

THE DRINK TANK
ISSUE 216



TunkBoots

Yes, that's a cover by Genevieve! That's always a good thing. And the lead story this time was inspired by BayCon and is dedicated to Alex, the hyper-intelligent parrot that was the foundation on which the Alex Foundation was founded.

I Hear They Taste Like Chicken

By Leigh Ann Hildebrand

Pauline was dragged from a leafy dream by metallic scratching heard and felt as a rusty thrumming in her bones. The insistent noise was conducted through the floor of the cage and into her head, beneath arms curled protectively around her face while she slept. Even after she realized she was no longer running through dappled green and yellow shadows along the bank of the river, she kept her eyes closed until she was fully awake and alert.

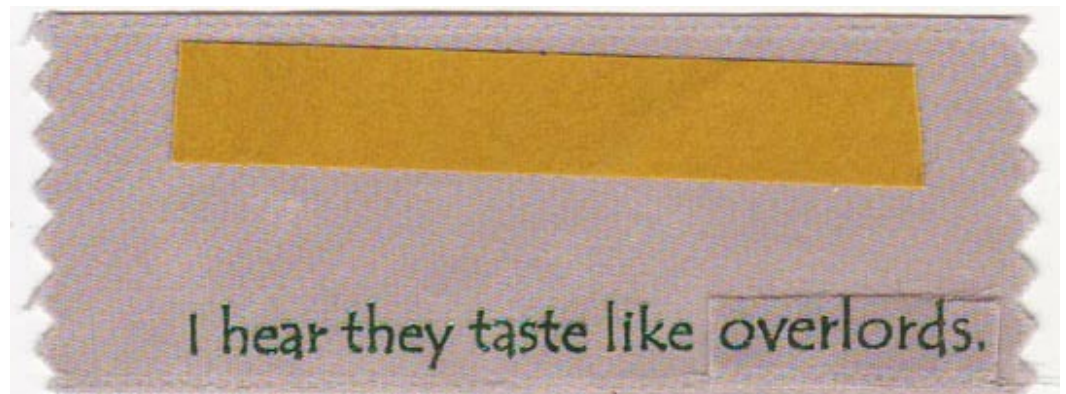
The scraping continued, more insistently. Pauline shuddered and pulled herself up into a crouch against the back of the cage, raising her head last to look at the source of the irritation. An olerd stared back at her expectantly, his brightly-plumed head cocked to one side, crest raised to signal aggression or curiosity. Pauline hadn't been among the olerds long enough to be able to gauge their moods perfectly, but she was learning. He scraped his sharp nails against the floor of the cage again; this time, she knew what he wanted.

Pauline stretched her back and pulled herself up into a standing position. The olerd jerked back and tilted his head to the other side, turning slightly to get a better view of her. Keeping him in sight out of the corner of her eye, Pauline raised her hands over her head and stretched up on her toes, then twirled in place before hopping first to one side, then another. She finished by running in a little circle around the middle of the cage, her head rolling loosely on her shoulders so that her hair fell forward against her face and then back behind her. As a finale, she did a slow spin into a kneeling position in the middle of the cage, facing the olerd.

"Ta-da!" she said softly, mostly to herself. As she did, she realized how dry her mouth felt, her eyes sandy from more than just sleep. How long had it been since she'd had even a mouthful of water? A day, maybe two, she thought. She caught a hint over-ripe fruit in the air, but even the vivid image of it in her head couldn't summon any moisture to her tongue.

The olerd made an odd clucking noise in his throat which Pauline guessed conveyed amusement. He leaned in closer, twisting his head as it approached the bars of the cage, one eye and then the other fixed on her. She leaned back unconsciously as the glossy gray beak approached her. The olerd's scaly claw grabbed a bar of the cage without warning, making Pauline squeal and pull her legs in close to her body. He responded by snapping his beak shut and pulling his head back before turning to look at something below the cage, out of Pauline's line of sight. His claw followed his gaze, returning with a small flat oblong shape. Before she could identify it as food, the olerd had already handed it up to his beak and begun chewing.

Pauline watched the olerd for signs he understood her thirst, her hunger. Instead, he watched her in silence for a while, occasionally reaching towards the cage with one claw or another. In



the distance, the girl thought she heard a chime and noises from the other room. The olerd gave no sign that he'd heard the chime. Instead, he began bobbing his head back and forth towards Pauline, his neck arched. With each bob, he moved closer to the cage, his eyes focused on hers. She felt rooted to the spot, afraid to move for fear he was about to strike at her face with his sharp beak. He came so close to her that she could feel his breath on her arms.

Then, without warning, he vomited.

The chewed food hit the floor of the cage with a wet echo and splattered onto Pauline's legs. She recoiled from the damp starchiness, but before she moved to clean it off, she looked up at the olerd's shiny eyes and thought the better of it. Instead she smiled weakly and nodded in his direction. He responded by reaching down for another of the flat wafers, which he grasped tightly while he watched her.

Fighting back disgust at the sodden mass of regurgitated food clinging to her legs, Pauline scooted forward across the cage until she was up against the bars. Tentatively, she reached her hand out towards the wafer in the olerd's claw and looked up at him, a pleading expression in her eyes. "Please," she begged, "can I have that? Please?"

Her captor watched her for a moment, eyes glittering. Slowly, and without looking away, he lifted his claw to his beak and snapped the cracker up, chewing voraciously. He swallowed quickly with a throaty sound of pleasure. Pauline sobbed once and pulled her hand back from the bars. She looked down at the soft starchy mass on her legs. Defeated, she scooped up a wet chunk with two fingers and lifted it to her mouth, gagging as she swallowed it. The olerd responded with a high pitched squawk of satisfaction. He watched her choke down two more bites before he left.

In the gloom of the cage, Pauline rocked back and forth, hoping that sleep would again bring dreams of the forests, of sunlight and warmth and a time before the nets, before the cage. In the meantime, she licked the starch and saliva and tears from her fingers.



Letter Graded Mail

Sent to garcia@computerhistory.org

By my gentle readers

And what better to start with than a LoC that covers several months worth of issues of The Drink Tank from John Purcell?

Okay, Chris. The semester is finally over, so here's the Lloyd Penney-style loc to end all Lloyd Penney-style locs. Take a deep breath, and let's do a bit of ketchup, er, catch-up here. (Your cooking article in my lastest ish (now posted) is lingering in my mind, drat it all to heck.)

