

TIGHTBEAM #278

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This is issue **#278** and is edited by Bob Jennings. Letters of comment are solicited from everyone reading this; also, reviews of books read, movies seen, and convention experiences recently attended, and any other fannish material that would be of interest to our members is also requested. Please contact Bob Jennings at—

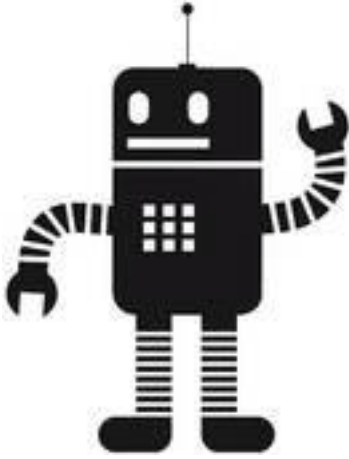
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cover illustration by Jose Sanchez

LETTERS



Lloyd Penney; 1706-24 Eva Rd.; Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

Thanks for yet another *Tightbeam*, issue 277 this time. I will make some comments on the contents, right after this very paragraph.

My loc...work is sparse right now, but at least I have a little bit of work. I've been doing a little conference registration work, some voice work, and some evening telemarketing work. Some little cheques do build up, and I keep going with it, based on a great line I have right now on a Technical Editor position with Capital One. Fingers crossed on that one. In order to stay portable, and able to move on a whim, from one apartment to a smaller one, we may have to liquidate our book collection, and possibly, probably, give away my fanzine collection. Just doing that will free up one whole locker.

Any addition to the Holmes collection is welcome, even if not canon. I like where Holmes enthusiasts put our favorite detective, even if it not canon. But, throw canon away entirely? I think not. I do like the Laurie R. Kind Holmes pastiches, and I very much enjoyed the movie on Holmes' retirement, starring Ian McKellen. Besides, I have to wonder if elder gods mix well with Holmes' logic.

I never did get enthused by Archie Comics, so I am expecting that I am not going to like this new Archie on television, with a lot of changes to it. Mrs. Grundy is what we call any fussy old ladies we come across who try their best to critique what we do while still trying their best to be sweet as pie. This TV show is going to blow all of that out of the water. Oh, well, not my interest, anyway.

IMHO, too many King Kong remakes. The original worked best for a traditionalist like me. I never did see the remakes, and that's fine. I tried to read *Strange and Norrell*, I really did. I kept losing track of the thread of the story. It is a huge book, though... Maybe I will try again sometime in the future.

This loc seems full of things I have to get rid of, and things I don't like. I am not usually that negative. Perhaps the next issue will turn things around for the next loc. We'll find out, and we will see you then.

I enjoy many of the new Sherlock Holmes stories, but there seems to be a small flood of the stuff out there now, and a lot of it is not well done. I do enjoy some of the new novels and short adventures, but, again, I wish Lovegrove had simply written his Sherlock Holmes/Cthulhu novels as additional adventures of the great detective, rather than trashing the entire original canon and claiming that his Cthulhu stories are suddenly the only, true, and real cases, that everything Conan Doyle wrote for publication was a sham. This strikes me as being mean spirited, as well as displaying an enormous egotism on the part of Lovegrove himself.

So far as the Riverdale TV series goes, I really have to wonder why the producers of this series even bothered to option the Archie series of characters in the first place, if they were just going to ignore virtually everything that took place in the comic books and turn their TV show into a typical steamy night-time soap opera. Anybody checking out the show for a dose of typical Archie-style teenage romance and hi-jinks is going to be shocked and sadly disappointed. It will be interesting to see if the series manages to get renewed for a new season.

I have not been generally happy by most of the King Kong remakes. When you are dealing with an excellent movie, film makers should leave the original alone. Remakes of a masterpiece like "King Kong" are almost automatically doomed to failure. No remakes, but I am certainly open to sequels. The recent "Skull Island" wasn't bad, even tho it straddled the bench between fast-action thriller and pre-historic monster movie. My understanding is that the same team that turned out "Skull Island" plan another adventure set in the same universe, but a different time period. It should prove interesting viewing at least.###



John Thiel; 30 North 19th St.; Lafayette, IN 47904

I hear you are complaining about the lack of LoCs for TIGHTBEAM. I feel called upon to help alleviate this and will be happy to not only do a letter of comment, but, if all seems well, to continue doing so when the mood strikes.

Plenty is commentable in the present issue. Just the fact that a man named Lovegrove has written a Cthulhu casebook with Sherlock Holmes in it evokes a comment, namely that his name is rather coincidental, at first glance, with the name H.P. Lovecraft, the originator of the Cthulhu Mythos. I learn from the review that he's somewhat a kinsman, though the variant name still wants explanation. There's also a C.D.W. Lovecraft about writing fantasy poetry and editing fantasy anthologies. It seems that after some obscurity Lovecraft's work is spreading all over; I have several books devoted to H.P. Lovecraft in my bookcase, mainly studies, as well as recent collections of his works along with the works of other members of the Lovecraft Circle (Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Blackwood). These people were doing literary fanzines at one time, I believe. As for followers of Cthulhu, I've seen quite a bit on the net and even Facebook that appears to be the work of such followers, including people trying to run the Elder Being for President of the United States. That will never be a success. A whole lot's going on about Lovecraft.

One thing about the Holmes/Watson idea, it's nice to have more honest investigators than were portrayed by Lovecraft on the scene, and I assume neither of them went mad when they saw what they were facing, which makes for more comfortable reading.

I noticed a remark in Ms. Tutihasi's review of "The Fool's Illusion" that the theater is a dissociation from reality. A very interesting observation, causing one to wonder how the theater affects reality and to wonder in what ways it merges with reality, as is apparently a theme of the book. I'll pick it up if I see it.

Cedar Sanderson is in the NFFF, which adds to the interest of the book. George Phillies recommends her for an interview in *Ionisphere*, which I'll be attempting in the next issue.

Tom Feller says "Empire", by Card, had its conceptual origination in a video game. I'd wonder about the title too, whether it has anything to do with Asimov's "Foundation and Empire".

The articles by Tom McGovern and Brad Torgersen were both good reading. If you keep up this level, there's no doubt that *Tightbeam* has made a first-class comeback.

--John Thiel

To the best of my knowledge neither the video game "Empire" nor the Orson Scott Card spin-off novel have any connection with Asimov's Foundation books. In fact from I understand, the Empire game that originally inspired the novel was never even completed or marketed.

Instead, after the production was cancelled, one of the owners of the project, Donald Mustard, contacted Card to write a novel using the basic theme of the never-released game. Card was apparently enthusiastic about the idea, since it gave him a ready-developed background and a chance to express his very conservative right wing political views in a SF novel that could sell beyond the SF genre audience, plus the deal called for at least three novels to be written. An Xbox arcade style game "Shadow Complex" was announced as a tie-in with the second novel in the series, but is actually a prequel to the events Card wrote about in the first novel. I am not sure if that game ever came out; perhaps some *Tightbeam* reader can provide more details on that.

The series has gotten a lot of criticism from people who generally say the action sequences are good, but complain that all the bad guys are cartoon/cardboard maliciously evil liberal stereotypes, while all the good guys are super conservative heroic stereotypes with nothing resembling the kind of characterization that Card used to inject into his stories. Meanwhile the first novel has been optioned for a full length movie, altho I haven't heard any word about a schedule for the movie production to begin.

I'm also not sure how well the series is actually selling. I just did a flash check at the amazon.com site, and they report that the first novel is #2,081,809 in their book list, but it clocks in at 5,250 on the science/fiction/fantasy list, so I suspect that means the book is a steady seller these days.

Lovegrove was quick to stretch a point in declaring himself a distant relative of H.P. Lovecraft in his novel, but I suspect this is entirely fictional, that there is nothing there but a vague similarity of

names. James Lovegrove is a longtime Sherlock Holmes fan, and has written (thus far) five different new adventures of Holmes and Watson, many with science fiction themes. Most of those have been very good, altho I was not really pleased with his latest, "Sherlock Holmes and the Labyrinth of Death". He also has a lot more novels set in various fantasy pantheons with an underlying theme. Titan Books is printing most of his new Sherlock Holmes material, including the new Holmes-Cthulhu novels. The second one of those should be out in another few weeks and I will try to do a review for the next *Tightbeam*.

Lovecraft has been a darling of the science fiction fandom since the 1940s. His discovery and appreciation by the mainstream literary circuit begin to catch on in the late 1960s, and today his material is studied and discussed as a bastion of twentieth-century supernatural literature. His stories even turn up in high school and college textbooks. Who wudda ever thunk! ###



Louis Desy Jr.; 47 Haywood St.; Worcester, MA 01604

I ran across this research from Cipolla. He was an economic historian that taught for a number of decades at UC Berkeley, after coming to the United States in the late 1950s. One of his best known works is "The Basic Laws of Stupidity". He argued that individual stupid people could be and are much more destructive than people usually expect or realize.

