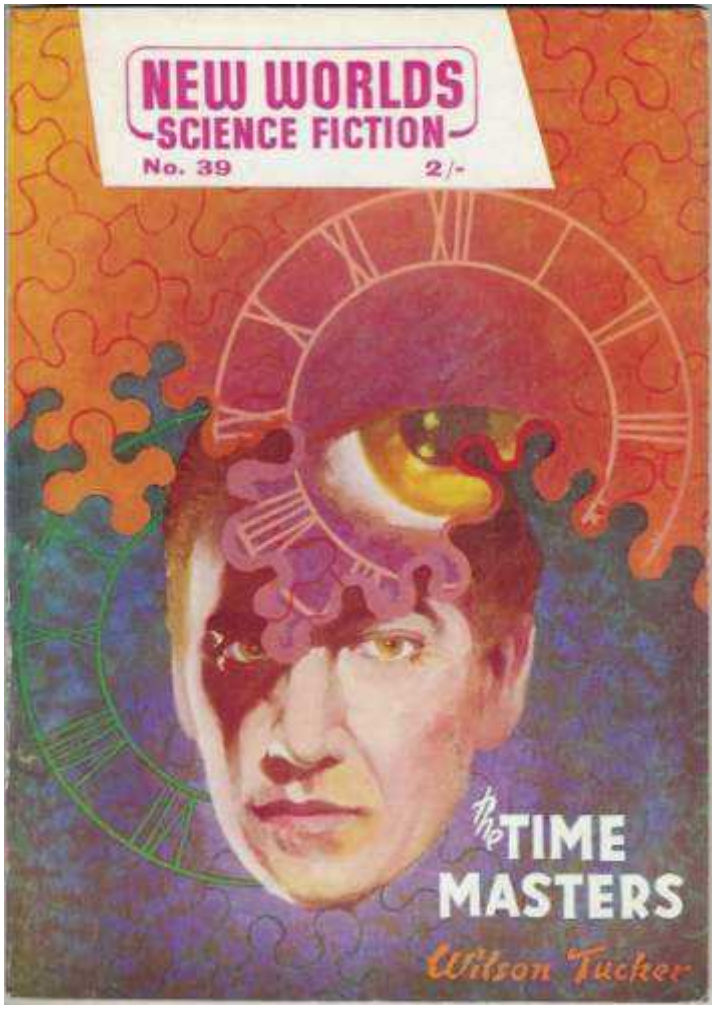
Virtual Tucker Hotel



Issue Eight

http://www.ustream.tv/channel/the-virtual-fan-lounge

From: Peter Sullivan ("ceemage"), peter@burdonvale.co.uk
Boring webpage at http://www,burdonvale.co.uk
Slightly less boring livejournal at http;//ceemage.livejournal.com

VTH is primarily an electronic fanzine, available on http://www.efanzines.com. Paper copies of this fanzine do exist, however, and will be available for the fannish usual. In any case, e-mails and letters of comment are, of course, welcome.

Thanks to: Bill Mills ("FanLounge"), without whom The Virtual Fan Lounge wouldn't exist – a letter from Bill follows inside. Also to Dean Sweatman for the scan of this issue's front cover.

Member fwa. Startling Press Production number 276. Today is Wednesday 11th June, 2008.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

The Virtual Fan Lounge was invited back to the Vegrants' party in Las Vegas last weekend, which included the third episode of Arnie Katz's "The Wasted Hour," his 30-minute faanish programme.

Our write-up of The Wasted Hour 3 will follow next issue. In the meantime, if you want to know what happened, you can view the video on-line in the Video Library, or be around in the Lounge for the "Re-mix Session" on Sunday 16th June.

This weekend's schedule is a triple-header:

- We have the usual Southern Fandom Classic chat session on the Saturday.
- As an extra event on the Sunday, we also have "ShelVy Speaks" - an audio interview with Shelby Vick.
- And, following on afterwards, we have a re-broadcast of The Wasted Hour 3, with more debate and discussion in the chat-room.