That's a fun article. I'm happy to say that I've continued my experiments.

#204: But of course the right people don't win the Oscars. It is all one, big self-congratulatory party. I haven't seen any of this year's nominees, so I really don't care. By now most of them are available on DVD, which means daughter Penny will be getting them on Netflix. Fine by me. By the way, Mark Mothersbaugh is a founding member of Devo, but you knew that, didn't you?

I watched Rachel Getting Married the other day and it was fantastic and there's an argument to make that Anne Hathaway deserved the Oscar and I can certainly make it! I think Mark Mothersbaugh is probably the best composer for quirky. His work with Wes Andersen is fantastic. He was pretty much the reason that Devo existed!

#205: Well, you know all about the Purcell Petting Zoo. We like all animals - except the untamed wildlife that inhabits our yard (snakes, mole crickets, wheelbugs, etc.). James Bacon had one heckuva honeymoon going to Africa and getting to see all the beasties. The closest thing we have here to a lion is Riley, our Main Coon cat. He's a good size; last week at the vet Riley tipped the scales at 18 pounds. Down a bit; usually he's in the low 20's, but Main Coons are big cats anyway.

We used to have a pair of Nile Monitors that lived in our laundry room. Someone let them go and they took up residence, never bothered any one, but they were collected this year because of the cold weather.

#206: Gawd, but I love Ditmar's artwork! So wonderful. I still have a batch more on the CD he sent me, so if you'd like a few more, Chris, let me know and I will ship away.

I am glad you and Linda had a good time at Corflu Zed - sure wish Val and I could have afforded the trip, but them's the breaks - and one time you gave us Virtual Lurkers an unnecessary close-up. Very scary, and almost burned your face into our computer screens. What a concept: ghost images of Garcia's face every time I log on. Gad, but that's gonna give me nightmares now...

Well, as far as the FAAn Awards went, at least Askance finished in 5th place, which is respectable. I am very glad that Earl Kemp's el got the Best Fanzine nod, and Bruce Gillespie is very deserving of his Best Fan Writer. Great winners all around, especially Jean Martin getting a Best New Fan award. That's pretty danged good for her.

You've seen more Ditmar in Claims Department and I've still got about 100 or so more images on that disk he sent! I was really pleased with the FAAn Awards. I don't think I placed top ten in any category. I wish they'd done another Number One Fan Face like at CorFlu Silver.

#207: We'll see how the Fan Hugos go this year. Once again, these are the only categories I care about since I am completely not up on the fiction, non-fiction, or media



Hugo categories. Well, maybe some of the short-form dramatic presentations, but that's probably about it. I am pulling for Taral Wayne for an award, though.

No question that Taral will take home a rocket. I read a little and watch a lot of the DramPres, but I really care about the Fan Hugos because it's almost all of my friends up there! I know I never have a chance of winning one, but I have to admit that it's kinda cool being nominated.

#208: Computer games are fun. I haven't done much playing on them this year what with my school related work and research taking up most of my time. Oh, well. The Dork Knight continues to amuse me. I have been enjoying these immensely.

I've discovered the Apps on Facebook and MySpace and they're ready to choke me with all of their awesomeness. I should start running The Dork Knight again, but I've got to find the disk that Dann gave me.

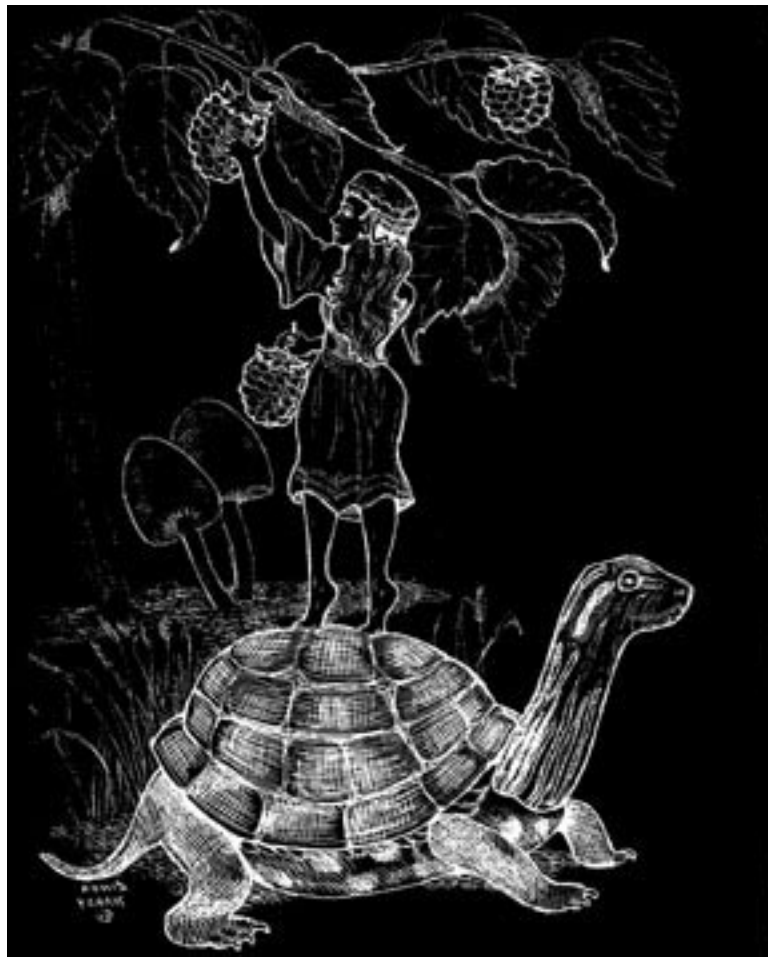
#209: I have yet to see Watchmen. That is all I have to say about this particular issue. From what I have heard, though, it really helps to understand the movie if you have read the graphic novel or at least are somewhat familiar with the background of the movie.

I still say that it's worth watching (comes out late in July on DVD) and you can make it through the film and enjoy it without having read the comic.

#210: Another fabulous Ditmar cover, and I do believe it is called "ANother Fake Bonestell" in honor of Chesley Bonestell's fantastic covers over the years on F&SF and other magazines and paperback covers. Only Ditmar could pull this off.

Sandra Childress's "The Running of the SMoFs" was very enjoyable. Horse racing is one of my guilty pleasures; not for betting on them, but simply enjoying the beauty of those magnificent animals. I love horseback riding, must do more of it this summer.

