

113



The Arn-ish!

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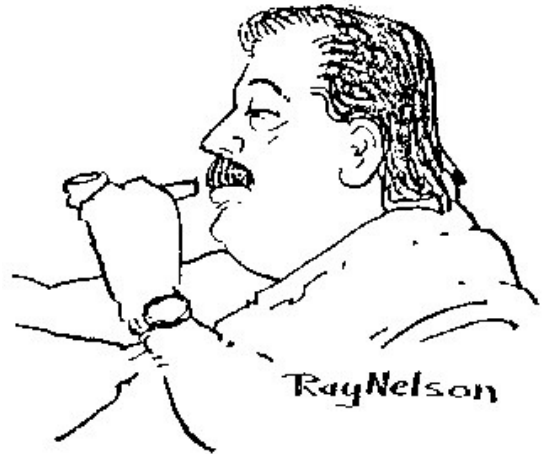
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Arnie Katz

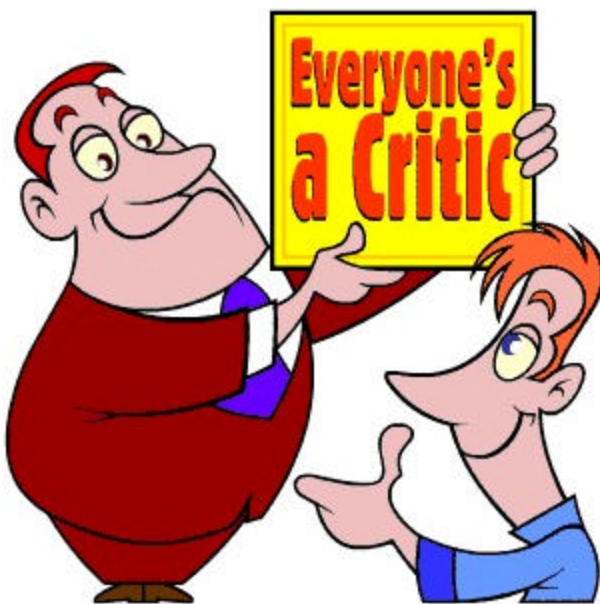
Why I Don't Review Fanzines

Katzenjammer

I like John Purcell very much. And despite the fact that we sometimes disagree, I respect his intelligence and his ability to articulate positions. That's the context in which we slipped into the discussion of fanzine criticism that inspired this essay.

I used to review fanzines at one time. I did several installments of fanzine reviews for *Quip* and several more for *Odd* back in the day. Although I think I did pretty well at it, I haven't done fanzine reviews since returning to Fandom in 1989 and have no intention of doing so.

I alluded to one reason in a couple of articles, here and in *Banana Wings*. I wrote that fanzine reviewer is a dangerous occupation for someone who, like me, is not innately lovable. Lovable people can write things with no blow-back when those of us who are not intrinsically lovable can catch hell for writing things much less severe. I couldn't write fanzine reviews without being honest, and that would likely decrease my already precarious popularity. (Like most insurgents, I just want to be loved.)



That's a good reason, I think, to refrain from reviewing, but it isn't the only one. The others go to the heart of fanzines and the art of reviewing them. In a sense, it is the precursor to the conversation John and I have had via email. I won't try to recapitulate that conversation, and leave John to present his views either in his column "Percolations," or "ChatBack." Instead, I'll just tell you more about why I don't plan to return to fanzine criticism any time soon.

It begins with a basic question: Should fanzines be critiqued? Fandom is a hobby and, it can be argued, people pursuing a hobby shouldn't be graded on their performance. If they're having fun, enjoying their hobby, that's all that's really important.

I tend to disagree with that point of view. A hobby enjoyed in solitude is only relevant to the person who enjoys it. A hobby that asks other people to give of their time and energy is another matter. If I write a diary – you know, like a blog only private and under your real name – all that really matters is that I like it. If it serves sufficient purpose to me that I write it, that's enough.

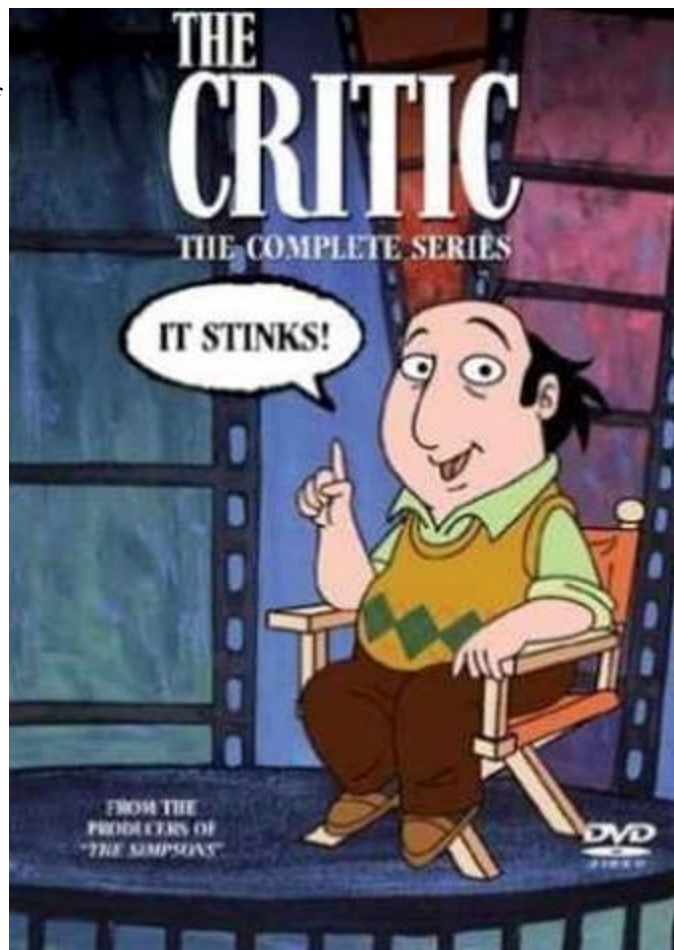
But if I take that diary and somehow turn the content into a fanzine, we've entered a different realm. Now the hobby involves others. People have to download the file, spend time reading it, pause to bask in its superlative brilliance and, in the best of all possible Fandoms, write a letter of comment. (If you're pressed for time, ignore the superlative brilliance and write the letters of comment, you baskers, you.)

So I consider fanzine criticism as legitimate. Still, the feeling, that it's not entirely fair in a hobby group, lingers. I don't believe it and yet... it is hard to bring the necessary whole heart to the task of critiquing fanzines. (My aorta is willing, but one ventricle still resists.)

An allied, but separate issue is the question of public versus private people. A professional author is a public person whose works and productions are fair game. Reviewing a fanzine is a little like barging into someone's home and evaluating the living room decor. Fans are private people, so it isn't totally clear that they should be subject to that kind of public scrutiny.

The counter-argument insists that we look at the situation *as it exists within the subculture*. Within the context of Core Fandom, the top editors, writers, artists and performers are known by all. Does that make them "public people" with regard to content that is also within that context?

If I had to make a black-and-white decision, I would say that, for purposes of Core Fandom, these people are "public figures" and thus fair game. I know



I've taken my share of shots, more when my fanzines are enjoying an upturn in popularity, and I think most others in the same boat grin and bear it, too. Well, that, or rip the disparager a new one.

Yet a voice in my head – unless you hear it, too? – tells me that activity in a hobby group maybe shouldn't expose one to the buffetings that public personalities routinely endure. I feel that way just enough to make me uncomfortable about doing fully honest and forthright fanzine reviews.

