it or not; their client gave me some issues when I tried installing it and, by this point, there was already a bunch of chatter about legal action coming down the pipeline. Instead I used Gnutella, followed by Kazaa about a year later.

The biggest problem with using either of these networks to find music was that there weren't a lot of full albums out there. Now, downloading singles is fine when you're just trying to find a copy of Wild Wild West, because who really needs a full cd's worth of the Escape Club? But if I'm looking for new stuff, especially if it's a brand new artist, I really want the complete album experience. On a few occasions I would go grab a track listing off cddb and try to hunt down all the songs I needed, but more often than not that just resulted in an "album" with missing tracks and songs all recorded at differ-

ent levels.

One positive thing that came out of the early networks was that they rekindled my interest in hip-hop. I started playing with them right around the time that Eminem started to get big, which meant that the modern rock radio stations that I listened to (actually they were called “alternative” by this point) actually played some rap every now and then. [Just as an aside, if you ever start to wonder if racism is still alive and well here in the heart of the Bay Area, try to remember the last time you heard a rap song on Live 105 that wasn't by Eminem, the Beastie Boys, Everlast, Kid Rock or the Bloodhound Gang.] My tastes in hip-hop have always been very, umm....specific. The stuff that I like, I really like; and the stuff that I don't like, I really don't like. That kind of polarization makes it hard to listen to the “urban” stations like 94.9 with any regularity, and the Internet just so happened to fill this niche perfectly. I went back and listened to all sorts of west coast stuff that somehow had passed me by during my adolescence. I wasn't looking for music that was super obscure or anything; it was mostly shit like Eazy-E at first, then random stuff from Death Row records, etc. I still ended up pulling down quite a bit of music that I didn't actually like, but it didn't matter. With the Internet, there's no appraisal cost besides the temporal

expense of finding and downloading the actual songs, which is easy enough to offset since you can actually listen to the songs you just downloaded while you're searching for your next track.

After two years at SFSU, I'd built myself a fairly respectable mp3 collection. This was in addition to the tapes and cds I already owned, which meant oscillating back and forth between two different mediums. This sounds like no big deal, but...while having two dates for the prom may be rewarding in its own way, television has taught us that it's inevitably more trouble than it's worth. In relation to my overall listening habits, my mp3 catalog was riddled with holes and heavily unbalanced. It was large enough, however, that cd players and tape decks took a back-seat to my PC as the medium of choice



for playing music while I was at home. Once that shift had occurred, there was now incentive for the great music digitization project that would ensue.

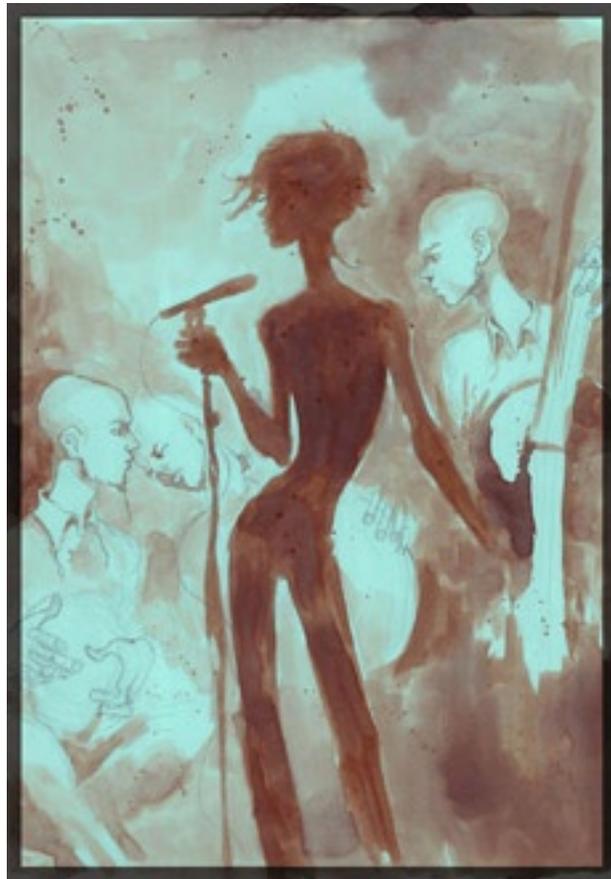
Being the music leech that I am, I owned very few original copies of most of the stuff I listened to. Fortunately, I still had fairly close ties to the people that I had gotten the music from in the first place; so I went out and re-borrowed everything I could get my hands on and ripped it all to my PC. As I did this, something cool happened...the people I was borrowing music from started to ask me for stuff. When I said before that I actually took some amount of pride in downloading music from the Internet, this is what I'm talking about. While most of my friends hadn't yet “gone mp3” to the extent that I had, hard drive costs had plummeted and the idea of having mp3 copies of all their stuff was attractive. On top of that, since I was one of the first people in my social circle to bother ripping cds, I became an aggregator of sorts. For the first time, a life-long music leech like myself was actually able to give something back to the people he was leeching off of.

Now, if you can't already tell by reading this, I love evangelizing music. For all you people out there that have given me music for free, I hope you take some comfort in knowing that I remember with remarkable completeness how the music I've come to love

came to me. [I'll admit that I don't always remember where I got the stuff that sucks, but you probably don't care if I remember that anyways.] Don't be surprised, then, when I try to describe to you how immensely rewarding it is when I hear someone listening to an album that I happened to have given them, even if I wasn't the one that actually paid money for it. This isn't to imply that just because I like something, I think the rest of the world is going to like it too. To a certain extent, it's just a numbers game.

It's a happy coincidence that the mp3 format was invented around the same time as people were finding their way onto the Internet; the marriage of these two technologies is why the word "revolution" has been applied to mp3s, while no such magnitude of import was ever granted to the emergence of compact discs. Even without the Internet, though, I think we would have still seen people embrace some kind of compressed audio format eventually, just because it's so easily transferable. Back in the cd/cassette era, giving someone a copy of an album I liked was much more of a thing that it is now. And knowing how much of a thing it is, if someone offered me a copy of a album, I felt a lot more compelled to listen to, and enjoy it. Compare this with the post-mp3 world, where, if I'm giving someone music, I'll drop the five albums they asked for a

on cd-rom and still have space left over for one or two personal recommendations. Now maybe they'll listen to my picks with a careful ear, or maybe they won't even listen to them at all -- but like I said, it's a numbers game. If you give away enough free music, sooner or later you're going to hear some positive feedback. And unless you're a band or a record company, that positive feedback just makes you want to give away even more.



So, things are interesting. M's in the hospital, though doing slightly better. It's been a rough couple of years for that side of my extended friend-family. Luckily, the cancer's still in check and it's just something that's taken up residence in her lungs. SaBean, who is an absolute wreck, has said that she'll be writing something about the situation for the next issue. Jay's handling it like he always does because he's that kind of guy.

I'm not as freaked out as I was the last time she ended up in there. I was in a terrible state that time.

I've been watching movies, including the far-better-than-it-needed-to-be *The Uninvited*. It's got a great cast, David Straithairn, Emily Browning and Elizabeth Banks. Great cast and the script, while starting slow came up to a taut supernatural/psychological thriller. Very good.

I've been listening to a lot of MC Chris. He does some of the most wrong, yet hilarious, humor you'll even hear in the various skits he included with his raps. The best ones are MC Chris goes to Heaven and meets Jesus and the one where he is in the middle of a Zombie Apocalypse and they're talking about the summer movies they wanna see. Funny stuff.