See below for more details of all of the future planned events.

Joining the Party

To use the chat-room, just go to http://www.ustream.tv/channel/the-virtual-fan-lounge. On the left hand side of the page is the live video feed – replaced by a slide show when there isn't anything happening. On the right is the actual chat-room. You can see what everyone else is typing in the top window, and add your own contribution in the smaller box at the bottom.

You will be assigned an initial user name in the format "ustreamer-12345." If you'd rather change this – to your real name, livejournal name, or whatever – you can do this by clicking the "Sign Up" link at the top to register for free. Some people have been slightly put off by the amount of information that the registration form asks for, which I can empathise with. But registration is entirely optional – you can simply stay as "ustreamer-12345" if you prefer.

Video Library

As well as the live events, The Virtual Fan Lounge is beginning to build up a library of recorded material available for viewing. The clips are listed under the main viewscreen – just click to select. The new video added this week is The Wasted Hour 3, presented by Arnie Katz. However, previous weeks' videos are also still available, including:

- Corflu Silver Panel – an extract from the Future of Fandom panel at Corflu in Las Vegas.
- The Wasted Hour 1 – featuring Arnie and Joyce Katz.
- Video Voyage 1 – a selection of videos from "Vee-Jay" Bill Mills.
- Mars Landing – ustream's coverage of the Phoenix landing.
- Space Shuttle Discovery – ustream's coverage of the space shuttle launch.
- The Wasted Hour 2 – presented by Arnie Katz.
- Bill Mills chatting with Peter Sullivan – a planning session that we ended up recording. Some potentially interesting hints about the future of the Lounge.

And, in addition, all the video clips from the Corflu Silver Virtual Con Suite are still available at the old web page:
http://www.ustream.tv/channel/corflu-silver-virtual-con-suite

Art Credits

Front cover: Cover of a magazine, featuring a story by our eponymous titular fan-turned-pro, Wilson 'Bob' Tucker.

Yours Sincerely, Wasting Away

Bill Mills writes: I have to tell you what a grand job I think you're doing with Virtual Tucker Hotel. As time goes on I expect it will be seen as a vital hub for info, schedules, articles and select quoted passges from chat transcripts, about and from The Virtual Fan Lounge. It's not a big surprise if it isn't that quite yet.

Not that you haven't already set a fine pubbing style and 'zine formatting, etcetera. But, I'd guess that the readership is still quite small and, at present, it's entertainment and informational value is not yet a big attraction to either core fandom or (gak) fandom-at-large. And it really can't become that until TVFL has more content, more regularly scheduled programs and events, to provide to visitors of the site.

I see TVFL's current state of development as very much like trying to start a new 'reader written' magazine. How is it going to have it's pages filled with stories and articles composed by readers until it's been on the stands long enough to garner readers? So, at first the publisher would have to 'seed the field' by soliciting friends and associates to write material and probably write the majority of the material themselves (under various psuedo-names a'course) to get out the first few issues. Then, if they're lucky, they begin having a readership... some of whom will take the already published material as 'templates' of sorts and begin submitting similar content of their own. Good Ghu, no one would rush to buy a mag that had a two page editorial soliciting reader contributions and nothing more. Ya' know? It is a process that, among other things, absolutely requires time to reach a successful result.

TVFL is kinda in that same situation. For the moment at least. Unfortunately, with limited resources and a limited 'talent pool' to create recorded content and broadcast interesting live events it's undoubtedly going to take longer to build a site like TVFL up to that position than some people are imagining. But, I certainly understand how easily impatient one can be with such a pace when a project like this begins.