That's the only kind I'd want to write. And, yes, that's another problem for me. While I understand, and to a degree sympathize with Insurgents' devotion to the truth, my worldview contains few absolutes. I end up balancing Truth against the potential for bruised feelings.

The rationale for reviewing a fanzine is that someone sent it out to people, expecting them to invest time and effort to read it. That makes it fair game for a review that may guide non-recipients in deciding whether or not to acquire it. If that's the case, then the reviewer has a duty to give the best possible judgments about the fanzines he or she critiques.

Great fanzines of the past and present have set a very high standard that the reviewer must compare to

the fanzine up for review in order to give it fair praise and criticism. Those who haven't read a lot of fanzines are often poor reviewers, because they lack enough perspective to know whether the zine at hand is good or bad relative to other fanzines.

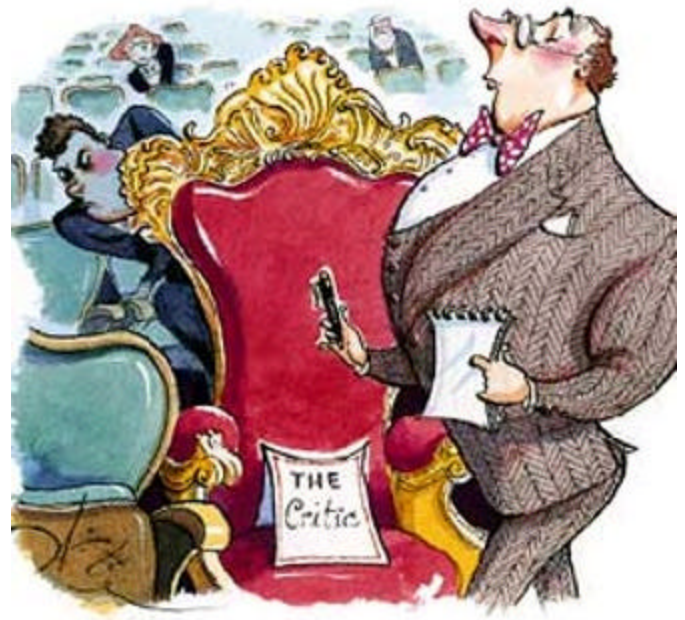
It's analogous to the analysis and rating of NFL football players. Every professional major league football player is an awesome athlete with incredible gridiron skills. The league's worst quarterback is still one of the top 50 people in the world at what he does.

What with desktop publishing, spellchecking and templates, today's worst genzine – *Gnarly Gnews* would be my pick – is miles ahead of what most non-fans would be capable of producing. I truly believe that the high quality of the *average* fanzine is a factor in the reluctance of young amateur publishers to jump into our Fandom.

Most fanzines fall short of *Innuendo*, *Blat!* and *Trap Door*. Since even the top fanzines of all time have flaws, it's plain that most fanzines have more, and more serious, flaws. Failure to delve into the imperfections breaks faith with the reviewer's readers, but may inflict a lot of pain on the editor of the zine under discussion. I don't like to hurt people, even the editors of bad fanzines.

Truth is elusive enough without the lack of objectivity that afflicts fanzine reviewers. Granted, no review is fully objective, but we are so closely connected to each other that it's very hard to separate a fanzine from the reviewer's personal relationship with the editor and his contributors.

Let's take a hypothetical situation. Suppose a noted British fan had written, in her fanzine – and I am quasi-quoting – that a fan is “undistinguished” in a



month in which that same fan won the 2009 Fan Achievement Award as “Best Fanwriter.” If that fan, however saintly (and virile) he might be, could hardly help reacting in some way in a review. (I'm kidding. I like and respect Sandra Bond very much and got over the criticism once I stopped crying, pulling my hair and screaming, “Who am I?!”)

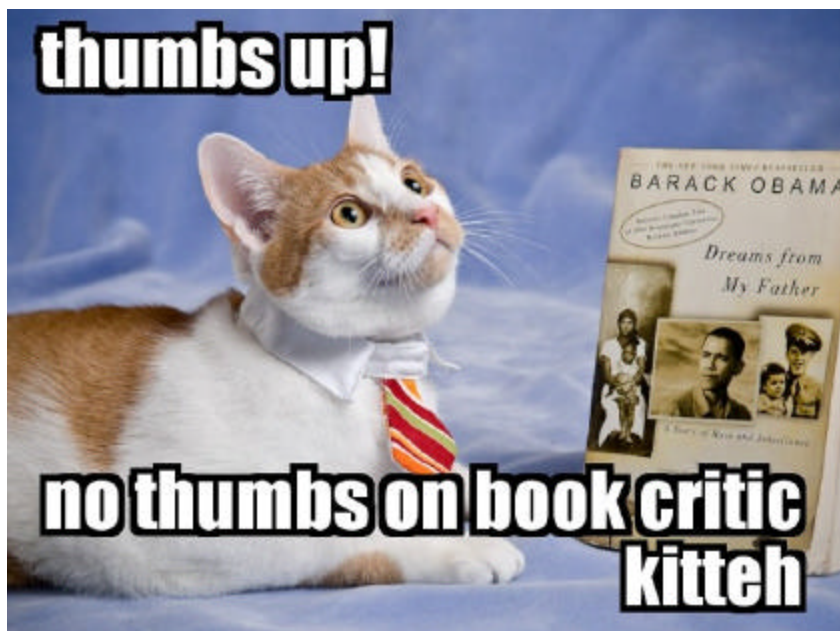
Those interactions underlie everything we do in Fandom, including reviews.

So much for objectivity.

Another reason not to do fanzine reviews is that the same factors that hurt the reviewer's objectivity also act on the object of the review. An insightful, truthful review that makes someone's fanzine seem like a pile of crap confers little good will upon the reviewer from the pilloried fanzine editor.

I expect to be a fan a long time yet and I hope you will pardon me for saying that I'd rather not have heat with someone for all that time because I thought their fanzine's type font or the illo on page 8 was not good.

Finally, as I pointed out in a *Banana Wings* article some time ago, we who are not innately and intrinsically lovable must watch our steps. Someone like John Purcell, whom everyone loves on first contact, can write things that would land me in the frying pan if I said them. So I'm going to let him write the fanzine reviews and I'll continue to not review fanzines.





Arnie Katz

Farw! 2 4e Katzenjammer

Forest J Ackerman died on December 4 after an extended period of illness. He died just before midnight on Thursday, as if he wanted to go out at the end of the traditional meeting night, like a true LASFSan. I don't think he fulfilled his intention of dying with his fingers on the keys "S-T-F," but he died among friends at home at a ripe old age.

It is sometimes easy for younger fans to forget, but we older fen knew him as the pun-spewing editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* or the old guy who pops up in many documentaries about science fiction, fantasy and horror films. Forry was the man who started the hobby we know today as Science Fiction Fandom. Others collected SF and even shared their interest with friends, but Ackerman's correspondence with alias Jack Darrow and then Jack Williamson represents Square One of the human network that grew into our hobby.

Forry was the first real media fan. He read SF and often wrote letters of comment to the prozines in the late 1920's and 1930's, but his special province was "scientifilms." When fanzines began to appear, starting in 1930, 4SJ quickly became a reliable contributor of news and reviews of scientifilms. He wrote on many other subjects, too, but he especially loved the movies.

Unlike many of today's media fans, however, Ackie didn't just watch movies or even just watch and critique them. He engaged in a tremendous amount of other fanac. He was one of the leading lights of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society and guided the club through good times and bad as Bjo Trimble did from the late 1950's to the early 1970's and as Bruce Pelz did for about the next three decades after that. They used to call LASFS "Forry's club," and it was probably no exaggeration.