The five laws are:

1. *Always and inevitably everyone underestimates the number of stupid individuals in circulation.*
2. *The probability that a certain person (will) be stupid is independent of any other characteristic of that person.*
3. *A stupid person is a person who causes losses to another person or to a group of persons while himself deriving no gain and even possibly incurring losses.*
4. *Non-stupid people always underestimate the damaging power of stupid individuals. In particular non-stupid people constantly forget that at all times and places and under any circumstances to deal and/or associate with stupid people always turns out to be a costly mistake.*
5. **A stupid person is the most dangerous type of person.**

I highlighted the fifth law. In Cipolla's view, a stupid person is one who causes damage to not only others but themselves as well, which is why he classifies them as stupid. He seems to call this group of people as the most dangerous since they are a negative for everyone, including themselves; in short, a lose cannon spreading damage to everyone around them.

I came across this work while reading a recent essay about the current stock markets and discussion concerning expected returns verses what is more realistic or probable. Even though bonds are returning around 2.5%, most people expect or hope for portfolio returns of around 7% to 8%, meaning that the typical allocations of stock/bonds would need the stock part to produce 12% to 14% in order to keep the portfolio on track for an overall average of 8%. Some people realize this and would not be in the 'stupid people' group because there are few other investment choices available, but there are large groups of other people who are completely unaware (or even worse, do not want to admit this) that a long term rise in stock of 12% to 14% is very unlikely.

The chart he presents also has an explanation for the helpless people quadrant. In the upper left, 'helpless people' could be altruistic people who are not being taken advantage of, but choose or want to give help to others.

On another subject, I ran across this while looking for information on the Pi Raspberry (single board computer with a very small foot print, like 20mm x 80mm x 5 mm that runs a version of Linux), when I found a lot of people complaining about the recent DVD HD format release of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. There is even an on-line petition where irate fans can sign on to demand the entire project be redone by Pivot—done correctly this time.

I always thought the transfer from DVD to HD format was just automatically running the footage through a computer and making the HD disks, but apparently there is a lot of work that needs to be done, and if not done properly completely messes up the end product.

Apparently the work done here was so bad that it looks like the team doing the transfer did not even look at the original or consult with the original director or any of his team.

Among the problems:

1: Night scenes now show as day because they didn't use the correct filter to make it night. Originally, I thought they just took the DVD and ran it through some kind of computer to 'raise it' to HD quality but that is not what happens. Apparently they take the original footage and are supposed to reedit it for the new higher resolution and format.

2: Color problems in multiple places, like all over the place.

3: Changed the original 4:3 screen to 16:9 even though making it 16:9 in some scenes shows movie equipment or film crew members on the sides of the frame. (At 4:3 these other elements would have been cut off and not shown.) The original director, Josh Weaton and some of the original film crew threw, what can only be described, as an absolute fit on Twitter on this change. The most telling is the directors scathing remarks that he specifically shot all the scenes for a 4:3 screen because when the series was first released, that is what most people had with their TV.

4: Changes in the special effects. The HD version changed some of the special effects. One of the most bothersome for some fans is that whole 'when a vampire gets killed and turned to dust'. On the HD version this effect looks more like they are turning into smoke.

I thought it was surprising that a work like this would have been done so poorly and so many mistakes made in the transfer. Did they really think the fans wouldn't notice?

Even more surprising to me is that the owners of the Buffy property would allow a DVD set with this many quality problems to be released. There has apparently been a sustained backlash against the set with people demanding their money back and declaring they will never buy another Buffy DVD set until somebody does something about the quality issues. It will be interesting to see if the people who produced the flawed set actually do something in response to the complaints.





BOOKS



The Chaplain's War; by Brad R Torgesen; Tor Books, 496 pages

I have been working on this book since... longer than I care to think about. And it's a good book. So what took me so long? Well, I bought it in paper. Yeah, I know, most people buy books in paper, what gives? Long story short – and I think I've told the long story before – I'm in the habit of reading e-books over paper for about a decade now.

I tried sticking this book in my bag and pulling it out to read in stray minutes like I do e-books on my phone or tablet. It didn't work. Not for the bulkiness of trade paperback size, although that was a factor. No, it was more that this was a book which demanded my full attention. I've had very little to give of that this semester. Until last night. I was halfway through the book, I sat down, and I finished it. It was glorious.

The Chaplain's War, if I must make a short comparison, is like Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. It's half philosophy, and half soldier training, for similar motivations. Like Rico, Harry lives on a world threatened by aliens. Like Rico, Harry joins up for a war against bug-like aliens. He suffers through training unlike anything in his life previously, makes friends, and then watches them die.

Unlike Heinlein's shorter novel, Torgerson interweaves his hero's training in the past with the present-tense story of the interaction with the aliens, and the crisis of faith the Chaplain's assistant is having after long years as a prisoner of war. It is handled delicately. There is no proselytizing in Torgerson's writing. It is, simply, an exploration of faith itself. If we are not the center of the Universe, and after our death, nothing, then we are forced to consider those who live around us. This is central to *The Chaplain's War*. The mantid aliens have no faith, only themselves, in a semi-automated existence that forbids them even companionship in ways humans would understand. Because of this, they relentlessly crush any sentient races they come across. They are the center of the Universe, and others are competition alone.

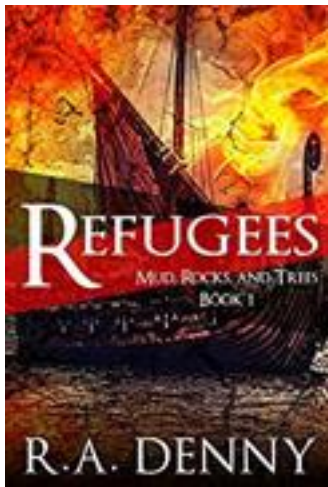
The humans in Torgerson's book are not saints. They suffer, they falter, they doubt. But in their earnest seeking, they convey to the curious aliens that the Universe may just be larger than only one race needs.

If you are looking for a philosophical throwback to the days when Science Fiction explored the really big stories of 'what is human?' then you will enjoy this book. Although the two threads are not close at first, they do merge by the end of the book, and they are both needed for the full tale. Yes, you could skip through and just read the present-day story of the aliens, the Chaplain, and Adanaho, but why?

Enjoy, savor, and finally, put it down with your mind full of dreams and hope and a small spark of faith in humanity.

GP: Like all modern books, you can get this one from Amazon at prices ranging on this case from \$0.00 to \$15.

---Review by Cedar Sanderson



Refugees (Mud, Rocks, and Trees Series, Book 1); by R. A. Denny, 2017---FREE thru Amazon.com

After receiving a request from the author, I obtained my copy of this book through the Kindle Unlimited program. A prophecy warns of dire consequences, heralded by the appearance of a new star. Dire consequences aren't things that emperors desire, and so this one, Emperor Zoltov, takes action to prevent unwanted future events from becoming real. In this case, that means death for a great number of his subjects, in order to guarantee that no one is able to fulfill the prophecies.

There are four peoples involved in this tale: humans; Web Feet; Fliers; and the Armored. Each has their own special ecological niche. The Webbies are fishers in the mud-lands, which is honey-combed with streams and rivers. The Fliers live in the great Forests. The Armored lived in the rocks, and hibernate through the summer months. On the plains live one particular group of humans,

who have domesticated great cats, to ride and hunt with.

Thanks to the presence of the prophets, all three of the non-human groups know what the appearance of the star signifies. In each group, one individual member, a relative youth, is called to bear a seal to the capitol city. In every case, the chosen one has to give up their prior life, and set out on a journey in search of a meeting with the others.

Meanwhile, agents of the Emperor Zoltov are tracking them down to kill them.

This is a solemn book, and I realized that as I attempt to review it. There are moments of beauty, and even levity, but for the most part, the sense of desperate hurry is present in all that they do. Each of the chosen has a hard time believing that the time of the prophecy has really come, and that they are the people that have to bear the burden. To add to the difficulty, they all know that while there are political ramifications to what they do, this is primarily a mission from the One True God Adon. "How can I be a servant of God? I am just a boy/girl!" is implicit in each one's response.

This is the first book in the series, and very little is resolved. It remains a pleasure to read, however, as long as the next installment isn't too far off. For an adult of mature years, such as myself, it's a great, relaxing read for a quiet weekend at home. As it happens, though, I had a house full of kids this weekend, all between the ages of 10 and 12, and I think the story would be perfect for them. There are plenty of good life-lessons in these pages, concerning duty and loyalty. If you want an adventure story without rape and murder, or are looking for a gift for a young reader, this will be a good choice.