I think it's a strong possibility that our potential audience, being frequently asked to come back and visit the site, will soon be bored by the lack of interesting and entertaining things to do there at this stage. And boring your audience is sure death for a website (or stage show, tv program, fanzine, etc.). However, I personally don't believe there is a lack of general interest in the idea (of such a site as TVFL) on the part of our potential 'audience'. The time is right for someone to begin creating entertaining fannish productions and for fannish shows and broadcasts to become popular and common internet fare. Though I think The Virtual Con Suite and The Virtual Fan Lounge can be seen as firsts and a good prototype to possibly inspire others to develop the idea into a more defined fannish video network, I'm not so sure that TVFL is destined to take that position ultimately.

None-the-less, to make the Virtual Fan Lounge site into something that attractive and inviting would require a more aggressive approach to programming... regularly hosting special event chats, as well as live and recorded 'shows', etcetera, and would still take some time to accomplish.

I have to admit that the way I originally envisioned the site, it's 'style', it's content and it's value was based on... well, a 'less-than-aggressive' approach. I was/am happily willing to re-address the concept as it began to blossom, but the result of that thinking puts the site into a bit more of a 'showbizzy' light that I had expected. Thus the thinking has inherently taken on the attitude of producers/publishers trying to increase their audience size, the pressures of feeling duty-bound to bring 'em in and a sense of urgency to get 'er done faster!

I'm not sure I'm so in favor of all that. But, I believe that waffling around about how to proceed would've done as much damage as any choice of direction could. So, I choose to jump right on in as quickly as I could, go with the flow and attempt to provide as much content and help as I am able.

If the chat room had continued to have a life of it's own, with chatters coming in to be with

each other irrelevant of an event or live video feed being offered as I had hoped, I might be hedging for a different approach now. But, alas, that didn't seem to happen. Again, at least not yet.

So, it would seem that the more 'general interest' approach to developing the site, that of having video content, on demand video to view, with text chat as an optional enhancement (instead of the reverse of that for which I had hoped) and the ocassional scheduled live video feed/event, is the way to go. Now if we only had a dependable, enthusiastic, willing group to contribute...

On the subject of producing programs for TVFL; I have the ability to use Skype to call phones in the U.S. (land line or cells) from my computer (as well as the traditional PC to PC connections) and can therefore route that audio into the chat room audio feed. This would allow those without webcams and/or mics attached to their computers to participate in a live feed from TVFL as audio guests. However, to even consider arranging these guest spots and 'telephone interviews' I would need to get a list of potential guests who have Skype and their user names, and a list of those who don't have Skype but would send their phone number and allow us to call their personal phone to be included in a live TVFL broadcast.

It would also help to have a list of those in our group who currently own webcams and/or computer mics for possible co-hosting of TVFL videocasts.

TVFL Site News; the problem of the disappearing video files seems to have finally been resolved by the overworked geeks in the uStream.tv tech department. All of the six pre-recorded videos that are currently on the site have been available without glitch for several days now. They fly in when their links are clicked , faster and better than they have ever done. If you have tried to view any of them before without success, please go back to http://www.ustream.tv/FanLounge/videos (which is the gallery of recorded videos separate from the chat room page) to try them again. Of course, you can also click the thumbnails under the video player window in the actual Virtual Fan Lounge chatroom page at: http://www.ustream.tv/channel/the-virtual-fan-lounge

The latest video added to the site is the second episode of "The Wasted Hour" with Arnie Katz, a proposed thirty minute show, which this time ran a bit short and is actually only twenty three minutes in length. It includes some news and short conversations with Joyce Katz and with, fellow Las Vegrant, Teresa Cochran Taylor. Registered uStream users can leave comments on any of the videos' display pages and we heartily invite everyone to do so.

I am open to ideas for possible future special chats, cam feeds and programs and welcome your readers' thoughts and suggestions.

My sincere thanks to you for all of your efforts and support as well as to everyone who has visited The Virtual Fan Lounge. Please be patient with us... we're a 'work-in-progress'.

