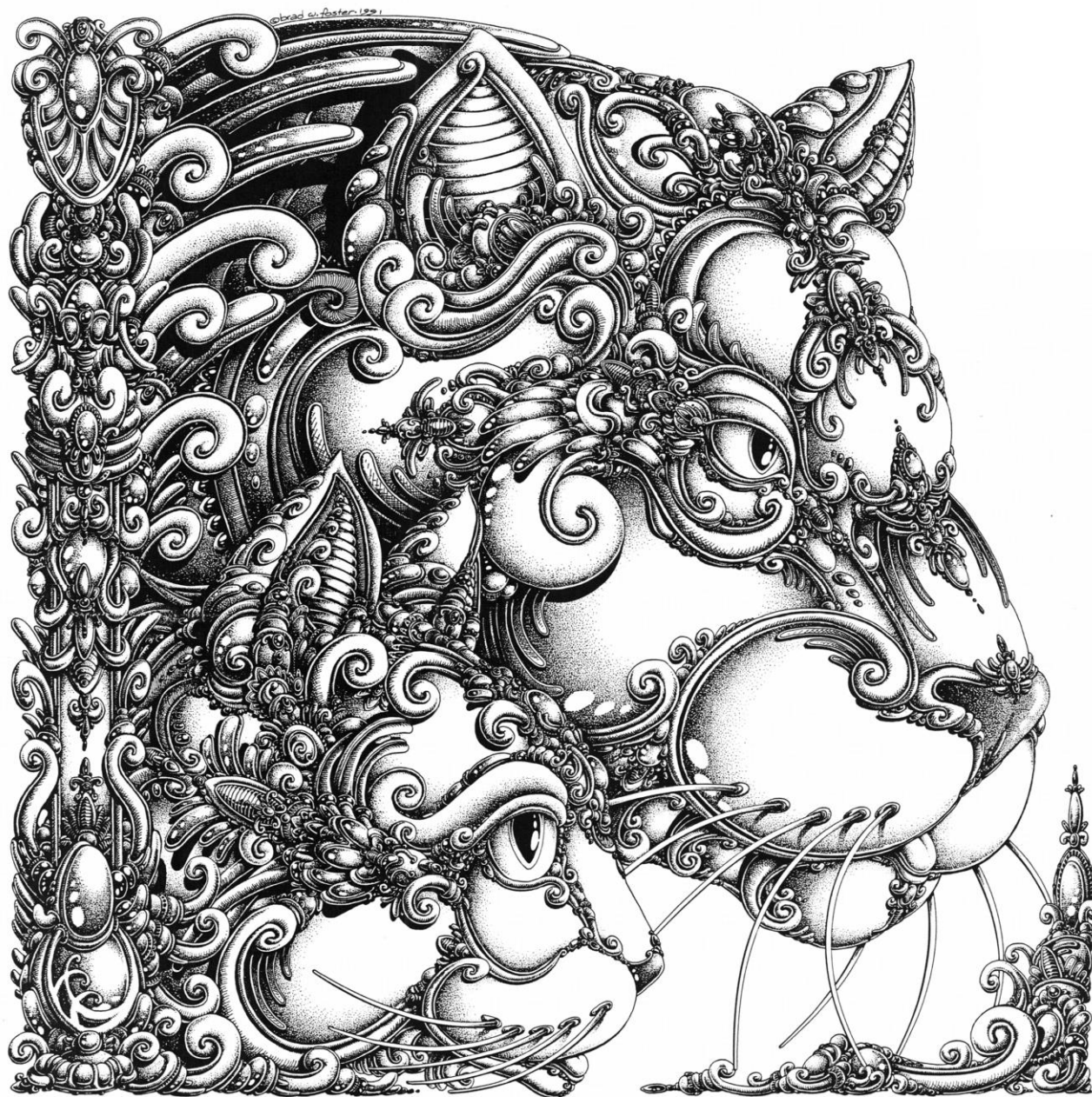


Fadeaway 55



FADEAWAY #55 is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by **Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email fabficbks@aol.com**. Copies are available for a letter of comment, or a print fanzine in trade, or by subscription at a cost of \$25.00 for six issues. Letters of comment are much preferred. Any person who has not previously received a copy of this fanzine may receive a sample copy of the current issue for free by sending me your name and address. Publication is (in theory anyway) bi-monthly. This is the July-August 2018 issue

REVISITING THE QUESTION of whether this fanzine should convert to an all electronic pixel format, I have heard from a smattering of readers, some of whom were interested in the electronic version of the fanzine, and others who really preferred that it maintain its present print format.

