

BCSFAZINE

Clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association
(Issue #543 – August, 2020)



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Dedicated to The Fellowship of The Greater BCSFA.

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To submit articles, art work, or letters of comment, contact God-Editor R. Graeme Cameron at: < the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

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FRED ZOOM MEETINGS – (The Graeme’s SF Fen Confab Meetings)

— Every Monday 3:00 PM (PST) to 9:00 PM (PST). All SF Fen welcome.

Contact me at < the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com > and I’ll send you the link.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Midnight, August 31st. My simple layout design ensures it will get into the following month’s issue to be published no later than September 2nd. Guaranteed.

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Cover Credit

The Horror of Party Beach

Cover – By unknown artist (Not stated).

Created, produced and published by Warren Publishing Company, 1964.

Publisher – James Warren.

Story adaptation and art direction – Wallace Wood and Russ Jones

EDITORIAL: THE GOD-EDITOR SPEAKS!

THE PUBLISHING MESS

At least five Canadian independent publishers have gone out of business this year for a variety of reasons, namely ChiZine Publications, Double Dragon Publishing, Coteau Books, Five Rivers Publishing, and Bundoran Press. The first dissolved in scandal, the second was purchased by a UK company, and the last three quietly shut down with all rights reverting to the authors. (It should be noted that Bundoran Press books will continue to be for sale till October 30th.)

This is a worrying trend. It may well continue. I've seen it claimed that book sales generally are down 27%. Independent publishers, especially magazine publishers, often operate on relatively thin profit margins. If there is no guarantee of at least break-even status, publishers collapse. Fewer people reading is a bad omen.

Some publishing outfits depend on a tiny staff. The workload stress is often horrific and not exactly something any sane person would normally do. A labour of love, in other words. But even if sufficient income trickles in to cover costs, added difficulties brought about by self-isolation problems and the need to look after loved ones can translate into too much for individuals to cope with. There are more than mundane market conditions at work. Times are hard. Very hard.

I know someone seeking to sell an anthology to publishers. Trouble is even currently scheduled books are being delayed because of problems afflicting the printing industry. I have the impression at least some publishers literally can't afford to slot in new books because they have no idea when they can bring them to market and start to regain costs. There is no firm foundation for planning anymore. It is as if the entire industry is sitting on quicksand running through an hour glass held by the grim reaper. (Stupid analogy, I know, but I'm fond of such.) In other words, there is every prospect that things may get worse.

Yet, although market conditions are poor, there is at least one path to continued survival. Unfortunately, it depends on publishers devoting most of their time to promoting themselves rather than the books they publish. Seeking Government grants at Federal, Provincial, and city levels, for one thing. Approaching academic institutions, arts councils, cultural groups and even corporations for support is also potentially worthwhile. Not to mention grabbing wealthy individuals with even a smattering of cultural "breeding" to beg them to become patrons. To be truly comprehensive when casting the net over potential donors and sponsors, a PR savvy full-timer position is required. Such a person will find their job be difficult to accomplish but, in theory, it can be done. It's not absolutely impossible.

Let us not forget the small-fry, the readers, who lack the means to fork over big bucks but who might be willing to help out a little bit and, collectively, provide enough funding to keep individual projects, or even the publisher, afloat and ongoing. Patreon, kickstarter funds, and ilk. Definitely worth pursuing.

In general, publishers need to avoid the traditional "mistake" common to fan-run

SF&F conventions, namely “If we plan big and commit to big spending, the fans will come in large numbers and we’ll make a profit!” That doesn’t work anymore. Best to determine the precise budget required and have sufficient funds to cover all costs beforehand. That way, if book sales are flat, at least you don’t lose money. And if the book sells at all, icing on the cake, i.e. pure profit. To put it another way, bean counting first, then literary art as a bonus.

There may come a day when readers expect to pay nothing for books. Publishers will, of necessity, pay all costs and earn all profits *before* they make the books available to the general public. Both authors and publishers will depend on fixed income with royalties non-existent. Or, to put it another way, only publishers and authors operating on this basis will survive. How to make this work? No idea. But human ingenuity and improving technology will find a way. Probably.

My business model for my Polar Borealis Magazine is ahead of the curve. I pay my contributors and charge nothing for the magazine. I rely on my meagre pensions and occasional gift contributions to keep going. So far it is working. Fifteen issues published to date, and three more in the pipeline. Unless an unexpected financial disaster strikes, or health issues, there’s no reason why I can’t keep publishing for years to come, for as long as I live, in fact. How many business models guarantee that kind of longevity? I am to be envied.

But enough speculation about the future of publishing. All that can be reasonably anticipated is that some sort of stable future will eventually shake out that may well be radically different from today in a manner that no one currently can accurately predict. Fine and dandy, but what are writers to do in the meantime? To whom can they sell?

Turns out there are still a number of short story and book markets available in Canada, most of them likely to survive into the foreseeable future as best I can tell. Next issue I will list as many as I can find in the “Literary Shenanigans section” for you to peruse and find comfort from the fact there are as many as there are. If you wish to explore them as potential markets for your work, just Google them to see what’s what. The publishing industry isn’t dead yet. Neither are you. Cause for hope.

The title of a recent, self-proclaimed “Pretty Terrible” blog by Natalie Luhrs is *George R.R. Martin Can Fuck Off into the Sun, or: The 2020 Hugo Awards Ceremony*. Note that she had been a finalist for “best Fan Writer Hugo” in 2017. Pretty insightful and painfully amusing comments on her part, bringing up a number of points that strike me as quite valid. You can read it here: [Critique of George R.R. Martin](#)

Myself, I caught an hour or so of the livestream. Martin showing off an early Hugo, which in fact is an antique orange juice squeezer that looks like it should have been a Hugo, I found somewhat amusing. But his wandering, self-indulgent commentary, combined with annoyingly loud music that sometimes overlaid the actual announcement of winners (well, at least once, anyway), an even more

annoying echo effect built-in to the ceremony and compensated by on-screen instruction to click on channel 2 and hit the pause button, which allowed you to listen but not watch the broadcast (which struck me as odd), wildly varying sound levels, miscues, and overall difficulty keeping track of the awards themselves, inspired me to turn off the broadcast. Too painful to listen to. Still, given the circumstances of an ad hoc show involving participants scattered across the planet, I should probably be surprised it was as good as it was. Full marks to the concom for trying. I guess it was successful. Sort of.

I did have the impression Martin was mispronouncing a lot of names, possibly deliberately. Seemed to be a touch of condescension in his explanations of traditional fannish practices that underly the origins of both Worldcon and the Hugos. For instance, he quickly ran off a list of fan funds like D.U.F.F. as if disgusted there were people attending the con who knew nothing about them. At least he mentioned C.U.F.F. (the Canadian Unity Fan Fund) though he muttered something under his breath which sounded like “but it’s only continental” is if to imply “it’s not intercontinental so it doesn’t count.” In which case, why mention it at all?

I suppose George was chosen as GoH and Hugo host because of the staggering popularity of his *Game of Thrones* TV series and books. That, plus his enormous earnings, presumably make him a role model of a successful SF&F author. True enough. If you want to be like George, be like George. Just be sure you’re equally talented.

His failing, if I can call it that, is that he is a less-than-successful spokesman on behalf of the sense-of-wonder joy of being a fan. Like many oldtimers of a curmudgeonly bent, he leaves me with the impression he feels modern fans have somehow betrayed the true fen values of the “superior” fen of the past, that it’s really rather tiresome to have to explain everything to the “newbies” who aren’t worthy of the knowledge, anyway. If I were a young fan, listening to him wouldn’t make me want to continue being a fan. I don’t go where I’m not wanted.

Maybe it’s heretical of me to say this, but why bother explaining the past when giving out the current Hugos? What’s the point? It’s as if spokespeople for the Hugos are attempting to justify the Hugos, to apologise for their very existence. Screw that! The purpose of the Hugos is to celebrate and promote today’s talent and innovation. The Hugos are a skill for modern writers, artists, fen, etc. It’s a waste of time to lecture the audience on the “glories” of the past. Not relevant.

If the current Hugos are to remain prestigious and important, they can only do so by emphasizing the importance and the prestige of the nominees and winners. Distracting the audience with mumblings about obscure and obsolete facts and practices they’re “supposed” to know is counterproductive, even damaging. I believe this “dead-weight past” habit is contributing to the decline of the reputation of the Hugos among the vast majority of fen who “just like the stuff.” Frankly, they’re only interested in what’s current. The past can go hang, as far as they are concerned. Hugo Award presenters should bear this in mind.

Granted, the Retro Hugos seem like they need to be put in context, but I think

not. No more than the current Hugos. You either know about the nominees or you don't. Having to explain and justify the nominees at the actual ceremony is rather late for any practical purpose. Won't change the votes.

Truth is, most fen don't care about the nominees they're not familiar with. Thus, for the majority, sitting through the awards is a somewhat dry, even boring experience. Very much like watching the Oscars. Or any other set of awards.

The solution is to entertain the audience. Of course, if the entertainment sucks, it only compounds the problem. Here the trick is to offer short, sharp, hilarious anecdotes that enliven the proceedings. Not meandering lectures on topics most people, even most fen, don't have the slightest will to sit through. Puts me in mind of the Ed Sullivan show back in the old days. Don't know how many times I endured the bloody Red Army Chorus or that idiotic talking mouse waiting for the good stuff like Wayne and Shuster skits, or Elvis.

Science fiction, in theory, is all about the future. Still waiting for the Worldcon to fully catch up with the present.

As for my take on the Hugos, I find it hilarious that John W. Campbell won a Retro Hugo for "Best Editor" and Jeanette Ng won the "Best Related Work" Hugo for her "2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech" in which she tore him a new one. Certain fen are going to be grouching and complaining about this till the day they die.

Personally, I fiercely admire Campbell for revolutionizing the market for SF and raising the quality and standards of SF literature, while at the same time fiercely despise him for the limitations he put on SF literature, his credulity regarding assorted fraudulent pseudo-sciences (thus bringing SF into disrepute with the general public), and the racism and misogyny reflected in his editorial policies. As an editor he is both my personal role model AND an example of someone not to emulate. Depends on which aspect of his multi-faceted editorial persona is under discussion.

In general I am pleased with all the nominees and winners in the Retro Hugo categories. I am tickled to see Theodore Sturgeon's *Killdozer* win. I am even more pleased to see H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos win. Granted, there was no "mythos." It's a concept August Derleth made up for marketing purposes and something many evangelicals take literally as proof Lovecraft was a Satanic bastard promoting a pagan religion to corrupt our youth (they have the same view regarding *Lord of the Rings*). In reality Lovecraft was merely having fun with a cosmic form of SF horror.

Lovecraft was as racist as fuck, though, to be fair, he did begin to moderate his views under the influence of Roosevelt's New Deal. But, at the same time, he was a master of "purple prose campfire tales" in which mood was infinitely more important than plot, and as the writer of such influenced and inspired the horror genre second only to Poe. An intelligent introvert who could be quite personable with like-minded friends, he reminds me in some ways of my grandfathers. I don't hate them, even though I consider some of their belief system to be archaic, obsolete, and not worth preserving. Similarly, I don't hate Lovecraft. Just his racism.

Long story short, I figure both the Retro Hugos and the current Hugos wonderfully reflect the past and present virtues of the science fiction field. Ultimately, it's all a matter of celebration and promotion. That's a good thing in my books.

Cheers! *The Graeme*

Send your letters of comment, submissions, ideas, etc. to:

< the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE

Note – All articles unless otherwise stated are by the God-Editor The Graeme.

Nature of zine – Pretty much anything to do with SF Fandom and whatever the fen are interested in. Or, to put it another day, whatever pops up in my fevered thoughts and the agitated minds of the contributors.

Tributes to Stewart Smyth – I had hoped to run a series of short reminiscences in honour of his memory and decades of contribution to Vancouver fandom. Unfortunately, no one sent in anything. Nor did I. I can picture him. I can hear his voice. I well remember his outrage whenever this or that fan exhibited thoughts and behaviour typical of mundanes but unworthy of enlightened fen. I can see him in my mind's eye, but it's as if I'm watching a play with a strobe-light flashing on and off. As a result, all that my memory can provide are glimpses frozen in time. He told jokes. He made observations. He loved to indulge in conversation. But I can't remember any of it. He was never the sort to write anything down. Produced no fanzines. Wrote no articles. Everything was verbal. I remember he was good to have around and good to be with. A true companion. But, increasingly these days, my memory sucks and is far more narrowly selective than it has any right to be. Damn it. However, I console myself with the thought that the memory of the people who knew us is our sole legacy. When we are gone we live on in the minds of others, however imperfectly. A pleasant sort of monument. More fitting than stone or a poorly assembled and incomplete eulogy. His friends remember Stew. He is worth remembering.

WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH

Basically, contributions by fen like you! Thus far, there has been no great rush of willing contributors, though the ones who have offered their articles are great and wonderful in what they write. It's just that I am greedy and keep hoping for more.

VOID BREATHER BOMBAST

Moon Got Metal! – While studying ice at the bottom of deep craters at Luna's North Pole that never see sunlight, NASA has observed that associated dust, blasted out of deep strata by meteorite impacts, has a greater concentration of metals like iron and titanium than previously suspected. This has American mining corporations rubbing their hands in glee. You see, back in 1966 the USA signed the Outer Space Treaty that states Nations cannot claim territory in Space. However, the USA never signed the 1979 Moon Treaty which stipulates that all activities in space must conform to international law. In 2015 the US Congress passed a law allowing any American company or citizen to mine and sell space material, albeit without claiming the location it comes from. Multiple nations are planning to mine the Moon eventually. Even Luxembourg set up its own space agency in 2018, for Ghu's sake. Long story short, it's not propaganda which is driving the current space race. It's the lure of profit and strategic economic advantage. Fun times ahead. Now you know why Trump set up the Spaceforce.

United Arab Emirates Planning Mars Colony – Got your attention now, don't I? Not a heading you expected to see? I could have just said *Arabs in Space*, which is not something Westerners normally contemplate. To backtrack a little:

In 1972 President Nixon sent Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nayhan, founder of the UAE, a moon rock from the Taurus-Littrow Valley gathered by the Apollo 17 crew.

In 1976 Sheikh Zayed met a group of Apollo Astronauts on world tour. Sheikh Zayed subsequently announced an official interest in someday establishing a space program.

In June 1985 Saudi Royalty in the form of Air Force pilot Prince Sultan Bin Salmon Flew aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery (mission STS-51-G) to become the first Muslim and Arab in space.

In 1987 Syrian military pilot Mohammed Faris, a graduate of the Soviet Interkosmos training program, flew via a Soyuz capsule (Mission TM-3) to the Mir space station where he spent eight days as a research Cosmonaut.

In 2006 the UAE began collaborating with universities and space programs around the world to gather appropriate technology and knowledge to apply toward a probe to be sent to Mars.

In 2014 the UAE officially established a national space program.

In 2017 UAE military pilot Hazza Al-Mansouri was one of two individuals to be first to join the UAE Astronaut Corps based at the Mohammed Bin Rashid space centre.

On Sept 25, 2019, Hazza flew aboard a Soyuz (Mission MS-15) to the International Space Station, returning safely on October 2nd.

On April 20th, 2020, the UAE space probe *Amal (Hope)* arrived at the Tanegashima Space Centre in Japan where it is to be launched atop a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries H2A rocket 53 metres tall and weighing 289 tonnes.

Hope is cube-shaped with sides approximately 3 metres across (a width of 7.9 metres with solar panels extended). It weighs 1,350 KG and cost a mere \$200 million to build. It features a high-gain dish antennae and three scientific instruments:

- an ultraviolet Spectrometer to measure the variability of hydrogen and oxygen in the Martian atmosphere,

- an Infrared Spectrometer to measure the temperature and abundance of water ice and vapour in the Martian atmosphere,

- and an Exploration Imager to measure properties of water, ice, dust, and ozone on Mars.

The primary purpose of the probe is to study the daily and seasonal cycles of water, gases, and dust in the Martian environment over a two year period. Data gathered will be shared with over 200 scientific and academic institutions around the world.

Since April and the probe's arrival at Tanegashima all onboard systems such as electrical power, communications, altitude control, command and control, propulsion, thermal control, and software programs have been thoroughly tested.

July 19th, 2020, UAE Space Probe *Hope* was successfully launched on its mission.

By February, 2021, *Hope* will enter a stable orbit around the red planet in time to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Arab Emirates.

Back in July, 2020, the current Prime Minister of the UAE (and Crown Prince of Dubai) Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, "announced the launch of the Arab Space Pioneers Program, which aims to advance Arab expertise in space science and technology. As part of a three-year program, young Arab researchers, scientists, inventors and creative talents will learn the skills required for a career in the expanding space sector."

Not only that, he also announced the UAE's intention to establish "the first habitable settlement on Mars by 2117."

A very interesting statement indeed. First, because it implies human technological civilization will still exist by then, which is optimistic and encouraging. But second, it also implies that all previous attempts by other nations will have failed, leaving the field open to the UAE's success. Hmm, interesting possibilities for science fiction writers, methinks.

Anyway, my point in emphasising the UAE space program is to remind people that today's space race isn't at all like the original space race. Back then it was a propaganda stunt game of one-upmanship to demonstrate which Superpower deserved to be considered number one (i.e. the dominant power every other nation should suck up to in world affairs). Today, numerous nations are racing to stick their fingers in the pie in order to justify a share in the economic exploitation of the Solar System's resources. Long term planning. Thinking ahead. To unimaginative types who believe the world never changes it all seems a bit silly and a complete waste of money. A century from now the outlook will be very different. For one thing, competition for those resources could trigger a war risk every bit as great as the

original cold war. Of course, we won't be around to observe this. Still, fascinating to witness the opening stages. Plenty of room for wide-open speculation as to what will eventually take place. We continue to be our own favourite spectator sport.

By the way, the UAE is nearing completion of its own Nuclear Power station. The first of the station's 4 reactors is already on line and operating. Ultimately the station will provide 25% of the UAE's energy requirements. Fair to say the UAE is embracing advanced technology as the solution to its problems and the key to future prosperity. Is that what Canada is doing or are we going to fall behind and someday become an economic and political backwater? An important question to ask, methinks.

China off to Mars – On July 23, 2020, a Long March 5 Rocket successfully sent China's Tianwen 1 Mars Rover toward Mars. Tianwen means "Questions to Heaven." It lifted off from Wenchang Spaceport on Hainan Island. It will reach Mars in February but won't land for 2 or 3 months depending on the weather below (just in case one of those planet-girdling dust storms show up). The lander will come down in the Utopia Planitia impact basin near the equator (roughly where NASA's Viking 2 landed back in 1976). It is hoped the 240kg, six-wheeled rover will function for at least 90 Martian days. A mast carries cameras, and assorted instruments on the body will assess the local minerology. Power will be provided by solar panel wings.