Often proclaimed "The Number One Fan Face," he manifested his editorial skill by turning the letter column of a defunct LASFS clubzine,



Imagination, and turned it into one of the most popular fanzines of the mid 1940's, *VOM (Voice of the Imagi-nation)*.

Forry financed the publication of the original *Fancylopedia*, drove Walt Willis cross-country during his 1952 trip (as recounted in "The Harp Stateside") and started the Big Heart Award. His acts of generosity are legendary.

Like most fans, Forry was a colorful character with many quirks and eccentricities. His allegiance to Esperanto, which also caused him to write in green ink, led him to develop the form of simplified spelling known as Ackermanese. You can see reverberations from Ackerman's linguistic experiments in the orthography of Art Widner.

He was a skeptic and an atheist. He went in for public Bible-burnings in his younger, flamboyant days, but he seemed to become more tolerant in many areas as he grew older. Ackerman was not generally known as a heavy thinker, but he was one of the leaders of the fannish protest against the exclusion of fans at the 1939 world SF convention and also campaigned strenuously against the embarrassing claptrap of the Shaver Mystery.

The death of 4e Ackerman strikes me as the end of an epoch like the death of Queen Victoria. He was there at the beginning and was our personal connection to the beginning. When I first got into Fandom in 1963, I met and often became friends with the men and women who founded and shaped our beloved subculture.

I had the privilege of knowing Bob Tucker, Jack Speer, Charles Burbee, Sam Moskowitz, Harry Warner and other fannish pioneers. Newer fans will never know that joy. They'll have to be satisfied with us.

The passing of Forry Ackerman marks, at least symbolically, the passing of the torch from the Pioneers to the Inheritors, from the fans who started it all, the leading lights of the first four Fandoms (1928-1945) to the leading lights of Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Fandoms (and the rank of Fifth Fandomites are visibly thinning).

I'm thankful to say that there are still quite a few active fans who are older than me, but the loss of FoJack is a reminder to enjoy Fandom's unique characters as long as we have them with us. I tell you, that Enchanted Convention must be crawling with BNFs and Elder Ghods. They're probably holding a testimonial for Forry even as you read this.

— Arnie Katz



Forry Ackerman shown amid the treasures of his famous home, the Ackermansion.



Arnie Katz Up to Here!

Up crobat Document to

Katzenjammer

This is the first time any of you have seen something like this. I'm reasonably sure that's the case, because until two weeks ago I hadn't seen anything like this and I'm the one who's doing it.

This is what the ancient fans, the ones from even before Xanadu I, called a "fanzine." Rather than explain what that means at this point, I want to tell you why I'm doing *Up to Here*. If you'll read this, I'm pretty sure you'll understand the point.

Everything you know about fanhistory is wrong.

Even those of you who claim to have passed your final exam with flying colors don't know anything about fanhistory. Not *real* fanhistory.

If it makes you feel better, let me confess that I was right there with you. Until I made a remarkable find, I didn't know anything about Fanhistory, either.

Now I do.

I don't know much, yet. It's still a little, though, which is more than nothing. I want to share with you what I do know so that maybe we can all benefit.

What you know, or what you *think* you know, is a cataract of lies, half-truths and falsehoods by



Faan Fiction

omission. The fanhistory we have been taught is a sham that tells us what the N3Ficans wants us to know. It's not a sinister conspiracy; just a bunch of people who want to keep everything nice and comfortable. Fanhistory as we know it sounds good and keeps Fandom growing.

If you're thinking that what I'm saying nuts or some misguided joke, let me assure you it's real. It's damn real.

And when I tell you what I have discovered, you'll know it's true.

It embarrasses me to admit that, as recently as a month ago, I couldn't have imagined what I'm writing, either. Until then, I foolishly thought, as you still do, that Fandom started in 2009 after a formless, shadowy period of eo-Fandom that stretched back decades into pre-fanhistory.

It started when I agreed to give the Welcome Speech at Xanadu 50. It was a great honor to be asked to speak at the Silver Anniversary convention, much less do the Keynote Address. Flattered, I wasted no time emailing my acceptance.

Then I thought about the enormity of it. I was a little nervous about addressing 23,000 fans in the Scarlett Madam Spas Event Center, not to mention the digital feed to 2 billion homes, so I wanted to make sure I gave them something with more sizzle than one of my seat-of-the-pants talks.

That kind of thing is fine for something small like Mega-Dragoncon in Atlanta in 2051. What did they have, 50,000 people, plus only regional cable? My speech there had kept the crowd quiet and attentive for 40 minutes. Not bad for a one-hour speech, I'd say. Of course, it was hard to miss with a talk that included both lawn care and a plea for new fan studies textbooks for middle schoolers.

If I'd known my future, I might not have followed through on the resolve to improve the speech. In a way, I wish I'd never started down that road. And in another way, I have come to think of it as the only road worth traveling.

Determined to make a splash in the national media, I started to research my speech a month before the actual event. I knew Chairman Justin Timberlake, now one of Fandom's grand old men, was counting on me to say something significant, something memorable. No one can say I didn't deliver.

Knowing that the audience was sure to have a lot of newer fans, I decided to make the subject the history of Fandom leading up to its unparalleled success in the present day.

I went to all the usual sources – Fancyclopedia IV, Time.com, and CNN – and assembled a pretty decent

spiel. I like to give my stuff a “cooling off” period. It gives me some perspective. This time, when I read my speech again the next day, I felt there was Something Missing.

It was a good speech. It covered all the highlights of fanhistory as ordained by the school boards and regents boards across the country.

And that, I reluctantly decided, was the problem. There wasn't anything new. I told the trite old tales – the inspiration of Scott Anderson that led to the first Xanadu, the N3F's merger with the Republican Party, the opening of the Fan Library of Congress -- well enough, of that but everyone already knew those stories.

I decided to dig deeper and come up with something fresh, something that would wow them in the aisles. I thought about it some more and decided that recent fanhistorical events were simply too well known. I concluded that, if I wanted to upgrade the speech, I'd have to strike out for eo-Fandom territory.

It didn't take long to discover that exploring the remote past is easier to say than to do. The aforementioned “usual sources” proved almost no help. Apart from a few generalizations about the small size and insignificance of Fandom before the Great Expansion of 2009, they had very little information about that by-gone fannish age.

My total lack of progress eventually convinced me that the only way to get what I wanted was to step off the Information Highway and explore some of the Internet's digital dirt roads.

I immediately hit a wall. The Internet Reorganization Act of 2038 improved the system in almost every conceivable way. The only trouble was that that heightened speed and efficiency came at a price. The cost was the removal of all the material that had gotten stuck in the system, abandoned by the posters. Almost nothing of the history of Fandom posted before 2008 – and the oldest entries was a mass of hype for the first Xanadu.

A few platitudes about “20th Century Fandom” wouldn't fix what was wrong with my speech. I needed *real* fanhistory, the same verified, rigorous kind of facts I'd expect in any fanhistorical discussion.

After some searches failed to turn up anything promising, my next strategy hit pay dirt. I went back to accounts of Xanadu 1 and scanned them for names. I figured that at least *some* of the attendees had to have some personal fanhistory that pre-dated that epochal gathering of Real American Fans.

Have you ever looked at those names? I mean, really looked? Some of them are in Klingon, a language invented for a sci-fi video feed called *Star Trek* that apparently was very popular during the 2-D video era.

Maybe we should delve into the Museum of Broadcasting and see if we can find them. Or considering the reported dress and conduct of the program's avid fans, as reported in those same accounts, might make one think twice. Some things Man Was Not Meant to Know. (Remind me to tell you about Calvin W *Buff* Demmon.* I read a bunch of his writing and now I Can't Stop Myself.)