Fannish Trails To You, (until we meet again...),

((**Peter replies:** I think you're absolutely right to just dive in and try things – it's the fannish way. With a new fannish medium like The Virtual Fan Lounge, no-one can know for sure what will work and what won't. Different people will have different ideas, and that's fine. Rather than argue about what works best in theory, the best way is to encourage people to try both and see which works best in practice – maybe they both do!))

((Once people are comfortable using Skype for telephone interviews, I know it can also do conference calls. And we've already talked about using that functionality to do a 'virtual con panel' of some kind. But, as I'm sure you'd be the first to caution, let's walk first, then run.))

((Yes, people can leave comments on videos. But they could also send their comments to me, and I could include them here. An empty lettercol is a dreadful thing to waste. Or they could even do both...))

Schedule for the next few weeks

Southern Fandom Classic chat-room session

Dean Sweatman and other members of the Southern Fandom Classic group will be holding their regular chat session in the Virtual Fan Lounge, and invite other interested fans from around the world to join them.

- Saturday 14th June, 4.00 pm PDT (Pacific Daylight Time)
- Saturday 14th June, 7.00 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)
- Saturday 14th June, 11.00 pm UTC (Co-ordinated Universal Time)
- Saturday 14th June, 12 midnight BST (British Summer Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 7.00 am WAST (Western Australian Standard Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 9.00 am EAST (Eastern Australian Standard Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 11.00 am NZST (New Zealand Standard Time)

(This may not end up being the regular time for this chat, but as we've already announced this particular session, we won't change it for this time around. But future sessions may be at an earlier time. See future editions of Virtual Tucker Hotel for confirmed details.)

ShelVy Speaks to The Virtual Fan Lounge

Shelby Vick, fannish legend, has agreed to give The Virtual Fan Lounge an audio interview, in which we'll be quizzing him about his time in fandom and getting some fannish legends confirmed or denied. We'll also be taking questions from the chat-room.

- Sunday 15th June, 9.00 am PDT (Pacific Daylight Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 12 noon EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 4.00 pm UTC (Co-ordinated Universal Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 5.00 pm BST (British Summer Time)
- Monday 16th June, 12 midnight WAST (Western Australian Standard Time)
- Monday 16th June, 2.00 am EAST (Eastern Australian Standard Time)
- Monday 15th June, 4.00 am NZST (New Zealand Standard Time)

Almost immediately followed by:

The Wasted Hour 3 - Re-mix Session

Last week's edition of the The Wasted Hour re-broadcast. Arnie Katz aims to be in the chat-room to respond to any queries, and re-argue all or any of his more contentious points.

- Sunday 15th June, 10.00 am PDT (Pacific Daylight Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 1.00 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 5.00 pm UTC (Co-ordinated Universal Time)
- Sunday 15th June, 6.00 pm BST (British Summer Time)
- Monday 16th June, 1.00 am WAST (Western Australian Standard Time)
- Monday 16th June, 3.00 am EAST (Eastern Australian Standard Time)
- Monday 15th June, 5.00 am NZST (New Zealand Standard Time)

Vegrants Party

The Vegrants in Las Vegas, Nevada meet the first and third Saturdays of the month and invite you to join them here for conversation, music, live web cam feed and possibly the latest of Arnie Katz's 30 minute presentations entitled "The Wasted Hour".

- Saturday 21st June, 8.00 pm PDT (Pacific Daylight Time)
- Saturday 21st June, 11.00 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)
- Sunday 22nd June, 3.00 am UTC (Co-ordinated Universal Time)
- Sunday 22nd June, 4.00 pm BST (British Summer Time)
- Sunday 22nd June, 11.00 am WAST (Western Australian Standard Time)
- Sunday 22nd June, 1.00 pm EAST (Eastern Australian Standard Time)
- Sunday 22nd June, 3.00 pm NZST (New Zealand Standard Time)

And More?

Other ad-hoc events may be added around this 'core' schedule – see future issues of Virtual Tucker Hotel for more details. And, of course, the chat-room itself is open 24/7.