China's previous attempt to launch a mission to Mars, the orbiter Yinghuo-1, failed when it's Russian launch vehicle fell back into the sea in 2011. Since then the Chinese have successfully landed two rovers on the Moon and developed the thoroughly reliable Long March series of rockets on their own. Fingers crossed, they will succeed. The more Rovers on Mars the more we learn!

Perseverance and Her Helicopter Zipping Toward Mars – Perseverance successfully lifted off courtesy of an Atlas rocket on July 30th, 2020. In addition to testing her little helicopter she'll build a stockpile of selected rocks to be picked up later in the decade and brought back to Earth. Why is this important? She will be landing in a dried lake bed known as Jezero Crater where clays and carbonates have been detected, in effect dried sedimentary layers laid down in water. Particularly exciting is a "bathtub ring" of what may be stromatolites, i.e. ancient fossilised microbial mats. Unlike previous missions, Perseverance is designed to detect microbes, even in fossil form. She carries 23 advanced cameras, and even some microphones to pick up any sounds in the environment. All in all she'll be trundling about for a year doing her stuff. Of the three missions launched to Mars this month, this is the one I'd most like to succeed.

Lurks the Great Galactic Ghoul? – This is an alien monster that feeds on probes sent from Earth to Mars. So far it has consumed about half of them. The concept was coined by Time Magazine journalist Donald Neff in 1997 to "explain" the mysterious failure of numerous probes. Some failed to lift off from Earth or break out of orbit, some missed Mars altogether, or crashed, or landed successfully and mysteriously abruptly ceased operation. Perhaps coincidentally, improving technology has seen increased numbers of successes. It is to be hoped, especially in the light of current missions, that the Great Galactic Ghoul will feed no more.

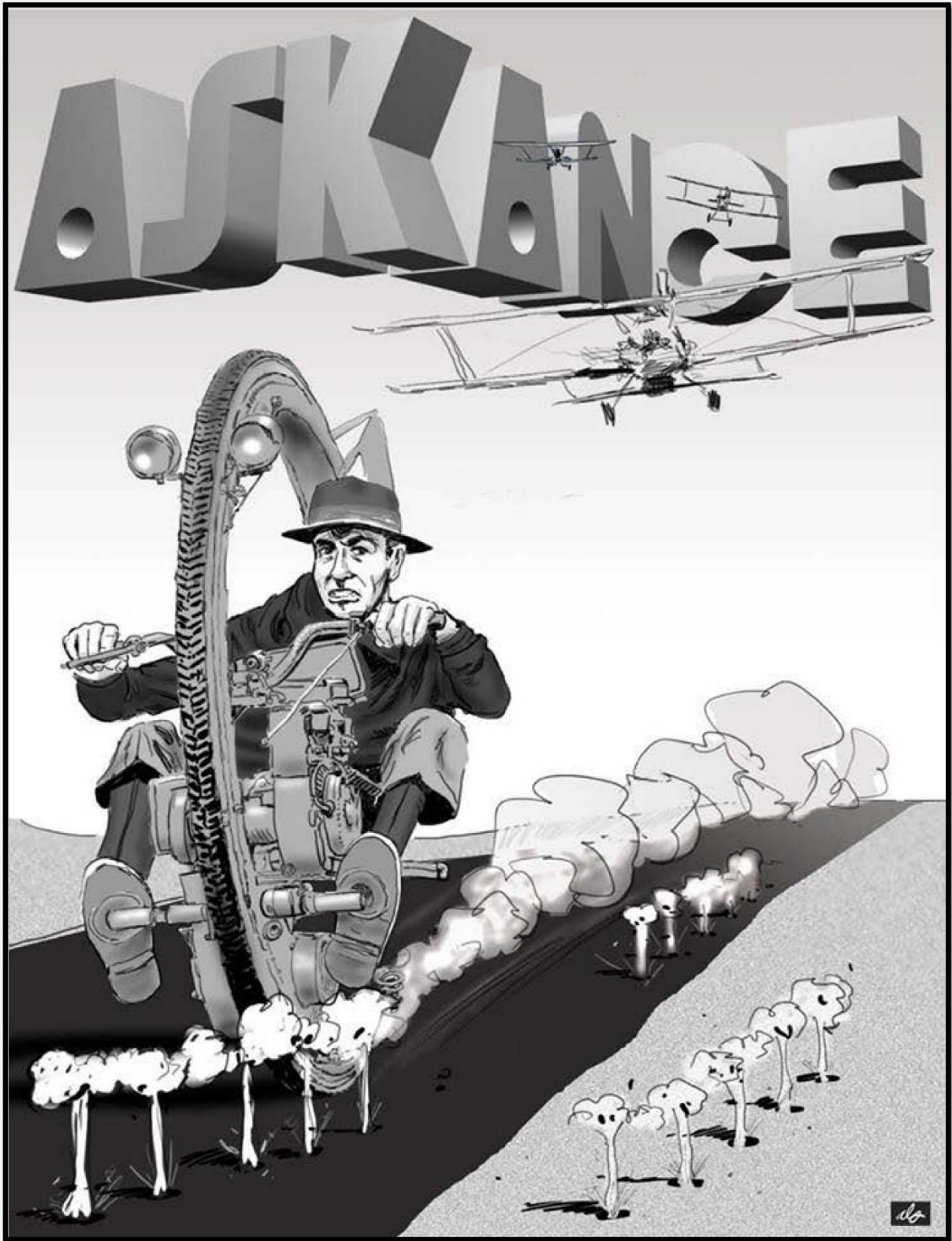
Airbus-France to build Interplanetary Cargo Ship – As mentioned, Perseverance's main task is to find evidence of current or past life on Mars. Miniature samples of evidence confirming this will be placed in small tubes which will be stockpiled as a sort of cairn. At some point in the future another probe will land, scoop up the tubes, then blast off into Mars orbit to rendezvous with the proposed cargo ship. Said vessel, named ERO, will weigh 6 tonnes and possess a powerful Ion engine that will require solar panel wings 120 feet wide to provide electricity. The perseverance samples, assuming the rendezvous is successful, will then be placed in a football-sized container to be hauled back to earth. Once in Earth orbit, the container will be inserted into a re-entry capsule to splash down so that its contents can be retrieved and studied in laboratories worldwide. Overall, a very complex mission indeed. It will cost only 7 billion dollars. With any luck, we'll have time to toast the discovery of life on Mars before it has time to celebrate the discovery of life on Earth by wiping us out with some spectacularly virulent plague. Just saying.

Dragon X Endeavour successfully splashes down – Astronauts Bob Behnken and Doug Hurley, who've been living aboard the International Space Station since they were lifted into orbit by a Falcon-9 rocket back in May, undocked from the ISS on Saturday, August 1st. The next day, Sunday August 2nd, they came down in the Gulf of Mexico West of Panama City in Florida. This marks the first time since the retirement of the Space Shuttle system in 2011 that Americans have been able to zip into orbit and back down again in their own spacecraft. This is a significant milestone in the exploration of the Solar System. It will pave the way for a manned return to the Moon by Americans, and ultimately, one hopes, will contribute towards an international manned expedition to Mars. I, for one, hope to live long enough to witness whatever live broadcasts will be available.

There's a Weird Cloud on Mars – It's been named the Arsia Mons Elongated Cloud, or AMEC. It forms every year around the Southern Solstice and stays put for 80 days or so. Composed entirely of water ice, it trails up to 1,100 miles from the tip of the Volcano Arsia Mons. Alas, nothing to do with the volcano itself, but has something to do with the way local winds react with the slopes of the mountain which is 12 miles higher than its surroundings. Interestingly, the cloud forms and then fades during early morning hours, then returns the next day.

Virgin Galactic reveals Interior of Passenger Spacecraft – It features 6 reclining seats and 12 large circular windows. The idea is you can float out of your seats and position yourself about the window of your choice for a spectacular view of the curvature of the Earth. Mind you, you'll only be in suborbital space for a few minutes, but 16 cameras onboard will capture your entire experience. So far, 600 people have bought tickets at \$250,000 a piece. Rest assured "soft cabin surfaces and elements become intuitive hand-and-footholds allowing astronauts to explore the cabin freely and fully." Even better, "the cabin's color palette has been carefully curated ... the golden metallics resemble luminous desert sands, blues conjure celestial spaces and teals inspired by the ocean ground travelers back to Earth." Pah! Sounds worse than a menu in a high-priced restaurant.

ART PORTFOLIO: AL SIROIS







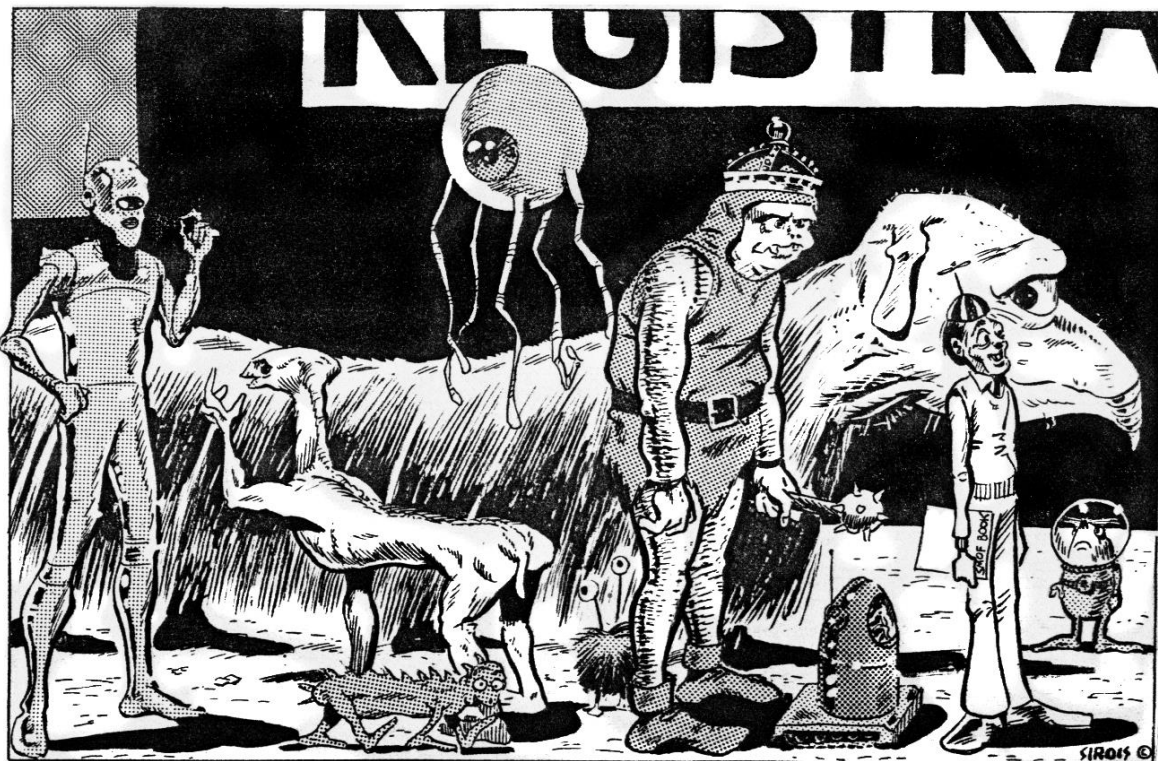
"...IT CERTAINLY PAYS TO HAVE FRIENDS..."

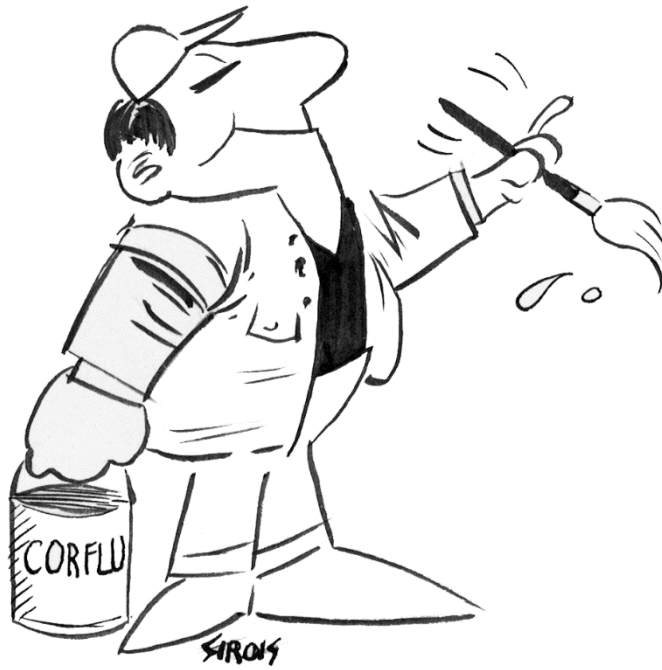


WE ARE NOT ALONE.... BUT WE
MIGHT BE BETTER OFF IF WE WERE.









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TWO-FISTED TAFF TALES

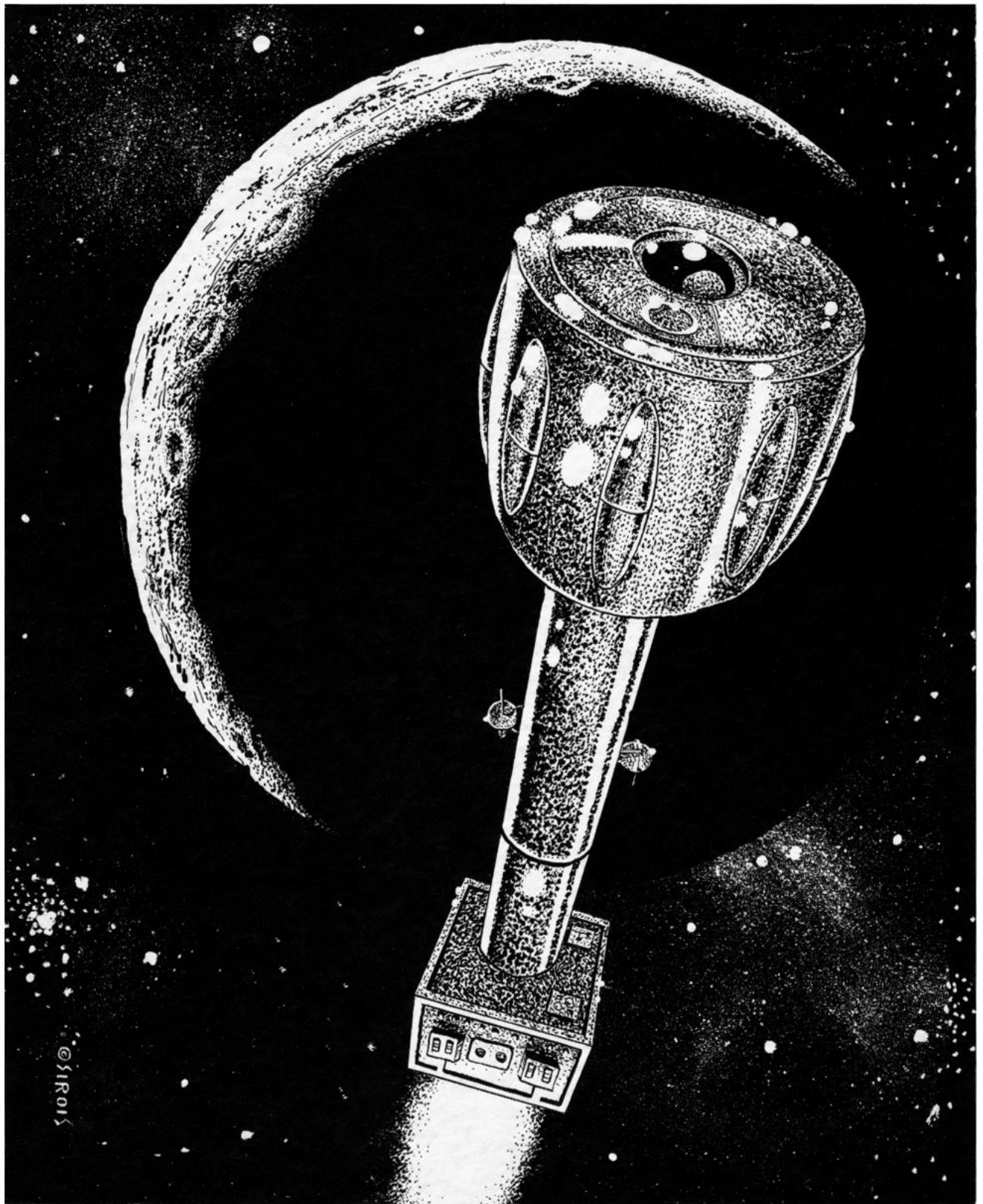


TERRY HUGHES



SIROIS
©85
AFTER KAMEN

FOR JESSICA SALMONSON



©19015

Al Sirois Biography

I am a writer, ghost writer, developmental editor, graphic artist and performing musician—although I am basically retired from the last, the virus having put a stop to my latest band. I think I’m done with all that. Fifty-four years of playing drums is probably enough ... but I don’t rule out the odd jam. I started off playing rock (drums and guitar) during the British Invasion, but began developing an interest in jazz around 1984 and finally made the switch from rock after having a stroke in 2009.

My publication career began in 1974 with the appearance of the short-short story “War Baby” in *Fantastic*. (It’d be called “flash fiction” nowadays.) That was also the year I discovered fandom. I went on to have fiction in *Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine*, *Fantastic*, *Amazing Stories*, and *Thema*, and online at *Electric Spec*, *Mystery Weekly*, *Every Day Fiction* and *Flash Fiction Online*, among other publications. I was very active in fanzine fandom as an artist and letterhack, and wrote the occasional article as well.

My story “In the Conservatory,” from *Thema*, was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Other professional works include a children’s book, *Dinosaur Dress Up* (Tambourine Press/William Morrow), a graphic novel, *The Endless Incident* (2014), a fantasy novel, *The Bohemian Magician*, published in 2017, and *Jersey Ghouls*, a horror novel published in 2018 from Azure Spider. A sequel, *Philly Ghouls*, was published in June of 2020, also from Azure Spider.

As an artist, I’ve hundreds of drawings, paintings and illustrations to my credit. I have contributed comic art for DC, Marvel, and Charlton, and have scripted for Warren Publications. I wrote and drew “Bugs in the System” for *witzend* #12, the famous comics fanzine started by MAD artist Wally Wood. I live in Rockingham County, North Carolina with my wife and occasional collaborator, author Grace Marcus, and our cat, Dashiell. I can be reached at al_sirois@yahoo.com.

LITERARY SHENANIGANS

Sunburst Awards Shortlist Announced

Toronto, Ontario(July 13, 2020) The Sunburst Award Committee is pleased to announce the shortlists for the 2020 Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic.