Bryan, Texas has a rather historic theater downtown, too; it is currently being refurbished for the local theater company, which is good. I love old Art Deco buildings.



If you really want to see some cool old western architecture, go up Highway 6 to Calvert, Texas (about 30 miles north of here). It is home to some of the niftiest Old West buildings and full of antique shops. One of these days Val and I plan on going up there just to spend a Saturday browsing the shops. Wonder what kind of old magazines I might find...?

I love horse racing. I made no money on the Triple Crown this year, though I also didn't lose anything, since my two buck bets across the board were won on the Derby with a Place on a pick at 3-to-1, so I'm still positive for the last decade!

#211: Pretty cover! More Taral Wayne writing - see Aksance #14 for just how prolific Taral has been these past two years - and Howie's article was interesting. No real comment, though, except that I am not done with my childhood yet.

He's been nuts! He's written more words than any other writer I can

think of, and he's also put out a ton of great art. I am extra proud that he's noted The Drink Tank as a starting point for this explosion!

#212: Great cover! It's Garcia, astride the Earth like some gargantua from another planet seeking to destroy All Life As We Know It.

I am glad Taral placed "Looting the Worldcon" with you. It didn't really fit in with how Askance #14 was turning out, so I am happy that this fine piece found the light of day with your zine. He really is a good writer besides being a damn fine artist.

Well, I am the Destroyer of Worlds!

#213: At first I thought this cover was an underwater scene. A closer look make me change my mind. Still, nice work. Is this another Mo Starkey?

Your write-up of the Eaton Conference was excellent. Greg Benford is one of the nicest guys I have ever had the pleasure to meet and hang out with, so I am glad you had the chance to chat with him. I haven't met his brother Jim yet, but that may happen some day. We shall see. In the meantime, a great report with really

cool illustrations you pulled together; I especially liked the Jules Verne picture on page 4: very steampunkish. Sure wish I could have been at the Eaton Conference. Someday if I ever wend my way out west, I really must visit the collection.

More work from cousin Claire, actually. She's doin' great stuff and I've got her working on rebuilding my art collection for zines. She's been doing stuff in that vein. I still haven't spent any time in the collection, but I must come up with a reason and a little time to visit and go through stuff!

#215: EEEeww..... I positively HATE computer crashes! Earlier this year, if you shall recall, my address book got phished, and I have since restocked it. Sometimes I have lost what I've been working on - both fannish and professional (school work, that is) - and forced to redo, and that is one royal pain in the buttocks. I am glad, though, you're back online and pubbing. Now you've got some catch-up to do.

It's been really hard to rebuild everything, especially the work stuff that I lost. Still, I'm working my way through it and I'm almost done. Still, I like this computer much better now as the little quirks it had previously are now gone and it's working much better.

#214: Your Lovely Linda is absolutely right, Chris: backup, backup, backup! A shame to lose all that artwork, and it's a good thing you've got that Ditmar stuff saved elsewhere. With your connections, and that active BArea fan base, you'll rebuild your artfiles and such.

Yes, I know I need to back-up more and more. I've got about 80G of stick storage, which has been very useful in keeping things saved. I might need to buy more.



It's a good thing to get John Hertz article reprints out in your zine. He's been one of fandom's better writers for a long time now -- is he nominated for Best Fan Writer this year? I forget offhand, but I think he is - and getting his work into Drink Tank is a bit of a coup. Good on yer, mate. I really only met Jack Speer once (Corflu Quire) for any great length of time; other times in the past were very brief: at both MidAmeriCon and IguanaCon I was introduced to Jack, but neither time led to any real conversation. That would have been great, but not meant to be, I guess. RIP, Jack.

I liked him, and I find myself thinking of him as a pillar that we've lost. It's a shame. I think John did a great job of paying tribute to him, though I apparently lost all of his italics, which I've got to find a way to fix.

Y'know sump'in'? Taral Wayne is just as good a writer as he is an artist. One of the pieces he mentions in this article ("Body Werk") was the cover of Askance #9. I still consider that one of the top four covers I've had the pleasure to pubso far; the others are Brad Foster's debut ish and first annish covers, Steve Stiles on #10, and the one coming up next month by Ross Chamberlain will now make this a Top 5 Askance cover list. Now to get working on that ish in a couple weeks.

That's a strong list of artists. I went through the old Drink Tanks the other day and I realized that I've had a lot of really crappy covers (mostly these are me trying to be cute) and some fantastic covers (I loved 112 and 121, and 108, which is really a better issue than I remembered) but not many in between. How can you go wrong with Ditmar, Steve Stiles, Mo Starkey and folks?

Speaking of art always reminds me of photographs, and the pics you ran in this issue were really good. Looks like folks had a wonderful time at that con.

Despite what Frank Wu says, I still want to see the new Star Trek flick. It looks like fun, so if I approach it on that level it should be alright. With your interest in movies, Christopher, you should do a Summer SF Movie Spectacular ish of Drink Tank. Think of it as a stfnal viewer's guide to the skiffy flicks of summer of 2009.

That reminds me: I need that arkle for Askance 15 by the first of July. Can do, big guy? Remember the theme. I've got ideas in store as far as layout and assorted illoes go.

I rally liked it and I'm thinking of seeing it again (as the only films coming up that I want to see are Harry Potter, Funny People and Public Enemies. Sadly, as I write this, people are watching Transformers. Of course, I am excited for Jennifer's Body with Megan Fox, but that's not until after summer. Transformers came out and I am not planning on seeing it...even with Megan Fox!



With that, this loc is over and done with. Now to fall behind on your next spurt of fan pubbing. Take care, roomie.

All the best,
John Purcell

And it's always great to hear from ya! I'm working on that article for ya. It's changed a bit, but it'll still fit and work.

And now...Lloyd Penney on the subject of Issue 215!

Is the computer crash bad? Are you still waiting for someone to come and recover your files, or is everything back up and running? I thought I might wait for 214 to come out, but instead, here are comments on The Drink Tank 215, plus the single (malt) zines from Baycon and Westercon.

Yeah, it was damn bad.

215...Sounds like the files lost are serious, but I am sure that most people would send you their files again, or have them in places where you could get the files again. Take what you need of my LiveJournal, and I will be working on getting some more Tales From the Convention! out to the zines at large. Aren't memory sticks great? Yvonne got me a 4Gb USB drive a couple of years ago, and now 16Gb and 32 Gb drives are available. With the benefits of flash memory, I've seen 500Gb flash drives available, and we might invest the money. I could back up my entire system on one of those.