---review by Papa Pat Patterson



Lord of the Dragons: The Golden Horn; by Mats Vederhus, 2017; e-book only; \$2.99 or FREE with Kindle Prime

The author solicited a review, and I obtained my copy through the Kindle Unlimited program on Amazon. This was indeed fortunate in this case, since the book didn't cost me a penny. If it had cost anything, even a penny, it would have been too much.

It starts with a confusing origin story. I accepted this as it was, since origin stories are often confusing. However, after much bashing about, we are given a few lines of narrative, and the entire story is repeated again. This time, it is evident that it is being presented as a mother telling the story to her daughter. BUT WHY IS THE ENTIRE STORY TOLD TWICE?

I was not particularly put off by some awkward word use in the first telling of the beginning of things; as I said, origin stories are often confusing. However, at the end of the mother's version of the story, she states

“Goluboy and Golubam had filled the night sky with stars. «It is said, » Olivia smiled, «that the last thing Goluboy and Golubam had done before they died, was to expire northern lights over Svalbard.”

[Vederhus, Mats. Lord of the Dragons: The Golden Horn (Kindle Locations 225-227). Kindle Edition.]

Wait. What? They EXPIRED the Northern Lights?

And so, I PARTIALLY understood why this book reads like a school assignment by a 15 year-old who is fascinated with Nordic myth. True, the author is young (although not THAT young) but he is not a native speaker of English. And it shows. Boy, does it show.

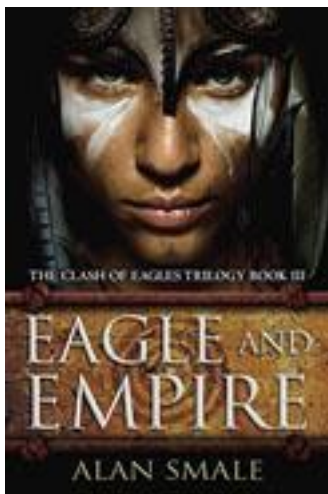
Honestly, I was unable to determine whether there exists within the stultifying structure a story worth telling. I had to quit, after reading the first third of the book. It was just too horrible for me to proceed.

“In the living room, she could not be.” Really, Yoda? “Linoleum rugs, woven by the Vikings in Norway, covered the hallways.” Yeah. I don't know how you weave linoleum, either.

These are just random quotes, but I could go on and on. Examples just as bad exist on almost every page.

Don't waste your time with this one.

---review by Papa Pat Patterson



Eagle and Empire—Book 3: Clash of Eagles Trilogy by Alan Smale; Del Rey Books; 560 pages; hardback \$30, but available at heavily discounted prices, also as an e-book

World War I is being fought on the American Great Plains in 1228! It's a three-sided conflict between the greedy Roman Empire, the fearsome Mongol Horde, and the unruly tribes of the Hesperian natives, and the fate of the entire world hangs in the balance. (The invading Romans claim North America as a Roman Province, and named it Nova Hesperia when they arrived in 1218.)

This is a book I've been waiting for months to read. The two previous books are among my favorites for the past year. I've written before about the first two volumes. In this third book, both Roman legions and the Mongol horde have arrived in North America and on a collision course. The Hesperian tribes thought they had it bad with the Roman invasion, but in their first encounter with the Mongol army they discover that the hated Romans are actually the lesser threat.

In the first part of the book Praetor Gaius Marcellinus intervenes between the Mississippian tribes and the Emperor Hadrianus III, and weaves an uneasy alliance between most of the tribes east of the Rockies and the Roman army to stand against the encroaching army of Chinggis Khan. Marcellinus is sent on a mission to enlist the aid of the Southwestern People of the Hand. The mission ends disastrously when the Mongol army on its return from making mischief in the Mayan lands wipes out the main city of The People of the Hand, capturing Marcellinus and his band of negotiators.

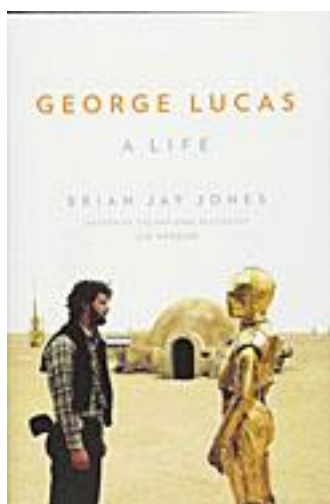
The good guys from Mississippian Cahokia think they have advantages over the Mongols since they have aviation, napalm, steel weapons and armor, Roman tactics and training, and native knowledge of the land on their side. What Marcellinus discovers in his visit to the Kahn is that the Mongols have developed their own air power based on the designs of the Pacific tribes, they have fearsome gunpowder-based bombs and projectile weapons, along with a much larger army as well as native allies of their own. Furthermore, the Mongols have hauled their ships over land in Panama and are attacking Cahokia via the Mississippi. If anything, the battlefield is tipped in the Mongols' favor.

What I like best about these books is the depth of characterization that Smale manages to bring to the story. There are both heroes and villains on both sides, and everything in between. Marcellinus is the most virtuous of the cast, but he is constantly pilled between his loyalty to both the Romans and Cahokians. He is oath-bound to serve Hadrianus and guilt-bound from his loss of the legion he once commanded. His ties to Cahokia are now family ties through his wife Sintikala, adopted daughter Kinimela, and friendship with hundreds of the Cahokians, not the least of which is Tathay, the Great Chief of Cahokia whom Marcellinus helped to elevate to his position.

The battle scenes are also excellently written with a deep understanding of Roman, Mogol, and American fighting styles. The battles revolve around who can invent winning tactics most effectively in the heat of combat, as well as overcoming human factors like mistrust between uneasy allies, including clashing cultures, bravery and treachery. I also admire how Smale refrained from injecting melodrama into the action. In other hands Sitikala might have informed Marcellinus of a pregnancy on the eve of battle, or the final fight to the death might have been decided by a *dues ex machine* like a tornado suddenly putting an end to the Mongo army. Instead, Smale constructs his battles as fair fights, with no punches piled and everybody staying within the defined boundaries of the characters and the situation.

While Alan Smale says in the afterword that he considers the story of the Roman occupation of the New World to be complete, he does leave open the possibility of more stories in the same milieu set in 13th century Europe and Asia in a world where the Roman Empire manages not to fall. I would certainly welcome more stories set in this world. With “Clash of Eagles” Alan Smale shows himself to be worthy company with Harry Turtledove and George R.R. Martin as a builder of fantasy worlds.

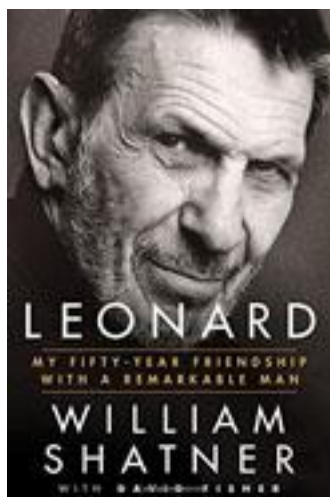
---review by Gary Robe



George Lucas—A Life; by Brian Jay Jones; Little Brown; Hardback; 560 pages; \$32.00 but heavily discounted, also available as an e-book

This is a comprehensive, but unauthorized, biography of Lucas from his birth in Modesto, California in 1944 to the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in 2015, which was the first *Star Wars* film he neither directed nor produced. (Despite his public statements, he did not really like it.) Since it was unauthorized, the vast majority of his friends and family did not talk to the author, although people like Gary Kurtz, the producer of the original *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back* who had a falling out with Lucas, did talk to him. However, there is so much information and misinformation in the public domain, the author had the challenge of sifting through way too much material. I was familiar with most of the story, including his first marriage to his wife Marcia, although I was not aware of Lucas’s five year relationship with Linda Ronstadt or his second marriage to money manager Mellody Hobson. Francis Ford Coppola and Steven Spielberg are also major characters. The author does not engage in film criticism, although he does discuss in great detail how the various scripts evolved. A recurring theme is that Lucas was a control freak who sacrificed short term financial gains so that he could control what we saw on the screen, although for the most part the author avoids psychology. Lucas eventually got it both ways when he became a billionaire after selling his companies to Disney. I consider this a must read for movie fans and especially for Star Wars fans.