ADULT FICTION:

Scott R. Jones, *Shout Kill Revel Repeat* [Trepidatio Publishing]

In Scott R. Jones' masterful collection, *Shout Kill Revel Repeat*, the reader is made to feel like the lone survivor of a shipwreck plunged into a turbulent ocean with each successive story appearing as a monstrous wave, ever-threatening to be the one that washes you under. But as should all serious writers navigating such dark waters, he

provides the reader with a beacon to assure us that no matter how grim things have become, there's always some hope on the horizon. In his case, Jones uses a stunning proclivity for language as his light-shining-bright and though his style might seem overly excessive, and downright dense, to some readers, what he achieves through it is nothing short of irrefutable proof that the true power of the written word *must* reside in its ability to reassert our humanity over the technological artifice which has come to dominate our world. A troubling, oftentimes brutal, collection of stories which captures the tenor of our times with a conviction rarely seen in contemporary literature and while - by design - it won't be for all tastes, the jury is genuinely excited to see what its author comes up with next.

Helen Marshall, *The Migration* [Random House Canada]

In *The Migration*, complex ideas stretch out in a deceptively simple narrative style. The novel wrestles with illness and disability and, below the surface, being a refugee on the run. The afflicted youth are stigmatized, and then they—what? Change, evolve, grow?—into forms that seem threatening and are further stigmatized but are also framed in angelic imagery, yet they aren't so belittled. The big question: are they still human? Are they zombies? Are they evolved? Who gets to be human? Are eugenics at play in the medical treatment? A harrowing and often beautiful story.

Karen McBride, *Crow Winter* [HarperAvenue]

Coming-of-age, identity, family history, cultural history, colonialism and its legacies, an historical mystery, a compelling main character and narrator, and a trickster god, and that's not even the half of it. Deft use of comedy supports, never subverts, the sacred. One roots for Hazel Ellis from the first page and her flaws just make her all the more relatable. The novel's world is seamless, with Nanabush as vivid and believable as any of the human characters. Canadians unfamiliar with our colonialist past and how it affects us still can learn a lot from *Crow Winter*.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Gods of Jade and Shadow* [Del Rey]

Gods of Jade and Shadow by Silvia Moreno-Garcia is an exquisite genre blender with a painfully human story at its heart. Set in Jazz Age Mexico, it tells the tale of Casiopea Tun, a young woman who works as a servant for her grandfather until she discovers the bones of a god hidden in the house and inadvertently brings the dead god back to life. The two set out on a mythical road trip of sorts to restore the god's power and return him to his rightful place as the ruler of the underworld, now controlled by his usurper brother. Along the way they encounter spirits, sorcerers and other magical beings, as they journey through worlds both mundane and mystical. *Gods of Jade and Shadow* masterfully mixes together fairy tales, romance, historical fantasy, a coming-of-age feminist story, and a lavishly detailed odyssey through Mexican history and mythology. It is truly a tale of the fantastic, defying categorization while celebrating the magic of imagination itself.

Richard Van Camp, *Moccasin Square Gardens* [Douglas & McIntyre]

Richard Van Camp's *Moccasin Square Gardens* breathes life into a wealth of lively characters populating Denendeh, north of the sixtieth parallel. His masterful sense of rhythm, timing and suspense are on full display in this unforgettable collection,

much of which is truly hilarious. From the tender love explored in "Aliens," to the terrifying futuristic "Wheetago War I" and "Wheetago War II," Van Camp's ear for dialogue reigns. *Where are the warriors?* this book asks. And it points: trapped, wounded inside adult bodies, calling for medicine, for healing to begin. Or else, wakened from lusty dreams to train, to hunt, to fight; strong women and men, side by side, defending a community under attack by enemies both ancient and familiar. In this exceptional book, the old ways are told anew by a seasoned and beloved storyteller.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION:

Nafiza Azad, *The Candle and the Flame* [Scholastic Inc.]

A beautifully constructed world with fascinating metaphysical ideas and many surprises in the plot for rich characters to navigate. The emotional and intellectual honesty of the novel—that the characters' growth is not just difficult but painful and yet so very necessary—is particularly admirable. Contemporary readers can relate to how a journey to a more just society may be difficult but cannot be avoided.

Sara Cassidy, *Nevers* [Orca Book Publishers]

Nevers by Sara Cassidy recounts the charmingly chaotic tale of resourceful, fourteen-year-old Odette and her seductive but "mortally clumsy" mother, Anneline, who make a home for themselves in Nevers, a town in rural France, circa 1799. Odette is as drawn to solving local mysteries and providing domestic stability as her mother is to creating romantic pandemonium undermining the social order. This magical romp brings a contemporary lens to an old-fashioned setting by including a diverse cast of characters, whose journeys coalesce in the communal pursuit of harmony and love.

Aviaq Johnston, *Those Who Dwell Below* [Inhabit Media]

Aviaq Johnston's gifts for narrative storytelling are on full display in *Those Who Dwell Below*, her follow up to the critically-acclaimed *Those Who Run in the Sky*. On the surface the novel is a thoroughly engaging re-imagining of the Inuit Nuliajuk legend involving a teenage shaman on a quest to appease a vengeful and fearsome undersea spirit, and thus save his village from starvation, but where the book really shines is in her characterizations of a people who inhabit a world ever-teetering on the brink of calamity. Accompanied by often-times startling black and white illustrations by Toma Feizo Gas, the book reveals a writer who is unafraid to take the reader to a place they may not wish to go and it's a testament to Aviaq's considerable prowess as an author that by its closing pages one can't help but be grateful that she had the courage to lead us on such a perilous and ultimately transformative journey.

Jess Keating, *Nikki Tesla and the Ferret-Proof Death Ray* [Scholastic Inc.]

Nikki Tesla and the Ferret-Proof Death Ray is the perfect formula for YA readers. The tale of a loner finding a place at a secret school of like-minded young geniuses who attempt to stop an adult from ruining the world, it is a quirky and charming coming-of-age story. It's also a fantastic grab bag of genres, mixing up mysteries, thrillers, romances, spy kids and secret academies in a delightfully designed and

illustrated package. This is a series that every young person in your life should be reading.

Alison Mills, *The Ghost Collector* [Annick Press]

Delightful and haunting. A delicious blend of the supernatural and the very real. Mills has great respect for her audience, taking great care to keep the narrative moving while never simplifying the novel's ideas and themes of loss. The result is a nuanced study in empathy for both the characters and the readers.

SHORT STORY:

Rebecca Campbell, "The Fourth Trimester is the Strangest" [*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, May/June 2019]

Amal El-Mohtar, "Florilegia" [*The Mythic Dream*, Gallery/Saga Press]

Kate Heartfield, "The Inland Beacon" [*Tesseract's Twenty-Two Alchemy and Artifacts*, July 2019]

Catherine Kim, "The Hundred Gardens" [*Nat. Brut*, Issue 12, Spring 2019]

Richard Van Camp, "Wheetago War II: Summoners" [*Moccasin Square Gardens*, Douglas & McIntyre]

THE JURY:

Jurors for the 2020 Award are: Peter Darbyshire, Kristyn Dunnion, Omar El Akkad, Michelle Butler Hallett, John Jantunen, Michael Johnstone, Ursula Pflug, and Sarah Tolmie.

Sunburst Award winners will be announced in the fall of 2020.

THE AWARD:

The Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic is an annual award celebrating the best in Canadian fantastika published during the previous calendar year. Winners receive a medallion that incorporates the Sunburst logo. Winners of both the Adult and Young Adult Sunburst Award also receive a cash prize of \$1,000, while winners of the Short Story Award receive a cash prize of \$500.

The Sunburst Award takes its name from the debut novel of the late **Phyllis Gotlieb**, one of the first published authors of contemporary Canadian Speculative Fiction. Past winners of the Sunburst Award include Senaa Ahmad, David Demchuk, Cherie Dimaline, Cory Doctorow, Rachel Hartman, Nalo Hopkinson, Thomas King, Andromeda Romano-Lax, and A.C. Wise.

For additional information about the Sunburst Award, the nominees, juries, as well as previous awards, eligibility, and the selection process, please visit the official website of the **Sunburst Award** at www.sunburstaward.org.

Pulp Literature Magazine Hummingbird Contest Winners:

Every year, as the days stretch and the buds bloom, the Hummingbirds arrive to spring us into summer. And this year's entries were a whirring and stirring bunch! Congratulations to Cadence Mandybura, whose beautiful stories claimed the top two spots, and to Laura Kuhlman, whose moving words had a power all their own.

First Place: *The Weeping Pools* – by Cadence Mandybura

First Runner-Up: *River's Thousand-One Voice* – by Cadence Mandybura
Second Runner-Up: *Glimpse of a Goddess* – by Laura Kuhlmann

Judge Bob Thurber had this to say about the winners: *The clarity, strength, and serenity of 'The Weeping Pools', with its restrained composition, nudged it forward, just ahead of 'River's Thousand-One Voice', which I enjoyed very much for its lovely voice. Also, and not least, the very concise 'Glimpse of a Goddess' has considerable merit. Congratulations to all the finalists.*

The winning entries will be published in *Pulp Literature* Issue 29, Winter 2021.
Congratulations to all of the shortlisted authors:

Andrew Moore for *Ye Fair in the Wood*
Andrew Moore for *In as a Lion, Out as a Lamb*
Cadence Mandybura for *The Weeping Pools*
Cadence Mandybura for *River's Thousand-One Voice*
Candace Kubinec for *Revenant*
Hannah van Didden for *The wife*
Jade Williams for *Dying to Travel*
Laura Kuhlmann for *Glimpse of a Goddess*
Soramimi Hanarejima for *Attention Management*
Steven Simoncic for *You Will Do This*

Bundoran Press to Cease Publishing

For Immediate Release – July 15, 2020, Ottawa, ON

Bundoran Press Publishing House regrets to announce that it will cease operations by October 30th of this year. All of our contracted books have been published and no new contracts will be signed although we will continue to sell books on our website (www.bundoranpress.ca) and various e-book and audio platforms until that date.

All rights will revert to authors and editors at the end of October. However, authors have been given the option of requesting rights reversion at an earlier date. All requests will be implemented as rapidly as possible. Final royalty payments, if any, will be made at that time.

It's been a great run. Since January 2013, when the current partnership took over the Press, we have published 4 anthologies and twenty novels and put tens of thousands of dollars in the hands of writers, artists, designers and other industry professionals. Over the years, Bundoran Press has garnered eleven Aurora nominations with two wins and had two Sunburst Award finalists as well.

Speaking on behalf of the publishers, Hayden Trenholm said: "Bundoran Press has always been a labour of love for all those involved in running it, both for my current partners, Mike Rimar and Elizabeth Westbrook-Trenholm, but also for the founders, Virginia O'Dine and Dominic Maguire. While we still love the press and our

artists, we no longer have the emotional or financial resources to continue the struggle. Selling books as a small press has always been challenging but the last year has seen those challenges grow. The current pandemic was only the final blow.

“Science fiction is our conversation with the future but Bundoran Press can no longer be part of that dialogue. The field is strong in Canada and I know that others will step up to see it continue to grow and prosper.”

MAGAZINES DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP (Canadian Zines Worth Reading)

Unnerving Magazine #13.

I reviewed every story and article in this magazine—published out of Powell River, B.C., by Eddie Generous—in my Clubhouse Column in *Amazing Stories* (online) Magazine on July 31st, 2020. Below is a sample review of one of the stories.

The Mermaid’s Purse – by Em Dehaney

Premise:

A young boy, grade-school age, finds a shark egg-sack in a tidal pool and brings it home to raise as a pet. He dare not tell his abusive mother.

Review:

Looking after a pet shark properly in a cramped, rundown apartment without the mother noticing is a tad unrealistic, just from the logistical viewpoint alone. Such superficial concerns are addressed, but on the face of it, not very credibly. Doesn’t matter. For a number of reasons that the story makes quite clear. I’ll discuss only one.

The story is told from the child’s point of view. This is a boy, being reared in a cheerless, loveless environment, desperately seeking a friend, in this case a pet, something to love and be loved by in return. A shark is not a good choice of pet for someone seeking affection. This doesn’t even enter the boy’s mind. With a child’s sense of logic, he cares for his pet in as responsible and compassionate a sense of duty as he can imagine, all the while interpreting his task in light of his own despairing fantasy.

I still remember a few instances of doing this sort of thing as a child myself, in terms of the logic I employed. I can remember running away from home to explore the world, armed with a broken hockey stick “sword” and a garbage can lid “shield” to deal with any monsters I might meet on the way. It all seemed perfectly logical and realistic to me at the time. A child’s logic is very “real” to the child. Having these memories, I find it easy to identify with the character’s “fantasy” logic and accept it, and thus the basis of the story, as credible.

Fortunately for me, I did not experience a loveless, abusive childhood. It is the rock-solid reality of the character's fantasy logic that binds me to him and to the story. I can identify with his pain. I can understand what he thinks he is doing.

This is a horror story, and the ending is truly horrific on several levels, all the more so since it is experienced through the "innocence" of a child's mind. I tend to prefer Lovecraftian horror fiction (which is safely removed from reality) and tend to avoid psychological horror that borders on reality, and especially tend to avoid horror stories that involve children (even though I've published one in my magazine *Polar Borealis*—*The Lonely Mr. Fish* by Lily Author/Blaze in issue #7—a story which reduced me to tears when I first read it), but I have to admit this is a really, really good horror story.

The ending took me aback, and my immediate impression was that it was way over the top, but on further reflection I realized it was entirely consistent with what had actually been going on throughout. This horror story, extremely well done in conception and execution, is a model beginning-writers would do well to analyse and emulate. So, even though it seemed a bit silly at first, this story ultimately struck me as powerful and insightful. Again, I am impressed.

(The story features a great closing line, by the way. Superb, in fact. Sums up the story perfectly.)

See the full review here < [Review of Unnerving #13](#) >

Check out issue#13 here < [Unnerving Magazine Home Page](#) >

RANDOM MUSINGS

When Someone Waves Hello, Don't Give Them the Finger in Return.

By Robert J. Sawyer

The Worldcon in 2022 will be in Chicago, as we all always knew it would be. Nonetheless, just two days before the site-selection voting was closing, a letter was circulated signed by dozens of SF fans, urging the World Science Fiction Society to strike down the bid from a group of fans in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to hold the 2022 World Science Fiction Convention ("Worldcon"); their only competition is a bid from another group of fans for Chicago, United States. You can read the letter here: <https://bit.ly/jedda-letter>

No one asked me if I wanted to sign the letter, but if they had, I'd have refused.

I'm pretty much a Kantian when it comes to moral philosophy. I don't ask, "So, what are you saying about *this particular example*?" Rather, I ask what general principle are you advocating for here? And, if the general principle is one that could

beneficially be applied on a universal basis (what Kant would call a categorical imperative), then I can get behind it; otherwise, sorry, no.

For me, the general principle that matter are:

- Everyone who is eligible gets a say.
- Every vote matters precisely the same amount.
- No cabal, board, or inner circle should be ruling on eligibility beyond what is in the letter of the existing rules.

On the basis of those general principles, I couldn't support this letter.

First, though, before we set it aside, let's take a moment to consider reality: there was simply no way in hell that Saudi Arabia was going to win the Worldcon for 2022. There wasn't even an alternate quantum reality in which that could have come to pass. The Saudi Arabian cat was dead from day one without anyone looking; it just couldn't possibly win. The 2022 Worldcon was going to be in Chicago; there was no universe in which the vote could have gone any other way and everyone knew that.

Second, there's no chance whatsoever that the Saudi Arabian government will be moved by this protest. A convention that, in its best year, attracts 10,000 people won't be occurring in their country? They'd give zero fucks even if it were a business convention; that it's a convention of vocal people mostly opposed to Saudi Arabian policies would actually make the government happy to see it occurring somewhere else, if they noticed the issue at all.

So, okay; the question is moot—decided; the 2022 Worldcon will be and always was going to be in Chicago. So what principle was at stake here? Well, the letter writers would say, I suppose, that it's a principle of supporting human rights. But that's not what's actually in play here.

Rather, the principle they're fighting for seems to me to be: Should a group of self-appointed guardians of fannish morality be able to demand that the Worldcon administration *bar* a bid from a specific country?

Well, on the one hand, sure—anyone can demand anything; that's free speech. Doesn't mean you're like to get anyone to give a damn about your demand, but, by all means, speak up.

But I'd prefer they had spoken up by saying: Hey, you—yes, you, all the people who are entitled to vote in site selection for the 2022 Worldcon—here are some issues we'd like you to consider before you cast your ballot concerning Saudi Arabia's truly appalling human-rights record.

That I could have gotten behind: tell me how you believe I should vote. But don't tell me, hey, don't worry, friend: we've taken away your choice so you can't possibly tick the wrong box—no thanks necessary; we had everyone's best interests at heart!

What the letter signatories were doing amounts quite literally to cancel culture: we will seek to *cancel* your bid—literally, precisely, in the dictionary definition of that term—because we don't like it, *even though* it fulfills every regulation required for a bid.

Yes, they couched it in polite language: "We are writing to express our concern that Saudi Arabia has been accepted as a potential host site for the 2022 World

Science Fiction Convention (WorldCon).”

But it’s clear what they were asking for—a rejection of the bid before the vote was to be held only hours later (the bid was submitted and publicized six months ago, by the way). As the letter goes on to state, in the view of the signatories, “It cannot and must not be acceptable” for the Worldcon to be held in Saudi Arabia under the present regime.

Again, their position seems to be that (the completely volunteer-run) World Science Fiction Society shouldn’t have accepted the bid. There’s no legal basis in the WSFS constitution for rejecting the bid (and the signatories haven’t proposed the bothersome work of actually attending Worldcon business meetings and proposing then following-through on trying to get democratic support for adding such a mechanism).

But, still, the letter implies, the bid *should* have been rejected and, since it wasn’t, it should have been canceled (by which person and on what authority is never specified) based on some principle—and it’s that unstated underlying principle, by bringing it out into the light of day, that I wish to explore.

Some of us, myself very much included, have been fighting for diversity and inclusion within SF&F fandom and prodrom for decades now. But you know who gets hurt by trying to prevent a bid from even being put to a vote? Simple. The people who put forward the bid. Saudi Arabians. Muslims. People vastly underrepresented in the Western-dominated Worldcon culture. Instead of welcoming the bidders with open arms—these fellow fans, our brothers and sisters—and saying, “Good luck!” and “Thanks for participating!,” the signatories are saying, in effect, “Sorry, you don’t get to play our game—you’re disqualified from participating; oh, sure, we *want* diversity, just, y’know, not *you*.”

Again, Kant would say: what is the general principle? It seems to be this: Fans from a country that has problematic government (or, if you wish, you can narrow it down to just a “problematic government in the area of universal human rights”) should be prevented from participating in the Worldcon bidding process.

