

FANZINES 16

April 2002

By Ted White

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TRAP DOOR #21, March 2002 (Robert Lichtman, P.O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442; available for “the usual” – “letters, contributions both written and artistic, and accepted trades” – or \$5.00 per copy; e-mail to locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com)

Trap Door has been coming out on a quasi-annual schedule since the '80s and has over the years become the premier “fannish” fanzine. Editor Lichtman says his fanzine is “like a class reunion,” because fans who had apparently been long vanished from fandom (“gafiated” – as in *Getting Away From It All*) turn up in its pages. Lichtman has, like me, spent his entire adult life as a fan, having published his first fanzine back in 1959. And by now he has honed his approach to fanzine-editing and can consistently produce one of the best fanzines coming out – if infrequently.

Lichtman had been using a simple word-processor and doing manual paste-ups for years, but with #21 *Trap Door* has fully entered the DTP/computer-publishing age. And this issue presents some impressive material.

The lead article is by Chris Priest. “The Lost Years” describes what happened to his writing career when he entered into a partnership with Dave Langford to run a small software company which more or less grew like Topsy. The title says it all but the 9-page piece fills in the details entertainingly and insightfully.

That piece would stand out in most fanzines, but here it is eclipsed by Joel Nydahl’s “Revisiting Nydahl’s Disease.” Nydahl is famous in fandom for having put out the best fanzine of 1953 (*Vega*) and then totally gafiating – at the age of 15! His abrupt disappearance from fandom after publishing the superb 100-page *Vega* #13 – its first “annish” or anniversary issue – led to the term “Nydahl’s Disease” to describe fans who burn themselves out in a blaze of glory. Last year both Lichtman and I contacted Nydahl (over the internet), leading to his decision to drop in at the Philadelphia Worldcon, where I finally met him for the first time (we’d been correspondents in 1953 and I’d drawn the cover for *Vega* #5). In his piece for *Trap Door* Joel describes what happened to him in 1953 (his family had moved from a farm to an in-town home and his social life had picked up) and what happened at Philadelphia last Labor Day weekend.

But that’s not all! Gordon Eklund contributes “The Katz Kontroversy: A Document,” a work of fanfiction (fiction *about* fans); Ron Bennett writes about “The Real Mrs. Brown,” under whom he taught at the Warwick School in Singapore for three years; Lucy Huntzinger tells “Twice-Told Tales;” Calvin Demmon writes about “An Old Boy and His Dog;” Steve Stiles describes his (brief) job illustrating the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers in “Drawing Board Blues;” I tell about “My Brief Career As An Artist;” and rich

brown (who does not capitalize his name) talks about his childhood as a miscreant in “Smokes.” And there are 20 pages of letters.

Trap Door is published half-size (5½ by 8½ inches), photo-copied, and uses the best artists in fandom (principally Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles, but also ATom, Harry Bell, Grant Canfield, Craig Smith, Bill Rotsler and D. West) to present a fanzine which looks as good as it reads – which is very good indeed. Highly recommended.

—Ted White