---review by Tom Feller



Leonard: My Fifty Year Friendship with a Remarkable Man; by William Shatner with David Fisher; Thomas Dunn Books; 288 pages, Harfdback; \$25.00 but heavily discounted, also available as an e-book

This is a memoir by Shatner about his friendship with Leonard Nimoy. Although they shared a scene in an episode of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, neither one remembered it when they appeared together in the second *Star Trek* pilot. Although they worked closely together during the original three year run of the latter show, their relationship was more one of cordial business associates than friends at the time. According to Shatner, they really did not become friends until they started to make joint appearances at conventions, and they eventually grew quite close. Unfortunately, their friendship cooled during the last few years of Nimoy’s life for reasons Shatner never knew. Also, Nimoy’s relationship with Gene Roddenberry was purely professional, and Shatner speculates that the reason

was a dispute dating back to the original series over Nimoy's request to get some time off to make a public appearance and extending to Nimoy's lawsuit over the royalties from the Spock character. I'm not sure where Shatner's writing ends and his co-author Fisher's begins, but the tone is very personal and introspective with considerable candor and affection for Nimoy. There are also biographical sections, although that material is covered in many other books, including some by Nimoy himself. This book is a must read for *Star Trek* fans, but others might find it interesting as well.

---review by Tom Feller



Luna: Wolf Moon; by Ian McDonald; Tor Books; 400 pages; Hardback; \$27.99 but heavily discounted; also available as an e-book

This is the second volume in the series telling the story of human expansion into the Solar System set about two-hundred years in the future. In the first volume we are introduced to the Moon which has been thoroughly colonized and dominated by a half-dozen family owned mega corporations exploiting various resources on Luna. It's capitalism run amok as lawless Luna is ripped apart by the feuding between the helium mining Corta family and the Makenzie metal extractors. It becomes a hostile takeover as the freewheeling Brazilian heritage of the Cortas is crushed by the more ruthless European Makenzies. At the end of the first book many of the key Cortas are dead or fleeing and the Makenzies have taken control of the helium extractors.

As "Wolf Moon" opens, the Makenzies are gloating over their destruction of the Cortas, but their celebration is cut short when the long-dormant Trokan program activates and turns the huge solar-powered smelter on itself and turns their main base into a pool of molten metal, killing the family's patriarch. Beyond that, the Makenzies are not one big happy family, and in the aftermath of Metalfall the two remaining heirs began a deadly fraternal conflict to control the company.

Up to this point Earth was happy to stay out of the Lunar politics as long as the families continued to provide the resources to keep the Earthly powers comfortable and commodity prices high enough to make sure the Huddled Masses stayed put. With the Corta-Makenzie war crippling Luna's production the Earth governments intervene in an attempt to gain control. Into this toxic mix, Lucas Corta, the presumed-dead heir to the Corta enterprise makes the potentially deadly decision to travel directly to Earth to negotiate a new ruling coalition to run Luna over the increasingly unreliable management of the Makenzies.

Lucas Corta's program to coax his lunar-adapted body to Earth and his careful dance with the Earthly powers-the-be in the futuristic Rio de Janeiro are the second-most interesting parts of the book. The flight of Lucasinho Corta, Lucas' dilettante son and his young niece Luna across the hostile surface of the moon are the best sections of the novel. The story plays out like a Lunar "Game of Thrones" with the Cortas taking the part of the Starks and Makenzies playing the Lannisters.

I really like how the early parts of the story show how Luna has become safe enough that most of its inhabitants don't consider it to be a hazardous environment. That perception is broken in the last third of the first book, and is shattered completely at the beginning of the second one. The Lunar inhabitants don't look at Earth as a potential refuge. Once a human visitor acclimates to Lunar gravity, there's no going back to Earth. After a couple of generations on Luna, even the trip back is fatal without heroic measures, and even then more than a few weeks on the surface of Earth will kill. That's acceptable for those who've chosen to live on Luna, but when a civil war threatens the lunar air, water, and food infrastructure, only the wolves who have never accepted Luna as a benign environment are equipped to survive.

As usual Ian Mac Donald has put a lot of thought into his world building and has populated his story with a large cast of memorable characters. In some places the characters are a bit difficult to sort out. It's difficult to remember just who a particular Corta or Makenzie is and how they relate to the story. I suspect this would have been improved if I'd gone back and re-read book one before I jumped into this one, but I'll save that for when the series is completed (?) with a third volume.

---review by Gary Robe

cinema

The feature film of the evening was “The Vampire Bat”, a 1933 pre-code horror flick starring Lionel Atwill, Faye Wray, Dwight Frye, and Melvyn Douglas, provided by Majestic Pictures. Majestic was a low profile, low budget company who saw a golden opportunity to exploit the fact that Atwill and Wray had starred in the very successful “Dr. X” the previous year, and that they had just finished production on the heavily-hyped Warner Brothers horror film “Mystery of the Wax Museum”.

“Wax Museum” would not be released for a few weeks, so Majestic decided to hire Atwill, Douglas, and Wray, adding in Dwight Frye, well remembered from his role in “Dracula”, to produce their own horror film starring people the public was already familiar with, in the kind of story the public expected from them. The fact that it was the heart of the Great Depression with many film studios in financial trouble, while many theaters across the nation were closing down and the whole industry facing uncertain future prospects undoubtedly helped Majestic land the actors for a film they promised would be made rapidly.

The movie has impressive looking sets and background, mainly because the studio also took the opportunity to rent the entire Frankenstein village set from Universal, as well as the interior sets from James Whale’s “Old Dark House”. Additional outdoor shots were filmed at the nearby Bronson Caves (dearly beloved and constantly used by Mascot and Republic for many of their serial and western movie productions).

All of this, plus the obvious acting skills of the players involved gave the immediate impression that this was a far bigger production than it actually was. Scenes were shot very rapidly, often with only one or two rehearsal run-thrus for the actors to get the feel of the backgrounds. Watching the film carefully we can also see that the scenes and the shooting itself is stretched out beyond the dialog to supplement the length of the film so that it clocks in at a full 63 minutes, yet it somehow manages to feel like a longer movie.

The story plot is fairly routine. Written by long-time silent movie scribe Edward T. Lowe Jr., the film opens as the leaders of a village in some nameless European nation are dealing with a series of mysterious deaths. Giant bats are nesting in the trees, while bodies are turning up with all the blood drained out of them. Naturally the superstitious locals suspect a vampire. The local magistrate (Douglas) will have none of that, yet he is at a loss to explain what is happening.

Meanwhile the local castle/manor house on the hill is occupied by scientist Dr. Otto von Niemann (Atwill), who helps out the local doctor by trying to care for the hysterical villagers. His beautiful niece Bertin (Wray) and her hypochondriac aunt are living with him, along with an assistant and a spinster housekeeper. Local feeble-minded dolt Herman Glied (Frye) increasingly falls under suspicion because not only does he have no job or means of support, but he also likes bats, and keeps them as pets, including carrying around one all the time to show to anybody who talks to him.

The bloodless victim body count increases, but whoever is offing the villagers makes a mistake when a crucifix from the latest victim turns up later at the castle. Housekeeper Gorgiana brings her suspicions to Dr. Neimann, but alas, it turns out that Dr. Neimann is actually behind all these strange murders, hypnotically controlling his assistant to use a suction machine to drain out all the blood of each victim, which he needs to



sustain a blob of artificial life he has created. Naturally he decides Gorgiana must become the next victim. Lucky for Neimann, after the body is discovered and the inspector investigates, it appears that Glied is guilty of the crime, so the local village forms a mob to run him down.

Niece Bertin discovers Neimann controlling his assistant via long distance hypnotism in an effort to kill Magistrate Breetschenider as his next victim, having conveniently given him some sleeping pills that were actually poison after the magistrate wrapped up his investigation of housekeeper Gorgana's murder at the castle. Neimann grabs Bertin, straps her to a table and prepares to drain all her blood out, but she is rescued at the last moment by Beetschenider who never took the 'sleeping pills'. He interrupted the assistant Emile trying to kill him and came straight to the castle to apprehend Emile.

Action ensues. Neimann is killed by Emile who resents being a hapless pawn in this murder scheme, the beautiful damsel is rescued, and all ends well as the vat with the living blob of artificial life is also destroyed. The End.

The plot is serviceable, but entirely predictable, and somewhat simplistic. What carries the movie is the acting along with the sense of menace and dreadful suspense that the film projects. Altho the production may seem a bit slow to modern viewers, it was hot stuff back in 1933 and racked up a solid box-office gate.

Unfortunately, despite this success, as well as the polished look and big name star power of their other features, Majestic Pictures was soon to become a victim of the Depression. Majestic, along with five other smaller studios was deeply in debt to Herbert J. Yates, owner and president of Consolidated Film Industries, which processed the studio's films. In 1935 he convinced all these six faltering companies to combine into one larger studio that would utilize the best talents and features from each of the independents. The new studio would be called Republic Pictures, a name well known to serial fans.

The copyright to "The Vampire Bat" was either never filed or never renewed (source information differs). It was in the public domain for years, with serviceable but somewhat fuzzy prints available everywhere. The version we saw was digitally remastered so it was crisp and crystal clear, with excellent background contrast. Unfortunately bright red color tint has been added to all the torches the villagers are carrying while they are tracking down poor hapless Glied. This is very distracting, and injects a jarring note that spoils the overall effect, not to mention disrupting the flow of the story at that point. Otherwise this was an excellent print, and a movie that anybody with an interest in supernatural or horror films is sure to enjoy.