And let me do these the courtesy the letter signatories never did: call them by name. Our kindred spirits who put together the Jeddah bid are Yasser Bahjatt, Khalid Alsameti, Rami Hamzah, Ahmad Sabbagh, Ashraf Fagih, Mohammed Albakri, Raneen Bukhari, Tamim Kashgari, and Thamer Alturaif.

Instead, of course, the winners were fans from the United States of America. I don’t have to go down the litany here of the ways in which that country falls short in terms of universal human rights.

But, to draw one small parallel, Canada legalized same-sex marriage coast-to-coast in 2005; the United States didn’t do that until ten full years later, 2015. Outrageous! And yet where were these same letter-writers then? They couldn’t say *no one* allows same-sex marriage, so it’s a nonissue on the world stage; it was legal throughout the country right next door.

And yet, there was no protest on this principled basis against the winning Worldcon bids voted on during that ten-year Dark Ages in the US, namely Denver,

Reno, Chicago, San Antonio, Spokane, and Kansas City (let alone preemptively against the other American bids that didn't win during that timeframe).

Yes, Chicago, the same city that we all along knew would be hosting the 2022 Worldcon, is in a country that didn't recognize universally same-sex marriage (and, not that such picayune granularity matters to anyone but Americans) from a state, namely Illinois, that didn't recognize it, either (even when other states DID).

I'm very reluctant to throw an accusation of any prejudice around—be it a -phobia or an -ism—because, so often these days, such a charge is enough to damn someone irretrievably.

I only know a couple of the signatories (despite my deep history in the SF professional and fannish communities), and am always reluctant to claim to have moral x-ray vision that supposedly lets me see what's in someone else's heart.

The least noxious motive I can see for this is virtue signaling—combined with fuzzy thinking—and in the absence of other knowledge of the signatories as people, I prefer to take the most charitable interpretation of what I nonetheless find to be an ill-advised move.

Here are the principles I *can* support:

- One person; one vote.
- Let people vote their conscience.

Otherwise, y'know, when Donald Trump or the government apparatus down the road says, "We're disallowing one of two candidates in the upcoming election," then those who signed the letter will only have themselves to blame—along with their foggy principle that if you don't like the other candidate you should appeal to the ruling authority to nullify that candidate's eligibility even to run.

To exactly no one's surprise, Chicago, Illinois, has defeated Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to host the 2022 World Science Fiction Convention. The 80th Worldcon, "Chicon 8," will be held over Labor Day weekend: September 1-5, 2022.

This means, just like the last time Chicago hosted the Worldcon in 2012 and for the first time since San Antonio in 2013, the Worldcon is going to be the same weekend as Dragon Con in Atlanta.

Although not principally a literary SF&F convention, Dragon Con, by virtue of its giant size, has long hosted a de facto literary SF&F convention within it that has more people attending than most standalone SF cons do, with separate full programming tracks including these specific literary areas:

- * Alternate & Historical Fiction
- * Diversity in Speculative Fiction and Literature Fandom
- * Fantasy Literature
- * High Fantasy
- * Science Fiction Literature

- * Writers' Track
- * Young-Adult Literature

as well as many other areas often also represented at Worldcons, including:

- * Costuming track
- * Filksinging track
- * Horror track
- * Kids' track
- * Science track
- * Skeptics track
- * Space track

In addition, Dragon Con has many SF/F/H media tracks, including various specialized ones such as Star Wars, Star Trek, American Sci-Fi Classics, Asian Cinema and Culture, and more.

A goodly number of authors, editors, and readers are going to have a difficult time choosing between Chicago and Atlanta in the summer of 2022.

Robert J. Sawyer's 24th novel, *The Oppenheimer Alternative*, is out now.

Check it out at < [Oppenheimer-Alternative](#) >

Read Mike Glycer's interview with Robert about his new novel

at < [File 770 The Oppenheimer Alternative](#) >

ANIME REVIEW: CAT SHIT ONE

(Originally posed as an online blog 6th September, 2010)

By Michael Bertrand

Yes, that is seriously the name of the thing I am about to review. I have no idea why it is named that.

You see, I am not an anime fan, or a manga fan, at all. I have seen a smattering of anime films and series, just big famous stuff like *Ranma ½*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, but for the most part, that was just what the people I was around at the time were watching. I have never gotten into the whole thing myself.

So when I encountered a link to some anime series with the incredibly weird title *Cat Shit One*, I had absolutely no idea what to expect. I knew the title, and that it featured anthropomorphic animals, and that was it. For all I knew, it could have be Japanese furry scat porn. I had no clue.

But with a name that weird, I just had to check it out. I am crazy like that.

Turns out, it is nothing to do with feces at all. It is military/action fiction which happens to feature cute fuzzy animals blowing up, shooting, and otherwise killing one another. It is pretty damn cool.

Plot wise, this episode is extremely corny and predictable. If you are familiar with the basic tropes of American style military action storytelling, you know more or less everything that is going to happen.

<<<---SPOILERS START HERE--->>>

You know that our two heroic action buddies, hardcore killing machine Packy and nervous, identifiable coward (Game over man, game OVER!) Botasky, in this universe both anthropomorphic rabbits, are going to be sent to rescue helpless and defenseless hostages, who will be beaten and maltreated before our eyes just so we are absolutely sure the bad guys are really, really bad, and that to do so they will have to gun down dozens of interchangeable bad guys (in this case, all anthropomorphic camels who speak Arabic and are in the desert and it is all, frankly, kind of racist but this is an action movie, comes with the territory), and that amazing heroics will be demanded of them, and that at some point our leader hero will order the coward hero NOT to come save him, and that our coward hero will defy that order and come save him, and we'll have the cute scene where the leader hero says "For disobeying orders...I am going to buy you a beer." Ha ha ha! Group laugh.

Nothing you have not seen before a zillion times, and the addition of cute fuzzy animals with machine guns and combat armor does not really change much. If that was all there was to this series, there would be very little to recommend it.

But the visuals ... my lord, the visuals.

I absolutely love this latest quantum leap in computer animation. The sorts of things that even small companies are putting out right now absolutely blow my mind with how *real* they look. I enjoyed this episode as good old fashioned uncomplicated American style military action storytelling, as perfected back in the '80s, but mostly, I enjoyed it as a visual treat, feast for the eyes, whatever cliché you want to call it.

It was just damned cool to look at.

There is still, of course, a visualization hierarchy in all animation. The more static and geometric something is, the more "real" it will look. The more dynamic and especially the more human something is, the less "real" it will look. But that hierarchy has been flattened considerably, and because the source material involve animal characters, they have the advantage in this piece of animal facial expressions and body language being simpler and more easily stylized than the human equivalent.

We have very intense specialized hardware to read one another's mood from facial expression, body language, and so on, and that makes animated people, especially

their faces, extremely difficult. Less so with cartoon animals, which is part of their appeal. Their expressions are simple, easily read, and being animals gives us a little distance from what is going on.

This, incidentally, is also why animals are used so much in children's entertainment.

But back to *Cat Shit One*. I loved watching it. The plot held no surprises, but sometimes, knowing exactly what is going to happen does not entirely diminish the enjoyment of the tried and true emotionally satisfying tropes. As a media consumer, the savvy and mature of us eventually stop expecting everything to be as good as the stuff we really love and learn to appreciate things for whatever they are.

And episode one of *Cat Shit One* is a simple, by the numbers slice of American style military action storytelling, with plenty of explosions, heroism, male virtue, bullets flying everywhere, black and white morality, the fight of good against evil, casual and non-serious racism, and lots of seriously cool military hardware and jargon, including the cavalry showing up in the form of one of my perennial favorite bits of military coolness, the American combat helicopter.

Perhaps further episodes develop a more complex and intricate and less predictable plot. They would not be the first show to start off with a by-the-numbers crowd pleaser as a first episode to just give people a low demand taste of what to expect and introduce the characters and setting before they start making things complicated and high concept.

I don't know, I've only watching this, the first episode. But I have to say, I quite enjoyed it. Just seeing what computer animation can do these days is fun enough. Enjoy it while you can, modern animators, this is the honeymoon period where just making the visuals look so damned good is enough to make the thing you make worth watching.

Pretty soon, that will become old hat and we will start expecting, you know, story, plot, and all that stuff too. Fair warning.

Does anyone out there know why the hell their unit is called *Cat Shit One*?

MESSED-UP MOVIE MOPES

Superman: Red Son (2020) – You know me. I like quirky, off-beat stuff.

So, what if, instead of landing in Kansas, Baby Superman fell to Earth on a Soviet Commune and by the age of 12 had decided to dedicate his powers to realizing the glorious vision of the glorious leader Joseph Stalin? This is the premise of the latest D.C./Warner Brothers full length animated feature film *Superman: Red Son* which is based on a comic book series.

Talk about being out of the ordinary! I'm blown away by this brilliantly original concept, something I literally never anticipated. Bear in mind I never much cared for

Superman or any other superhero comic when I was a kid. I always preferred science fiction comics like *Magnus*, *Robot Fighter* or *Mighty Samson*. The closest I came to appreciating Superman was the Wallace Wood parody *Superduperman* in *Mad* magazine, or rather the pocket book reprint collection I first saw circa 1962. Superman as such I always considered kind of *meh* and dull. But a Stalinist Superman! Mindboggling!

I discovered this film while perusing old SF films on Amazon.ca. The image for the Blu-ray popped up, featuring Superman with the hammer and sickle on his chest instead of the usual “S,” and striking a heroic pose above a typically Stalinist social-realist bit of art depicting a line of Soviet Army flag bearers. So, naturally, I checked out the reviews. Two things were quickly apparent. First, many said the film wasn’t as complex or as good as the comic book series. No problem. Typical of movie adaptations. Second, American viewers seemed to hate the film, giving it low ratings and complaining of too much speechifying and politics. This sounded very promising. I knew I had to buy this film! Arrived two days later.

The film begins with a brief sequence devoted to Superman discovering his powers as a young boy, then cuts to Stalin revealing Superman to the world. This presents a bit of a problem for President Eisenhower, who fortunately has the brilliant scientist Lex Luthor to back him up. Luthor concocts a scheme to make it look like the Soviet Union is attacking the United States, forcing Superman to intervene and save New York City. While there, he meets Lois Lane, star reporter, who happens to be Rex Luthor’s girlfriend. She opens Superman’s eyes to the evils of Stalin’s rule. End of story? Not a bit of it. The film has barely begun. It covers a span of many years.

When confronted, Stalin explains he had protected Superman from reality in order to preserve the lad’s purity of purpose for the greater good which would ultimately arise from temporary but necessary immoral deeds committed by the state. Stalin calls Superman a “blind kitten” unable to visualize the urgent need to rid the state of its myriad internal enemies. Superman slowly comprehends the inexorable logic of this logic to the point where, after Stalin’s death, he replaces him and carries on his legacy, determined to achieve Stalin’s vision no matter what the cost.

That’s the fundamental brilliance of this film. No matter how many people suffer from the consequences of his actions and decisions, Superman never wavers in his invincible confidence and belief in the Stalinist *perfection* of the world he is trying to create. He lectures the American people in calm, matter-of-fact tones pointing out they are being silly in ignoring capitalist oppression, etc. etc. I particularly like the scene where it is the Americans who build the Berlin wall and the Soviet Superman who tears it down. No wonder some Americans don’t much care for this film.

Thing is, as someone who has read a great deal about Stalin and his oppressive, mass-murdering *utopia*, as someone who fully appreciates how historically accurate the dark humour of the movie *The Death of Stalin* is, I am impressed by the *Red Son*’s depiction of that level of fanaticism. When Stalin was alive there were literally millions of people devoted to his propaganda cult, millions who desperately believed

he really was the greatest dentist of all time, the greatest engineer, the greatest doctor, the greatest scientist, etc., etc., in short, the greatest human being who ever lived, knowing more about any subject than any other human being. So, imagine a would-be Stalin who is *literally* a Superman. His ego would know no bounds.

Normally, American propaganda concerning evil types implies the bad guys know they are evil. This movie relentlessly promotes the concept that the bad guys, especially their glorious leader, see themselves as righteous crusaders battling the forces of evil (i.e. Americans) for the sake of the human race. I think most Americans find it difficult to accept or understand how anyone could believe that. I wouldn't be at all surprised if some Americans denounce this film as outright Communist propaganda. If they do, they're missing the point, of course.

The principal conflict of this film appears to be the battle between Lex Luthor and Superman, in which Lex comes up with one clever "mad scientist" scheme after another to bring down Superman. But the true story arc is the conflict within themselves as each gradually begins to understand they are not the heroes they believe themselves to be. It is difficult for the viewer to relate to either character. Which is the hero? Which the villain? Both are megalomaniacs who think in absolute ideological terms. You'd have to be crazy to identify with either of them. Since most viewers are sane (one hopes) this would seem to be the fatal flaw of the film, that it distances the viewer and prevents the viewer from getting emotionally involved.

To which I say, who cares? This is a concept-driven fable ramming home the old saw that absolute power corrupts absolutely with the consequence that all nations led by rulers relying on rigid, inflexible ideology and the belief the end justifies any and all means inevitably winds up with little to choose between them. The platitude "I am here to liberate you" uttered by both sides is equally empty and meaningless to the corpses scattered in the ruins. Don't believe me? Just ask the dead. (Now there's a concept for you, zombies created simply in order to conduct a poll. Hmmm.)

Point is I think the film brilliantly illustrates the amorality, not to say the immorality, of international relations as normally conducted, what with war and diplomacy being considered two sides of the same coin. Self-proclaimed supermen only make things worse. Beware of "Great men." Mass murdering fuckwads, the lot of them. No matter how charming.

So, bleak message aside, is there nothing to enjoy in this film? There's a fair amount of satire, some of it quite subtle. On the Soviet side, the obsession with tractors, heavy machinery, hydroelectric dams, exaggerated statistics, formal affairs for the elite (the ones who are more equal than others) and prickly, paranoid relations with allies and underlings are displayed quite accurately. As for the Americans, it is a sly dig at Capitalism to have the Howard Hughes/Daddy Warbucks-like genius of Lex Luthor depend entirely on taxpayer's money to fund his defence of the American way of life. That, too, is an accurate depiction of the way things are done.

Oddly enough, Superman appears to possess a better sense of humour than Lex Luthor, despite having no sex life whatsoever, something that would depress most men. Luthor, on the other hand, is phenomenally good in bed but takes Lois Lane for

granted. You might say both men need counselling, but they're far too obsessed with their political role to worry about petty details like personal life. Still, both do possess a sense of irony. This makes for the occasional amusing aside.

Both Lois Lane and Wonderwoman, relatively minor in their screen time, are nevertheless interesting characters in their own right, both functioning as the conscience of the hero/villains to the point of occasionally getting them to briefly consider an almost humane perspective. Of the two Lois is the more focused and cynical, Wonderwoman the more optimistic and naïve, albeit prepared to turn bitter and cynical at an instant. Many viewers seem to consider them wasted, throwaway characters, but I found them fascinating, each frustrated in their own way with the two super-duper Alpha males they are dealing with.

Batman appears. If I interpret the plot correctly, he's the grown-up version of the young boy who used to bully Superman as a child on the commune. I therefore deduce his utter hatred for Superman is based, not on concern for the suffering of the working class oppressed by the state as he claims, but rather on his insane jealousy of Superman's instant celebrity and rise to power once his powers were revealed. In any case, Batman's function as a leader of anarchists skulking in the shadows strikes me as entirely appropriate to Batman if he had in fact grown up in Stalin's Russia. Orphaned by the state, as it were, and determined to get his revenge, though cloaking himself in high ideals and his own meaningless platitudes. I gather some viewers found his presence arbitrary and pointless, but I disagree. I figure he stands in for the kind of well-meaning but "holier than thou" resistance forces that are often as ruthless and uncaring as the idiot self-proclaimed deities they seek to overthrow. (Have I mentioned I am somewhat cynical when it comes to politics?)

Thing is, the very things many people found boring, the premise and the conversations, I found exhilarating and entertaining as a surprisingly intelligent spoof and warning about the cold war antics of the past and the implications they may or may not have in our wonderful world of today. The film is not canon, to put it mildly, and, given the premise, there's no way it could have been. It's properly to be viewed as a stand-alone, and I think it's brilliant.

By the way, it's visually a treat, even though it involves limited animation. It definitely has the comic book "look," is certainly very colourful, and in composition sometimes comes close to the best anime. Very artful, in other words, despite its simplicity. Plus, believe it or not, I often got so caught up in the *political pontificating* and the physical action I was no longer conscious of it being a *cartoon*.

In short, this film exceeded my expectations and I found it delightful.

Now you know I'm weird.

Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy (1981) – I recently binge-watched the entire 6 episodes of the original BBC TV series in one sitting. Definitely a delight. Enjoyed every minute of it. But Great Galloping Ghu! Was it really that long ago when it first aired? Hard to believe.

Apart from the clever and witty dialogue, much of which still holds up, the series

has generally been considered, visually at least, to be on a par with the “cheesy special effects” of old *Dr. Who* episodes. This is not fair. First, like *Dr. Who*, HGG was filmed on a limited budget. But second, and most important of all, a considerable portion of HGG’s budget was devoted to the sets. The 1993 BBC documentary on the making of HGG refers to “the bored French guy sitting high above the sets in front of a pane of glass.” It was his job to paint the “expanded” set on the glass and have the camera shoot through glass to the actual set below, resulting in an inexpensive “in-camera” effects shot. Later they decided to shoot the sets first, project the image onto a pane of glass, and then have the glass painter add the expanded “view,” the combination being filmed again as a seamless whole. A lot cheaper than modern CGI.

Ah, yes, everybody remembers the simple but evocative computer animation of the Hitchhiker Guide book displays. State of the art! Highly advanced computer animation for the day. Except it wasn’t. There isn’t one shot of CGI anywhere in the series. That kind of technology didn’t exist yet, or at least in not a form cheap enough for the show’s limited budget to acquire.

What about *Tron*? That came out in 1982. *The Last Starfighter*? 1984. CGI good enough to handle the guidebook screen shots simply wasn’t available to the BBC in 1980 when HGG was being filmed.

So how did they do it? Old-fashioned individual cell “cartoon” animation. Each cell individually drawn, coloured, and photographed. Tedious in the extreme. But designed to look like computer graphics as imagined by the show’s art designers.

“But ... but ... but ...” you protest. Because you remember a scene or two where Arthur Dent was looking down at the screen of the book in his hand, moving it about a bit, and the image on the screen was rocksteady, as if actually being displayed on the screen. That was electronic, surely?

Nope, not at all. Because of the camera angle you couldn’t see it, but there was a projector, resting on a tripod, which was attached to the back of the Guidebook and projecting the image on the back of the transparent screen. As Dent shifted the Guidebook, the projector moved with it, the projected film image seemingly displayed by the screen itself. Brilliant piece of improvisation. Worked perfectly.