Some of the names were obvious pseudonyms, like "Dragonhelm Orcslayer" and "James Taylor." That still left a lot of names. I ran each and every one of them through Cold Fusion to look for links.

Then I explored those links. That led to some tedious and unproductive evenings, I can tell you. I didn't expect to find many survivors, though finding one with experience that predated 2009 would've been a bonanza. Even if I didn't find someone who'd actually been a fan back then, I hoped to find a relative, a descendant, of someone who'd been there. There might be files, even actual paper.

Toward the end of maybe the fifth search session, I got frustrated, stoned and maybe a little silly. I was down to the last few names, so I picked one and started clicking links with Mad Abandon. (Capitalization Can Be Funny.)

I burrowed deeper and deeper into the layers of sites that led to other sites that led to still other sites. I kept clicking and the pages kept flashing on the screen. Anyone who has ever done this knows where *that* leads: one finds oneself within the ".XXX" extension. Specifically, I reached BigFannish Boobs.xxx.

I spent the next half hour looking at some of the models and thinking about what to do with this minor piece of information. There's more to life than just fanhistory, you know.

Then I noticed that some of the women on the site had online diaries with contact information. I searched through them until the name of one of the models jumped out at me, much as her breasts did in the 3D section. (She had at least two of those "D"s even before they took the photos.)

I skimmed through the entries. Skipping over her descriptions of sex with anything that moved (and several things that didn't) eliminated about 80% of the content. Her musings about the N3F's chances to capture Congress in the mid-term elections accounted for a lot of the rest.

One post caught, and held, my attention. The woman wrote about her grandfather, whom she said had been a sci fi fan longer than anyone, even back to eo-Fandom days.

I wrote a brief note to the woman and got an answer less than an hour later. She mostly talked about her physique and her array of services, some of which sounded interesting and all of which sounded expensive.

I didn't think it would be fair to string her along by pretending to be a potential customer. Besides, my wives wouldn't welcome such behavior on my part. The key to marital bliss in a world of poly amor relationships is honesty. Besides, she had a living to earn, too. I did write back and we exchanged a few



notes after I made her understand that my interest was more fanhistorical than sexual.

One thing led to another and she soon agreed to meet me at her place. She made a point of mentioning that her manager would be present. She said she had boxes of stuff from her grandfather in the attic and that I could look at them for a brief period of time, under the supervision of her and her “manager” San Diego Trey.

I met her at an Oxy-bar. Her manager favored the retro look I guess, because he looked just like a pimp from the 1980’s. I reminded her about my interest in her granddad. With some reluctance, she agreed to let me spend two hours in the attic for the equivalent of her customary charge for two hours of her valuable time. Her time might’ve been worth that a few years or a decade ago, but I didn’t haggle. She might’ve just blown off the whole idea and I didn’t want that to happen, not when I was so close to finding something.

They escorted me to an unassuming single-storey house on a nondescript block. It needed paint, except for the bright red paint on the front door. I guess she was a traditionalist.

With the woman and her manager watching me, I sifted through the boxes of her grandfather’s stuff. I’m sure they could see the reaction on my Face.

It was worthless.

Well, not worthless, but not anything that was going to help me write that speech. Her granddad had been a fan – well, wasn’t just about everybody? – but he didn’t have anything that went back before Xanadu 1. If he’d had anything older, he didn’t save it and from the look of the boxes he’d saved just about everything fannish that came his way. I didn’t even bother to ask about files. If granddad had any, they’d be long since corrupted and, besides, I didn’t think she’d go for me prowling around inside a computer.

I signed heavily and began to pack the mementos back into the cartons.

“Is this what you want?” she asked me. “How much is it worth?”

“I’m sorry,” I said. “There are some nice items here, like the Xanadu 3 Program Book and the newspaper with the headline about the election of Present Craig Miller over Chastity Bono, but that’s not what I’m looking for.”

I saw the sad expression on her face. “I’m sure you can sell some of this for good money,” I added. It was true and I knew that’s what she wanted to hear.

“What do you need?” said the manager. “What do you want?” I suspect he had perfected this patter in other circumstances.

“It’s a little hard to explain.”

“You looking for fan porn?” the manager guessed.

“No, no, no,” I contradicted. “I’m looking for stuff about Fandom, about Fandom before 2008.”

“What you want that old shit for?” he asked.

“Fandom is better than ever.”

“Sure, but I’m a fanhistorian,” I said. And I stood up a little taller when I said it. I’d been to an Ivy League School and earned a doctorate at Stanford in Fannish Studies. “I’m trying to put something together for a speech at Xanadu 50.”

“You’re gonna be on the mega-feed?” the woman said, suddenly more interested.

“Yes,” I replied. “I’m giving the Welcome Speech.”

“Well, if that’s what you want...” the manager said.

“I’m afraid so.”

“You have to come to my crib. I got a ton of that old crap,” the manager said.

“You do?” That stopped me in my tracks, you can bet.

“Yeah. My mom’s uncle was one of those eo-fans I think. He left a lot of stuff. I’ve been holding it, waiting for someone to pay the price.”

“I don’t want to buy it, just read it,” I said. I saw the disappointment and interest drain from his face. “Well, I could give you credit during the speech, let people know what you have to sell. My speech could make it even more valuable.”

I could tell he liked that idea. I didn’t want to delay before capitalizing on my good luck in meeting him when I had gone to meet someone else. He could easily change his mind,

So, we went to his apartment, where he dragged several cartons out of the back of a closet. Without taking his eyes off me, he carefully opened one box at a time.

It was exciting and it was also agony. I wanted to dive into this *mound* of fanhistory, but he wanted to dole them out to me one at a time. I couldn’t even dig through the box to find the most promising artifacts – and I could only wonder what might be stored on the racks of shiny silver disks if we could find some way to boot them.

All he’d let me do was examine one artifact at a time, which I did with exaggerated care to allay his paranoia about harm coming to his hoard of fannish treasures.

It certainly qualified as treasure. I’d never even imagined so much eo-Fandom material existed and I doubt anyone I knew had ever seen anything like this.

There was so much, it was too much for me to study. I knew the owner wasn’t long on patience and could stop me at any time. Even though he blocked my

insatiable curiosity by showing me one thing at a time, but I couldn't stop myself from wondering what the next thing would be.

All I could do was skim as much of it as possible, hoping that my eye would light on fanhistorically significant information. I found plenty, too, but I must've missed a hundred tidbits for every one I found. And it all came at me so fast that I retained just a fraction of what I discovered.

And still, it was more than enough to blow my concept of fanhistory to smithereens. This article will give you a pretty good idea of what I'll say at Xanadu 50 next week, minus a lot of arm-waving and shouting.

When I got home, I spewed as much as I could remember into the recorder and transferred my digital notes to my desktop computer. When I reviewed what I had, it stunned me.

Everything I knew about fanhistory – well, almost everything – was wrong, wrong, wrong. Xanadu started a new era of Fandom, but it wasn't the *first* era by any means. It turns out that what we call "eo-Fandom" was a rich and varied hobby – and utterly different than Fandom as we know it today.

I'm pretty hazy about eo-Fandom history, so I won't try to pretend to knowledge I don't have. I think I have the overall picture, though, and it's as shocking in its way as that painting of Dorian Gray that Oscar Wilde wrote about. (He was a 19th Century novelist, dramatist and humorist; there are vids.)

Going by what I pieced together, Fandom really started in 1929, not 2009. Fans will find it hard to believe, but the first fans were compulsive readers. They read for fun in a world without vids or audio feeds. Even sci fi movies weren't too common. The ones they had were mostly guys in make-up and mil special effects. The earliest ones made you read the dialogue instead of hearing it.

That didn't leave many alternatives, so those fans read magazines with written stories. These "prozines" were printed with ink on cheap paper. They had no animations and only a very few drawings.