As I have said before, one of the big advantages of running the issues in electronic format is that the illos can be run in full color without extra effort at all, whereas my printer will only do black and white. In addition, the pixel format version reaches readers almost instantly via email. That said, I am willing to bow to reader demands. Those readers who prefer to receive the issues in print form can continue to do so. Those who want the electronic format will receive their copiers via email in PDF format.

However, I am going to be dropping a number of people from both lists. The ways people can receive this fanzine are clearly stated over there at the top of the page, but let me just run thru them again. You get copies if you send me a fanzine in trade, or you can pay cash money to subscribe, or you can send in letters of comment. And of course, people who contribute articles or artwork always receive copies of the issues that carry their material. But that's all. If you have not been doing any of that, in particular, not writing the occasional LOC, then this may well be your last issue.

And before you shrug this off as a toothless gesture, let me mention another consideration we discussed in the past, namely, not posting every issue of this fanzine on the internet. Bill Burns who provides the excellent efanzines.com has been unfailingly generous with his time and efforts in posting lots of newly released fanzine issues on his website. However, of late he has been complaining about the work load involved, and would really prefer that regularly published fanzine titles maintain their own archive website that he can link to by posting just the cover of their recent issues.

I don't have a website, or an electronic archive of any kind. I think the easiest thing to do here is to send the fanzine out to interested readers, and only submit occasional issues to Bill to post on his efanzines.com website. I will try to submit this particular number for his consideration, but not upcoming issues #56 or #57.

Also, for what it's worth, despite some glitches over the past year, *Fadeaway* will be going back on a regular publishing schedule effective with this issue, and I may, as the situation warrants, even put out issues more frequently than bi-monthly. So, again, not to be a total jerk, but if you want to stay on the mailing list, please send me your fanzine in trade, write an article, provide some artwork, subscribe, or write a respectable letter of comment. Or do without this fanzine in the future.

ENUF IS ENUF How many more dead students is it going to take before the American public puts an end to the private ownership of military grade assault rifles, and other accelerated rate of fire weapons? These are not firearms that can be realistically used for hunting, or as a weapon for self protection. The only use for those weapons is to kill enemy soldiers on the field of combat. Military grade rapid fire automatic weapons should never be in the hands of civilians.

Gun crazies who worship firearms apparently believe that owning those weapons will somehow protect them in case the government decides to turn into a communist dictatorship and armed rebellion breaks out. History, past and present, shows that civilians who attempt to battle trained military forces in direct confrontations always fare badly. In addition to better training and tactics, along with force of numbers, the government military forces invariably outgun the well intentioned civilians. AR-15 style weapons pale in comparison to a supplemented BAR automatic weapon, which has far greater range and strike strength. Military forces can use mounted 50-cal machine guns, or artillery, or bombs dropped from the air, or armed drones, or dozens of other options that will (and have) made short work of determined civilian opponents. The streets and

fields of hundreds of foreign lands are littered with the dead bodies of civilians who erroneously believed that a determined well armed civilian presence could stand against trained military soldiers.

Yes, back several hundred years ago, citizen militia using their own weapons were able to harass and beleaguer the British Army, but it was battlefield actions by the Colonial army that won independence. Since 1776 the variety and lethal intensity of weapons used by the organized armies of all nations have increased dynamically.

What will it take to stop the slaughter of innocent children and by-standers who are attacked by lunatics determined to murder as many people as possible using these kinds of firearms? Trying to abridge the existing laws, increasing background checks, trying to eliminate criminals and the mentally unbalanced from owning weapons is not enuf.

The reality is that the NRA, amply financed by gun manufacturers and foreign governments, has the money and the determination to stop each and any kind of legislative effort to regulate the sale and ownership of firearms by their vigorous defense of their 2nd amendment rights.