What about Zaphod Beeblebrox’s second head? Pretty cruddy, right? True. But be fair, it was designed and built in a week. Many people remember it as just sitting on Zaphod’s shoulder doing nothing. In actual fact, driven by mechanical rods, it had the ability to blink, roll its one visible eye, open and close its mouth, nod, and even shake from side to side. Trouble is, the face itself was so immobile that it gave the impression of doing nothing even when it was doing something. Though it spoke several times, lip syncing was beyond its capabilities.

How was it controlled? Remote radio control by a transmitter designed for a model helicopter that could fly. In fact the neck joint was the helicopters rotor blade ball mount. Off the shelf technology purchased from a toy store. Ingenious. Desperate necessity (lack of money and filming schedule) resulted in an unconvincing but better than any conceivable alternative solution to the problem.

Then again, in the 1972 movie *The Thing with Two Heads*, apart from a couple of

shots using a dummy head, the bulk of the scenes featuring the two-headed “monster” consisted of Ray Milland standing or sitting behind Rosey Grier and resting his head on Grier’s shoulder. This actually works surprisingly well, but must have involved a lot of rehearsal time to get it right. Which is probably why this technique was not employed in Hitchhiker. Simply not enough time in the shooting schedule.

No need to condemn the inexpressive second head. All part of the fun of watching the series. All you have to do is accept the premise and go along with it. Foolish to be literal-minded and demand realism. The head is actually quite charming, precisely because it is such a shoddy effect. Besides, Zaphod’s stolen ship uses the infamous improbability drive to visit every spot in the universe simultaneously. Just consider his second head one of the more improbable constructs influencing the show’s purported “reality.”

By the way, Zaphod didn’t just have an extra head and an extra arm, he had an additional penis as well (according to the documentary). All part of Zaphod’s insufferable ego. Each was 7 inches long, the left one dangling down his left leg, the right his right leg. Originally they were going to be 9 inches long but were cut back to be more subtle in appearance. Turned out to be so subtle as to be subliminal. They simply weren’t visible as anything other than folds in the pants he was wearing. Nobody ever noticed.

Yet the actor wore them throughout the filming. He felt the gizmos helped him get into the extravagant, exaggerated “showman” ego of the character. Hmm, could be.

If I understand correctly, everything was filmed, then transferred to video. The original films were thrown out by the BBC to free up storage space. Which, of course, is what they did with the earliest Dr. Who episodes. Like throwing away a gold mine. In hindsight, rather foolish. But, to the bean counters at least, made sense at the time.

So, the Blu-ray I binge-watched was based on the surviving videos. The quality was not as good as modern remastered classic films, but easily comparable to what I saw on colour TV when first broadcast. So, I’m happy with it. The outfit which created and filmed the guidebook segments kept their film copies, so the Blu-ray contains, as an extra, the complete sequence of segments in higher quality than as originally broadcast. I’m happy with that, too.

Overall, I’m very happy to have finally “watched” the original TV series again. I enjoyed the characters and the snappy dialogue as much as I did the first time I saw the show. Up till the Galactic Police catch up with Zaphod and the cast find themselves trapped aboard a generation ship filled with useless twits who, it turns out, are what originally populated the Earth. I’m not quite sure why, but I found the humour of the series from that point to the ending rather lame and laboured, nowhere near as subtle and sophisticated as compared to what came before. Too obvious to be funny.

But that’s just me. Overall, I still love the series. The original radio shows, records, TV show and books were huge hits back in the day. Deservedly so. Genuinely entertaining.

The Horror of Party Beach (1964) – That year the Warren Publishing Company (most noted for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*) released their first film-book, a magazine patterned after European posed-photo “comic” books. They didn’t sell well. Only three were produced: the first *The Horror of Party Beach*, the second *The Mole People*, and a third with both *Curse of Frankenstein* and *Horror of Dracula*. Naturally I snapped them up and still have them.

Frustratingly, I had to wait over 30 years before I was able to purchase a low-quality VHS tape and watch *The Horror of Party Beach*. Recently I required a high quality blu-ray with crisp detail and excellent resolution. What a revelation! The movie is way more fun to watch than I had originally thought on first seeing the VHS tape.

A bit of background is in order. Born in 1930, Producer/Director Del Tenney studied acting in Los Angeles, and appeared in bit parts in movies like *Stalag 17* and *The Wild Ones*. In 1954 he moved to New York city and concentrated on acting in stage plays. A few years later he moved to Lakeville, Connecticut, and transitioned into film production. By the time he retired he had directed 14 movies and appeared in over 250 plays. He stated he had spent his lifetime having fun and regretted none of it. Considered himself luckier than most men.

Anyway, the first movie he produced/directed was *Psycho-Mania* (1961) with a screenplay written by his wife Margaret. On the strength of this a man from Albany who owned 13 theatres, name of Alan V. Iselin, offered to put up half the money if Tenney would film 2 movies designed to be shown as a double bill in drive-in theatres. Iselin even had the titles in mind: *Curse of the Living Corpse* and *Invasion of the Zombies* (later changed to *The Horror of Party Beach*). Each contributed \$60,000. The first was a psychological multiple-murder mystery taking place on a single estate. The second, a monster movie filmed in several Connecticut municipalities. Interior scenes for both films were shot in a mansion owned by Tenney’s father-in-law. Needless to say, everything done as cheaply as possible in order to keep within the budget.

Amazingly, Twentieth Century Fox agreed to distribute both films as a package which they premiered at a back-to-back drive-in theatre in the Fort Worth/Dallas, Texas, area. On the other side of the screen, a multi-million dollar double bill featuring *Move Over, Darling* and *PT 109*, the latter starring Cliff Robertson. Tenney felt “his” package didn’t stand a chance. In fact, incredibly enough, it grossed double what the Hollywood professional package earned. The lightbulb lit up over the heads of the Fox studio executives and they went from 50 prints to a mass distribution of 500 prints which earned them a considerable amount of money. For about a year, *The Horror of Party Beach* was incredibly popular with teenagers. It was designed that way, quite consciously planned to appeal to teens.

It was a deliberate spoof of American International Production’s *Beach Party* (1963). Sure, the beach in Connecticut, compared to the California beaches in the Annette Funicello film, “looked like a beach in Siberia filmed on a gray day” according to one critic, but the bikinis were raunchier, the teens more obviously on the make,

the bikers borderline tough, the monsters too absurd for words, the jokes a bit more hip (though not very), the rock 'n roll surprisingly cool, and the amount of gore a huge surprise for the era. It has to be said; *The Horror of Party Beach* is aimed at teenagers without any concessions to adults who demand “wholesome entertainment” for teens. In a way, it is more “real” than the AIP films. Definite appeal. Which is not to say it's a great film, or in any way a documentary, but as far as exploiting the teenage audience goes, Tenney added a touch of grit AIP lacked. Hence the temporary success of a now obscure movie.

The opening features Hank, a young man getting serious about life, and his girlfriend Tina, still immaturely sex-mad, driving along in a nifty sports car. They're overtaken by a motorcycle gang. They're not exactly Hells Angels, being the Riverside Oaks Motorcycle Club, but they were genuine local tough guys and Del Tenney was a bit afraid of them. Their black leather jackets and snazzy black sunglasses were their own, not provided by the costumer.

In the scene the cycles come alarmingly close to the car. Left out is the accident where one cycle clips another and the whole lot of them crash, putting several of the gang members in hospital. A few days later the gang drives up to the studio in the middle of the night. Worried, Del Tenney shows them the accident footage repeatedly for hours. Pleased and satisfied, they roar off. Thus ends the menace of the Riverside Oaks Motorcycle Club.

The next sequence in the film shows radioactive waste being dumped into the ocean. It settles on a bunch of skeletons lying on the deck of a sunken ship. Protozoans accumulate and turn the bones into living zombies, which is all the set-up the monsters need. Very efficient when you think about it.

Ah, yes, the monsters. There are two versions, each with multiple suits so that up to six monsters can appear in a given shot. Version A is a sort of shapeless, shambling humanoid with seaweed streamers and a large, toothless maw. Version B, the one most often seen, is clearly human-shaped, albeit covered with seaweed scales that look for all the world like cut-out bits of plastic. They walk leaning forward, knees bent, and elbows held out to either side. Still look pretty tall though, because atop the stuntmen's head (he sees through a hole in the neck) is a kind of exaggerated *Creature From the Black Lagoon* head rather resembling a gladiator's helmet, what with a high central crest, jutting gills, and—not so Roman a touch—huge ping-pong ball eyes. The truly bizarre touch is a half-dozen hotdogs jutting out of the mouth or, to put it as politely as possible, a bunch of phallic symbols. Though the monsters press these against the girls, the gory damage is brought about by their claws, not by their hot dogs. The version B monsters are not at all frightening, to put it mildly. Downright silly, in fact.

Del Tenney hated the monsters. They were designed and built by Robert Verberkmoes, who thought they were hilarious and fun. Come to think of it, this probably saved the film from being savaged by critics as obscenely violent. No matter how much syrup (blood) they smeared on the victims, the monsters were so obviously ridiculous it was impossible to take the violence seriously. Good thing. Maintained

the sense of fun Tenney was seeking.

Famously, the film features 6 songs written and performed by the less-than-legendary Del-Aires, namely “Drag race,” “Joy Ride,” Elaine,” “You are not a Summer Love,” “Wrigglin’ Wobblin,” and “The Zombie Stomp.” To be fair, the 4 band members were teenagers still attending High School, yet are surprisingly good, both in their musical ability and their performance personas. Alas, this movie represented the high tide of their music careers. Sadly, the blu-ray extra features include the two surviving members, Ronnie Linares and Booby Osborne, now in their 70s, playing “The Zombie Stomp” with thin voices and thin legs. Maybe sad is not quite the right word. Melancholic. Wistful. Poignant. But at least they seem to be enjoying themselves, and are quite proud they were recorded on film at the height of their youthful ambition.

The film is often touted as the first horror musical. In that it came out a month after *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed-Up Zombies*, which featured song and dance numbers like “Choo Choo “Ch’boogie” and “Shock Out of Shape,” I’m afraid that claim isn’t literally valid. Gotta say, *The Horror of Party Beach* is a far more entertaining film, though.

I’ll throw in a mention of Eulabelle. She’s the black maid who warns everybody about Voodoo spurring the monsters on. Traditionally, her character is viewed as racist exploitation. She rose above that. First of all, the actress’s actual name is Eulabelle Moore. Second, she is by far the best actor in the film. Third, her character possesses the most common sense of any, and functions as the spur to action by others who cling to their state of denial. I think she had a great deal of fun with her role. I suspect she was an experienced local stage actress whose work Del Tenney knew and that’s why he chose her to perform the role as opposed to grabbing just anybody who wouldn’t bother to put much effort into it. More than anyone else in the film, she exhibits genuine talent. At least, I think so.

Hmm, I just looked her up. On May 31, 1955 she played Gurlene in the *Mind Over Mamma* episode of *The Elgin Hour* anthology-drama TV series. She appeared in at least 15 Broadway productions including *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1950), *The Male Animal* (1952), and *Great Day in the Morning* (1962). One critic described her as “an accomplished comedy actress.” Bit horrified to discover she passed away in November of 1964, only a few months after *The Horror of Party Beach* opened. She would have been about 61 years of age. I suppose this film is the only record of her acting. If you watch her performance carefully, you’ll see quite a bit of subtlety. Good sense of timing, too. She deserved better, of course, but at least we are offered a glimpse of what she was capable of. Frankly, I think the film would have been much better if her character became the hero who motivates the townspeople to defeat the monsters. I believe she had the strength of talent to play a natural-born leader. Would have been fascinating. As it is, she did the best she could with what she was given. More than the role required. Tenney did well by her.

Tenney himself is in the film, playing the gas station attendant who gives directions to the 3 man-hunting Brooklyn girls passing through town in their white convertible. His performance serviceable enough. Naturally the girls get stuck in the

woods with a flat tire and get attacked by the monsters. That sort of thing happens a lot in this film.

Haven't said much about the plot. Don't need to. It's mostly monster attacks interspersed with outbursts of boogying and rock 'n roll. Works for me. For what it is, I consider this film loads of fun.

One final note: None of the monsters shown in the photo pictorial film-book have hotdogs in their mouths. Instead, sharp, curving teeth are drawn over the photos. This makes them look almost terrifying, as opposed to not-at-all scary. Thus Warren's film-book gave me a false impression of *The Horror of Party Beach* that took a lifetime to dispel.

FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE: A CHECKLIST FOR OBSESSIVE COMPLETISTS

There are hundreds and hundreds of genre films these days. Impossible to keep track. But what about the history of such? Finite numbers for any given period: some well-known, others obscure. There are many worth seeing, good, bad, and indifferent, yet all vital to a comprehensive understanding of how the genre evolved and developed. Some may be impossible to track down, others are shown frequently on TV, many can be ordered. Accessibility varies from year to year. Still, worth a try.

The idea is to check off the ones you have already seen, then devote the rest of your life to sourcing, watching, and checking off the remainder of the lists. After all, not as if you have anything else to do. Right?

PART TWO: GENRE FILMS 1907 TO 1910.

1907:

- *Dr. Skinum* – Fitness fad shrinking/expanding clients but not their clothes.
- *Hair Restorer* – Angry wife gets covered in hair, turns into carnival attraction.
- *The Hair Restorer* – Fiancée and mother-in-law accidentally become hirsute.
- *The Inventor's Galvanic Fluid* – Causes a painter, swimmers, etc. to speedup.
- *Love Microbe* – “Love bug” isolated by researcher and wreaks havoc.
- *The Mechanical Statue and the Ingenious Servant* – Gladiator automaton.
- *Tunneling the English Channel* – Trains collide in middle on opening day.
- *Under the Sea* – Super sub discovers: sea nymphs, giant seahorses, huge crabs.
- *The Wonderful Electric Belt* – Cure-all belt creates hyper-vitality.
- *Work Made Easy* – Magnetism triggers tools to work by themselves.

1908:

- *The Airship* – Naughty pranksters in airship pursued by winged policemen.
- *An Animated Doll* – Boy steals life-sized robot doll for his sister.
- *The Doctor's Experiment* – Serum makes people behave like apes.

- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – 1st film version. Hyde suicides to punish Jekyll.
- *Energizer* – Parody of breakfast cereal adverts offering boundless energy.
- *Galvanic Fluid* – Liquid electricity makes people and vehicles fly.
- *The Invisible Fluid* – Makes people invisible, handy for a young thief.
- *Long Distance Wireless Photography* – Scientist transmits TV images.
- *The Magnetic Kitchen* – Magnetism makes equipment move by themselves.
- *The Man Who Learned to Fly* – Man crushed flat to fly like a kite.
- *The Monkey Man* – Man's brain replaced with monkey-brain transplant.
- *The Professor's Anti-Gravitational Fluid* – Boy annoys adults with fluid pranks.
- *Voyage to the Planet Jupiter* – A king dreams he travels through space.
- *When the Man in the Moon Seeks a Wife* – Early “alien-needs-woman” plot.

1909:

- *The Airship Destroyer* – Aerial torpedo shoots down airship bombing England.
- *An Apish Trick* – Monkey gland treatment improves love life.
- *Aviation Has its Surprises* – Girl elopes. Dad turns into balloon to recover her.
- *Bleary-Oh the Village Aviator* – Spoof of first cross-channel flight.
- *The Doctor's Secret* – Reducing machine explodes; patient loses weight.
- *The Earthquake Alarm* – Variation of the boy who cries wolf.
- *The Electric Policeman* – Cop with electric boots unable to stop.
- *The Electric Servant* – Mischievous use of remote control device.
- *Electric Transformations* – Professor uses electricity to transform people.
- *Electricity for Nervousness* – Cure for twitches spreads electric shocks.
- *The Elixir of Strength* – Harassed family man gains power to subdue family.
- *England Invaded* – Foreign army (identity not specified) invades England.
- *An Invisible Thief* – Wears clothes to rob, strips to escape. Excellent sfx.
- *The Invaders* – 5th column of invaders threatens inhabitants of English house.
- *Invasion: Its Possibilities* – Armoured train defeats army invading England.
- *The Inventions of an Idiot* – Modern equipment “improved” to fail.
- *Invisibility* – Assorted problems due to improper use of invisibility powder.
- *A Journey to the Middle of the Earth* – First depiction, but no longer extant.
- *Life in the Next Century* – Everything automated, so life is boring.
- *The Magnetic Squirt* – Fluid gives extra strength to walkers and runners.
- *A Maker of Diamonds* – Artificial diamonds do not benefit inventor.
- *A Marvellous Cure* – More hair restorer shenanigans.
- *Marvellous Fluid* – A professor disperses rejuvenation to everyone he meets.
- *A Modern Dr. Jekyll* – Another “missing” film, acclaimed in its day.
- *Professor Puddenhead's Patents* – Flying automobile taken on joy ride.
- *The Electric Enlarger* – Electric wand introduces gigantism in bugs and dogs.
- *Professor Weise's Brain Serum Injector* – It works but subjects seek revenge.
- *Professor Zanikoff's Experiences of Grafting* – Limb grafting goes wrong.
- *The Pulveriser* – Powder turns everything into dust. Antidote urgently needed.
- *The Rubber Man* – Rubber-bodied electric robot on a rampage.
- *Up the Pole* – Baron Munchausen beats Peary to North Pole. A satire.

- *Voyage to the Moon* – French film using Chinese actors to portray explorers.
- *The Wonderful Electro-Magnet* – Attracts people. Churches are filled again.

1910:

- *The Aerial Submarine* – Pirate Queen commands flying submarine.
- *The Aeroplanist's Secret* – High speed airplane sabotaged to kill thief.
- *Burglary by Airship* – Airship with magnet steals metal till shot down.
- *The Comet* – Mankind seeks refuge in caves as passing comet destroys surface.
- *Dr. Smith's Automaton* – Marching robot knocks people over till hits wall.
- *The Duality of Man* – Hyde on a spree till drinks poison.
- *The Electric Insoles* – Owner wreaks havoc till shoes catch in manhole.
- *The Electric Vitaliser* – Brings statues to life. All dance to destruction.
- *The Elixir of Youth* – Man becomes too young, then too old. Returns to normal.
- *Frankenstein* – First film version. Surprisingly good creation scene.
- *Freezing Mixture* – Man freezes annoying Aunt. She's much nicer when thawed.
- *The Invisible Thief* – On/off thief outwits police chasing him.
- *A Marriage in the Moon* – Astronomer flies to Moon to marry female Martian.
- *The Police of the Future* – Police airborne, use telescopes to find criminals.
- *Setting Back the Hands of Time* – Rejuvenation hijinks to save marriage.
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – Sincere effort to portray the novel accurately.
- *A Trip to Mars* – Professor discovers hungry trees and a giant Martian.

Sources:

Science Fiction: The Complete Film Sourcebook – Edited by Phil Hardy, 1984.

The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies – Edited by Phil Hardy, 1986.