You may be thinking, "That's ridiculous! Fans would never do that!" If you mean fans today, then you're right. Those eo-fans were a lot different than us. They not only liked to read, but they liked to write and draw, too. Oh, they did some of the things we do today – watch movies, attend committee meetings, drink beer and collect autographs of movie stars – but they mostly wrote and drew little magazines. The Zines didn't have sci fi stories, though, not even porno fanfic.

From what I have seen, the earliest of those fan publications were mostly full of discussions of science fiction stories and their authors. The ones I've seen

from the mid-1950's seemed to be mostly about Fandom and how they were proud and lonely – those were their words – to be a fan. I don't know about proud, but they must've been very lonely to pick up a hobby that was less popular than necrophilia. They didn't care; they had fun and enjoyed contact "with their own kind."

They drank beer – they called it "bbeer" for some reason -- and used drugs, but they claimed there was more to Fandom than just getting drunk and stoned at convention parties. The big thing wasn't the parties and the Xanadu business meeting; they entertained each other and communicated with each other through their fanzines, web sites, listservs and blogs.

I don't know the details about how Fandom got from there to where we are now. I've seen mentions of population explosions and vast influxes of fans who sound, well, like the ones who we met when we joined.

Like the Huns, they didn't just ride away over the horizon, never to return. The most likely answer is that the number of fans of this type stayed the same or grew slowly, while the numbers of other fans increased exponentially. Those fans told their friends and, since Fandom was becoming more and more like regular society, those friends came – and brought their friends, too.

The end result is that Fandom is like it is now and not like it was when those weird people were churning out writing and art of a decidedly curious kind

The funny thing is, when I read those papers in that guy's apartment, I felt something. It's not that Fandom isn't great and popular and fun for the whole family, but I find it a little boring. If you're getting this thing, it's likely that you have expressed similar sentiments to me.

Maybe there could be something else. I've always liked to write and the idea of having my own little magazine is only slightly more interesting than the prospect of getting such things from you in the future.

So I'm going to try it. That's what this is supposed to be, one of those fanzines. It's probably not the greatest and it isn't very large and no one will confuse it with one of those fancy semipro publications, but I'm getting a kick out of doing it.

Another reason I'm writing is that I want to take up a collection to buy those cartons of stuff I saw so that we can really go over them. Maybe we can even get the disks to work – and who knows what they may hold.

Xanadu is only a month away, so I hope those of you who read this and want to explore will write back immediately.

I'll be watching the inbox.

-- Gary Shear



Arnie Katz

The Vegrants Celebrate

Las Vegrants

I enjoy holidays. Give me half a chance and I'm ready to plunge into all-out festivities. Naturally, I enjoy some holidays more than others.

I'm especially fond of one, though, New Year's Eve. Joyce and I often gave New Year's Eve bashes while we lived in Brooklyn. In the early 1970's, we had some huge ones that drew fans from nearby states for a couple of days of revelry.

We picked up the idea again after we moved to Las Vegas and Las Vegas Fandom really got rolling. Ken and Aileen Forman excelled at both Halloween and Christmas parties, so we went with our strength and started holding fannish New Year's Eve Open Houses in 1991. The parties continued, at a slightly smaller size, even through the transition between the *Wild Heirs* era and the arrival of Las Vegrants' New Generation in 2005.

The influx of new active fans has made the last few editions especially lively and this year's figured to be pretty large. Joyce and I went into "party set-up" mode fairly early in the afternoon. We were eventually joined by James Taylor and Teresa Cochran. Many of the Vegrants are very good about helping, but none does more before and after meetings than James. That took a little pressure off Joyce and also gave me a chance to slow the pace a little.

Tee and I talked about her progress as a musician. She is currently working very hard to master the fiddle and there's no doubt that she's more polished and skilled every time she plays at a Vegrants meeting. She is partial to "old-timey" music and seldom, if ever, calls the instrument a "violin." This shows her commitment to such tunes and also preventys the recycling of some very bad puns about "sex and violins."

When Derek Stazenski joined us, talk turned somewhat in the direction of sports. Tee and Derek are both ardent devotees of the Detroit Red Wings hockey team. (You remember hockey. It used to be called one of the four major sports before the league went Scandinavian and then suffered a season-killing players' strike.). Big D and

James Taylor and Teresa Cochran celebrated their second New Year's Eve as a





Joyce dipped into her seemingly bottomless store of sparklers to celebrate the occasion. The High Priestess got quite a few of the Vegrants to step into the backyard to blaze a few minutes before midnight.

There's always a lot of food at Vegrants, but Joyce goes all out for New Years Eve. This is the dining room spread, essentially the overflow from the buffet in the living room, plus some special hot dishes..



I also congratulated each other on the incredible victories of the UNLV basketball team just as if we had snagged rebounds and made baskets.

Scott Anderson brought a very engaging guest, a coworker named Mike Bisonette. I have no idea whether Mike is interested in becoming a fan or is just Scott's pleasant coworker, but he made a very good impression on the Vegrants. He's intelligent and seems to have a good sense of humor, which are the main qualifications for membership, along with an interest in Core Fandom and a desire to be friends with the rest of the cabal..

He gave Derek, who was wearing a Dallas Cowboys hat, some grief about the failings of the Texas team. America's Team (allegedly) had just bitten the big one in a game where a win would've put them in the NFL play-offs. Their poorly played loss knocked them out of the whole thing.

Two other first-time visitors look like great candidate for Vegrants, Rick King and Jacqueline Monahan.



This is the appealing photo of Joyce Katz that, by law, every Las Vegas fanzine is required to publish. I know this is true, because Joyce read me the law, or rather told me the gist, just before this issue.



JoHn Hardin rushes Emergency Snack Foods to a waiting group of hungry Vegrants.

Rick was a local fringe fan in the early 1990's and was well known to some of the present-day Vegrants, including JoHn Hardin, Laurie Forbes, Joyce and me. Rick is returning to the fold after about 14 years of gafia, so he has a lot to learn, but he is very enthusiastic about the Vegrants' writing, drawing and publishing activities. Rick is also an artist and cartoonist.

Jacqueline Monahan, not to be confused with the now-departed Jacqueline *Mason*, is a professional writer who really took to the whole idea of Fandom on first hearing. She, too, is likely to appear in *Idle Minds* and other Vegrants projects.

I don't think there's likely to be much confusion, despite the similarity of names, among fans who have contact with them. Jacqueline Monahan is an articulate and vivacious woman who is much more interested in fannish creativity and communication than fan-political power.

Everyone had a very positive take on both of these guests, so I invited them to the next regular Vegrants

Alam and DeDee White are not only long-time Vegrants, but also host the popular Cineholics club.





One of the things I like best about Vegrants special gatherings like the Open House is that they draw people otherwise seen too seldom. A good example is the Waldie Clan. Marcie (*center*) is flanked by sister Penny and husband Ray.

meeting on January 3. We're at the 'getting-to-know-you" stage and that's easier when there aren't quite so many Vegrants and somewhat less hedonistic celebration.

Unemployment has hit the Vegrants moderately hard, but JoHn Hardin offered a bit of good news on the job front. Cutbacks at the software company had pushed JoHn into more of a coordinator role, but he is now back as one of the writers of the company's product, a forthcoming online game.

All the gaming talk evoked memories of vanished Vegrant Marc Cram and big, cheerful Mike Legg, who now runs a software development company. Mr Pallandrome moved back to Vegas and contacted me, but he has since slipped away again.

Brenda Dupont regaled us with an account of a

Lori Forbes is not much known outside southern Nevada Fandom, but she is a major fan on the local scene.





Bill Mills snaps some shots of the festivities at the Launch Pad.