Memory technology amazes me. Someone should start a museum looking at the phenomena...

Kevin's Pants...is the rabbit performing Hamlet? Las Vegas is a great place to be, but it's a heckuva walk. Fremont Street is truly entertaining, and sometimes rough on the eyes. It's a shame about Seattle having to withdraw from 2011...they've had some very bad luck. After imbibing, any three unrelated foods would taste good. After more imbibing, anything you might put in your mouth, food or not, would taste good.

Seattle bids may well be cursed. It's the second or third time they've had to withdraw. I'll need to double-check that Fight SMOFs zines to be sure.

This is the first issue of The Drink Tank that I've done on this computer. To celebrate, I'm having RIBS!!!

Westercon in Las Vegas...we've all gotten so many zines from Arnie Katz, we might not realize there are other fans in Vegas, too. Woody Bernardi is back in Vegas? Not connected with the Vegrants any more? We all choose what parts of fandom we want to be a part of, but that shouldn't give us the right to diss what others like. Leigh Ann likes patchouli? I know Yvonne does... The fannish Match Game wreaked havoc once again, the delight of the people in the audience, no doubt.

I think Woody was just visiting. That Match Game was nuts, though it wasn't the one where I openly mocked Kevin J. Anderson and co. which got me a big laugh just before a certain party entered which would have been highly uncomfortable *cough, cough*

Liars! The Journal of Lies...Liars, liars, Kevin's Pants on fire! If John Scalzi gets any more fan Hugos, we might all drop them altogether, and stick with the FAAn Awards. And if we do that, much of fanzine fandom might wash their hands of them, and come up with some other awards. Just Tape Some Bacon To It...what did James do in that issue?

I'm telling you, Scalzi would be a KING of Men if he just did a regular zine!

Looking for more steampunk, Mr. G...we got our steamy dose at Anime North this past weekend, and had a great time. I was the railway conductor, and Yvonne was the airship pilot. And, I am finally going through Phil Foglio's Girl Genius...great stuff!

Enjoy Girl Genius. I love it and I'm thinking he's taking home the Hugo for Best Graphic Story. I'm so happy that I get to be the Fan GoH when he and Kaja are the Artist Guests at Windycon. That's like Heaven!

I got a cute redhead for MY 30th birthday...I get her for every birthday! And, I will be turning 50 on June 2, and I will still get that cute redhead! (Yvonne. Who did you think I

meant?)

You turned 50, you lucky dog! I'll be sure to give you a call when I hit the Big 5-0 in a decade and a half.

Kirk...this convention is swarming with Klingons! They're all wearing flesh-coloured turtles on their heads, and car floor mats on their shoulders, and they are all TALL! And how many trilobites can fit on a CD? I gathered that Mercedes Lackey and Larry Flint were ill just before the convention. Afterwards, I heard of con crud complaints, so maybe they made the right decision. Are we all con crud carriers?

Yeah, Mercedes and Larry didn't make it out, but they were so nice to do a live video feed, which was a lot of fun to play with. There was a moment when a falcon was on screen and Mercedes' parrot went nuts!

I thought Dave Langford used all his Hugo Awards to make a silvery picket fence for his front yard? Yup, everything in this Drunkzine lounge is extremely fan. Just for the record, Moxie is a warrior's drink. It's not carbonated prune juice, but it does taste like it.

iDamn straight! I love Moxie and I can't wait until they drop the price at BevMo!

Did I get through everything? Well, if you can do it, so can I. Good luck reconstituting issue 214, and it will get a more coherent loc than this one when it arrives. See you and it then!
Yours, Lloyd Penney.

***Well, it wasn't exactly what I planned, but it happened, and that's all I can ask for
And now...Taral Wayne on issue 215!***

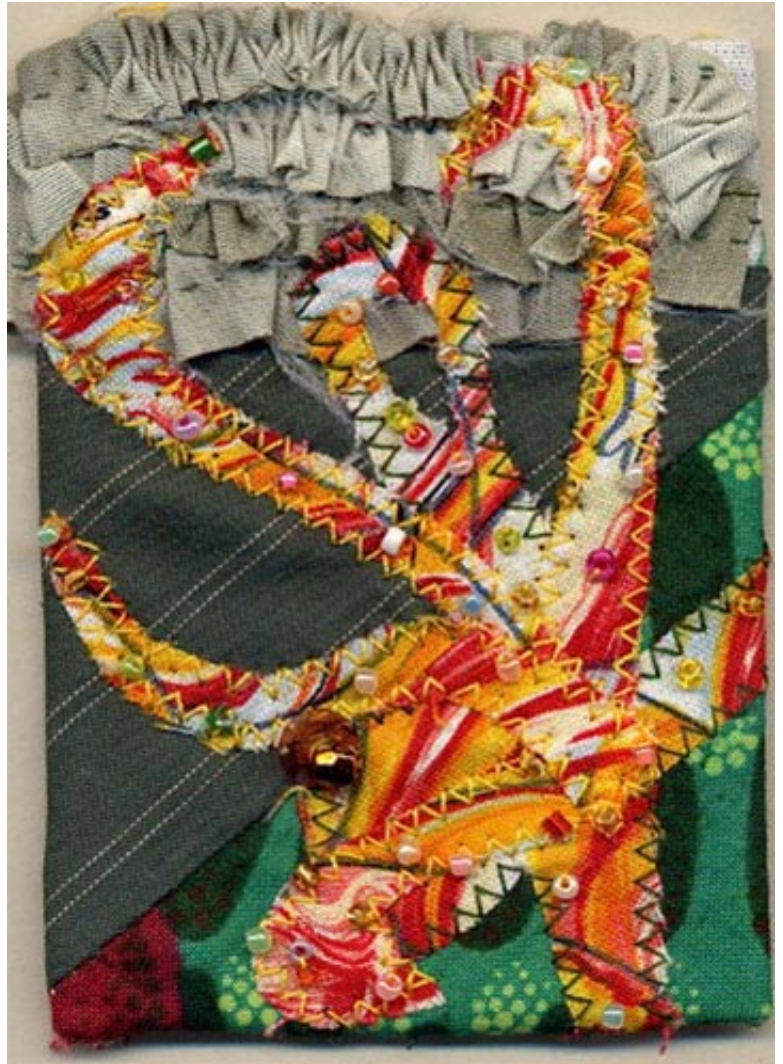
Now, a LoC on Frank Wu's piece on Star Trek from Taral Wayne

***Loc on Drink Tank 215, Jun
09***

Frank has *that* right. ...the improbability that Kirk would receive permanent command of the newly launched flagship of Starfleet, that is. But the violations of plausibility hardly stop there.