Since viewing the film I had a chance to discuss it with Phil Hopkins, owner of The Film Detective, the company that digitized and remastered the copy that I saw. It turns out that this version was taken from a 35mm print held for years in the UCLA Film Archive, one of the films they never had the time or money to restore. Enter Phil and his Film Detective company, who volunteered to do the necessary restoration and digital transfer. It took almost a year of work to properly format and digitize the new copy. The newly pristine copy was screened at a special showing at UCLA the same day the new copy was released for sale on DVD. Copies of the DVD, with additional background scenes, poster scans, and a historical commentary track are now on sale thru Amazon.com.

It turns out the splotches of bright red coloring added to the villager torches as they were tracking down poor Glied were actually part of the original movie. For a time in the late 1920s and early 1930s there was a film movement to add color emphasis to graphic action scenes in black and white movies, such as coloring the blast from pistol shots bright red, or, in this case, turning the torches the villagers carried bright red. Apparently this technique did not last long. Perhaps regular paying theater going audiences found it as distracting as I did with this particular film. In any event the technique was abandoned after 3-strip Technicolor film became available around 1932 at a somewhat cheaper price than the Technicolor Corp had previously been asking (possibly another result of the Depression, but more likely a marketing ploy to get more full color movies made).

Phil heads The Film Detective, a company that deals with and restores old films, many on the old nitrate film stock. They make transfers to digital formats, and restore the films by cleaning up the sound and picture, in order to make the films available on HD DVD, and now Blue Ray DVD formats.

There are two sides of the business. One part of the business is transferring and cleaning up the film video and audio for transfers to digital. The other part is finding where the old films are, and then, negotiating with the current rights owners or entity that holds the physical film so they can make a transfer to digital.

Many of the films that they deal with have had the copyright expire so the film is in the public domain, but even then there is still work that needs to be done before being allowed to access the material.

Many times the film is in the hands of a collector that does not want to allow a digital copy of their print to be made, since some collectors believe that would reduce the value of their private collection. Part of this mental attitude is that the value of a collection is not just the dollars that it would bring, but the fact that if someone has, say, the only copy of a film in existence, even a bad film, then that makes it more of interest to collectors, and so the 'value' of the collection is enhanced.



Phil Hopkins, with friend Pierce Sears on right

I think part of the problem with running the company, or even explaining exactly how his business operates, is that he usually does not want to appear over eager in his typical negotiations with the collectors who have the old movies, so when he explains what he is doing he is very low key (which is probably good for this kind of work). My impression is that Phil spends at least 25% of his work time talking with or visiting with the holders of the films and getting them to make an agreement where he can get the material to transfer to digital. I also expect that once a collector says it is OK, that Phil then needs to get moving as quickly as possible to pick up the movies so the collectors do not have a chance to change their minds, or develop seller's remorse about allowing their precious films to be turned into DVD transfers.

Somehow, part of the payment Phil has to be making to these people must be something like making them feel that allowing the material to be transferred to digital format is important historically, that they had a part in making the film available for later generations to see. I do not think money alone would get the deals done with a lot of collectors.

As an example of this, I know two local friends who collect old films on 16mm films. One collects mostly comedy short subjects, while the other person collects primarily feature films produced by Universal Studios before 1946. They both know that every single one of their films will be worth zero someday when it all deteriorates and turns to vinegar, but they still want to hold onto most of them as part of their collections, even the ones that they know will never be watched again. Overcoming the compulsive collector mind-set must be a big part of Phil's operation.

The Film Detective offices are located in Rockport, MA across the street from the railroad station for the commuter rail that was the old Boston and Maine line. Phil has many films carefully stored in air-tight containers in the building, and he also has storage facilities elsewhere around the region. He maintains his goal is to get everything eventually gathered into one large warehouse, but considering the number of projects he has working and the leads he is following up all around the country this does not look like something that is going to happen any time soon. In the true spirit of entrepreneurial-ship he has his wife and daughter working for him as part of the company staff.

One of Phil's pet projects is to obtain all the episodes of the 1950s TV series 'The Harbor Master', a short lived show about the fictional adventures of the harbor master of Scott Island, near Rockport, MA. One of the interesting facts is that one of the episodes Phil has features a part played by a little girl who in the story was the parade flower girl who lived in Rockport. The whole episode was about a town having a blessing of the fleet ceremony on a rented pier that was not safe. At the end of the parade route, the blessing would take place, and then the flower girl would go to the end of the pier to toss flowers she was carrying into the water. In the show,

the girl falls and gets hurt when part of the pier collapses. At one of the recent town festivals they showed this episode and the woman who played that part happened to be in the audience; she is still living in Rockport.

Phil is trying to run down all the copies of this series, which would probably generate local and regional interest because of the Rockport/Gloucester story location, in addition to being of interest to fans of classic TV. The series only lasted a year, but it was apparently syndicated right after it went off network TV, so 16mm prints should be out there, somewhere, but so far only a handful of shows have turned up. These are the kinds of frustrations Phil has to deal with on a regular basis in his business.

Most of the films The Film Detective has restored are on sale at Amazon and other web sellers. His websites are **The Film Detective; Owner: Phil Hopkins**

<https://www.facebook.com/filmdetective>

<http://www.thefilmdetective.com/>

---review by Robert Jennings



The Great Wall

During the Oscar ceremony, host Jimmy Kimmel commented that Matt Damon turned down the role that won Casey Affleck the best actor Oscar so that he could appear in this movie. (Damon was still one of the producers of *Manchester by the Sea*.) This is an historical fantasy in which Damon's character is one of two European mercenaries (the other is played by Pedro Pascal) who travel to China to obtain the secret of gunpowder. He discovers that the wall was not built to keep out the Mongols but rather to keep out monsters. Willem Dafoe plays another European mercenary who travelled there 20 years previously for the same purpose.

It was filmed mostly in China, and, costing \$135 million, it became the most expensive film ever made there. The costumes, production design, and special effects are excellent, but the story itself is just about fighting monsters and is really not all that interesting.

---review by Tom Feller



Logan

This is supposed to be the last film in which Hugh Jackman plays the Wolverine, aka Logan, and Patrick Stewart plays Professor X, all set in Marvel Comics X-Men universe. It is set in the year 2029, when the other X-Men are either dead or in hiding, and there is no effort to make the two actors look younger than they are. In fact, Stewart lost 21 pounds so that he would appear frail and fragile. (Also so that they could film Jackman carrying him to the bathroom.) The Professor is suffering from Alzheimer's, and Logan and Caliban (Stephen Merchant) are his caregivers. Although the film is the tenth based on the *X-Men* comic book, it is rated "R" for the stylized violence in the tradition of Sam Peckinpah. The obligatory plot mostly concerns Logan's efforts to protect a young mutant (Dafne Keen) from a mercenary (Boyd Holbrook) and an evil scientist (Richard Grant) and transport her from Mexico to a mutant sanctuary in Canada. Jackman and Stewart are excellent in their respective roles and make the film worth seeing.

---review by Tom Feller



I recently had an opportunity to watch “Donovan’s Brain” again at a friend’s house. This was a 1953 science fiction/horror thriller which starred Lew Ayers along with Nancy Davis and Gene Evans. Based on the 1942 novel by Curt Siodmak, this was the second time the novel had been made into a film and was clearly the most successful. A third adaptation was made in the early 1960s. The 1944 version titled “The Lady and the Monster” was turned out by Republic and starred Vera Ralston with Richard Arlen. I have never seen this movie but people who have tell me it was not very good.

In addition the book has inspired a number of direct spin-offs, including an Avengers TV episode, several cartoon satires, and a Steve Martin comedy. The story has been a direct influence on well known science fiction and horror writers as diverse as Stephen King and Gene Wolfe.

In 1968 Siodmak got around to writing a sequel titled “Hauser’s Memory”, which was also turned into a movie in 1970 and that movie was nominated for a Hugo Award.

The story deals with a prominent businessman who dies in an accident and has his brain removed and kept artificially alive. As time goes on the brain not only remains alive, but becomes conscious, and manages to exert influence over the people surrounding it. Before the accident Donovan was a

ruthless businessman who was under investigation by the government for hiding away a lot of money owed the IRS, and even after death he is determined to protect his stolen funds, up to and resorting to remote control murder thru his malicious control of the people around him. The protagonist must somehow escape the malignant influence of the living brain and thwart its evil intentions.