Christmas Day lunch at the Cheesecake Factory with Laurie Forbes and Scott Anderson. It sounded like fun; Joyce and I are always looking for Christmas Day adventures, so we may try it next year.

The latest remake of *I Am Legend* inspired a lot of discussion at the party. The consensus was that Will Smith did a great job in a movie that didn't match either the Vincent Price version or *The Omega Man* with Charlton Heston.

You can never tell what's going to come up at a Vegrants gathering. For reasons that presently escape me, Bill Mills burst into the lead vocal of *Don't Hang Up* to which I added a do-woppish background in a ridiculously deep bass voice. That led to some egoboo for Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, if only they had attended the Open House.

We all drank champagne as we watched the ball drop at midnight.

Rick King, John DeChancie, James Taylor and Tee Cochran closed down the New Year's Open House, all of us reluctant to break up the conversations. Fittingly enough, in view of the occasion, we ended with a bit of Auld Lang Syne, telling Rick about what has happened to all the fans he knew when he last encountered Fandom.

Joyce and I, still keyed up from the evening, stayed up still later, long enough to properly salute 4:20 AM..



The Party Resumes...

Joyce and I thought about canceling the January 3 Vegrants meeting, because it followed the New Year's Eve Open House so closely. When I sounded out some of the Vegants, though, sentiment was strong for reviving the party on Saturday.

As it turned out, we had about 15 Vegrants on hand, but also some important absences. Illness and circumstances kept a hefty chunk of the Vegrants' Actifan Element from attending the first meeting of 2009. Bill & Roc Mills and James Taylor & Teresa Cochran (Cochtayl) were all mired in various stages of a persistent virus and JoHn Hardin had some parental obligations.

While the Vegrants have a valuable collection of entertaining fellow travelers, it's the Actifan Element that gives the group its essential character. Accordingly, that's really the aspect we're trying to beef up at

Scott Anderson chats up invited guest Jacqueline Monahan at the big annual party.

the moment, hence the invitations to Rick King and Jacqueline (Jac) Monahan to attend as guests. (Both are fitting in quite rapidly. So at the 1/18 meeting, we made them Vegrants.)

With Tee and James battling illness, Derek Stazenski had the novel experience of being the first to arrive for the meeting. We talked about sports and, shortly, Brenda Dupont, Rick King and John DeChancie arrived within minutes of one another.

Brenda raised the point of the Internet no longer being the “in” thing. The decline in blogs and social meeting sites indicates that the fad aspect is starting to ebb.

A couple of things seem to be diminishing, including the popularity of blogs. One reason is the realization that, with a few exceptions, the readership for individual blogs is very small. A study pegged the average readership at *seven*.

While some fan-written blogs have a larger following, it doesn't seem like many even have equivalent circulation to a fannish apa and I doubt many have distribution equal to any of the current major fanzines.

Another reason why blogs aren't quite as hot is that a lot of people who post blogs aren't really writers. A lot of folks confuse the ability to type with the ability to write. (I am living proof that the two abilities are not necessary conjoined.) There's nothing like a few weeks of attempted daily posting to convince even fairly stubborn people that they should expend their energy in another direction.

Brenda and I talked a little about the third, projected issue of *Idle Minds*. During some casual discussion with Joyce over the days leading up to the 1/3 Vegrants meeting, we talked about possible themes for the issue. We are trying to have a theme for each issue as an aid to the Vegrants who are just getting involved with fanwriting and fanpublishing for the first time. For now at least, giving them some article-hook subjects makes it a little easier.

We came up with two theme ideas that sounded pretty promising. In the name of letting everyone have a say, I talked informally with most of the *Idle Minds* editors who were there.

Joyce liked them both, too, but she especially wanted to do one of them. She lobbied among the editors a little and, sure enough, that's the one we decided to do first. You can expect the other one some time during the spring.

The likelihood is that, whichever one we pick, we'll end up doing them both.

The chatter moved away from strictly being about *Idle Minds* to the more general topic of fanwriting. The newer Vegrants seem somewhat taken aback by the

seeming ease with which I produce so much fannish content. I've explained that it isn't exactly easier for me, but I have learned to put aside the assorted fears that often beset the new writer.

Brenda said that one of the things she admires about Core Fans is their willingness and ability to put themselves into their writing. That seems so obvious, until you realize how few people do that. Part of my approach is that I wholeheartedly believe that there is a sizable group of my friends who'd enjoy reading what I have to say, whether it be an anecdote or personal adventure, a fanhistorical opus, faan fiction or something even farther afield. That may not be true, and sometimes I worry that it's not, but that faith in my connection to the rest of you is crucial to my enthusiasm for writing fan stuff.

Another thing I don't do, as a writer, is wait for inspiration to strike. Everyone wants that one, overwhelmingly powerful thunderbolt, but that can involve a long wait. (Back in Brooklyn, my IBM Selectric typewriter got hit by ball lightning as I sat hunched over it, but I don't recall the event including any brilliant cognitive breath throughs.)

I get ideas all the time and forget half of them before they can be transformed into an article. I always assume that there are more ideas where I got the ones I've already had. Though I am very careful with the structure of my pieces as in the recent “Katzenjammer” that had a number of shorter elements, I normally plunge into a piece and then wait until I see where it's going, and then revise the whole thing. (Just recently, I started writing an article, got about halfway and decided that it would work better as faan fiction. It's “Up to Here” found elsewhere in this issue.)

The fantalk continued spiritedly until about 2:30 AM. Besides Joyce and I, the stay-lates included Brenda, Rick, John DeC, Jac and Rick. As I booted them into the night, the thought came to me that the last-gasp partiers had represented a heartening series of interconnections that tie the Vegrants together. Joyce and I are the originals, Rick is from the 1990's era, though he was a fringe fan at the time. John DeChancie is one of Vegas Fandom's lucky strokes, an experienced fan and professional author who likes writing for Fandom. Brenda and Jac are promising new fans who've come within the Vegrants orbit.

I guess it figured that the club that takes at least two meetings to do a decent oneshot (the editorial in *Idle Minds*) should take two evenings to polish off the year-ending party.

— Arnie



Arnie Katz

A Look at 'The Wrestler' Katzenjammer

Joyce and I, in company with the other members of Las Vegas film club, Cineholics, a large number of friends who have absolutely no interest in pro wrestling, saw *The Wrestler* on Friday evening, January 15. The group had what must've been a record turn-out, 17, and those around me seemed to like it, despite their aversion to the subject.

For me, it was a memorable night at the movies. In a way, it reminded me of how I felt when I saw Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*. I actually cried during that film. It had nothing to do with anything happening on the screen. The sheer joy of seeing a truly great, "A" fantasy film made the tears flow.

I didn't have quite as strong an emotional reaction to *The Wrestler*, but it certainly hit me hard. It isn't every day that you see the best damn wrestling movie ever made.

The Wrestler is a serious movie with serious intent. It makes *No Holds Barred* look like a gaudy pile of bogus crap. *The Wrestler* is not perfect – it's a "worst case" scenario -- but its authentic feel and serious message lift it far above all previous efforts.

A smart wrestling fan is a skeptic, almost by definition. Years of watching wrestling storylines makes the veteran fan distrust his eyes and ears. So much of pro wrestling is otherwise than it seems.

All right, maybe I'm a bit more of a skeptic than even most smart fans. It wasn't until 1996 that I provisionally accepted the possibility that Andy Kaufman is really dead.

Accordingly, I was reluctant about seeing *The Wrestler*. I heard so much praise, even from chronic curmudgeons like Wrestling-Observer's Dave Meltzer. If Dave, as jaded as he has become in recent years, likes something about pro wrestling and it isn't Japanese, I have to take notice.