For instance, what of collecting new recruits right at the construction site of the Enterprise, or the total lack of evident security? And then launching a shuttle ship to orbit from literally under the shadow of the half-finished starship? It looked very pretty, but not even in the improvident 21st. century would we do anything so fraught with the possibility of violent, flaming ends for a cartload of green recruits.

And did you note the huge chasm that the 12 year old drove his guardian's vintage Corvette into? Whoa! Wasn't that in *Iowa*? Since when are there chasms that make the Grand Canyon look like a gentle depression to be found off the main roads of Iowa? Did a



comet gouge out a fifty mile long, two thousand foot deep channel during a glancing blow in the early 22nd. Century?

What about the fabled Kobayashi Maru incident? Would the real James T. Kirk crack jokes and crunch on an apple during his rigged test? Or would he have played it with a straight face, and did his best to pass it off as a realistic response to an anticipated hopeless situation, one that he might have carried off in the actual event? He would have had to be very persuasive to get the academy to accept that result. The smart aleck in the new film would have just been washed out, or at least forced to re-take the test without cheating. As we saw, it appears he was saved only because an emergency interrupted his hearing. Just in... are all Starfleet computers that accessible to the students? Why didn't a computer log tip off Spock immediately that his program had been tampered with?

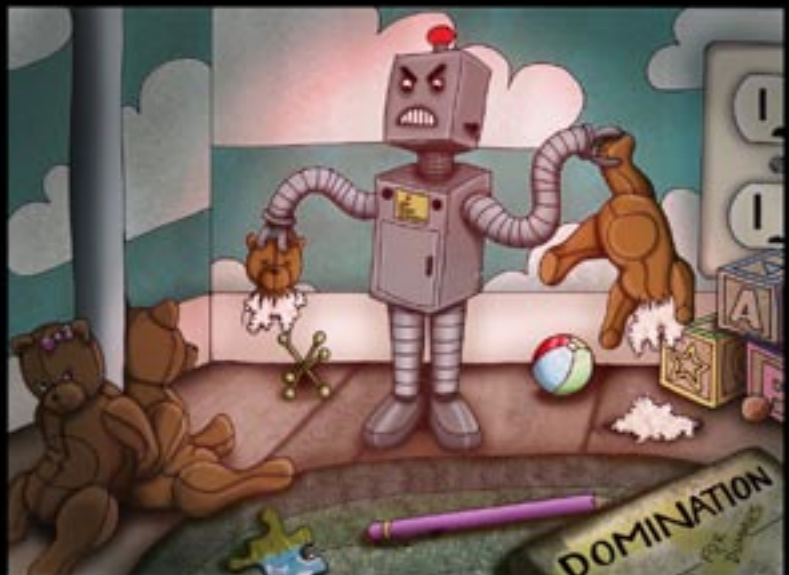
One might also ask when James T. Kirk acquired his characteristic penchant to stop and moralize, so evident in The Original Series. The grinning bad boy of the film seemed to have no higher motives. He liked to drive fast and break rules, but not "for the greatest good of the greatest number," or anything sappy like that.

One could probably go on like this for pages... But the real howler is one so fundamental to the plot, and very premise, of the film that it *must* be brought up.

Here we have a vengeful Romulan, whose home world has been destroyed, and whose ship has been propelled 129 years into the past. What does he do with the 129 years given him? Does he inform the Vulcans about the future outcome of Spock's attempt to save Romulus from a nova, so that the tragedy might be averted? No, the galaxy's most stupid Romulan spends his time trying to wipe out all the other world's of the Alpha Quadrant, in a pointless act of revenge. I suppose if Vulcan doesn't exist in 129 years time, Spock won't fumble his rescue attempt. On the other hand, who **is** going to rescue Romulus from the nova then?

D'oh!

None of which is to say I didn't enjoy the movie. It was a great deal of fun, and the actor who played young Spock had the role spot on. I could hardly believe it wasn't the real Nimoy, magically made younger than he had been even in TOS. "Bones" was almost the real McCoy, though he overlooked the mint-julep accent we might have expected from him at that tender age. Sulu was Sulu, powered up and more vivid than before. Chekov was... well, amusing. I suppose they had to portray him differently from the Paul McCartney look-alike he was in 1966. The stereotype was no longer intelligible in 2009. Scotty, though. I like this Scotty, but he isn't the dour Scotsman engineer cliché that the original Montgomery Scott was – this one was a distant relative of the sort of Glasgow hoodie who regularly attends





soccer riots, and is likely to belong to a white supremacist movement.

Okay, so the plot of the new movie has assembled the whole cast in one go, though not without doing considerable violence to the facts as we supposedly knew them. And by blowing up Vulcan, we've reset the future clock. Nothing from now on has to happen as it happened before. We're ready for a completely new franchise that the writers can dismember and distort to heart's desire. What will they do with it?

My fear is that future Star Trek movies will likely follow in the footsteps of this one, and be light-hearted, frolicking, and too damn much fun. Possibly a sort of Indiana Jones in Space, with all the edge-of-your seat action and adolescent humour of Harrison Ford transporting onto the bridge of the Serpidian battle cruiser and exclaiming, "Snakes, I hate snakes..."

Myself, I prefer my Star Trek to be taken a little more seriously.

In my eyes, it was pretty much the perfect Star Trek movie for me. It didn't take itself too seriously, and it managed to give us non-campy action (and Diora Baird as the Green-skinned roommate of Ohuru) which is always to be applauded. Yes, massive gaps in logic, but still it's all a lot of fun and ultimately, that's what I wanted out of the flick. Of course, there's also the fact that The Romulans must have had a nice food system to supply for 25 years!

And what of Mr. Eric Mayer? Well, here's a LoC from him too!

Chris,

Please note the new mail. I had to change ISPs which I thought was bad, but nothing like a computer crash.

I've noted that. I steal my wireless, so there's never a need to change ISPs!

My condolences on that. Losing all that stuff is really depressing.

Years ago I lost a lot of laboriously collected music files and that really sucks. Yes, we are supposed to back everything up diligently, but I admit I only do backups in a desultory fashion. And that's still the case. I guess I'm a slow learner, or maybe just bone idle.

