

Flipper

like a bulletin
about nothing

So, I was walking along and I saw Joyce Katz digging a ditch. "Hey Joyce, whatcha doin'?" I said. "I'm starting an APA" she replied. "Want to join?" "That looks like a lot of work" I said. "Oh, no" she said quickly, "quite pleasant actually, once you get into the swing of things." She dug her spade deep into the earth and stood on it. I thought I heard her mutter an imprecation at the hard, dry clay as I sipped my drink, but this must have been a mistake in my unreliable hearing. Joyce is a lady and she does not mutter her imprecations, preferring to crisply enunciate them.

"You know how I feel about hard work, Joyce." Another shovelful of dirt came flying out the ditch. "Of course, JoHn (she stressed the silent capital). "Not for nothing are you known as The Human Sloth."

This is true. My resolute failure to publish a fanzine is legendary, if by "legendary" you mean it annoys my friends.

"Therefore you realize," she continued, "I would *never* ask you to do anything that requires real work. Why, I can't think of anything more fun." Joyce switched to a pickaxe and attacked a particularly large stone. I thought I heard her grunt with effort, but I know this was my hearing, again. Joyce is a lady and would never grunt while attacking anyone with an axe. "Come on, John, it'll be fun." She smiled at me, pickaxe raised high. "Uh, sure. Sounds like it" I said, and jumped into the ditch with Joyce. She's always been convincing that way. And that's how I came to commit to writing a fanzine for SNAPS.

Of course the problem with my story is, outside of Joyce threatening me with an axe, there's no analogy between digging a ditch and writing a fanzine. I'm here as proof that even the most hard-to-motivate among us can play when it comes to writing for a low-pressure, local APA. All I have to do is remember that I'm writing for my friends; I'm writing to people I know, and it becomes much easier to relax and have a good time. Which is what this is supposed to be about, really.

What the Hell?

"Why's your fanzine named "Flipper?" I can hear you ask (Well, OK, maybe not you, but somebody thought it. I heard them. And now you're thinking I'm crazy. See. *I know*).

I always have a name for a fanzine before I write it, because coming up with the name is easy. No obligation behind a good name. OK, some obligation. I like 'Zealot' for a fanzine title, but a name like that implies a certain, uh, zeal and energy of which I am rarely possessed. And I like 'Orrery' too, but it implies too many moving parts, or too much organized movement.

I also adhere to the Arnie Katz school of fanzine naming: A good fanzine title is short and punchy. While "Rhymes with Month and Silver" and "When People Were Shorter & Lived Near the Water" amuse me quite a bit, they violate the short and punchy rule.

Anyway, "Flip" is a good name for a zine; so good that it must have been used more than once over the last 60 years of fannish history, and so I decided I didn't want to use Flip. If I couldn't be Flip, I could certainly be flippant. I thought about using Flippant as the title, until I flashed onto "Flipper." It has the word "flip" in it; is almost "flippant" and is a stupid enough name that few people would have ever used it for a fanzine title. As a bonus,

there's a weird, art-punk band from the '80s called Flipper, and if fanzines are like anything in the music world, they're closest to the Do It Yourself ethos of punk rock. And so Flipper it was.

Album Oriented Rock

"Great records have strength in depth, expanding rather than retracting with repeated listens."

~Neil McCormick

Theresa Cochran and I were on our way home from the latest Vegrant's meeting. As usual I was playing some stuff for her that she hadn't heard (I've always preferred to impose my musical taste on people while in moving vehicles. Captive audience) when she asked me a music question I've never been asked before: "What's your favorite album to listen to all the way through, from beginning to end?" "Good question!" I said. "I'd have to think about it.... What's yours?" "Probably *2112* by Rush" she answered. "Wow" I replied, suitably impressed. A love for semi-obscure '70s prog rock, AND filk music? "The force is strong in this one" I could imagine Ken Forman saying.

I know Teresa mentioned other of her favorites, but my mind had spun off on my own answers to the question. Weeks later I'm still putting a list together.

My first impulse was to say REM's *Reckoning*; their second album. This is the album that made me a lifelong fan of the band. It's got a lot of great songs on it but in retrospect *Life's Rich Pageant*, their third album, is more coherent, and more fun to listen to from beginning to end than *Reckoning*, which is still wicked good. *Out of Time* is probably the best REM album from beginning to end. So, that's the REM category.

I once wrote that *Nothing's Shocking* by Jane's Addiction was "a flawless gem, perfect for reflecting upon the nature of love, hate, life, death and power." And maybe it was, when I was 24. Nevertheless, each song on this album fits exceedingly well with the others, even as their styles diverge. This was the band's shining moment, and few albums acquit themselves in a single listening as well as this one does.

But, as Sean Connery once said, there can be only one. When I was 18 or 19, I spent an evening at home alone, tripping on LSD and listening to *The Dark Side of The Moon* by Pink Floyd. I don't remember how many times I listened to the album that night, just that Pink Floyd was my only friend in a house full of strange angles and surreptitious movement. Every time the music stopped, I would go to the record player and flip the album over to the other side (yes, kids, analog technology). I must have listened to it nine times from beginning to end that night.

Like a lot of the concept albums of that era, *Dark Side* was designed to be listened to from beginning to end, preferably with headphones, all the tracks bleeding together with no spaces between the songs. It works impeccably, even today.

Before I wrote this article, it had probably been 10 or 15 years since I listened to *Dark Side*, but that's because I listened to it so many times over the years, it became a part of me. I decided to go back and listen to it, and was surprised and gratified that the

(Ovah, Dahling)

album has held up so well in the (Ghu help us) 34 years since its release. The album sounds surprisingly contemporary, with its use of samples and sound effects. I listen to a lot of new music and *Dark Side of the Moon* does not sound like a relic of the seventies, unlike a lot of music from that time (think Abba, Aerosmith, Alice Cooper, America and lots of other bands that don't start with the letter "A").