Very few movies have satisfied such high expectations. *The Wrestler* definitely hit the mark. Mickey Rourke, as the washed up former mat star, has already won the "Best Actor" Golden Globe Award and he deserves consideration for all the other such honors, up to and including the Oscar, for a sensitive and human portrayal.

This is in no sense a broad-brush picture of all of Professional Wrestling. *The Wrestler* is not a movie about the glamour and high life of Vince McMahon's World Wrestling Entertainment or even on the level of the second, much smaller national promotion, Total Non-stop Action.



Randy “The Ram” (Mickey Rourke) (*right*) stands in the ring on the set of “The Wrestler.”

That world would make a different, perhaps less powerful, movie. This one is about the much grittier world of Independent Wrestling, small promotions that play to crowds of 50 to 500 fans and pay as little as \$10 or \$20 to many of the workers. That’s if the show makes enough money so that the promoter feels like sharing some. In the Indies, men and women make sub-marginal money and subsidize their love of pro wrestling with day jobs.

It is the story of a man who has tasted fame, if not fortune, in big-time wrestling. The movie jumps forward 20 years after Randy “The Ram” Robinson had his biggest night against the Ayatollah.

Two decades after his short peak, “The Ram” is still involved with pro wrestling, because that’s all he knows or wants to do. He has found a marginal existence in the Indies, but he is beset by all of the pro wrestling maladies, including drug abuse, chronic physical injuries and estrangement from his family.

The Ram doesn’t live in the MTV world of Hulk Hogan. The big paydays that went with the big

matches turned out not to be so big. The Ram has no cushion of savings or luxury lifestyle.

He sometimes has to live in his vehicle and often begs for menial jobs for low pay just to make enough to stay a little behind. His life is about wrestling for small crowds in high school gyms and chasing strippers in seedy topless clubs.

The portrayal of pro wrestling is surprisingly accurate. It’s surprising, because most other movies about wrestling try to depict it as a sport instead of an athletic performance. That’s so far from the actual situation that it is impossible to take such movies seriously.

The Wrestler is very realistic. It shows that the matches are planned and choreographed, but the danger and damage are all too real. You see wrestlers working out a match in the dressing room or deciding to just wing it.

It’s also fairly true-to-life when it comes to the practice of “calling the spots.” When a match is in progress, whenever the wrestlers come together so that their heads are in close proximity, one will tell the other the next few moves in verbal, shorthand. They call too loudly, but that’s acceptable artistic license.

Director Darren Aronofsky bangs home the blood and sweat of a match without erecting a phony “wrestling is real” structure.

This is not a simplistic rise-to-the-title boxing story with hammerlocks substituted for haymakers. It is about a man whose life reaches several personal and professional crises at the same time and how he copes with it.

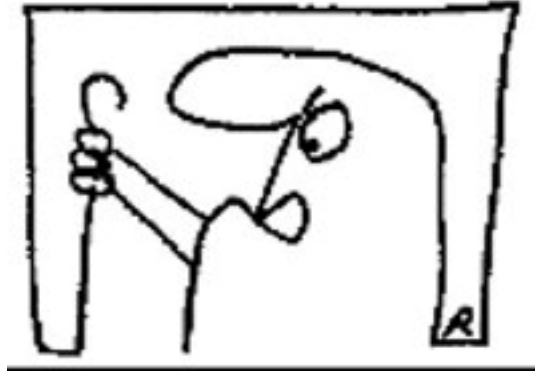
The Wrestler is a very downbeat movie. Randy the Ram is having a terrible time and there are few bright spots on his horizon.

Occasionally, the story does get a little heavy-handed. The scene in which The Ram works a fan fest and sits at an empty table is probably not much like the real thing, especially for a wrestler who was a major national star. Wrestling fans like their history and, it should be mentioned, female wrestling fans like older wrestlers, too. In the movie, a forlorn Ram sits at a table with his photos for sale with no one coming up to him. Fan fests are usually pretty successful and someone with The Ram’s pedigree would be an attraction. It makes a point about the fleetingness of fame, but it is not an authentic point and thus stands out in a movie that has few such excesses.

Mostly, though, this is grimly authentic; it has the feel of a documentary.

I’ve never recommended a wrestling movie to anyone for any reason. I unhesitatingly recommend *The Wrestler*.

— Arnie Katz



Arnie Katz

The 2nd Fannish Revolution

Katzenjammer

If a good movie is one that makes you think, then I guess *Finding the Future* is one of the best films I've seen in a long time. Alan White, lord of the Cineholics, loaned it to Joyce and me when we couldn't make the meeting at which he showed it.

The documentary, shot at the 2000 ChiCon V World Science Fiction Convention, focuses on what is termed the "mass movement" of Fandom. In a blinding flash of inspiration – I was already halfway there due to a baseball accident involving my left eye as a teenager – I realized that Fandom as presented in the film bore little, if any, similarity with the Fandom in which I am a participant.

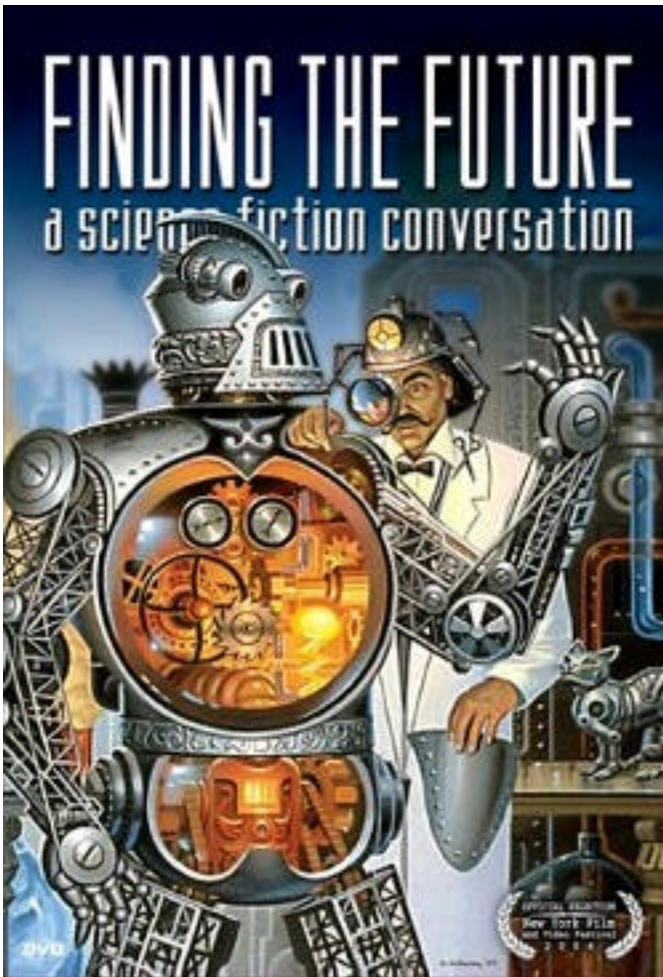
One indication of the vast separation between the Fandom shown in *Finding the Future* and the one I inhabit is that this lengthy documentary never once mentioned the word "fanzine." Nothing fan-literary came up, even clips that featured a few guys who could've mentioned such things: Robert Silverberg, Forry Ackerman and John DeChancie. All three made cogent comments about science fiction; but they said nothing (that got into the film) about Trufandom.)

As *Finding the Future* began, I clung to my belief that these folks are not fans. I liked that idea a lot, because it meant I didn't have to think about them or consider their opinions any more than I would Mundane people's ideas about Fandom.

It was easy to maintain that belief. The people shown in *Finding the Future*, mostly scruffy folks in their 30s and 40s, had few of the qualities that I associate with Core Fandom. They seemed pretty Mundane and ordinary in most ways.