I lost most of my music, but I've got enough scattered across enough old computers that I've managed to put almost all of it together.

Your loss did result in a small work of genius by Frank Wu. I mean, yes, come to think about it, a computer crash is not as bad as the "loss of all iron," but believe it or not, I would never have thought about the loss of all iron! Sheesh. I love it. But still, I'm not

saying Frank's bit was funny enough to be worth you losing all your art and music files.
Frank's a great guy and I missed having him in my pages! It may have been worth it...

When my computer went down it took a lot of stuff other than music files. Most of it was not missed. In fact some of the losses were positive. For example, I was finally rid of 30,000 words of a noxious novel which I had conceived and started before I had a clue to what I was doing. The whole concept was unusable, not to mention idiotic, but of course I couldn't throw the deformed baby away. Actually it was more like the tar baby of Uncle Remus notoriety. I couldn't shed it and every so often I'd wrestle with the thing but that only made it worse. Well, it'll never waste my time again. Good riddance! And then there was the pdf fanzine I put together back when I discovered eFanzines. (Has it been over four years now?) Anyway I decided discretion was the better part of stupidity, but did I delete it? No.

I blame the improved performance of my machine on the fact that the OS and everything had to be re-installed.

It continued to lurk on my hard drive, just waiting for me to get drunk enough to address it to Bill Burns and hit send. No risk of that now, thank Ghu. So I hope you at least lost some crap that you'll be glad to see the back of. I'm tempted to say a hard drive failure can kind of like a digital colon cleanse. But when you lose music and art it's more like a colon cleanse that removes your heart and lungs too.

(Whoa, don't touch the flush handle!!)

Well, maybe not heart and lungs. I'd say spleen and appendix.

And as for locs...I've been so negligent about writing recently you probably didn't lose one from me but if you read it the loc served its purpose. It wouldn't have been great art.

I'm always glad to have your words in the pages, whether it's as an article or a LoC. You know, you could write more articles instead of LoCs...

I don't want to sound too glib. I know it's devastating to lose certain things and I hope you can find replacements.

I am working on it. I've at least got Stop Making Sense and now The Wild Party!



FREAKSHOW

The Cranky Person's Guide to the 2009 "Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form" Hugo Nominees

by Daniel M. Kimmel

I don't have a good relationship with the Hugos. When I started casting Hugo ballots in the '90s I tried to be very conscientious, reading as many of the nominees as I could. I discovered a lot of authors who became favorites. And then I watched as the stuff I had ranked *beneath* "No Award" went home with the prize.

Then there are the "lost years," that awful time a few years back when it was pointless to even vote in the Dramatic Presentation category because that horrible Tolkien crap was going to win. Every year. Even the year after when Gollum's appearance at an awards show won. I don't know why I'm immune to the supposed charms of these overrated books and movies, but I'm glad they're long behind us now.

Which brings us to this year's long form nominees. When the dramatic category was split I was in the camp who wanted what most people wanted: a movie category and a TV category. However revising the Hugo rules is like herding cats or sculpting in Jell-O: it's exasperating and the result is going to be far different from what was intended. Crazy nitpickers – or, more properly, our fellow fans – insisted we had to broaden the category to include plays, slide shows, podcasts... in short, all sorts of performances. In addition, why should a miniseries compete with a single episode of a show when it's more like a movie? So we have the "long form" and "short form" categories. I haven't seen the "short form" nominees this year, hence this essay focusing solely on solely on the long form. With any luck this will appear after the voting has ended and will have no impact whatsoever.

Three of the nominees are feature films based on comic book (excuse me, "graphic novel") characters. These were actually three of the most entertaining films out last summer, and I gave them all good reviews. But are they Hugo-worthy? "The Dark Knight" was the follow up to the brilliant retooling of Batman in "Batman Begins" and while hugely entertaining was a little too busy for its own good. Did we really need both the Joker and Harvey "Two-Face" Dent in the same film? I think not. However there's no question that the late Heath Ledger's turn as the Joker was a memorable and unsettling capstone to his all too short career. While some cynics think his untimely death made people overreact, there is no doubt that this is a performance that would have been noticed even without the real life tragedy.

Now that said, what exactly is it that makes this a science fiction movie? Sure there



are people running around in various disguises and costumes, but while they might be copied at a convention masquerade there's nothing inherently science fictional or fantastic about doing so. (Odd, yes. "Sense of wonder" unusual? No.) I'd be disappointed if this film won the Hugo. I accept that fantasy and horror are also included in our awards, but I don't see any of those elements playing much of a role here.

Which brings us to "Hellboy II: The Golden Army." Okay, here we have demons and mutants. This qualifies. I did have a lot of fun with this film, but I thought the story was too complicated and overreached. Thinking back now I'm not sure I could tell you what the story was about without rereading my review. On the other hand, the scene where Hellboy and Abe Sapien get drunk on Mexican beer and sing along to a maudlin Barry Manilow song was well worth the price of admission. There was a real twisted sense of humor at work here. Which is to say, my kind of humor.

What is there to say about "Iron Man?" Great film. The birth of a new franchise. Robert Downey, Jr. was a standout and if he'd come to Montreal to accept the award that would be reason enough to give it to this film. As the author of I'll Have What She's Having, a book about romantic comedies, I also loved the by-play between Downey and Gwyneth Paltrow as his trusted assistant. Let the twelve-year-olds geek out over the suit. My favorite moment was when Downey said he could do very well without her and Paltrow replied, "Really? What's your Social Security number?" Not a perfect film, though, and the climactic battle reminded me of nothing so much as the excesses of "Transformers" as the two mechanical suits battled it out. (Were the actors even there that day?)



The last actual movie on the list is "WALL*E." Pixar has become the gold standard of animated features and their film for this summer, "Up," will be on many ten best lists at the end of the year including, possibly, mine. They've only failed once – artistically, not financially – with "Cars." (The only thing worth watching in "Cars" is the final few minutes with an absolutely delicious joke involving John Ratzenberger, who is in the voice cast for all the Pixar films.) "WALL-E" is a touching parable about consumerism and standing up for one's self, and if the robots were sometimes too cute, well, this is a cartoon being released by Disney. Clearly the most SFnal entry on the list, it would be a worthy Hugo winner if the voters so decree.