I am convinced the only thing that will work is to adopt a tactic near and dear to the GOP Majority--- Repeal and Replace. Repeal the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution, and replace it with a new amendment which will guarantee the right of citizens (but not non-citizens) age twenty-one or older, who have not been convicted of a criminal felony (or been dishonorably discharged from any branch of the US military) to own non-military grade, non-automatic, non accelerated rate firearms with a magazine capacity of twelve rounds or less, providing the citizen is of sound mind. Citizens may only purchase one firearm per day (or week, or whatever), must submit to a background check to verify his identity and check his record, and must wait a period of eight days before the purchase can be completed after the background check has been verified. In addition, I would also add the proviso that all handguns manufactured and/or sold in the United States must be made child proof (a very simple thing to do, which the gun manufacturers oppose because it would involve retooling parts of their factories).

Will this happen? Maybe. The recent high school massacre in Florida has galvanized a large segment of the population who previously were not particularly interested in the subject of gun control. More important, students, millions of them, have taken this up as a cause, and they are determined to do something to deal with the problem.

Vast numbers of high school students will reach voting age this year, and vast numbers of young students are right now taking advantage of the early-voter registration laws most states have on their books. These are people with one agenda in mind, and come the election this November, they intend to vote for candidates that promise to do something to regulate the gun problem, or at the least, to vote against legislators who accept money from the NRA and plan to do nothing to change the way guns are being bought and sold in the country today.

How will all this play out? I'm not sure, but I'm cautiously optimistic. The least we can do as concerned citizens is to support this effort, and to publicize the idea that a repeal-and-replace program will effectively deal with the problem and simultaneously protect the rights of citizens who want to hunt, or need to carry firearms for self-protection.

Let me repeat: no civilian should own a military grade accelerated rate automatic weapon. Until those weapons are taken out of the hands of civilians, the massacres will continue. This is the year to do something about the problem, and with publicity and cooperation, something can be done.

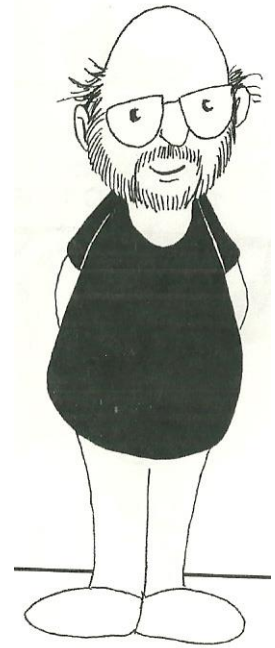




An Interview With Brad W. Foster

conducted by **D. Blake Werts**

with a few after thoughts by Bob Jennings



Finally, after years of trying, I got a chance to pin Brad down for enough time to eke out this nice little interview. Even if you think you know Brad, you're going to learn some fascinating stuff in these pages!

D. Blake Werts: Thanks much for taking the time to answer a few questions we've been dying to ask you. First off, we have to get some of the basics out of the way: where were you born and raised? Have you always been in or around Irving, Texas?

Brad Foster: I was born in San Antonio, Texas. But as an Air Force brat, ended up moving all around the western half of the country for a while. I think the longest stay of all the various stops was probably in Idaho for a couple of years. My father died when I was about seven years old, and my mother moved with me and my two sisters back to San Antonio, to move in with her parents. I've been pretty much a Texas boy ever since.

College was still in the state, first at Texas A&M University at College Station, where I got a degree in Environmental Design (think of it as a lead-in to Architecture). Then moved to Austin and studied art for about two years at the University of Texas. Austin is probably still my favorite city in the state.

Anyway, ended up coming up to the Dallas-Ft. Worth metro area to look for work once out of school, and have been here for several decades now. Have accumulated too much stuff, and too much debt, to probably ever move on again. Though, if we win the lottery....

DBW: When you got to the Dallas-Ft. Worth area after school, did you take on a full-time job matching either of your college degrees? Do you recall some of your first art/illustration/comics work out of school?