An Illustrated History of the Horror Film – Carlos Clarens, 1967.

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction – Edited by John Clute & Peter Nicholls, 1993

Science Fiction in the Cinema – by John Baxter, 1970.

THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR AND JOLLY REVILER:

A

By Stan G. Hyde

I've been writing (or will be writing) for a number of cool magazines lately and thought, in the spirit of the original column, it was time to do a "cool stuff" article. I have loved reading fanzines all my life, and mourn their slow passing. Personally, cuddling up in a comfortable chair with a magazine in my hands is greatly preferable to sitting here staring at a screen, but all things pass I guess. Here are a few great opportunities to enjoy the experience before it's gone forever.

The Lost Films Fanzine – John LeMay

Occasionally I used to devote this column to a feature called *The Theatre of What Should Have Been* (does anyone’s memory stretch that far back except God-Editor Graeme’s and mine???) I’ve always been fascinated by films that were proposed but never made.

My friend John Le May has a similar fascination and has authored a number of books on the subject.

(Notably *The Lost Films: The Mutated Edition* for which I wrote an article on the “International Kaiju Brotherhood.” Er, I’m sure most folks know “kaiju” which has become common in English since movies like *Pacific Rim* have used it. It’s Japanese for “strange animal,” aka “monster”—and it’s “kaiju eiga” is a Japanese film genre, literally “monster films.”)

John continues to write books on everything from the Spaghetti Western (“Deadly Spaghetti”) to early American UFO sightings (“The Real Cowboys and Aliens 1800 - 1864”). But he also decided to make his interest in Lost Films into a fanzine (which you can purchase on Amazon—it’s modern times, right?)

Volume One explores how Hammer’s failed *King Kong* adaptation became a Volkswagen commercial, the unmade sequel to *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* ... “*The Bride of Phibes*,” and features a long article on how Toei’s 1977 *The Legend of Dinosaurs and Monster Birds* became ‘*Teremoto 10 Grado*, essentially a complete overhaul of the movie—which makes for a fascinating reflection on the ability to completely change a film through editing. Issue two looks at the unmade sequel to *Orca*, and the unmade *The Night Killers* which was to have been the third movie in *The Night Stalker* “trilogy,” which became a television series instead.

Lots of good stuff. Currently I’m writing an article, on unmade attempts to turn *The War of the Worlds* into a film before George Pal succeeded, for the Halloween Issue. (I’ve still got lots of time before the deadline ... The God-Editor can tell you all about me and deadlines ...).

There’s also a (Kindle-only, so far) special issue: *Movie Milestones* is a *Lost Films* special edition celebrating the 80th Anniversary of 1940’s *One Million B.C.* and the looming 55th Anniversary of its 1966 remake, *One Million Years B.C.*, from unique angles. Examined are deleted and unfilmed scenes, plus the filmmaker’s original visions for the films. Also covered are forgotten caveman films like *Beautiful Dreamer* (1952) and *Eegah!* (1962). The magazine even examines unmade projects inspired by the B.C. remake’s success including an aborted TV series, a *Deluge* remake, and *Mistress of the Sea* to star Raquel Welch. Also included is a mini-filmography of many of the movies to utilize stock footage from *One Million B.C.*

You can find John’s fanzine and other books on Amazon here: [Lost Films](#)

Amazing Figure Modeler – Terry J. Webb

I was very happy to finally do some writing for editor Terry J. Webb’s *Amazing Figure Modeler*—a magazine I have read for all of its 69 issues.

The focus of the latest issue was Godzilla and other Japanese kaiju.

I was able to do an interview with Takuji Yamada—a model diorama creator who is essentially the Norman Rockwell of Japan, creating nostalgic scenes from recent history most famously ... however, he also models military subjects, giant robots and giant monsters. There's a museum devoted to his work called the Hamamatsu Diorama Factory in his hometown of Hamamatsu.

Last year I was able to ask Yamada-san to be a guest at G-FEST 26—the annual celebration of Godzilla and Japanese fantasy movies in Chicago—so I had a few opportunities to sit down with translators and discuss model building with him. It was an honour.

I also wrote an article on “Chibi models,” sometimes called “Super Deforms,” for the issue. These are basically model kits which have been stretched out of scale and usually given enormous heads and a comic interpretation. There are thousands of them available, but collaborator Jon LeGrand and I stopped at a fifty or so of the more amazing Godzilla themed ones.

There are also articles on Chicago kaiju sculptor Bill Gudmundson, a ton of how-to articles, and the regular features that inform folks about what super obscure topics garage kit sculptors are releasing now, so it's well worth a look. (Hmm—Garage kits are model kits that are cast in resin from rubber molds, usually by the original sculptor in their own house—hence, “garage.”)

Normally the magazine is available at Barnes and Noble in the States, and often hobby shops carry it, but this issue was a shorter run than normal because of Covid-19 and editor Terry Webb's concern that by the time bookstores opened again the mags would be stale dated, and therefore trashed.

Some local Vancouver hobby shops did end up with their issues from Diamond distributors (the big comic book distributor) so you might find a copy in your favourite hobby store but probably the easiest way to find a copy would be to check in at their website: [Amazing Figure Modeler](#)

Mad Scientist – Martin Arlt

Martin Arlt publishes a wonderful filmzine that features great art and lovingly nostalgic articles on everything from classic monsters to Doctor Who. The focus is deliberately nostalgic and it's always a good day when one shows up in the mail. Martin is a geneticist—hence the Mad Scientist name—and pretty busy, so he has been doing less issues lately, but he is hoping to get out a 20th anniversary issue this year (which I've promised to write for).

The website is really just a couple of pages with an order form and a contact for Martin, but you can check out the issues still available there:

[Mad Scientist](#)

Briefly, #33 was focused on *The Lost World* (1925), *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, and various saurian topics. #32 was focused on *Ghidorah, the Three-Headed Monster*, with a gorgeous wrap-around cover by Mark Maddox (who has lately been doing the covers for *Scream Factory's* Hammer film blu-ray editions—more on that

later). Issue 31 looks at Doctor Who season 13 as well as *The Thing From Another World*, and Mary Shelly's *Last Man* among much more.

Hopefully you have the idea. Martin and I have a friend who claims that one of his favourite things to do when the issue arrives is to run a warm bath, pour himself a glass of wine, and read *Mad Scientist* from cover to cover in the bath. I don't think I've ever read a fanzine that way ... I'd worry about the bathwater getting cold but maybe the wine counteracts that. In any case, it's a lot of fun and I'd check out the back issues.

Little Shoppe of Horrors – Dick Klemensen

So, as friends know, my imagination is dominated by three continents ... an imaginary Asia as presented by Toho Films, an imaginary Europe as presented by Universal Films, and an imaginary Europe as presented by Hammer Films. Yes, there are other filmmakers and studios (Val Lewton's films, Mario Bava's, Dario Argento's, et cetera), but those are the big three.

Currently, Scream Factory—the horror film focused division of Shout Factory—is producing blu-ray editions of films from Hammer that are the most beautiful I've ever seen. (Katie and I watched *Kiss of the Vampire* (1963) a few nights ago, and the new scan was like seeing the movie for the first time.) Besides great features like making-of documentaries and discussions with those folks who are still around from the original production staff, they include tons of commentaries by film historians and production staff. For instance, the *Kiss of the Vampire* disc includes the television cut *Kiss of Evil* with the extra footage filmed for TV, and a 6 by 9 presentation, and includes a commentary for each of those.

We're living in "great times" if you're a Hammer fan!

Many of the discs include interviews with Dick Klemensen, who has been publishing *Little Shoppe of Horrors* since 1972. Hammer is the main focus of his incredibly detailed fanzine, but he looks at other British horror films as well. The magazine has terrific art (often by Mark Maddox who has been creating the DVD covers for the new Scream Factory discs) and features unbelievably thorough film history investigation.

I'm so happy that the years of cinematic sleuthing by fans like Dick has resulted in the saving of so much cinema history, both oral history and documentation, and I'm always happy to read a new issue of *Little Shoppe*.

The most recent issue—#44—is focused on the Hammer *Hound of the Baskervilles* with Peter Cushing as Sherlock Holmes, Andre Morrell as Watson (best Watson ever!), and Christopher Lee as Sir Henry Baskerville. The issue is rounded out with Hammer 'adventure' movies like *Terror of the Tongs*, and *The Stranglers of Bombay*.

Recent issues include films like 43's *The Blood Beast Terror* and *The Crimson Cult*, 42's *Village of the Damned* (the film version of Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos*), 41's amazing coverage of *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, and finally 40's coverage of Hammer's film version of Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass and the Pit*.

Most highly recommended if you have any interest at all in the history of British horror and fantasy films. (41's coverage of *When Dinosaurs ...* also featured coverage of David Allen's unmade *Raiders of the Stone Rings*—with an inside cover of a man riding a giant sloth while confronting a dinosaur. I mean—it doesn't get better than that. And yes, if that title seems familiar, it's because George Lucas acquired it/was inspired by it for a little art film called *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Hammer tried to float another film inspired by Allen's treatment called *Zeppelins vs Pterodactyls*, but alas, that too never saw the light of the projector.

Back issues are available from the website: [Little Shoppe of Horrors](#)

G-Fan – J.D. Lees

Being a Godzilla fan for five decades now, I've seen the fortunes of the big guy rise and fall several times, but somehow he always seems to come out on top ... both in his films and as a movie star.

Graeme reviewed the (Japanese) Oscar winning film *Shin Godzilla* (2016) a few issues back, and we're looking forward to the third film in his American trilogy—*Godzilla vs King Kong*, sometime in fall 2020 if the Covid-19 situation doesn't push the film back a little longer.

My first Godzilla film was 1962's *King Kong vs Godzilla*, and I never really thought there would be a re-match ... so I'm looking forward to the new film with somewhat bemused, but happy, anticipation.

At the centre of this since the early 1990's has been J.D. Lees' fanzine, *G-Fan*, which is currently at issue #127. The magazine is an invitation to fall full speed into the rabbit hole of kaiju fandom with film news, historical articles, fan fiction and more. The latest issue features articles on the Chinese SF film *The Wandering Earth*, an exploration of the 'DNA' exhibition of tokusatsu (Japanese special effects) related to *Gamera*, "The Secret History of *Godzilla—Final Wars*," "Stop Motion Kaiju," and more.

It may come as a surprise that "kaiju central" in North America is Canada, but J.D. is a resident of Steinbach Manitoba, and his filmzine has probably had more of an effect on stateside kaiju fandom than anyone could ever have predicted.

The fanzine also gave rise to G-FEST, an annual convention celebrating all things kaiju that has been held in Chicago each summer for 26 years. (This summer's #27 was put on hold because of Covid-19, but the convention is planned for 2021 at a new hotel since the even has out-grown the current location.)

It's hard to judge just how much the event has influenced the change in attitude toward these films (*which had always been taken more seriously in Japan), but I will mention two moments I think were significant.

In 2005, special guest Yoshimitsu Banno was trying to get a 3-D version of *Godzilla* made for IMAX theatres. At the time, Toho had retired Godzilla officially with 2004's movie *Godzilla Final Wars* but a friend had had a surprising discussion with a Toho producer who said that "if Godzilla came back it would probably be in a big, International co-production." It turned out that Mr. Banno had used the opportunity

of coming to G-FEST to shop the IMAX project around—and though it never came to fruition, it was at that time he first met with Legendary pictures who eventually decided they wanted to make a 3D feature film. Mr. Banno, who passed away in 2017, was an executive producer on the American film.

I love this personally because Mr. Banno who directed *Godzilla vs the Smog Monster* (1971) was told by Producer Tomoyuki Tanaka that his film had ruined the Godzilla series and that he would never make a Godzilla film again. (Arguably, a film which features rock music, psychedelic light shows, a character who trips out and sees giant fish dancing, and a strong ecological theme, is pretty unique in the Godzilla canon.)

It's very cool that Banno brought Godzilla out of retirement and into International stardom, and that it happened on a trip to G-FEST. (We had a memorable dinner with Mr. Banno where I discovered that he was, no surprise here, a big fan of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*—the environmentalist classic which inspired the smog monster Hedorah. He felt that she had taken great risks publishing that book. He also commented several times that I reminded him of Ernest Hemingway ... not sure how I should take that. Anyways, it was a memorable evening.)

Yoshimitsu Banno passed away in 2017. Both he and Godzilla suit actor Haruo Nakajima (who also passed in 2017) have a dedication at the end of the closing credits of *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (2019).

Another moment that makes me wonder relates to *Shin Godzilla*, the highly successful Japanese Godzilla movie in 2016, which won best picture and best director for its two directors, Shinji Higuchi and Hideaki Anno, that year.

Higuchi-san was a guest of G-FEST in 2011. Previously he had been special effects director on the Gamera trilogy in the 1990s, had directed the remake of *Japan Sinks*, the alternate history SF World War 2 film *Lorelei*, and the two part adaptation of *Attack on Titan*.

He was presented with the convention's award—*The Mangled Skyscraper*—which is given to folks who have contributed professionally or fannishly to the kaiju community. Later, when I was in Japan talking to a friend who works with him, he told me the convention was a big influence on him and it made him re-evaluate his work on kaiju films, and appreciate the fact that it was valued by fans.

Did that have something to do with his choice to work on *Shin Godzilla*? Apparently he was a big influence on friend and fellow director Hideaki Anno deciding to work on the project.

Perhaps, perhaps not ... but I do think that fans have been a big part of the revival of Godzilla.

Anyway, if you have any interest at all, both G-Fan magazine and G-FEST, the convention, are highly recommended.

Check out the website: [G-Fan](#)

IT IS WHAT IT IS

(Mansplaining the State of Fandom)

By Garth Spencer

Let's talk fanzines.

People have produced their own amateur publications in a number of media and formats for a long time. Dale Speirs, a lone faneditor in Calgary, has explored the prehistory of self-published periodicals—if “prehistory” is the right word—in his own fanzine, *Opuntia*. (Like numerous faneditors, he has moved to online electronic publication, and his fanzines are archived at <http://eFanzines.com>.) All I may contribute, if you don't already know all about it, is a short sketch of the fanzine world I found associated with SF fandom, and a brief idea of the abyss that lies between fanzines and the contemporary zine world.

The thing to remember is that SF fandom as we know it was originally an inexpensive way for impoverished young SF fans in the 1930s to enjoy themselves. Fan activity included anything you could do or make on your own, or with a few friends, which is why conventions started the way they did, and why fanzines were at first conceived as Our Own Magazine, emulating professional newsstand fiction magazines, even if the fans only had a mimeograph, or a spirit duplicator, or even a hectograph to work with. Frederik Pohl (in his biography, *The Way the Future Was*) writes an evocative description of how many ways people found to produce fanzines, even jamming as many paper sheets and carbon-copy sheets as possible into a typewriter.

As time went on, the definition of the fanzine changed, and diverse fanzines emerged: not only fictionzines, but clubzines and personalzines and newszines, and genzines—general-interest zines—modeled as much as anything on *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and other general-content journals of news and opinion. The content changed and diversified too; at different times, fandom at large seemed largely to be about Serious and Constructive analysis of current events and SF themes, or later a fun-and-nonsense “fannish” phase. The convention grew up of trading fanzines to other fanzine editors, to contributors of articles and letters and art, and it superseded gestures at specifying a cost for single fanzines, or for subscriptions.

From at least the 1950s to the 1970s a great deal of art and craft went into making mimeographs, or ditto machines, or other limited-run copying media perform outside their limitations. When you can manage it, there's a particular satisfaction in composing several articles and letters together with fanart when they all illustrate the same theme. Not that everyone attains the same level of art.

Some of the most evocative articles about generating graphic effects with only a typewriter and a mimeo stencil can be found in the articles of the late Susan Wood, particularly her reviews of *Chaunticleer*. (See the memorial volume *The Best of Susan Wood*, edited by Jerry Kaufman.) Taral Wayne, a well-known fanartist, wrote a

detailed two-part analysis of the fanart contributed to fanzines by several celebrated artists, such as Alicia Austin, Stu Shiffman and others (appearing in *New Canadian Fandom*, and later online).

Things changed in fandom after about 1970 or 1971. The focus of fandom at large seemed to move away from fanzines to conventions. At the same time, new fans entering fandom were generally exposed to gaming, or comics, or *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, or other media franchises; and rightly or wrongly, felt alienated from fanzine fans if they met. It seemed to go both ways—a normal case, I suppose, of people normally feeling normally dissed by a normal disparity of interests.

The fans devoted to film and television SF or fantasy created their own definitions for fanzines—usually amateur fictionzines, with Trek or SW fanfiction, offered for sale—and for media conventions, usually modeled on the “professional” conventions pioneered by Paramount Studios, or by the Gatecon organization.

Things changed again the 1980s and 1990s. One of the largest new subcultures to make itself visible was the punk movement. Associated with it was a DIY movement, which resulted in a new zine movement. This coincided with the appearance of affordable home computers and printers, and also the appearance of affordable quick-copy centres. A wealth of independent do-it-yourself zines appeared, and still appear in comic stores, some record stores, and even some public libraries. Some review zines appeared and even appeared on bookshelves: *Factsheet Five*, of celebrated and deplored memory; *Broken Pencil*, a Canadian periodical review of zines, still in circulation.

And the media kept changing. The rise of the Internet, and then the World Wide Web—along with the increasing costs of postage, and of copying—has pressured many small periodicals to cease hardcopy production. This has only forced them to go online.

This created an immediate clash with reality, over the issue of copyright. Fannish, or fanzine fans had a practice called “fannish copyright”, meaning that writers and artists contributed their works for publication on a one-time-only basis, and the editors (if they had a masthead or colophon) specified that “all rights are returned to contributors”. This may not make a lot of sense in the real world of copyright, unless reworded carefully, in ordinary commercial terms.

Mediazines had a harder time of it. Paramount Studios apparently ignored the fanfiction written by Trek fans, but in the 1980s Lucasfilm sent a number of lawyer-like letters to purveyors of SW fictionzines, apparently threatening legal action if they infringed upon *Star Wars* copyrights. Whether small-circulation mediazines threatened the profits of Lucasfilm, I leave as a question for the reader to investigate. (Until the rise of the Internet, circulating a small number of copies of a work fell under the doctrine of “fair use” and did not infringe on copyright. However, any online publication is theoretically as available as any other publication; without certain restrictions, such as subscribers’ passwords, the Internet removes any difference between large-scale and small-scale publications.)

Today, an enormous number of fanzines are distributed only by email, and/or we post them online. Some of the online fanzine libraries, or archives, are <http://eFanzines.com>; and www.fanac.org; and the N3F (National Fantasy Fan Foundation) websites.

FANNISH FAILURES AND FOLLIES

2020 Neffy Award Winners

George Phillies, President of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, editor of TNFF, and ballot counter, has announced (July 19th) the winners of the 2020 National Fantasy Fan Federation Speculative Fiction Awards, the Neffys,

Best Novel – *Endgames* – by L. E. Modesitt, Jr.