This 1953 version was pretty good. It had solid plot structure, and built suspense all the way thru. However I was affected not only by having remembered the plot of the book, which the movie changes in a number of ways, but also I was affected by the excellent adaptation of the book which was done on the radio program Suspense in 1944 (specifically on October 19, 1944 with part 2 airing on October 25th, 1944). That radio adaptation happens to be one of the strongest shows Suspense did during that decade, and it makes a lasting impression on anyone who has ever heard it, me included. It was the first two-hour, two part story Suspense ever did, and it was also their first pure science fiction story. The radio adaptation was hosted by Orson Welles who also starred in multiple roles. In 1982 those two Suspense shows were turned into an LP album set which won the Grammy Award for Best Spoken World Album that year, even though it was essentially an LP transfer from the 1944 original radio transcriptions discs and not an original production from 1982 at all.

Those who are curious about that radio adaptation can hear it by going on line with their computer and typing in this URL--- www.escape-suspense.com/2007/10/suspense---dono.htm/

The movie made a number of changes in the book, including substituting a young robust actor for Dr. Cory’s alcoholic assistant (he was a doddering oldster in the original story), and most importantly, changing completely the way Cory finally deals with the menace of the brain which is controlling and destroying his personality. There also appear to be some editing gaps in the movie. For example, during a brief period in which hero Dr. Cory regains control of his personality, he makes a tape recording of suggestions to his staff back at his home on how to deal with the Donovan problem. This information is key to overcoming the monstrous brain, but nowhere in the movie is it shown that any of Cory’s friends ever got hold of that tape, let alone listened to it or implemented any of its suggestions. There are some other gaps and jumps which seem to imply that this movie was originally going to be about two hours long but was edited down to meet the exhibitor preferred running time of 83 minutes.

Still, it was an enjoyable high tension thriller and if anyone reading this has not seen the movie they should give it a look. A DVD copy is out which is crisp and clear, available at a very affordable price. And of

course, one of the other attractions of this movie is to see young star Nancy Davis in a strong role. Later on she had another strong role, as Nancy Reagan, wife of the President of the United States.

---review by Robert Jennings

DOCTOR WHO—SEASON 10



After a year's near hiatus with only the Christmas Special to tide the series over, Doctor Who returned on April 15th with the introduction of a new companion and new mysteries. Pearl Mackie takes over as Bill Potts, a cafeteria worker adopted by The Doctor as a student. With a nod to the first couple of Jon Pertwee seasons, The Doctor is oath-bound to remain on Earth and guard a mysterious vault. To pass the time The Doctor is a university professor giving lectures on whatever the heck he decides to expound upon. The Doctor notices Bill sneaking into the auditorium and adopts her as a mentor.

The Doctor is kept on track by Nardole, a character introduced two years ago in the Christmas Special "The Husbands of River Song".

Nardole is unusual as a Companion in that he knows exactly what The Doctor is and is himself a time traveler from the far future with plenty of intergalactic experience of his own thru association with River Song. Bill is a different sort of companion compared to Amy Pond or Clara Oswald. Both of these previous Companions were introduced as puzzles The Doctor needed to solve. Bill is a mundane black woman to begin with, although we soon find out she is a lesbian. That's an interesting departure from the modern era Companions, in that, with the exception of Donna Noble, Bill is a Companion with no crush on The Doctor.

Up to this point Peter Capaldi's tenure as The Doctor has been a mixed bag. Season 8 was probably my least favorite of the modern series. Season 9 had some very good episodes mixed in with some dreary ones, right up to the outstanding one-two-three punch of "Face the Raven", "Heaven Sent", and "Hell Bent". That trilogy is up there among the absolute best Doctor Who stories of any era. I will note that my wife Corlis and I disagree strongly on whether "Heaven Sent" is unwatchable or brilliant. I vote for brilliance, although I have a greater affinity for dark stories.

Now with Season 10 we are coming to the end of Peter Capaldi's run and, from what we know at mid-season, there are some rough waters ahead. The Doctor's blinding in Episode 5, "Oxygen", is unique in Doctor Who history. In 37 seasons and 13 regenerations The Doctor has never been physically crippled. His injuries are either shrugged off with hyperactive Time Lord healing powers, or they are fatal, leading to regeneration. It looks like The Doctor will remain disabled at least through the current three-part story, and perhaps until his regeneration at year's end. It has been made clear at this point that The Doctor does not know of any way to restore his sight short of regeneration, and maybe even then full healing is not guaranteed.

The other fun Doctor Who game to play is who will be the 14th Doctor? So far there have been lots of interesting suggestions as to who might take up the keys to the TARDIS, but so far the BBC has kept a lid on the announcement and even evidently planted a rumor that Kris Marshall, the former lead of the Caribbean-set police drama "Death in Paradise", had been cast.

I'd really rather be kept in suspense until Doctor 13 starts glowing at Christmas. That's probably not possible, since at some point The BEEB will need to go into production for Season 11 and it'll be impossible to keep the secret around Doctor Who Studio in Cardiff.

Another bit of Doctor Who trivia. You owe it to yourself to look up "The Curse of Fatal Death" on YouTube. This is a Steven Moffatt produced Doctor Who spoof done in the late 90s that features Rowan Atkinson as The Doctor and Jonathan Pryce as The Master. It's only 20 minutes long, and it's a must see but be-sure-to-go-pee-pee-before-you-watch-it romp to anyone who knows The Doctor. Just watch it. I'll explain it to you later.

---review by Gary Robe



BUT WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

by Brad R. Torgersen

Every writer gets this one: people wanting to know where those ideas come from. It's led to snarky rejoinders about the idea of the month club (said to be operating from assorted odd locations around the world but never actually sighted in the wild), weary responses along the lines of "How do you keep them out?" and a whole lot of confusion.

For me, it's not a direct line. I'll have a thought related to something else, then I'll read something else which will set off a different chain of thoughts which hook up to the first one, and so on over a period of months or years. Eventually something that works for a book emerges.

Of course this is the kind of subconscious-heavy process that makes people nervous. We don't know what's going on in there so how can we rely on it to deliver when we need it?

Which is why I trawl weird news sites and check out conspiracy theories every now and then. You do need to be careful with these. They can suck you in and chew through what passes for sanity in record time. But for story fodder? Priceless.

Seriously.

How many conspiracy theories are there about alien abductions being hushed up? I grew up hearing them. They collided with a stray thought along the lines of "Wouldn't it be awesome if an alien abduction accidentally got a bunch of trained knights instead of an average joe and the knights went on to form an interplanetary empire?" There may have been some interesting fan fiction mixed up in there as well. And maybe a little Humanity Fuck.

Yeah.

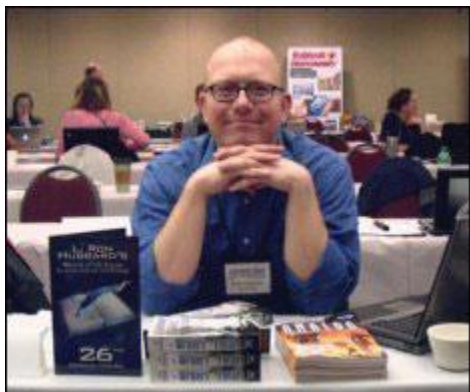
The con vampire books had a similarly mixed start. I've read vampire fiction for years and I know all the tropes, even the (ugh) sparkly ones. The stray thought that the SF con scene was perfect for vampires because there's one damn near every weekend most of the year, and, as long as they can manage not to go killing dinner, nobody's going to bad an eyelid at pale, avoids sunlight, and has bad teeth. That kind of mixed up with my sense of humor and led to Jim Hickey and his werewolf best buddy. Everything else in those books is a combination of "it seemed like fun", "it wanted to be there", "Make me a reformed succubus" and the like.

Hell, even Impaler started life with the combination of being fascinated by Vlad's life and wondering what the world would be like if he hadn't been murdered just as he'd reclaimed his throne. I made a few attempts at writing his story over the years, none of them going more than a few handwritten pages, then I tried writing him first person just to see if that would work better.