One of the movie's con attendees called Fandom a "mass movement" and that concept seemed to resonate with everyone in *Finding the Future*.

I couldn't help laughing when I heard that. Fandom in the classic sense, and now exemplified by Core Fandom, is for the few rather than the many. Fandom's population only exploded after what I call the Second Fannish Revolution that began in the mid 1960's.



Classic Fandom provides a nurturing environment for people who take pleasure in reading, writing and exchanging ideas with other similarly creative oddballs. An interest in speculative fiction and the future is the filter that brought such fans together and the subculture of Fandom that kept them connected.

Implicit in the classic concept of Fandom is that its participants are a small and beleaguered minority. Fandom developed as a counter-culture, another lifestyle that diverged from the mainstream culture in quite a few significant ways. If everyone subscribed to the fannish social contract, then there'd be no need for Fandom, because Mundane society would be just like it.

In fact, Fandom represented such a departure from Mundane World norms that it took an alienated, inner-directed personality to be a fan. It's no accident that such personalities predominate among Fandom's great pioneers from Ackerman to Burbee to Hoffman to our own Ted White.

Fandom, as presented in *Finding the Future*,

emerges as very different from the traditional brand that Core Fandom perpetuates.

What *Finding the Future* shows beyond doubt is that these people, however different they may seem, are fans.

Moreover, they are *science fiction* fans. They have been drawn together by a love of science fiction and fantasy and the desire to express their rebellion from the mainstream culture through their participation in Fandom.

My answer to this seeming paradox is that there are now *two* Science Fiction Fandoms! There is Original Fandom, there is the one that began with Forry Ackerman in the late 1920's. There is also Reconstructed Fandom, which resulted from the tremendous impact of Tolkein, *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* on Mundane popular culture.

Reconstructed Fandom – and I would welcome any name they prefer to apply to themselves, except “Fandom” or “Trufandom” – is not the first reinvention of Fandom. I ran into one in the 1960's, an extensive network of correspondents that had no connection or overlap with 1960's Fandom.) I believe it eventually *did* intersect our Fandom and melded into it.

There's a lot of crossover between Original and Reconstructed Fandoms, because there's plenty of common ground. We are united by our interest in speculative thinking. It is easy for those who want to talk science fiction to veer back and forth across the invisible line that separates these two co-existent SF Fandoms. Original Fandom and Reconstructed Fandom each have strong activities that the other doesn't emphasize. If you want a really cool masquerade, you've got to go to Reconstructed Fandom; if you want a fabulous fannish fanzine, click Core Fandom.

It's no accident that a lot of the “new” Core Fandomites in recent years have come from Reconstructed Fandom rather than direct from the Mundane population. They make great additions to Core Fandom, too, if they are able to embrace the counter-cultural subculture. (Most Core Fandomites participate in the activities of Reconstructed Fandom at least occasionally.)

Yet, the two Fandoms are strikingly different, too. Original Fandom is about substance and content. Reconstructed Fandom is largely about style and attitude. Those differences can be

bridged in casual contact, such as at a convention, but it is shortsighted to pretend that they don't exist. Ignoring the distinctions leads to hurt feelings, and painful misunderstandings.

If Original Fandom is like the Bohemian counter-culture, then Reconstructed Fandom is like weekend hippies. Original Fandomites are true mavericks; Reconstructed Fandomites are participants in a trend, a fashionably unfashionable rebellion that consists mostly of wearing under-sized tee-shirts and funny hats.

Much like the relationship between the Beats and the casual Hippies of a decade or two later, a lot of the peripheral activities of Original Fandom have become the prime activities of Reconstructed Fandom. Original Fandom, as mentioned, is about creativity, about producing works of writing, art, video and audio. Core Fandomites also dabble in gaming, filking, costuming, con-running and socializing. These other activities, though often highly pleasurable, are adjuncts to the main emphasis on creativity and communication.

Reconstructed Fandom has transformed these peripheral (in Original Fandom) activities into major expressions of fannish enthusiasm.

Look at how costuming has elaborated into intricately coordinated presentations of beautifully crafted costumes in appropriately theatrical settings. That's a long way from the relatively informal parade across the stage at those 1950's and 1960's World SF Convention masquerades.

Reconstructed Fandom has greatly benefited Con-Running Fandom, too. Conventions are now much larger and better run with far more activities than the ones Original Fandom staged for about 30 years. (I prefer small cons like Corflu with a high percentage of known fans, but then, I'm a Core Fandomite.) Those large committees, with the attendant increase in capabilities, reflect the fact that Reconstructed Fandom prizes conventions as an end in themselves rather than as facilitating fanac.

Con-running Fandom confers status and egoboo based, to a large extent, on what titles at which cons with what perks the fan has on his or her fannish resume. This dovetails with the emphasis in Reconstructed Fandom on events. With little contact with fanzines, Reconstructed Fandom participants look at conventions as the focus of their fanac. Without cons, there'd be no filking, no

gaming, no masquerades, no sci-fi bull sessions at late-night con parties and so forth.

Frankly this is in many ways an academic distinction. The common ground between Original and Reconstructed Fandom is so vast that we navigate between them without noticing any boundary, and in many cases fans in both groups interact seamlessly.

Yet there's also a tension between Original and Reconstructed Fandoms that needs to be considered by we allegedly intellectual, inner-directed folks.

The two Fandoms have different priorities, aesthetics and even ethics. Things that are acceptable in one are often frowned upon or even taboo in the other. It is important for Core Fandomites – that's us, folks – to understand that the Reconstructed Fandomites are not bad fans; they are different from us, but true to their own Fandom.

It would be nice if Reconstructed Fandomites extended that same understanding to Original Fandomites. In many cases they do. But Reconstructed Fandom still has an Interest Group component due to its status as a mass movement. A large convention like the World SF Convention or DragonCon is bound to have a lot of attendees who are fairly mainstream in their worldviews. They are not likely to be all that accepting of the Original Fandom subculture, largely because it isn't relevant to them.

I also think this "two Fandoms" theory has a warning in it for Core Fandom. We are engulfed by a numerically superior mass movement that doesn't share our love of words or our fanhistoric connections and perceptions. We would do well to respect their form of SF Fandom without relinquishing the right to define our form of Fandom according to the principles we hold dear.

There's certainly room for both as long as each is free to maintain its identity.

Where Are the Locs?

I wanted to keep the page count down to a classic "24," so there's no "ChatBack" column this time.

I will have an all-letters issue out in 7-10 days. Hope you will all contribute to it, because it's going to be a landmark, at least for me.

Last Hurrah

Normally, the title of this tail-dragging piece is figurative. This time, though, it is fairly close to literal. You see, this is both the fourth anniversary and the last regular issue of *VFW*. It has been a great run, but now it's time to give it a tidy finish and move onto my next project.

I'm already working on a wrap-up letters issue and will send it out when I've got the response to this one. That means you can expect it in seven-to-10 days. After that, let's just say I'll have a first issue in early March.

Why fold now, when *VFW* is so popular? My answer is sincere, if not especially illuminating: it feels right. I'm tired of telling people it's not that much about Las Vegas. It isn't weekly and some of it isn't even about Fandom.

Successive waves of change have created a fanzine very different than the one I started 113 issues ago. In fact, it's quite different than it was as recently as a year ago. There'll be a few more refinements to come and, basically, my new fanzine will probably be more similar to recent issues of *VFW* than those issues were to issues in volume two or three.

Important Note to Contributors and Letter-writers : After long consideration and extended communion with the Elder Ghods of Fandom, it has been determined that the death (of this fanzine) does *not* release you.

— Arnie Katz