Best Shorter Work – *By the Warmth of Their Calculus* – by T. S. Buckell.

Best Fan Writer – Lloyd Penney

Best Anime – *Astra: Lost in Space*

Best Non-N3F Fanzine – *Opuntia* – edited by Dale Speirs

Best N3F Fanzine – Tightbeam

Best Fan Artist – Jose Sanchez

Best Book Editor – Toni Weisskopf

2020 Hugo Award Finalists

Best Novel

- ***A Memory Called Empire*, by Arkady Martine (Tor; Tor UK)**
- *The City in the Middle of the Night*, by Charlie Jane Anders (Tor; Titan)
- *Gideon the Ninth*, by Tamsyn Muir (Tor.com Publishing)
- *The Light Brigade*, by Kameron Hurley (Saga; Angry Robot UK)
- *Middlegame*, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)
- *The Ten Thousand Doors of January*, by Alix E. Harrow (Redhook; Orbit UK)

Best Novella

- ***This Is How You Lose the Time War*, by Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone (Saga Press; Jo Fletcher Books)**
- “Anxiety Is the Dizziness of Freedom”, by Ted Chiang (Exhalation (Borzoi/Alfred A. Knopf; Picador)
- *The Deep*, by Rivers Solomon, with Daveed Diggs, William Hutson & Jonathan Snipes (Saga Press/Gallery)
- *The Haunting of Tram Car 015*, by P. Djèlí Clark (Tor.com Publishing)

- *In an Absent Dream*, by Seanan McGuire (Tor.com Publishing)
- *To Be Taught, If Fortunate*, by Becky Chambers (Harper Voyager; Hodder & Stoughton)

Best Novelette

- ***Emergency Skin*, by N.K. Jemisin (*Forward Collection* (Amazon))**
- “The Archonology of Love”, by Caroline M. Yoachim (*Lightspeed*, April 2019)
- “Away With the Wolves”, by Sarah Gailey (*Uncanny Magazine: Disabled People Destroy Fantasy Special Issue*, September/October 2019)
- “The Blur in the Corner of Your Eye”, by Sarah Pinsker (*Uncanny Magazine*, July-August 2019)
- “For He Can Creep”, by Siobhan Carroll (Tor.com, 10 July 2019)
- “Omphalos”, by Ted Chiang (*Exhalation* (Borzoi/Alfred A. Knopf; Picador))

Best Short Story

- **“As the Last I May Know”, by S.L. Huang (Tor.com, 23 October 2019)**
- “And Now His Lordship Is Laughing”, by Shiv Ramdas (*Strange Horizons*, 9 September 2019)
- “Blood Is Another Word for Hunger”, by Rivers Solomon (Tor.com, 24 July 2019)
- “A Catalog of Storms”, by Fran Wilde (*Uncanny Magazine*, January/February 2019)
- “Do Not Look Back, My Lion”, by Alix E. Harrow (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, January 2019)
- “Ten Excerpts from an Annotated Bibliography on the Cannibal Women of Ratnabar Island”, by Nibedita Sen (*Nightmare Magazine*, May 2019)

Best Series

- **The Expanse, by James S. A. Corey (Orbit US; Orbit UK)**
- InCryptid, by Seanan McGuire (DAW)
- Luna, by Ian McDonald (Tor; Gollancz)
- Planetfall series, by Emma Newman (Ace; Gollancz)
- Winternight Trilogy, by Katherine Arden (Del Rey; Del Rey UK)
- The Wormwood Trilogy, by Tade Thompson (Orbit US; Orbit UK)

Best Related Work

- **“2019 John W. Campbell Award Acceptance Speech”, by Jeannette Ng**
- *Becoming Superman: My Journey from Poverty to Hollywood*, by J. Michael Straczynski (Harper Voyager US)
- *Joanna Russ*, by Gwyneth Jones (University of Illinois Press (Modern Masters of Science Fiction))
- *The Lady from the Black Lagoon: Hollywood Monsters and the Lost Legacy of Milicent Patrick*, by Mallory O'Meara (Hanover Square)

- *The Pleasant Profession of Robert A. Heinlein*, by Farah Mendlesohn (Unbound)
- *Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin*, produced and directed by Arwen Curry

Best Graphic Story or Comic

- ***LaGuardia*, written by Nnedi Okorafor, art by Tana Ford, colours by James Devlin (Berger Books; Dark Horse)**
- *Die, Volume 1: Fantasy Heartbreaker*, by Kieron Gillen and Stephanie Hans, letters by Clayton Cowles (Image)
- *Monstress, Volume 4: The Chosen*, written by Marjorie Liu, art by Sana Takeda (Image)
- *Mooncakes*, by Wendy Xu and Suzanne Walker, letters by Joamette Gil (Oni Press; Lion Forge)
- *Paper Girls, Volume 6*, written by Brian K. Vaughan, drawn by Cliff Chiang, colours by Matt Wilson, letters by Jared K. Fletcher (Image)
- *The Wicked + The Divine, Volume 9: “Okay”*, by Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie, colours by Matt Wilson, letters by Clayton Cowles (Image)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

- ***Good Omens*, written by Neil Gaiman, directed by Douglas Mackinnon (Amazon Studios/BBC Studios/Narrativia/The Blank Corporation)**
- *Avengers: Endgame*, screenplay by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely, directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo (Marvel Studios)
- *Captain Marvel*, screenplay by Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck and Geneva Robertson-Dworet, directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck (Walt Disney Pictures/Marvel Studios/Animal Logic (Australia))
- *Russian Doll* (Season One), created by Natasha Lyonne, Leslye Headland and Amy Poehler, directed by Leslye Headland, Jamie Babbit and Natasha Lyonne (3 Arts Entertainment/Jax Media/Netflix/Paper Kite Productions/Universal Television)
- *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, screenplay by Chris Terrio and J.J. Abrams, directed by J.J. Abrams (Walt Disney Pictures/Lucasfilm/Bad Robot)
- *Us*, written and directed by Jordan Peele (Monkeypaw Productions/Universal Pictures)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

- ***The Good Place: “The Answer”*, written by Daniel Schofield, directed by Valeria Migliassi Collins (Fremulon/3 Arts Entertainment/Universal Television)**
- *The Expanse: “Cibola Burn”*, written by Daniel Abraham & Ty Franck and Naren Shankar, directed by Breck Eisner (Amazon Prime Video)
- *Watchmen: “A God Walks into Abar”*, written by Jeff Jensen and Damon Lindelof, directed by Nicole Kassell (HBO)

- *The Mandalorian*: “Redemption”, written by Jon Favreau, directed by Taika Waititi (Disney+)
- *Doctor Who*: “Resolution”, written by Chris Chibnall, directed by Wayne Yip (BBC)
- *Watchmen*: “This Extraordinary Being”, written by Damon Lindelof and Cord Jefferson, directed by Stephen Williams (HBO)

Best Editor, Short Form

- **Ellen Datlow**
- Neil Clarke
- C.C. Finlay
- Jonathan Strahan
- Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas
- Sheila Williams

Best Editor, Long Form

- **Navah Wolfe**
- Sheila E. Gilbert
- Brit Hvide
- Diana M. Pho
- Devi Pillai
- Miriam Weinberg

Best Professional Artist

- **John Picacio**
- Tommy Arnold
- Rovina Cai
- Galen Dara
- Yuko Shimizu
- Alyssa Winans

Best Semiprozine

- ***Uncanny Magazine*, editors-in-chief Lynne M. Thomas and Michael Damian Thomas, nonfiction/managing editor Michi Trota, managing editor Chimedum Ohaegbu, podcast producers Erika Ensign and Steven Schapansky**
- *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, editor Scott H. Andrews
- *Escape Pod*, editors Mur Lafferty and S.B. Divya, assistant editor Benjamin C. Kinney, audio producers Adam Pracht and Summer Brooks, hosts Tina Connolly and Alasdair Stuart

- *Fireside Magazine*, editor Julia Rios, managing editor Elsa Sjunneson, copyeditor Chelle Parker, social coordinator Meg Frank, publisher & art director Pablo Defendini, founding editor Brian White
- *FIYAH Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction*, executive editor Troy L. Wiggins, editors Eboni Dunbar, Brent Lambert, L.D. Lewis, Danny Lore, Brandon O'Brien and Kaleb Russell
- *Strange Horizons*, Vanessa Rose Phin, Catherine Krahe, AJ Odasso, Dan Hartland, Joyce Chng, Dante Luiz and the Strange Horizons staff

Best Fanzine

- ***The Book Smugglers*, editors Ana Grilo and Thea James**
- *Galactic Journey*, founder Gideon Marcus, editor Janice Marcus, senior writers Rosemary Benton, Lorelei Marcus and Victoria Silverwolf
- *Journey Planet*, editors James Bacon, Christopher J Garcia, Alissa McKersie, Ann Gry, Chuck Serface, John Coxon and Steven H Silver
- *nerds of a feather, flock together*, editors Adri Joy, Joe Sherry, Vance Kotrla, and The G
- *Quick Sip Reviews*, editor Charles Payseur
- *The Rec Center*, editors Elizabeth Minkel and Gavia Baker-Whitelaw

Best Fancast

- ***Our Opinions Are Correct*, presented by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Jane Anders**
- *Be The Serpent*, presented by Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske and Jennifer Mace
- Claire Rousseau's YouTube channel, produced & presented by Claire Rousseau
- *The Coode Street Podcast*, presented by Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe
- *Galactic Suburbia*, presented by Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce and Tansy Rayner Roberts, producer Andrew Finch
- *The Skiffy and Fanty Show*, presented by Jen Zink and Shaun Duke

Best Fan Writer

- **Bogi Takács**
- Cora Buhlert
- James Davis Nicoll
- Alasdair Stuart
- Paul Weimer
- Adam Whitehead

Best Fan Artist

- **Elise Matthesen**
- Iain Clark

- Sara Felix
- Grace P. Fong
- Meg Frank
- Ariela Housman

Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book

- ***Catfishing on CatNet*, by Naomi Kritzer (Tor Teen)**
- *Deeplight*, by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan)
- *Dragon Pearl*, by Yoon Ha Lee (Disney/Hyperion)
- *Minor Mage*, by T. Kingfisher (Argyll)
- *Riverland*, by Fran Wilde (Amulet)
- *The Wicked King*, by Holly Black (Little, Brown; Hot Key)

Astounding Award for the Best New Science Fiction Writer, sponsored by Dell Magazines

- **R.F. Kuang (2nd year of eligibility)**
- Sam Hawke (2nd year of eligibility)
- Jenn Lyons (1st year of eligibility)
- Nibedita Sen (2nd year of eligibility)
- Tasha Suri (2nd year of eligibility)
- Emily Tesh (1st year of eligibility)

1945 Retro Hugo Award Finalists

Best Novel

- **“Shadow Over Mars” (*The Nemesis from Terra*), by Leigh Brackett (Startling Stories, Fall 1944)**
- *The Golden Fleece*, by Robert Graves (Cassell)
- *Land of Terror*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.)
- *Sirius: A Fantasy of Love and Discord*, by Olaf Stapledon (Secker & Warburg)
- *The Wind on the Moon*, by Eric Linklater (Macmillan)
- “The Winged Man”, by A.E. van Vogt and E. Mayne Hull (Astounding Science Fiction, May-June 1944)

Best Novella

- **“Killdozer!”, by Theodore Sturgeon (Astounding Science Fiction, November 1944)**
- “The Changeling”, by A.E. van Vogt (Astounding Science Fiction, April 1944)
- “A God Named Kroo”, by Henry Kuttner (Thrilling Wonder Stories, Winter 1944)
- “Intruders from the Stars”, by Ross Rocklynne (Amazing Stories, January 1944)

- “The Jewel of Bas”, by Leigh Brackett (*Planet Stories*, Spring 1944)
- “Trog”, by Murray Leinster (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1944)

Best Novelette

- **“City”, by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1944)**
- “Arena”, by Fredric Brown (*Astounding Science Fiction*, June 1944)
- “The Big and the Little” (“The Merchant Princes”), by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, August 1944)
- “The Children’s Hour”, by Lawrence O’Donnell (C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, March 1944)
- “No Woman Born”, by C.L. Moore (*Astounding Science Fiction*, December 1944)
- “When the Bough Breaks”, by Lewis Padgett (C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner) (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)

Best Short Story

- **“I, Rocket”, by Ray Bradbury (*Amazing Stories*, May 1944)**
- “And the Gods Laughed”, by Fredric Brown (*Planet Stories*, Spring 1944)
- “Desertion”, by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science Fiction*, November 1944)
- “Far Centaurus”, by A. E. van Vogt (*Astounding Science Fiction*, January 1944)
- “Huddling Place”, by Clifford D. Simak (*Astounding Science Fiction*, July 1944)
- “The Wedge” (“The Traders”), by Isaac Asimov (*Astounding Science Fiction*, October 1944)

Best Series

- **The Cthulhu Mythos, by H. P. Lovecraft, August Derleth, and others**
- Captain Future, by Brett Sterling
- Doc Savage, by Kenneth Robeson/Lester Dent
- Jules de Grandin, by Seabury Quinn
- Pellucidar, by Edgar Rice Burroughs
- The Shadow, by Maxwell Grant (Walter B. Gibson)

Best Related Work

- **“The Science-Fiction Field”, by Leigh Brackett (*Writer’s Digest*, July 1944)**
- *Fancyyclopedia*, by Jack Speer (Forrest J. Ackerman)
- *’42 To ’44: A Contemporary Memoir Upon Human Behavior During the Crisis of the World Revolution*, by H.G. Wells (Secker & Warburg)
- *Mr. Tompkins Explores the Atom*, by George Gamow (Cambridge University Press)
- *Rockets: The Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere*, by Willy Ley (Viking Press)
- “The Works of H.P. Lovecraft: Suggestions for a Critical Appraisal”, by Fritz Leiber (*The Acolyte*, Fall 1944)

Best Graphic Story or Comic

- ***Superman: “The Mysterious Mr. Mxyztplk”*, by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (Detective Comics, Inc.)**
- *Buck Rogers: “Hollow Planetoid”*, by Dick Calkins (National Newspaper Service)
- *Donald Duck: “The Mad Chemist”*, by Carl Barks (Dell Comics)
- *Flash Gordon: “Battle for Tropica”*, by Alex Raymond (King Features Syndicate)
- *Flash Gordon: “Triumph in Tropica”*, by Alex Raymond (King Features Syndicate)
- *The Spirit: “For the Love of Clara Defoe”*, by Manly Wade Wellman, Lou Fine and Don Komisarow (Register and Tribune Syndicate)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

- ***The Canterville Ghost*, screenplay by Edwin Harvey Blum from a story by Oscar Wilde, directed by Jules Dassin (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM))**
- ***The Curse of the Cat People*, written by DeWitt Bodeen, directed by Gunther V. Fritsch and Robert Wise (RKO Radio Pictures)**
- *Donovan’s Brain*, adapted by Robert L. Richards from a story by Curt Siodmak, producer, director and editor William Spier (CBS Radio Network)
- *House of Frankenstein*, screenplay by Edward T. Lowe, Jr. from a story by Curt Siodmak, directed by Erle C. Kenton (Universal Pictures)
- *The Invisible Man’s Revenge*, written by Bertram Millhauser, directed by Ford Beebe (Universal Pictures)
- *It Happened Tomorrow*, screenplay and adaptation by Dudley Nichols and René Clair, directed by René Clair (Arnold Pressburger Films)

Best Editor, Short Form

- **John W. Campbell, Jr.**
- Oscar J. Friend
- Mary Gnaedinger
- Dorothy McIlwraith
- Raymond A. Palmer
- W. Scott Peacock

Best Professional Artist

- **Margaret Brundage**
- Earle Bergey
- Boris Dolgov
- Matt Fox
- Paul Orban
- William Timmins

Best Fanzine

- ***Voice of the Imagi-Nation*, edited by Forrest J. Ackerman and Myrtle R. Douglas**
- *The Acolyte*, edited by Francis T. Laney and Samuel D. Russell
- *Diablerie*, edited by Bill Watson
- *Futurian War Digest*, edited by J. Michael Rosenblum
- *Shangri L’Affaires*, edited by Charles Burbee
- *Le Zombie*, edited by Bob Tucker and E.E. Evans

Best Fan Writer

- **Fritz Leiber**
- Morojo/Myrtle R. Douglas
- J. Michael Rosenblum
- Jack Speer
- Bob Tucker
- Harry Warner, Jr.

Brisbane, Australia, to Bid for 2025 Worldcon – Yep, already started up. Co-Chairs are Devin Madson and Leife Shallcross. They indicate they plan to include “marginalized voices in programming” and want to form “an inclusive concom.” Makes me wonder if they are implying their Worldcon will be in contrast to what just happened. Or, perhaps, they are addressing a perceived need and want to reassure people right from the get-go they have no intention of letting the dead weight of the past inhibit Worldcon from representing today’s concerns and visions of future progress. In sum, I anticipate politics and controversy will rule the roost as much or more than recent years. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing depends on your point of view. I like to think that it indicates Worldcon is at least keeping up with the times. Who knows? Maybe someday it will be relevant to the future?

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS TO PRETEND TO ENJOY

Note: AGoH = Author Guest of Honour, ArtGoH = Artist Guest of Honour, ComGoH = Comics Guest of Honour, FanGoH = Fan Guest of Honour, GamGoH = Gaming Guest of Honour, MedGoH = Media Guest of Honour, SciGoH = Science Guest of Honour, and Toastmaster = Toastmaster.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE – (August 14 to 16, 2020) – **When Words Collide IS ONLINE AND FREE THIS YEAR! NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED!**

Welcome to WWC's pandemic-response online festival. This event will include a variety of live webinar presentations, workshops, discussion panels, and social activities.

In conjunction, we are also happy to provide an online art show, and merchants corner, as well as the 2020 Aurora Awards Ceremony.

2020 Aurora Awards and Hall of Fame Inductions:

Begins 5:00 PM Mountain Daylight Time, Saturday, August 15th, 2020.

Join our host Mark Leslie Lefebvre for this year's live streaming of the awards. The Aurora Awards are for excellence by Canadian's in the field of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror. We will first be inducting three Canadian's who have made major contributions to the genre into the CSFFA Hall of Fame. After we will be announcing the winners of the eleven Aurora Awards which range from categories such as Novel, Short Fiction, Artist and Fan Organizational.

The Aurora Awards ceremony will last 110 minutes. To be followed by the Aurora Afterparty beginning at 7:00 PM Mountain Daylight Time, hosted by Mark LeFebvre. Also 110 minutes.

Blue Pencil Café, Pitch sessions, and 1-on-1 consultations are also featured, as well as book launches, readings, and podcasts.

There will be no less than 5 tracks of programming each day.