BF: Well, just to be totally clear, I only have a single degree, a Bachelors of Environmental Design from A&M. I took classes at UT without even thinking of getting another degree, just trying to actually learn things this time. When I got there, found out many of the advanced classes I wanted to take required that I had taken lower-level classes first. But, and I loved this, all I had to do was check a box saying I had taken those classes, and I could sign up for the advanced ones. Again, not worrying about a degree, I got into those I wanted to that way.

Stayed with my sister and her family when I got up to DFW, and drove in each day to do the rounds of art studios and ad agencies. I got a lot of positive feedback on my portfolio, and I quickly found out that there really was no such thing as a "full time drawer," which is what I wanted to do. You could be an art director, or a graphic designer, and that would get you the security of an office, paycheck, and benefits. But if you were only the person who drew the pictures, which is all I was qualified for at that time, that was pretty much freelance and short-term, always depending on if they needed your skills at that particular moment or not.

But, everyone was so nice. "This is great stuff!" "Wow, if only we had something we could use you on," "We'll let you know if something comes up in the future." There was the one agency where the guy had me lay out my stuff on a large meeting table, then said "I want our art directors to look at this," and I recall five or six of the most beautiful women I had ever seen in my life showed up, all very complimentary of my doodles and scratches. I think I would have paid them at that point to work there.

One guy was pretty up-front about how it worked, pointing out they saw dozens of artists like me on a slow week, and all those samples kind of got dumped in the same overflowing file cabinet. With so much there, unless they had already worked with you, odds were you would not be remembered down the line, and the only way to get a job as a freelancer was to show up every week and see if there was anything right then that they could use your style on. Otherwise, I was just another easily forgotten face and folio that constantly floated through the offices.

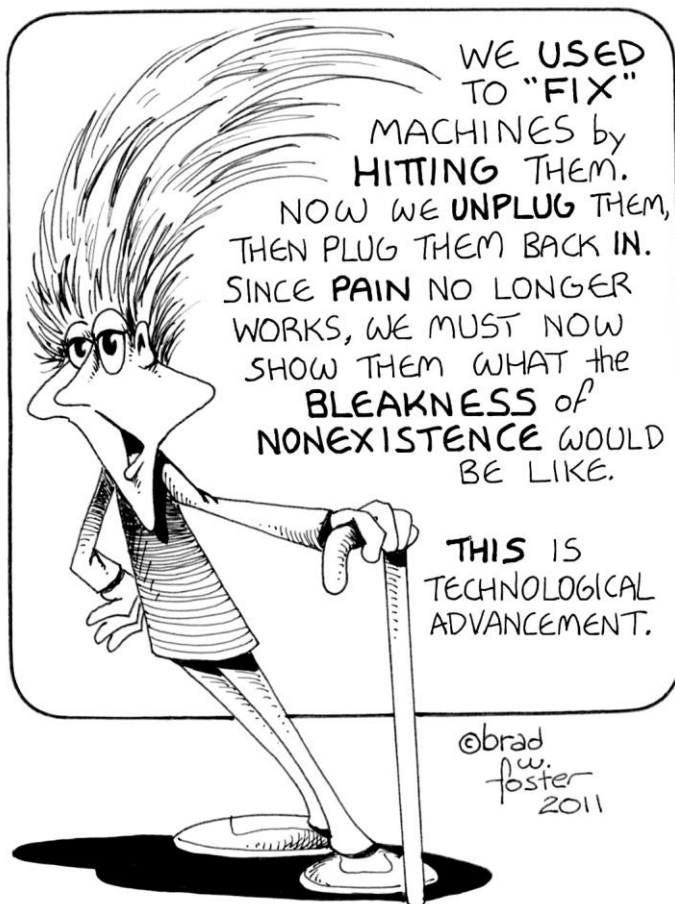
With all that positive, if non-job-getting, feedback, the best interview I had was the most honestly brutal. The amazing illustrator Don Punchatz ran the almost legendary SketchPad Studio in Arlington, in the middle of DFW. Lots of artists had moved through there, learning their chops working for and with Don. (Probably best known to people reading this interview would be Gary Panter). I couldn't believe I worked up the balls to even call him, but did get an appointment to show my stuff.