For Love of the Game

Outside of a youthful dalliance with BMX bikes and skateboards, I've never been the sporting type. I played a lot of informal Frisbee for a few years, and I can still throw a pretty mean flying disc, but I can't sprint to catch them like I used to. And besides that time my mom got me a bowling ball when I was 10, I've never been interested in any sport that involved ball-handling (that's not a sport, Forman). I regret that I can't contribute when Arnie and Bill Kunkel talk about baseball, or random strangers ask me about the latest football game. I've just never cared for sports.

But now things are different. The Olympics changed my life. I have at last discovered a sport which is not only worth following, but is actually *worth watching on TV*. What is it?

Women's Beach Volleyball. I like it so much, I've already started collecting pictures of the athletes. What athletes they are, too. In case you haven't had the pleasure of observing this fine athletic contest, beach volleyball players are (at least at the Olympic level) tall, long-legged, toned-and-tanned young women who play in bikinis and bare feet.

And *women* is what they are. All the players are in their late 20s to mid-30s. For an oversexed guy like me it's a much more wholesome viewing experience than, say, women's gymnastics, which would more accurately be described as *girl's* gymnastics. It's hard not to feel creepy while looking at the ass of some 15-year old Ukrainian on the balance beam. No, women's beach volleyball is just that. Beats the hell out of watching golf on TV, I tell you what.

They also have Men's Olympic Beach Volleyball. While this is still interesting for its athleticism in an abstract sense, it just doesn't grab me the same way. For which I'm grateful, I suppose. If I ever *did* go there, I'd probably start with Olympic swimmers. Have you seen those guys? Reminds me of Will Smith in *I Robot*. But I digress.

Despite my sworn aversion to sports, I've always liked the Olympics, probably on principle more than enthusiasm for any particular event. While the marquee events like gymnastics and swimming and diving are fun to watch, I think I like the more obscure ones the most: trampoline, archery, race walking, beach volleyball. These are compelling because you know these people aren't doing it for the glory, or the fame, or the Nike contracts. They're doing it because they want to be the best, or because of an unquenchable love for what they do. Or so I like to believe.

I like the Olympics because I'm idealistic enough to believe that maybe it's really just about the joy of pure sport; about excellence

for the sake of excelling. Even without that; despite the worst excesses of doping and corrupt judges, I watch because I know I'm seeing something special. I know I'm seeing the best of the best; elite performers whose bodies and lives have been honed to a single sharp edge, designed to cut one thing. I watch because it makes me believe in the possibility of excellence in my own life. I think we could all use more of that. Me especially.

(*ed. note ~ yeah, I wrote this when the Olympics were on TV and it's been sitting forgotten on my hard drive since then. Sue me.*)

"Make Me One With Everything"

That's what the Buddha said to the hot dog vendor. I've always been bothered by that joke to the extent that most Buddhists are traditionally vegetarians.

But the more I learned about Buddhism (in my slow journey to becoming a practicing Buddhist), the more I realized that it is not a dogmatic philosophy and that the tradition is flexible. There's no requirement to believe in vegetarianism (or reincarnation, or much else) to follow the path.

But I became a vegetarian anyway. Yes, last month on my 40th birthday, I decided to become a vegetarian. Understand, please, that this had little to do with Buddhism and everything to do with fear of dying young(ish). I realized that everything I ate that's really bad for me was a meat dish. You name it; hot dogs, hamburgers, steak, fried chicken, bacon, sausage, prosciutto, salami, pastrami, carne asada, chorizo.

Oh, chorizo. Chorizo is a Spanish word that means "suicide by burrito." Essentially, it's grease and spices in a sausage case. OK, the grease is supplemented by pig lymph nodes and salivary glands, but they're just there for texture. Sounds revolting I know, but fried up with eggs and wrapped in a tortilla with some hot sauce it's the tastiest goddamn thing to ever come across the border. And I have vowed to eat no more, since I can feel my arteries harden every time I eat the stuff.

Fortunately for me, there's Soy-Rizo. As methadone is to heroin, Soy-Rizo is to chorizo. It is an acceptable substitute for the artery clogging Mexican food, made with soy instead of miscellaneous pig scrap. On the Soy-Rizo case it says "You won't believe it's not Chorizo!" which is really a better name for the product. "I can't believe it's not Pig Anus" was my wife Karla's suggestion.

When I mentioned my decision to become a vegetarian to my friend Arnie Katz, he was very supportive. "Every hardcore vegetarian I ever met was an asshole" he said. I agreed, saying that doctrinaire vegan types could be very tiresome. "Also," he continued "no great writer was ever a vegetarian." This sounded slightly suspect to me, but I couldn't argue. As far as I know, H.P. Lovecraft ate small children to fuel his muse, and Hemingway drank blood straight from the tap, between bouts of bull-slaughtering and coolie-shotgunning.

Nonetheless, I shall soldier on, confident in the belief that I don't need animal protein to be a good writer. Of course, I believe this whole fanzine is passing good, which goes to show you how badly I've been deluded by lack of pig anus in my diet.

The newest theoretical physics posit that the universe is fundamentally made of infinitesimal, one dimensional strings that vibrate in 11 dimensions, thus creating all particles and forces in the universe.

Meanwhile, I still have to take out the trash.

This is Flipper #1, written for SNAPS #1, 4/8/2005. All contents copleft by John Wesley Hardin, 523 Grimsby Ave., Henderson, NV 89014. Member FWA, Supporter AFAL.

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Hail Eris, Praise Bob, Grep Kibo.*