The WWC online festival is 100% volunteer operated and is open to the public. There is no registration fee, though limited-capacity events require pre-registration, and participation in past festivals as a qualifier.

For details and to download program see: [When Words Collide](#)

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL! (Letters of Comment)

Note: Annoying comments by God-Editor [*are in brackets*] immediately after introduction of topic in question. This, a feeble attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in a fanzine lounge or a hospitality suite in the interests of conviviality. But mainly, to avoid tiresome necessity (if editorial comments are at the end of each LoC) to start each paragraph with “[*Re: your comment...*]” which would be a terrible waste of space (unlike this brilliant introductory note which is, of course, a triumph of its kind.)

From: **Taral Wayne** – (July 4th, 2020)

Hi Graeme,

I wrote a loc, which the mail program in its infinite wisdom magicked out of existence before I could save it, so I have to write it over. It was about how Rob Sawyer remembered cons in the old days, and how things are changing for better or worse. I wrote that I remember Rob before he ever sold a story, and how he ran the local SF club for a year. And I compared the \$5 I paid for my Torcon II membership. But I don't want to write all that over again, so we're both screwed. Thanks Microsoft.

[Life (which is what the computer provides) is often like that. I know exactly how you feel. Tough enough making the effort once. The spontaneity vanishes when the accomplishment disappears. Best to move on to something else. Otherwise it's like navigating multiple levels of a complex video game with no save button. Endlessly frustrating.

Your letter is intriguing and amusing as is. Reminiscent of Stan Hyde's occasional column on "Movies that never were."

Can I run your above comments in the loc column in the next issue? A lot of people will identify with your frustration.]

Sure ... plenty of time if I change my mind and actually write a second time. But don't get your hopes too high.

From: **John Purcell** – (July 18th, 2020)

Well, good day, Graeme! I hope you are doing well these days. Judging by the lengths of BCSFAzines under your aegis, you are staying busy, which is a very good idea. Keep up the good work. A few comments are in order on the latest one, so let's get those taken care of, shall we?

I have a lot of John Brunner's early Ace SF paperbacks in my collection. You are absolutely correct that they were mostly "pot-boilers" meant to entertain, but Brunner definitely fine-tuned his writing in the process. A few months ago I read *To Conquer Chaos* and *The Super Barbarians*, and enjoyed them despite their flaws - mostly plot and character development with a lot of over-descriptive language - so reading your reprinted review of *To Conquer Chaos* was a good way to refresh my memory. Let me simply state that I am glad Brunner came out of this phase a much better writer. *Stand on Zanzibar* remains a fine achievement in his career, as well as other novels from the 1970s and on.

Hey, that portfolio of the artwork of Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk was a nice break from all the text in this long issue. Her cartoons are fun—my favorite is the one on the top half of page 12—and well-executed. Thank you for sharing this.

I also have to agree with Robert J. Sawyer's musings about virtual cons vs. in-person cons. Not surprisingly, I prefer being in the company of fellow fans, artists, and writers, but for now having online contact with them is a good substitute. With

any kind of luck, by the summer of 2021 conventions will be back. Things will be different then, no doubt, but at least the friendships will remain strong.

My wife and I watched *Die Fabre* (2010) in late June this year, and really enjoyed it. I agree that it is probably the most faithful movie adaptation of Lovecraft's original story, and recommend folks to see it. Definitely avoid that 2019 Nicolas Cage version. *Blegh!* It's bad.

Interesting listing of old sf movies from 1896-1906. This is greatly appreciated, as is the rest of the fanzine. Keep the fires burning, Graeme.

All the best, John Purcell

From: **Garth Spencer** – (August 1st, 2020)

Dear Graeme,

As usual, a number of entertaining ideas and subjects entertainingly presented.
Onward.

I am going to use the word “Onward” to signify a transition from one idea or subject to another. As we both know from years of fanwriting, people normally present, and respond to a succession of ideas or subjects (often transitioning without rhyme or reason), so we might as well be explicit about switching from one to another. One must, after all, spell some things out for the assistance of others.

Onward.

The passing of Stewart Smyth came as a shock, partly because he had been complaining so long about his breathing and sleep apnea that I expected him to continue in this vein until he was 165. I should have realized, from the moment I met him, that his deep, low-pitched, muffled voice was a sign of things to come. So were the periodic deep breaths and sighs that punctuated his speech; I used to think he did that for dramatic effect. Well, now we know what to look for in other sufferers.

Of course I wish there were someone to step up and assume his role as organizer of nude swimming parties, but we are none of us as young and lithe as we once were, so it won't be the same. Besides, he would rather be known for his deep knowledge of 1950s pop culture, which was a closed book to me, or for his unpublicised work on behalf of the campaign for sasquatch citizenship.

Onward.

About Aurora Awards, and your current candidacy: kudos to you! Now, how many people know what the Aurora Awards are, what they're for, and how they work? I confess I fell out of touch with the whole effort to spotlight Canadian SF and fantasy with a fan-voted award, when it became apparent that somebody needed to promote the award itself, in the first place. By the same token I fell out of touch with the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, or fan funds in general, since it seems the people who are interested and who know about them already do not quite promote the fan funds themselves, what they are and how they work, to the fans who don't already know.

But this is a twice-told tale and it isn't your particular job to tell it again. ("I wonder whose job it is?" he wrote rather suggestively.)

But I'm probably flogging a dead horse, given the number of unfamiliar names on the ballot.

[The Aurora Awards will be broadcast live as part of the live online When Words Collide convention. That's an "always sold-out" popular writers festival which, even under the current circumstances, will garner a tremendous amount of publicity for the Auroras. Not to put words in your mouth, but I think you misinterpret "fan-voted" as a call for action re: publicity aimed at traditional fans. In reality, today "fan-voted" implies publicity aimed at "fans of the stuff," a category of voting fan that way outnumbers traditional fen. The fannish awards, still targeting "fannish" activities, always get the fewest votes. It's the professional awards that attract the most voters, namely fen who love speculative fiction and media but haven't got a clue what "fandom" is all about. The Auroras will continue to survive only if the focus remains on non-traditional fen as the source of votes. Concentrating exclusively on old-time fen would kill the Auroras dead. To put it another way, the bread and butter core of Aurora Award support are the people who like to read books and watch movies, not the fen who like to write about fandom in fanzines. Been that way for decades. Wave of the future. This is why traditional fen no longer "own" the Auroras.]

Recently I unsubscribed from a lot of email sources, and regretfully I unsubscribed from FanFundAdmin. After these many years, I really wasn't contributing, or indeed reading the emails I received.

Onward.

As I wrote somewhere before, the first virtual convention—Concellation 2020—struck me as a great, perfectly hilarious, totally fannish concept. Now, of course, scores of conventions have been jumping the shark by converting to virtual, Zoom-based conventions online. I just didn't realize there was any level of controversy about this, but then, when people ignore real vital issues in our times, in favour of creating drama about popular issues where can actually be influencers, I am usually clued out.

[I would argue it's not a case of either/or. People can have fun part of the time, as best they can, while wrestling with important issues the rest of the time. However, times being what they are, having fun is more important than ever, so anything perceived as not being done quite right is seen as spoiling the fun. The world is deadly serious right now, and as a consequence, that tends to be the prevailing attitude toward everything. You might say the search for "the sense of wonder" has become desperate.]

You are quite right that Zoom, being a new medium, is more of an adjunct than a replacement for conventions of the previous style. Your further points about the

benefits of conventions having online, as well as in-person meetings, are entirely capable of being proven in practice.

Robert Sawyer echoes your observation that the cost of hotels as convention venues has nearly exceeded the function space cost that SF conventions can pay. I see that he puts it very differently, as a matter of the “nut” that the hotels must demand, in terms of a block of rooms booked. It would appear that, just as media of communication succeed one another in popular use and only sideline, but do not replace previous media, so the market conditions have been sidelining in-person conventions, even before the pandemic restrictions hit us all.

[Definitely the case in the Vancouver region. I can't speak for anywhere else, but I suspect the problem is widespread.]

All I can add to this is that those of us who were socially awkward still represent a demand for in-person, face-to-face, meat-space connections. But this is another twice-told tale and may be explored at another time and place.

Onward.

You may or may not have already completely explored in print the aesthetics of bad drive-in sci-fi movies. This may have been covered already in Joe Bob Briggs' *Cahiers du Drive-in*; then again, you may yet make your name with a series of columns, or a collected volume, arguing for the worth of *Nude on the Moon* and *Fire Maidens of Outer Space*.

Personally, I would like to explore the political economy that produced B-movies. Why were there B-movies in the first place? I have this nagging suspicion that these productions were a way for the Mafia to launder their money. And leave us not neglect the unintended consequences, in terms of general impressions left with a naïve viewing public about science and nuclear technology, or UFO abductions. (Classic urban legends about UFO abductions can be traced directly to at least one B-movie, starring Peter Graves.)

Onward.

Your science news about neutron stars and black holes got me thinking: what if there's nothing inevitable about a roughly Earthlike planet having a long enough span of uninterrupted time to develop life, even “intelligent” life, and even civilizations; what if it's a completely random crapshoot, whether a planet has all that time or not, before a black hole or neutron star comes close enough to destroy it? Could the Fermi Paradox, the fact that we have no conclusive signs of technological civilizations in outer space, be resolved as a matter of statistics ... and could we be unusual in having survived this long, without being destroyed?

Onward.

I appreciate Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk's art, both 2D and 3D. I made an ass of myself by asking once whether the 3D robotic figures were animated. I might as well have asked whether the 2D graphics were animated GIFs.

Onward.

As touches on TED talks: Michael Bertrand reports that Sam Harris arrived at a position which I also arrived at, independently: that you can get from statements of fact (such as the sciences deal with) to statements of value (such as philosophy and ethics deal with), if you make certain assumptions, such as that human life and welfare *matters*. (I gather that such an assumption is called an axiom, something that isn't provable or disprovable. That may be inherent in the nature of value statements.)

It is notable that almost all human beings take such an axiom as a matter of course – except for psychopaths and sociopaths.

Michael should remember at this point that our culture is unlike other cultures, in the extent to which we adopted a “live and let live” attitude to lifestyles. Until the philosophical revolution which occurred when classical liberalism appeared, practically every society prescribed lives for its members pretty narrowly. To this day, in traditional cultures such as much of rural India, your birth family determined what craft or profession you will work in, what you will wear and eat and where you will live and worship, and whom you may marry; and marriages will be arranged by your parents, unless you end up starring in a classical drama or tragedy. Even in English-speaking and other industrialized countries, there are significant regions and populations where some of these social rules still dominate. So, in North America and Europe and Australia, *not* everyone buys into ideas like equality before the law, or equal access to justice, voting and education regardless of race, creed or colour, even if the assumptions are commonly written into the constitutions of U.N. member states.

[One historian suggested that not every contemporary country lives in the twentieth century. Famously, when a relative of the King of Afghanistan overthrew the monarchy and made himself a Communist dictator, Henry Kissinger sent him a diplomatic note stating: “Congratulations! You have moved your nation from the 16th century into the 17th century.” As things turned out, the new dictator wasn't Communist enough in the eyes of the Russians, who promptly engineered a coup in which the new “new” government requested Russian intervention. Governments play games like this all the time. Not much fun, these games.]

Onward.

Re your comment to my letter: I guess that in some sense, a writer like Robert Heinlein is like a tragic hero. He made honest efforts, in different stories, to put himself into the heads of very different characters: military men, an actor, an inventor, a businessman, a preacher, and so on. It says much about him, how well he succeeded. However, it became pretty clear that he had limits. Ultimately, he couldn't stretch himself entirely out of the mind and life of an American raised in the Midwest in the very early 20th century. This is a lesson to us if we are creators. We have our own limits.

This also sheds light on the current tendency to judge past historical figures, even heroes, by present-day standards. If you or I were transported into the mind and heart of Thomas Jefferson, let us say, would it be possible for us, any more than it was possible for Jefferson, to see any way to run a cash-crop plantation except with slave labour, when power machinery was unavailable and inconceivable? For that matter, if you or I were transported into the mind and heart of the Canadian bureaucrats fiercely determined to keep Canada British and white, would it be possible for us, any more than for them, to conceive that natives or Chinese or Sikhs or kanakas were capable of the reason, character, and responsibility of higher-ranking Canadians? I would say, look at these people in their times, and give them credit for such character growth and integrity as they could attain. Or judge them for failing and falling, by the standards available to them.

[To use an extreme example, I should hate to judge Hitler by his own standards. But I'm not trying to be a smart ass. I see nothing wrong in viewing history-as-it-happened from the participants' mindset AND from the contemporary point of view, bearing in mind by that I mean what I flatter myself in believing is the "logical" choice and definition, a progressive liberal outlook. This, in theory, gives me a chance to understand "why" people did "what" they did, while still reserving the right to consider them a bunch of jerks.]

From: **Felicity Walker** – (August 1st, 2020)

Comments on *BCSFazine* #542.

I hope this is not too late. It's been a busy month and it got away from me. I promised myself I would get it done no later than the night of July 31st, but it looks like it will be after the midnight deadline. If I can get it done before 5 AM it will be a moral victory.

"Cover": I like the Chiller font.

"Editorial": I remember that Stewart Smyth liked comedy and was good at impressions. He also had a long memory for pop culture references and told stories about authors and fans and several other topics such as pro-wrestling. He regularly supported FRED which was always appreciated. He gave his cat a good home. Like with anyone, his fortunes rose and fell over the years but he always kept trying.

You make good points about the benefits of Zoom conventions, as does Robert Sawyer in "Random Musings—Virtual Unreality," such as that there can be room for both types of convention. As I get older and it hurts to be alive, the idea of attending a convention without having to leave home starts to seem more appealing. Previously, VCON was my yearly "vacation," right down to the hotel room. With a Zoom convention, I can attend a con and cuddle my cat at the same time!

I'm primarily interested in movies from my childhood era as well, though in my case that's the 1970s–1990s. I enjoy finding movies I imprinted on but also discovering “new” movies from that era, movies that I haven't seen and wasn't even aware of. There's so many hidden veins to mine, like Swedish action director Mats Helge Olsson, just to name one at random. You put it very well about period charm and nostalgia. I don't know what you mean by antique social situational awareness. I'm twentieth-century too. That's what speaks to me, and not so much the movies from before or after that period. However, I've also been able to enjoy more modern movies in small doses thanks to a YouTube account that uploads short scenes with great dialogue or acting. I might not be persuaded to invest in watching a whole two-hour movie if I don't like the premise and it's not from my era, but when it's presented in bite-sized snacks, it's easier to appreciate the redeeming qualities.

I think we agree that whether buying physical media or downloading, having your own permanent local copy is the only way to go. Don't trust the cloud. It may not be there next time.

“Void Breather Bombast”: Black holes and neutron stars are both pretty scary. Neutron stars have some of the properties of black holes, like extreme gravity that can spaghettify you, pull light into orbits, and dilate time. At least neutron stars aren't singularities, though. It's fun to read about how compact things can get without becoming black holes. I was glad to read that other people had theorised the idea of a black dwarf, a white dwarf old and cool enough not to emit any light.

“Art Portfolio: Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk”: I like the human on page 12. The style reminds me of Joe Martin, whose comic strip “Mr. Boffo” I loved in the 1980s, but who also did a strip for the business section of the newspaper called “Porterfield” which the character here would be fit right into. I love her answer to “Do they move?”

“Books to Burden Your Mind: *To Conquer Chaos* by John Brunner”: I agree the fiction of the twentieth century had a more optimistic tone even when the endings were sad or the worlds dystopian. Even cyberpunk, which was pessimistic enough to extrapolate a century of corporate control, still believed technology would march on and that we would not extinguish ourselves or run out of resources.

There was an episode of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987) (animated series) in which the villain, the Shredder, tried using a book of spells to open a portal to Dimension X instead of his usual technological method, but misspoke the last word of the spell because he saw the Ninja Turtles about to attack and said “...open a portal to Dimension—stop!” This opened a portal to a different dimension. A huge, plant-like tentacle monster came through. It was very powerful and could have destroyed the Earth but Michelangelo made a dress out of fronds and distracted it with a seductive dance (this is arguably where it became silly, even by the standards of that series), long enough for the other turtles to collapse the ancient temple/abandoned subway station on the monster, killing it and closing the portal.

This did briefly captivate my younger self's sense of wonder, as it implied that there might be a Dimension Stop inhabited by eldritch abominations, along with who

knows how many other dimensions. Also it involved problem-solving through heroic crossdressing, which is always a plus.

“Messed-Up Movie Mopes: Four Films Based on H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘The Colour Out of Space’: *Die! Monster Die!* (1965)”: I too enjoy overstuffed set decoration.

“*Annihilation* (2018)”: I didn’t understand *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) on first viewing (as a child) but then a lot of it is never explicitly stated, only implied. Funnily enough, it was a comic book spin-off by Jack Kirby that made it make sense to me. Clarke’s novelisation is also more straightforward. I think Kubrick tried to obscure what was happening to make it more mysterious, and to give the viewer the intellectual exercise of spotting all the symbolism.

“The Light-Hearted Vituperator and Jolly Reviler: A Hundred Years of Ray Harryhausen by Stan G. Hyde”: When I rewatched Harryhausen’s skeleton army scene, I realised they were like the Terminators of their day!

“June 8—FRED SF Fen Confab Zoom Chat by Joy Devoy and Felicity Walker”: “Note: Felicity didn’t participate in the verbal conversation and conducted the entire meeting in chat mode. Most of the participants concentrated on listening and talking and ignored the chat texting. Consequently, the above quotes, derived from the chat messaging, are skewed toward a minority of topics and participants.” That is both true and also untrue in that I don’t have a camera or microphone on the computer I use for the FRED Zoom, and so I communicate entirely in the chat room; however, I did respond to what was being said in the audio/video portion of the meeting. On the other hand, this particular log is made entirely of the chat room text, and is therefore highly incomplete even if it is a fairly representative cross-section of the audio/video discussion topics. For subsequent meetings I started taking detailed notes about on the audio/video part of the meeting as well as archiving the chat text.

[*Alas, ran out of time. Wasn’t able to edit your current notes for this issue.*]

“Ook! Ook! Slobber! Drool! (Letters of Comment)”: Steve Green: I like the idea that the new *Star Trek* continuity should be classified as fanfic.

Garth Spencer: Some of the ideas *Star Trek* offered were new to people seeing them for the first time. However the main purpose of *Star Trek* or any entertainment is escapism. I can forgive it for not reinventing the wheel. It sounds like authors are like rock bands. You become a fan of one style and then they switch and you feel betrayed. I still haven’t forgiven Lawrence Gowan for switching from New Wave to acoustic folk and releasing ...*But You Can Call Me Larry* (1993). I will not call you “Larry,” Mr. Gowan.

AFTERWORDS

August 15th. Will I win an Aurora? Sorry to admit uppermost in my thoughts.