

FANZINES 5

May 2001

By Ted White

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Each year fans interested in fanzines hold a convention called Corflu. Corflu 18, held in Boston, is only recently over (next year's Corflu will be in Annapolis, Maryland), and, as usual, I was handed a bunch of fanzines. Here are a couple:

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NIEKAS (Ed Meskys at Niekas Publications, RR#2, Box 63, 322 Whittier Hwy., Center Harbor NH 03226-9708; e-mail to edmeskys@worldpath.net; subscriptions: \$19 for four issues, \$37 for eight; also available for trades or contributions)

Niekas is a big (64 pages plus covers) photo-offset fanzine. It's "standard" letter-page-sized, but printed on sheets twice that size and "saddle-stapled." Ed Meskys is the "Editor-in-Chief" with Anne Braude and Todd Frazier his "Associate" and "Assistant" respectively, while Jim Reynolds handles "Design, Typesetting, Layout and Production." Ed needs these helpers because he has been for several decades too visually impaired to handle all the chores of a large fanzine himself. Ed started *Niekas* in 1962, while he was still sighted – originally for a small apa (amateur publishing association). Within a few issues he picked up Felice Rolfe as his coeditor and his fanzine exploded into a fat genzine which won the Hugo Award for Best Fanzine in 1967. Felice has left the fanzine, but with the current issue, #46, it's still going strong.

Niekas is a type of fanzine which is called "sercon" these days. That means it approaches SF from a serious, sometimes academic, point of view. This issue highlights "An Address by Our Technology Guest of Honor," by Dr. Raymond Kurzweil, a keynote address to the fourth US/Canada [blind] Technology Seminar, reprinted from *Braille Monitor*. There are seven columns (in addition to Ed's editorial), notable among them Diana L. Paxson's "Patterns: Sharing a World with Marion Zimmer Bradley" and Ray Nelson's "On Liking Clark Ashton Smith." This issue is a special "Strange Sports Stories" issue, with eight contributions to "The Sports Section." In addition there are two "Extremely Short Science-Fiction Stories," several works of poetry, a section of book reviews by a variety of writers, and what amounts to *two* letter columns, the first arranged by topics under discussion. The art and visual presentation of *Niekas* is looser and more "fannish" than one might expect in a fanzine of its nature; *Niekas* is not an imitation professional magazine. It will be appealing to a broad range of fans, including those mostly unfamiliar with fanzines.

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AZTEC BLUE (Murray Moore, 1065 Henley Rd., Mississauga, ON L4Y 1C8 Canada; e-mail to mmoore@pathcom.com; available for trade, contributions, letters of comment and single-issue requests)

Aztec Blue #3 lies at the opposite end of the fanzine spectrum from *Niekas*. It runs 22 pages and is warm and informal, half of its pages taken up with the letter column. The remainder of the material is Murray's editorial, which opens the issue, and the conclusion of John Berry's report on a 1988 trip to Albania, the first two parts of which appeared in issues 1 and 2. Murray knows how to make his fanzine look good. Grant Canfield's cover, a drawing of a "man with a bionic backhoe for an arm," is brilliantly conceived and rendered in a style not unlike that of French comics artist Moebius. Grant's back cover drawing, a study of a "light fixture at the bridge over the Truckee River, downtown Reno, Nevada," reminds us that his day gig is as an architect. Between the covers, *Aztec Blue* is neatly but informally presented and is an excellent example of an unpretentious fanzine that deserves your attention.

More reviews next issue.

--Ted White