After all the agencies in gleaming high rise buildings all over the city, bit of a surprise to find out that SketchPad was in a small room at the back of a nondescript little strip mall. But that room was stuffed with drawing

boards, artists all over working on projects big and small at various levels of completion, Don moving among them all, guiding, adding, cajoling, turning out amazing stuff. It took him about a half hour from when I got there (on time) to when he could break away to give me a few minutes.

No conference room—we sat on the curb just outside the door of the studio. My one real memory of that moment was him very quickly flipping over page after page of my lovingly assembled folio, the one that had gotten me so much praise, and muttering things like "crap" or "stiff" or simply silent frowns. He stopped on one page for a bit, then flipped on quickly through the rest. Then he went back to that single page, pointed to it, and told me I needed to do more of "that" if I wanted to be a real artist.

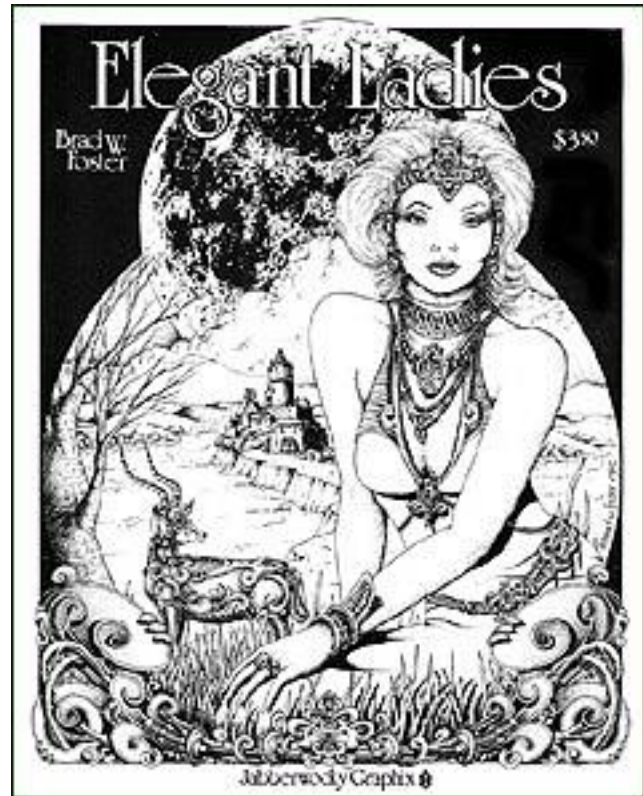
I probably made that more brusque than it was, most likely because I was so shocked at the time. Don was actually a very kind and giving man, always happy to help out. But, regardless of how it actually went down, the core was: he was absolutely right. Everything in my folio at that time were pieces I had



created specifically to try to get work. There was only one personal piece that I had slipped in, just for myself. And that was the only one he thought showed any promise.

He was the only one good enough, professional enough, and kind enough, to be honest. Not just try to move me out with a happy lie about “yeah, you're great, we'll get back to you” like the others. Everything in that portfolio had been pieces I had created while in school specifically to try to get illustration work. The type of subjects I had been told every artist should do. I did my best on them, but they weren't really anything I was interested in. I had allowed myself a single page to put in one of my personal fantasy drawings. And that was the one he had stopped at.

I think over the years I did get a couple of small jobs from Don, but that wasn't what I owe him for. I owe him for opening my eyes early on that if I was going to do this, I should work at what I liked, not at what I thought others would like. To stay with my own personal style. I didn't have the chops to be the everything-to-everyone commercial artist. But, if I worked at my own vision, I might be able to get folks to see it would work for them, too. He gave me lots of encouragement and advice over the years, and I always try to remember that, and do the same with other young artists now that I am that old guy.



(I never did work for Don in all the years I knew him, up until his death several years ago. But he was always there to talk to me, advise me, give me some pointers and direction. One other story: I remember visiting him once at his home, after he had closed down the full-blown SketchPad Studio operation. He was now using just one or two assistants, and working out of his second floor studio/office. I was there to show him some stuff, don't recall what, ask some questions. We were sitting in his living room, and he was his usual gracious and helpful self. Then this guy comes down from upstairs and says he has finished what he was working on. I go up with Don to look at it. There is a huge illustration board on the table, probably three feet tall, with a super-fine rendering of a skyscraper, every window tightly drawn. What the assistant had been doing was, probably for the last several hours, carefully cutting tiny bits of masking frisket out of each tiny window. Don checked it over, picked up the airbrush, laid down some color work over it for a minute. Then told the guy to start work on cutting the next level of frisket, and we went back downstairs. I loved working with airbrush, but cutting the mask was the most tedious and time-consuming part of it all. I told Don about the guy upstairs: “When I grow up, I want to get one of those!”)