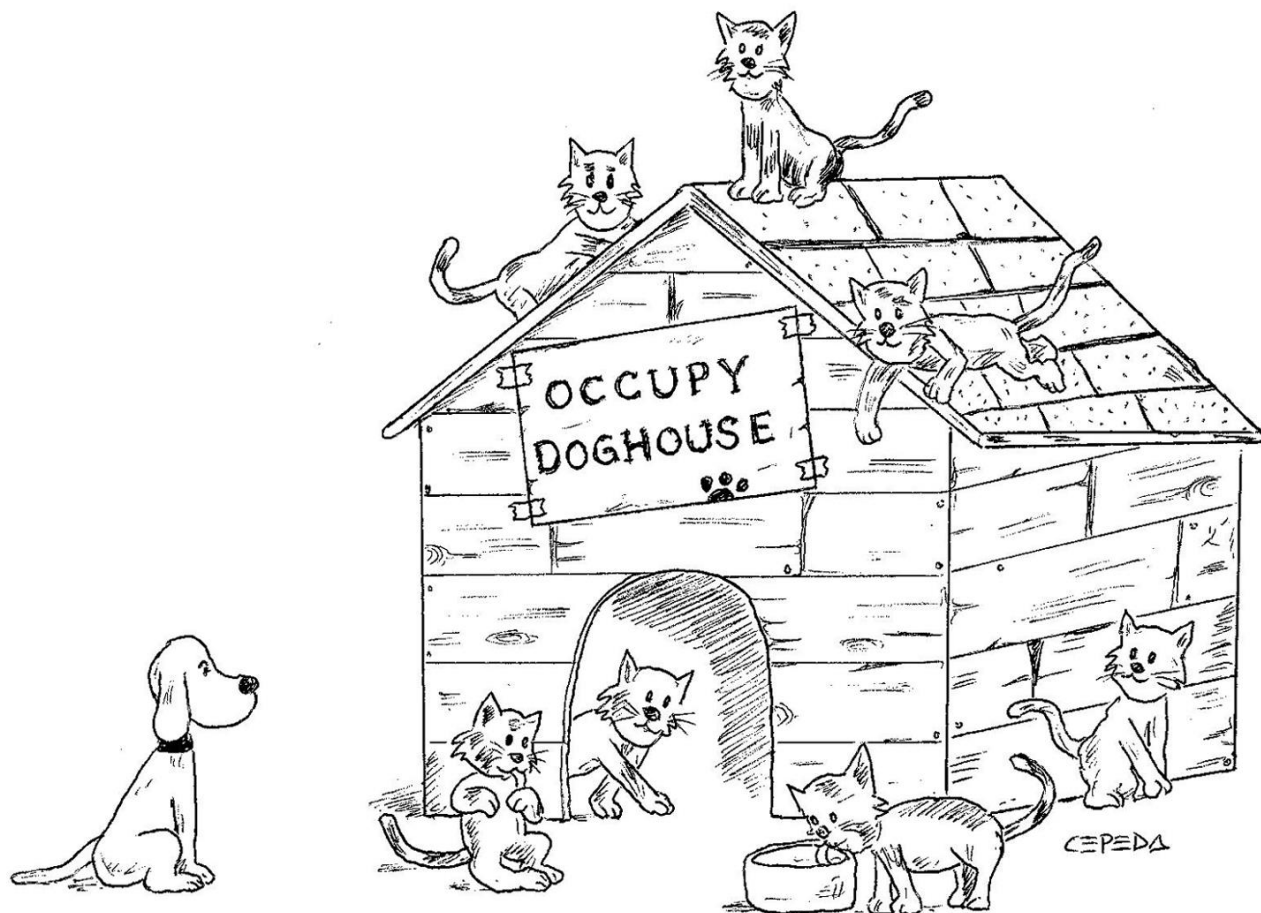
That's what I mean by the subconscious process. Any kind of odd tidbit can set off a chain of thought that leads you to a working story. I usually have several bubbling around, although lately they haven't been able to push past the damn narcolepsy that well (she says as she sleep-types – I'm still recovering from the medication

interruption, alas). They're still there, just not screaming at me to bloody write them. Although I could do without the infinitely spawning Harry Potter alternate universes. Those are just irritating.

So go and read all the weird shit, try to stay out of the black holes of conspiracy mania, and ask the magic question "What would happen if it were true?", then you too shall never be without ideas again. Just don't come crying to me when your mind won't shut up and it's too weird and scarring for words. I've been there. I have no sympathy.



Brad R. Torgerson is a writer of science fiction and fantasy stories. He has published several novels, as well as several dozen short stories and novelettes, some of which are included in three anthologies of his work. Nominated for both the Nebula and Hugo Awards, new stories are always in the works. He maintains a website where he talks about speculative literature, the process of creating it, and he also plugs the works of other writers whose material has impressed him. Check it out at <https://madgeniusclub.com/>



FANZINE REVIEWS

A regular feature of

TIGHTBEAM

by

Bob Jennings



In my opinion fanzines are one of the pillars of fannish existence, as much the heart and core of fandom as conventions, correspondence and clubs. Despite the popularity of the Internet, there are still many fanzines being physically printed and actually mailed out to interested fans. I will try to take a glance at some of the print fanzines that I have received since the last issue of *The Insider* was mailed out. Copies of print fanzines intended for review should be sent to---
Robert Jennings; 29 Whiting Rd.; Oxford, MA 01540-2035

Most of these fanzines are available to interested parties for "the usual", which is fan shorthand for sending the editor/publisher a letter of comment, or a copy of your own print fanzine in trade, or contributing written or artistic material for publication. Most editors will cheerfully send you a copy of their zine if you send along a card or letter asking for a sample copy, or, if you want to be a nice guy, you could enclose a couple of bucks to help defray the cost of postage.



TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #245

5-1/2x8-1/2" fold

over saddle stitched, 28 pages, published bi-monthly by Rob Imes; 13510 Cambridge #307; Southgate, MI 48195; \$2.50 for sample issue, after that The Usual

This is the official 0-0 for the UFO fanzine cooperative. What is that, you might ask? Essentially fans who produce their own fanzines agree to cross promote each other's efforts thru the pages of their own zines and also thru the pages of Tet Frags. It is not an apa; there is no central mailing officer, and there is no set schedule the members must produce their zines on, altho *Tet Frags* itself comes out bi-monthly.

The UFO was developed in the 1970s to help producers of comic fanzines find a way to successfully cross promote their efforts. Back in those days there were literally thousands of different fanzines devoted to comics. The hobby produced amateur comics, histories of comics, offshoots, comic perzines, reprint projects, and a lot more. There have been a lot of ups and downs with the UFO over the years, but it is on a firm footing now, and Tet Frags is available to anybody who shows an interest in the publication or the UFO. Members are encouraged to write reviews, and editorials, commentaries, overviews about their

involvement with the world of amateur publishing and their own products as well as those of their fellow members. This issue carries a lot of reviews, and a lot of commentary about the change face of both fandom, and how the Internet is directly affecting the world of amateur creation.

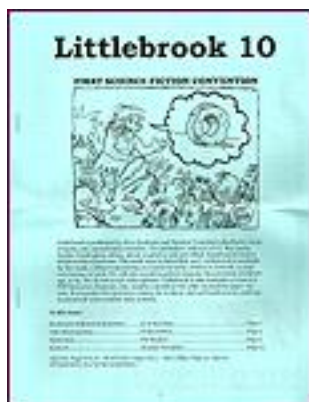
The focus right now seems to be primarily on artists and those who are creating their own amateur comic book characters, but the range is varied and there is room for everyone. There are usually some interesting illos thruout, and there is no letter column in this particular number. Issues generally run about thirty pages each.

This issue is a very good one, with strong articles from members discussing a wide variety of subjects, from dealing with creative block, to how to produce effective action movement in comic book art, to teaching classes in comic book design to young children (it is apparently not that hard to develop drawing skills and nurse artistic talent, but almost all children below the age of ten lack sufficient life experience to actually create readable, let alone believable, comic book plots).

One of the more interesting articles comes from Larry Johnson, looking back on his long career as a commercial artist doing creative page design and art for the Boston Phoenix, while trying to create his own comic book stories and characters at the same time. He relates his experiences as a gay person who was never into the flamboyant life style flouted and sometimes glamorized by the kinds of alternative newspapers he worked for, and how creating comic book stories helped him develop not only his art talents, but his ability to communicate in the real work world and relate to other career opportunities that presented themselves as a result of his comic book and artistic talents. This is quite an interesting bit of biography, well written thruout.

Another interesting commentary comes from Gavin Galligan, who relates his opinions and ideas of both the current and amateur comic scene as well as the changing political scene of the United States thru his detailed discussions and critiques of comics books. Gavin is very conservative politically, and his observations about the casual hypocrisy and ultra-liberal smugness in certain professional comic books are interesting to follow.

In fact this entire issue has fascinating, insightful articles by the UFO members talking about themselves, their involvement with art and writing, and how they are deal with the creative process. A free sample is available to anyone who wants to check it out, and it is well worth checking out.



LITTLEBROOK 10

8-1/2x11"; 16 pages; very irregular by Jerry Kaufmann and Suzanne Tompkins; PO Box 25075; Seattle, WA 98165---available for The Usual

Here is another fanzine that gives a whole new meaning to the word "irregular" when that word is applied to a publishing schedule. It has been over three years since the last issue came out, and some of the contents of this particular issue relate to that lateness theme.