But wait, there's one more nominee. "METAtropolis" is an audiobook presentation edited by my dear pal John Scalzi. Well, not quite a pal. We did a couple of panels together at Denvention last year and

he signed a book for a friend of mine. I love his writing and he was delightful in person but I doubt he could pick me out of a police lineup. Scalzi and four other writers (Elizabeth Bear, Jay Lake, Tobias Buckell, Karl Schroeder) each wrote a novella for a shared universe about a future urban dystopia. I bet it's wonderful. I bet I'd love it if it came out in book form. However even for free there was no way I was going to devote 547 minutes to find out. Maybe you folks who commute 4 ½ hours each way to work have the time to listen in. You're probably the same people who wanted to know if you can give more Hugos to the "extended editions" of "Lord of the Rings." Come Judgment Day I will no doubt have a lot to answer for, but I don't think that not devoting nine hours of my life to an audiobook nominee is going to be one of them.

So this curmudgeon is rooting for the adorable "WALL•E" and hoping that the youngsters who enjoyed it will become the convention-going fans of tomorrow. And John, if you should win instead, congratulations in advance. When next year brings us a 400 hour audiobook nominee from Neal Stephenson, we'll all know whom to blame.



My Three Favourite Michael Jackson songs - PYT (Pretty Young Thing), Human Nature and Gotta Be Startin' Somethin'

As Eye See It

Taral Wayne

In the following, I've expanded on a number of comments recently made on FaceBook. They seemed rather wasted there, so I thought I'd waste them somewhere else as well.

Guess I'll be visiting an ophthalmologist... as soon as an appointment can be made, that is.

For years I've had a minor physical idiosyncrasy -- a right eyelid that drooped a little. It gradually gave me more and more of an ironic look. But now it's drooping so far it's begun to cover the pupil, and interfere with my vision. I need to find out why, and whether it can be easily corrected. I can't go around holding one eye open with my finger, after all...

There are a number of possible causes. When I mention this to people, the inevitable response is "Oh my gawd, you haven't had a stroke, have you?" While I suppose that is possible, there are no other signs of it – slurred speech for example, or facial paralysis. More likely would be a nerve problem. Or simple age related ptosis of the eyelid.

Ptosis is a condition that means nothing fancier than "droopiness." It affects breasts too. As well as internal organs. In the eyelid the common cause is a weakening of the

muscles that keep the eyelid open, and it tends to worsen throughout the day. This is exactly what I'm experiencing.

If that's the only thing I have to worry about, the solution is a simple out-patient surgical procedure that re-sections the muscle above the eye, in effect removing the slack.

The condition grew so severe that adaptive behavior – such as looking downward – was unhelpful. It appeared suddenly, and lasted for about a week. I found myself often coping by keeping my left eye closed altogether. Would I have to attend the worldcon wearing an eye-patch, I worried. But then my droopy eye-lid slowly improved. Even so, I find that some days are a little better than other days. Being outdoors, or in sunlight are harder going than being indoors in artificial light. So I've tended to stay in my apartment rather than take the walks I normally would. Wearing sunglasses, staring at the sidewalk, and misjudging distances leaves little room for taking pleasure in the exercise. Good-buy summer; I hardly knew you.

After dogging my GP for a couple of weeks, I finally got news about his referral. I have a tentative appointment to meet an ophthalmologist now.

October!!!

I may be able to speed this up, but I never expected a delay as long as four months! Matters could have been worse. The ophthalmologist *might* have scheduled my appointment at the same time I was supposed to be in Montreal. Or suppose the surgery was immediately before the worldcon. I might have had to appear with an eye-patch after all. Still, *October*? I don't relish stumbling around like this almost all summer. And it will go a long way to spoiling any chance of having a good time at the con.

I knew being a GoH at Anticipation was too good *not* to have a catch. Well, now I know what it is.

What of Canada's much vaunted socialized health care system, and invidious comparisons with America's "corporate" health care system? Is my wait for an appointment only the tip of a "socialist" iceberg? Are unwanted newborns being thrown out of the windows of hospitals in downtown Toronto? Are cancer patients succumbing to their tumors long before treatment? Are elderly citizens forgetting who they are before they can be diagnosed with Alzheimer's? Rubbish. Canadians have slightly longer life expectancies than Americans, in fact, and a much smaller infant mortality rate.

Much as I don't like waiting for this appointment, it has to be admitted that I'm seeing a specialist, not a GP. I can walk into my General Practitioner's office any time of the day and week without any appointment. Not only that, but if I were living in the U.S.



I'd have *no* medical insurance -- I can't afford such luxuries. Not even if I were to forgo all discretionary spending would I have the two or three thousand dollars it costs for even the rock-bottom coverage advertised on American TV. The alternative would be Medicare.

As I understand it, the quality of coverage available from Medicare varies a great deal. In general it is substandard to what you can get through private insurance, but to what extent depends on the state, and county, or even what *neighborhood* you live in. Whatever the drawbacks of Canada's health care system, it has to be said that I'm seeing the same ophthalmologist that anyone else would see,

and waiting the same length of time that anyone else would. Being richer would be an advantage only if I chose to pay some enormous amount of money to attend a private clinic in the U.S.

Putting it another way, if I were well-heeled my choices would be exactly what they are for anyone well-heeled in the U.S. Since I'm broke, my choices are infinitely better in Canada.

When the insurance lobby in the U.S. warns people against the loss of freedom of choice in health care, they forget – or resort to deliberate misrepresentations, as I think more likely – about the lack of choice when going to Medicare. Medicare is a walk in and get what service you're given, period.

But even if you have an insurer, you may not be much better off. Many HMO's forbid choice. They give you a short list of physicians, and you must see one of them. If you choose to see any other GP, your visitation fees won't be covered. Moreover, an doctor working for an HMO will only recommend treatments the HMO authorizes. Similarly, he will only prescribe drugs the HMO authorizes. You call this choice? It sounds more like "democracy in Iran."

If you don't like seeing the doctor you're told to see, you have other choices. You can pay for a separate consultation, and a different treatment, but the HMO will cover not a nickel of it – despite the thousands of dollars you've paid them. Alternately, you can change plans, and insure yourself at much greater cost. What the "freedom of choice" the insurance lobby ballyhoos is only the freedom to pay for what you can afford. Plainly, "corporate health care" equates life and health with a commodity, like a cell-phone with more features. If you can't afford it... chose to be sick... or worse. Your call, so to speak. Life is a marketable commodity, to be bought by those who have shown themselves most deserving of life, or to enjoy the "level playing field" of good health, by making the most income.