I realized if I was going to do this art thing, I didn't have the technical skills then to be an illustrator you could just call up and I could knock out whatever image you needed. I had limited skills, tightly focused on a few things I liked. Rather than looking for a job where the work came to me, I was going to have to find those places where the stuff that I did would fit in.

Freelance.



would fit in better?

Let's see... doing the math... this would have been just at the start of the 80s when I got to Dallas. For the younger readers, back then, there were these great places you could go to called "bookstores." And not only would they be full of books you could buy, but most of them would have row after row of this other thing called "magazines." Thousands of different "magazines" were published back at that time, being printed every month. Some of them even hired artists to do pictures for them, rather than just taking photos off the internet, removing the watermarks, and printing those. (It was an innocent time.) These bookstores would often have hundreds of different titles every month, covering just about every sort of interest you could imagine, and you could flip through them all.

And I did. Starting at one end of the display rack and going one by one. Were they using any art at all? What kind of art? All color, or some black & white? Did they just use big things, or little things? Super real, or open to more cartoony, or fantasy? Plus I picked up what was the Bible for illustrators back then, the Artists Market, listed thousands of places around the country that actually paid to get art. Telling what they were looking for, who to contact, what kind of pay it might involved, etc etc.

I sent out a lot of samples. Mostly heard nothing back at all. But got a little job here a little job there. Small pen and ink drawings of Cats for Cat Fancy magazine. Pin-up airbrush page for Adam's Choice. Pen and ink illustrations for digest magazines like Amazing Stories and Sex Guide. Got a hidden-pictures page accepted into Highlights for Children, and did an over-sized coloring book based on Aesop's fables for Troubadour Press.

So, anyway, the famous artist thing was definitely looking less and less close on my personal horizon, and I needed some kind of a job to pay my own way. So with my total of six years of college, I ended up working for a company where I drove around Dallas cleaning drapes and furniture in people's homes. It was physically draining, but paid well enough that I could get my own place, pay my own bills, and still stay independent.

After about a year and a half, I was in the best physical shape of my life, and while I was still drawing fun stuff for free for various zines and mini's, I really wanted to be a full time artist. I recall working out how much it would cost to pay all of my very minimal bills each month, and that I had saved enough that I knew I could pay for everything for at least six months. I figured, if I couldn't find something, anything, that actually paid me money in that time, I'd go back to a regular job, and stick to doing the drawing in my spare time. But I would at least know I had given it a fair shot, and not spend my life wondering "What if I had only really buckled down and tried to see if I could do it?"

So, I quit. Now, how to find work? Clearly it was not going to be through the ad agencies and stuff I had tried earlier. Maybe what I needed to do was find those specific markets where I knew my work

Even started writing adult paperback erotic novels. (Okay. So it was smut. But, it was happy smut! There's a whole sub-story on those.) Plus somehow I hooked up with a local author who was writing text books teaching kids computer programming. I ended up doing illustrations for a whole series she wrote through a major computer publishing house. And many of the images I did there I still sell these days as prints.