For example, one of the feature articles this time round is part another part of the 1998 TAFF report by Ulrika O'Brien, including this time her reports of English fans she met at the 49th British National Science Fiction Convention. Her comments and observations are quite interesting, and her observations are particularly pithy, including her observation that so far as she can tell, almost every person in the UK, but especially British SF fans, perpetually utilize humor in their daily lives,

particularly irony and ludicrous understatement, which are employed by everyone both casually and deliberately. She notes that Americans often find British humor oblique because they lack a significant amount of cultural, social, or even language similarities with British life to understand context, let alone what the overriding theme of the intentional humor might happen to be at that moment. That doesn't faze British fans, tho they do seem try harder when Americans happen to be handy.

Her comments on fans and the country itself are also quite insightful, such as her observation that there is no such thing as old growth forest in Britain, and indeed, considering that all the trees still in existence there have been listed, scrupulously tended, pruned, protected, and minded by generations of dedicated foresters who have turned the surviving tree areas into whatever specific purposes the government or their private owners demanded, that the very term 'forest' should be deleted from the British lexicon. Outdoor trees in Britain should best be considered a majestic, highly successful form of bonsai farming; except the Brits insist on using full sized trees, while the Japanese prefer their hobby timbers to be midget sized.

The entire report is filled with pages of these kinds of interesting observations, including insightful commentary on UK fandom and the hobby itself. This report, six pages of small type, only covers a short time period of her TAFF visit. Seven previous chapters have appeared in many different fanzines over the past twenty years, and there are more to come. This must surely comprise the longest, and the longest running fan trip report ever made. I look forward to the next parts of this journal. I also hope that when the report is all done that some way can be found to put everything into one comprehensive volume, and also, that this will happen before those of us who have been following the report hither and yon thru many different fanzine venues die of old age. It could be a close race.

Suzle Tompkins has a long write-up on attending the 50th class reunion of her high school graduation class. Class reunions have never been high on her list of things to do, but the approach of the monumental 50th anniversary, plus the realization that this might be the very last chance to see any of the people she attended high school with catapulted her into action. She attended an elite private HS in Bucks County, PA, a whole

country away from Seattle where she and Jerry live. The trip report and reunion was interesting, notably because of the reactions she encountered when she tried to explain her and Jerry's fifty year involvement with science fiction fandom to some of the people there.

There is a letter section, mostly discussing the eminent marriage, and then subsequent death of long time fan Stu Shiffman. Jerry discusses hallucinations and dreams, and how they might (or might not) be related to real life, and perhaps to recent political events around the world as well.

This is an interesting issue, well worth checking out. I only wish that the editors would produce this fanzines on a [much] more frequent basis.



COPY THIS #40

4-1/4x4-1/2"; 44 pages of very small type; mostly monthly from D. Blake Werts; 12339 Chesley Dr.; Charlotte, SC 28277---available for The Usual

This is a mini-zine which happens to be a newszine devoted to mini-zines. For those not familiar with the term, mini-zines are physically small amateur publications (usually roughly 4x5" in size) devoted to comic strips or cartoons. These have been the new underground comics and the new frontier for cutting edge humor for a long time now. Circulations of mini-zines range from a few dozen to a thousand copies per issue, or more. The range of art and creativity is also very wide. There is some brilliant work being turned out in mini-zines, but then there are also some absolutely awful crudzines being offered out there as well.

Copy This tries to keep up with what is happening in this sub-species of comic art creativity. In addition most issues provide one or two in-depth interviews with mini-zine creators. These interviews are almost always insightful, and cut straight to the quick of a creator's career, his art, and the subjects he deals with.

This issue features a very long interview with Michael Neno; an accomplished artist who has been around the comic book world and comics fandom for over thirty years. Neno is a very versatile artist who easily slides thru multiple art styles, from simplistic thin-line cartooning, to ultra-realistic heavy brush panorama material, and everything in between. Michael relates there was never a time, from age five to present, when he did not want to be a cartoonist and comic book artist. The trip from fan and reader of illustrated art, including many different kinds of comic books, to the present, where he turns out small press comics, self published comic books, illustrates for children's books, does ad promos, posters, comic book lettering, web-comics, art for music jackets and much more has been extremely varied. He credits his sheer dedication to the creative process of art for being able to actually make a living as a free-lance artist mainly doing mini/underground comics in these days when most freelancers have to have a "real" job to support themselves.

He also relates that a determined work ethic is essential if anybody hopes to succeed in art or any of the creative enterprises. He currently has nine projects going, and is working to land the position as chief artist for the new about to be launched revival of the old Harvey comic cartoon heroine Little Dot, a character obsessed with dots. As he notes, there are vast area of untapped humor and adventure with that obsession that the original comics never managed to tap into.

This issue of *Copy This* is more than twice the size of regular numbers, and this very extensive interview with Michael Neno is the primary reason. Neno is a fascinating person, someone totally involved with comics and illustration at all levels. He isn't afraid to voice his opinion about anything that touches on comics or art, and his observations linked with his history in the business make fascinating reading. I zipped thru the entire 37 page interview in a flash, without looking up from the pages even once. This is one of the strongest interviews the fanzine has done.

This issue also comes with a free insert, a complete 8 page sample mini-folio of Neno artwork in a variety of styles, titled "Pictures of Benevolence". The mix is interesting, and the art is generally pretty good. *Copy This* inserts freebie sample mini-comix several times a year as a way of promoting both new and old artists whose work editor Werts feels deserve broader coverage.

The issue finishes up with some reviews of recent mini-comics and amateur press comic projects the editor has recently received.

The format is tight and well presented. Editor Werts has enduring enthusiasm for the mini-zine art form, and the people who create them. I really can't stress how interesting and informative this fanzine is. Anyone with even a trivial interest in the mini-comics scene or the world of amateur cartooning should definitely give be getting this mag.



DASFAX May 2017

8-1/2x11", 4 pages; published monthly by the Denver Area Science Fiction Association; c/o Tay Von Hageman; 4080 S. Grant St.; Englewood, CO 80113; comes with club membership, membership fees are \$15 per year, or available for The Usual.

This is the newsletter of the Denver area SF club. The group is unique in that almost every meeting features a guest speaker, often a popular SF/fantasy author. There are also club wide games, discussion groups, and the meetings are usually followed by a party at one of the member's homes. The first Saturday of each month there is an Alternate Meeting, which is another party hosted by a different club member.

I note the arrival of this current issue of this clubzine, but I do not recommend anybody who is not already a member of the club bother ordering this number. This issue features an abbreviated editorial by club director Rose Beetem, along with the nuts and bolts of the club, and a listing with contact

information for the other club officers, as well as a brief mention of upcoming club events.

There are a couple of random cartoons and a map to the next alternative June party gathering, but the heart of every issue of this fanzine would normally be the feature article written by 'Sourdough Jackson', a long time club member, and a long time fan who discusses science fiction and fantasy as part of his "Writers of the Purple Page" series.

Unfortunately that feature is not present this time round, and indeed, in the past two years the rest of the club's contributions to the newsletter seem to have withered away to almost nothing. Normally 'Jackson' is able to carry the monthly issues entirely on his own, but without his presence, this becomes just a bare bones listing of club officers and events. I wish some of the other club members would contribute to these monthly bulletins, but I guess everyone has gotten used to 'Jackson' carrying the burden. I hope his entertaining column will return next issue.



Purrsonal Mewsings #59

R-Laurraine Tutihasi; 2081 W. Overlook St.; PO Box 5323; Oracle, AZ 85623-5323; 8-1/2x11", 13 pages; irregular by ; available for The Usual

This is editor R-Laurraine's perzine, which also doubles as the editor's apazine for Stipple-APA. Each issue features some abbreviated apa (amateur press alliance) mailing comments that readers will find difficult to get involved with. The mailing comments consist of brief remarks related to the past mailing of Stipple-Apa, and are pretty much incomprehensible if you are not a member of that particular group.

In the past editor Tutihasi has devoted a lot of her recent issues to trip reports that often read like an expense diary, with notations of places stopped for gas, foods eaten, when she turned in for the night, when she woke up, even what she had for breakfast. I find that kind of stuff gets old pretty fast.

Lucky there is none of that this issue. Instead editor Tutihasi has offered some generous reviews of new books, movies, and plays she has experienced. Most of these are not brief throw-away comments either. The books in particular received solid in-depth examinations, with critiques and emphasis on the strong points of the material. She and her husband are ardent amateur astronomers, so two of the reviews that I found particularly interesting were her comments about recent volumes concerning the star constellations, past and present, and some constellations that no longer exist any more, and why/how that actually happened. There is another review about a book dealing with the upcoming total solar eclipse that we folks living in the United States will experience later on this year.

Each issue always features a generous assortment of color illos from a wide variety of sources, but mostly photos she or her hubby took around their house, which is located in semi-desert terrain. This issue features no cats (despite the fanzine title), but does offer many photos of local birds. The format here is clean and open, with wide margins and distinct type font. This is a good solid, fun issue, well worth checking out.

**THE DEADLINE FOR TIGHTBEAM 279 IS
20 AUGUST 2017**