But sometimes I think that even the money is secondary. Behind the issue of wealth is a mode of thinking that becomes familiar if you've read much about other societies around the world and throughout history. It appears that the real values held by those who wish to preserve the status quo in health care could be a class system that, of course, no-one formally acknowledges. Some people have to be treated as better people than others. Some people deserve more from life, by virtue of an imagined superior nature. This validates the premises on which a certain vision of America was founded – the Protestant work ethic, and a belief that Godly work is rewarded in Godly favoritism. Deny those fundamental beliefs, and much about the idealized national character would be revealed as a toxic historical fiction.



I note with interest that the rhetoric from the insurance lobby focuses on the loss of business that would result from any government run option. There's no denying it. They're quite right. Insurance companies *would* lose business -- as Canada's big insurers more than likely did when we began our universal, single-payer health care system around 50 years ago. However, why should it be taken for granted that the self-interest of investors in the insurance business, a minority by any measure, should be more important to public policy than the public's health? In Canada, the public has made it pretty clear that the We The People won't tolerate

the rich opting out of the public system. Our reason is exactly the same as the American insurers' reason to fear the middle class opting out of private plans – except it's the other way around. We feel that if the wealthy could, they would opt out of the public health care system. While this would benefit a minority, it would leave the public system with the burden of providing care for the greatest number while robbing it of money to do so.

But evidently the balance of power in the US is different than it is in Canada. The interests of insurance providers trumps public interest. Any health care reform the U.S. is likely to mandate is almost certainly to be through private insurers. No matter who pays the premiums, or who reaps the benefits, the insurance companies will remain in the transaction, skimming off the top. Profit *must* be made by somebody, whether there's any need for it or not. It's natural law, according to neocons.

Medieval lords believed the same thing about land ownership – if a peasant had land it wasn't real ownership. It would be taken away from him, and given to a titled thug who would then “really” own it. The feudal system demanded that land belong to the king, who then awarded it in fiefdom to the nobility. The nobles then gave the land to his serfs. Ultimately, though, the lord controlled the land, regardless of the commoners who actually occupied it. Occupancy didn't matter. “Ownership” in the middle ages was a right given by the king.

In the Modern era we think we've escaped that, but increasingly we seem to be slipping into a corporate vassalage, where we can do nothing for ourselves as “the public”. We are being pressured surely and gradually into permitting a corporation to do everything for us. At a profit of course. Even where profit clearly undermines the self-evident purpose of providing effective, universal health care we are told we should be powerless to act. Public action isn't “real” – only a the corporate pursuit of profit enjoys legitimacy.

Over the last few decades, the process of reducing the public to serfdom seems to have advanced further in America than in most other developed nations. Ironically, where the people still have the power to act together in their own interests, American conservatives call them “socialists,” and decry a “loss of freedom” when the people act!

This is not to say that in Canada we have no private health insurance. If you demand a transplant your doctor feels would serve no purpose, or want a quack treatment in the Philippines, or require a private room and nurse, or wish to try experimental drugs or treatments, or if you prefer to consult a world famous personal physician who caters to the rich and famous, or if you simply want a face lift, the public won't pay for it. The consensus is it's not needed, or is doubtfully effective. Of course, you can either pay out of your own pocket, or you can carry additional insurance. You can buy as much extra, premium health care coverage as you can afford. Be sure that the rich carry plenty.

The companies that were in the health insurance business are still around. No ex-insurance executives, are selling apples on street corners. No investors were bankrupted. Insurance companies learned to sell other kinds of insurance, or even went into another line of business. The rich always adapt. They resist it because – unlike some laid-off GM worker – they can buy off change.

And that's the bottom line.



Fannish Memory Syndrome

by Steve Green

I first met Alan Keeley circa 1990, when he was managing a video rental store around a mile from Ann's and my home. A year or so later, when I was first attempting to launch a career as a freelance journalist, Alan mentioned he was off to pastures new and wondered if I'd be interested in taking over his rota of four five-hour shifts per week. Since the owner had no objection to me bringing along my primitive Amstrad word processor in order to catch up with magazine work during the quieter periods (of which there were many), my decision was a no-brainer.

Alan and I kept in touch, not least because we shared a love for sleazy horror, particularly those movies demonised as "video nasties" and effectively outlawed by mid-'80s legislation. By this time, I was writing a regular fanzine review column for *The Dark Side*, then (as now) Britain's leading horror magazine, and I used to lend Alan copies of the more interesting publications. In return, he let me borrow some of the wilder pre-censorship releases in his enormous video collection.

I'm not sure which of us came up with the idea for *Horrorshow*, but for me it was a natural way to vent my increasing disbelief at some of the more ridiculous material I was being sent (the anal comparisons between various video releases, often oblivious to the fact that PAL and NTSC tapes are mastered at different speeds; the fascination with "flavour of the month" directors such as Dario Argento and Jorg Buttgereit, endlessly refreshed as the latest batch of Nth-generation pirates hit school playgrounds).

Horrorshow was deliberately engineered to run against the grain of its contemporaries: mimeographed rather than photocopied (other than the covers), available for "the usual" rather than cash, abusive for no other reason than it seemed funny at the time. Still does, actually.

As for the editorial pseudonyms we adopted, I'd first used "Eddie Trenchcoat" as a byline when producing the occasional cartoon for my local newspaper more than a decade earlier, whilst "Mister Damage" had apparently been Alan's nickname / alter-ego since time immemorial. He was still using it when he joined the Midlands band Talisman on bass several years ago, and it enabled frontman Clem Dallaway to track me down one Sunday in late May and pass on the news of our mutual friend's death two days earlier.

Alan had never been exactly efficient in maintaining contact with his friends, many of whom had worked alongside him in Birmingham's vast indoor and outdoor markets, but Ann and I had hoped we'd cross paths again after he forgot to let us know his latest change of address sometime in the late 1990s. More recently, I'd kept on the look-out so I could let

him know of Ann's passing. Instead, the first Wednesday in June found me standing in a Roman Catholic chapel in Maypole, an urbanised village south of the city centre, watching a noticeably bored priest splash water on Alan's coffin. He was 52.

You always think you have more time, and you never do.

Shine on, Mister Damage, you crazy diamond.

[Both issues of Horrorshow are now archived at eFanzines.]



Tales of the DORK KNIGHT