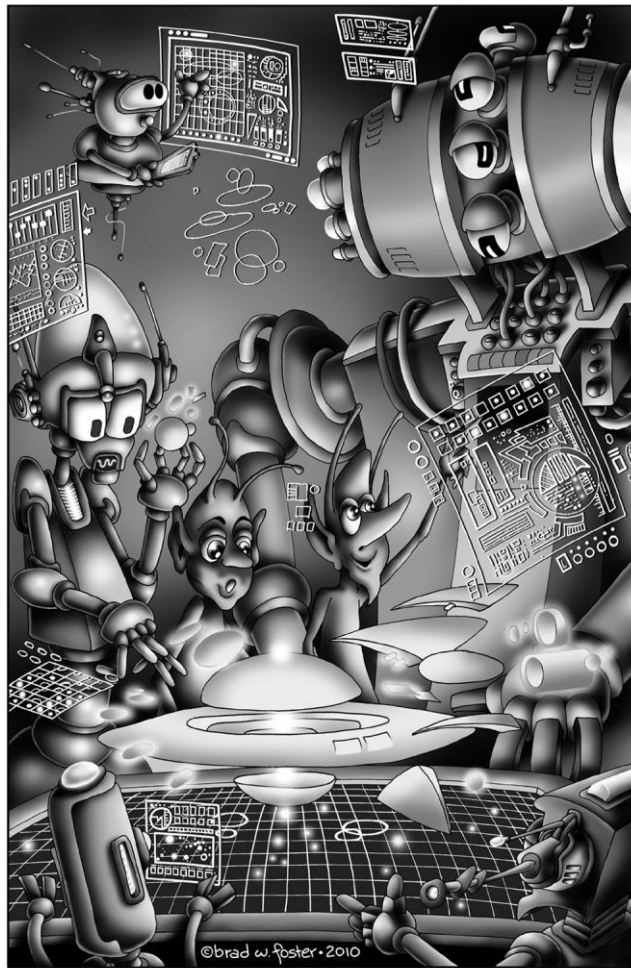
DBW: I've read that you can't really remember a time when you weren't drawing. Is this true? Did you take to cartooning and art early on in your life? When did comics become a part of that inspiration?

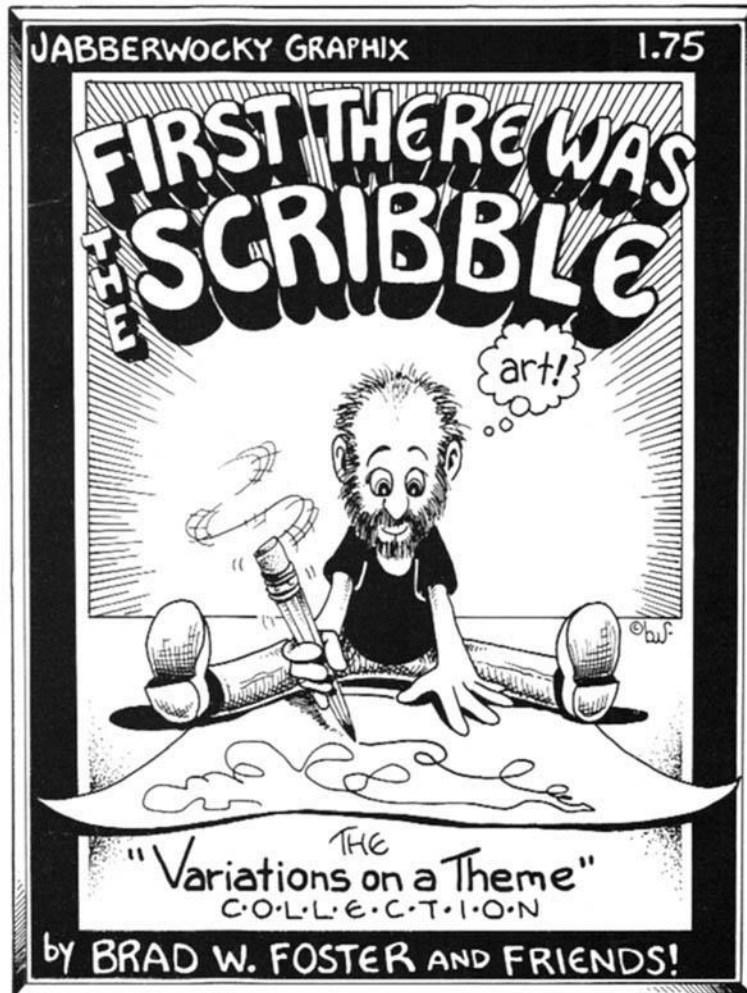
BF: One of the most asked questions I get (after "Did you really draw this?" and "How long does it take you to draw this?") is "When did you start drawing?" I like to say that it's not a matter of "starting," but more that I never stopped. We all draw as little kids. And, no matter what we create, our parents love it. The best art gallery in the world, or at least the one filled with the most love, is the front of a refrigerator door. But at some point someone—a parent, another adult relative, a teacher—will try to "help" the young artist by pointing out something like: "That's a nice drawing of a horse you've done, young Brad.

