

FANZINES 30

By Ted White

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ASTONISHING TRAPDOOR STORIES / TRAP DOOR #22 (Robert Lichtman, editor & publisher, P.O.Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442; email to locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com; available “by Editorial Whim for The Usual (letters, contributions both written and artistic, and accepted trades) or \$5.00 per issue”)

Herewith I break an unwritten rule of this column – not to review a fanzine previously reviewed here. I reviewed the last issue of TRAP DOOR about a year ago (which gives you an idea of its publication schedule), but this is a special – unique in fact – issue. The title – *Astonishing Trapdoor Stories* – gives a clue. This 60-page issue (published as usual in the folded half-lettersize of 8.5” x 5.5”) is overwhelmingly devoted to one piece of fiction, “Sense of Wonder” by Gordon Eklund. The issue has only an introductory two-page editorial (largely given over to appreciation of the late Harry Warner) and a three-page reprint (from 1946) of Charles Burbee’s “Invasion 1949” to bookend Eklund’s novella.

Eklund is a major SF writer of long-standing (he was first professionally published in 1970), but he was a fan of some note for the decade that preceded his professional debut. In recent years he’s combined the two to write fanfiction.

“Fanfiction” is defined here as “fiction about fans;” this is its original definition and it still flourishes. Most fanfiction is short and humorous or satirical in its writing style. But some fans – notable among them Marion Zimmer Bradley in the ’50s – have written serious fiction about fans.

Most of Gordon’s previous pieces of fanfiction (all published in fanzines over the past 10 or more years) have been short and ironic. “Sense of Wonder” is at once both longer and more ambitious, incorporating an actual SF plot (time-travel) and a journey back to the days when Hugo Gernsback was cooking up the first issue of *Amazing Stories*. The story is told first-person by Charlie Frap, and has the feel of a loopy ’40s time-travel story by Robert Bloch – but translated into fannish terms: a fannish “Lefty Feep” story. I’m not convinced by its time-travel logic (which seems to me to have several huge holes), and I’ve written a letter to Lichtman and Eklund about that, but I am impressed by the overall concept and execution of the story, which is fully professional in quality.

I’m also very impressed by the *look* of this issue, which is completely due to artist Dan Steffan, who has illustrated the entire issue. The front cover – logo and all – is marvelously evocative of the SF pulps of the ’40s, while the back cover creates the cover of the April 10, 1936 issue of *Time* magazine – the one with Hugo Gernsback on the cover (in “Sense of Wonder”’s universe, anyway) – with striking fidelity to the look of the magazine at that time. Inside the issue Dan opens Gordon’s story with a double-page spread and follows that with five full-page illos. And his half-page illo-title for the Burbee short (a delightful story which could have appeared in an early issue of *F&SF*, but didn’t) is a bold piece which stands out on its own. Steffan is long overdue a Fan Artist Hugo; he towers over recent winners.

—Ted White