But, you know, they really only have four legs, not seven." For most people, that early criticism is enough to take all the fun out of drawing, and they move on to other interests. For me, I liked my seven legged horses, and clunky robots, and scratchy, lumpy people, and I just kept doing my own thing.

I think I seriously started considering I might be able to do actual comics when I saw my first underground comic book in the early seventies. I got the Bud Plant Catalogue (back when it was a tiny, digest-sized pamphlet of a thing. Little did we know the huge and wonderful monster that would grow into!), and boldly broke both state and federal laws by checking that "I am over 18" box, and started ordering. Up until then I'd seen a few comics with artists working in interesting styles, but the UGs were a whole 'nother story! There seemed to be no rules at all as far as what style you could work in, what you could do with a page. I remember reading somewhere that, to do comics for Marvel or DC, all the inking had to be done with a brush, pens were not even considered. But then I got, among tons of others, comix like Meef and Mothers Oats by Dave Sheridan and Fred Schrier, both masters of the crazed pen work. And Rand Holmes, who could almost out-Wood the actual Wally Wood at detailed drawings. Rick Griffin drew like no one else. Larry Todd. Greg Irons. S. Clay Wilson. Jaxon. Robert Williams. So many. Also absorbed tons of science fiction and fantasy, and the pen work of masters like Virgil Finlay. Stephen Fabian. Hannes Bok. I loved it, and I wanted to do it, too.

Oh, and Vaughn Bode. What a huge influence he was. No one drew like he did, he was totally unique, and he was everywhere! Not just underground comics, but mainstream companies. He worked in both black & white and full color, in slick mags like Cavalier and National Lampoon. He did covers and illustrations for science





fiction magazines and books, self-published in strange, experimental formats, huge books and small. The freakin' energy, the refusal to stay in one little corner, it was just amazing. I was so sad, and angry, when he died. All the amazing things he might have gone on to create, all never to be seen now.

DBW: As you worked through school, were there aspirations of doing comics work at the time or did you have your eyes set on some other career?

BF: I remember being fascinated with cartoons, comic strips, comics, etc. Something about the combination of drawings and text, and of the great variety of ways of combining those two things, was great. Plus there was so much of it around way back then in the olden days of my youth, outside of the comic books. Newspaper strips were huge, and there were several pages of them each day. Sunday comics of all types and genres. Virtually every magazine published ran gag cartoons in their pages. I clipped and saved the daily newspaper strips like Rick O'Shay and Alley Oop, loved the style of the art, the

ongoing adventure tales of each, moving back and forth between serious and humorous as they felt best to tell a story.

Actual comic books were kind of hit-and-miss for me to find early on. I mean, compared to today, they were actually available in more places. Now it seems you have to go to a specific store that specializes in comics to find them. There were none of those then, but they were on racks and display stands in pretty much every grocery store, small ice house, drug stores, all kinds of places. It's just, unlike the comic shops that can now tell you when the last issue came out, and when the next one was scheduled to arrive, you had to just hope you'd stumble over the latest issue of something you were following. Back issues? Dig through some of the piles of dusty comics in the used book stores. Of course, the beauty of that was you could usually find them pretty cheap! I remember loving the Magnus, Robot Fighter comics. (Great, tight stories complete in each issue, and that gorgeous clean Russ Manning artwork!) I had no idea what a publishing schedule was then, just a kid looking for comics, so I was just pleased whenever a new issue would almost miraculously appear after it seemed like months since the last one came out, and I happened to stumble across it before it sold out.

I remember doing a long, convoluted fantasy comic in high school. Can see the influences of Bode' and Rick Griffin in that, as well as being much too long and involved, because I had discovered fantasy novels like Lord of the Rings and the Gormenghast trilogy. I think I did a couple of dozen pages, very amateur looking, with a "story" that was really going nowhere, and in no hurry to get there. I sent it off to Kitchen Sink Comix, just knowing that I was on my way to being a "real" published comic book artist. I don't think I have it around

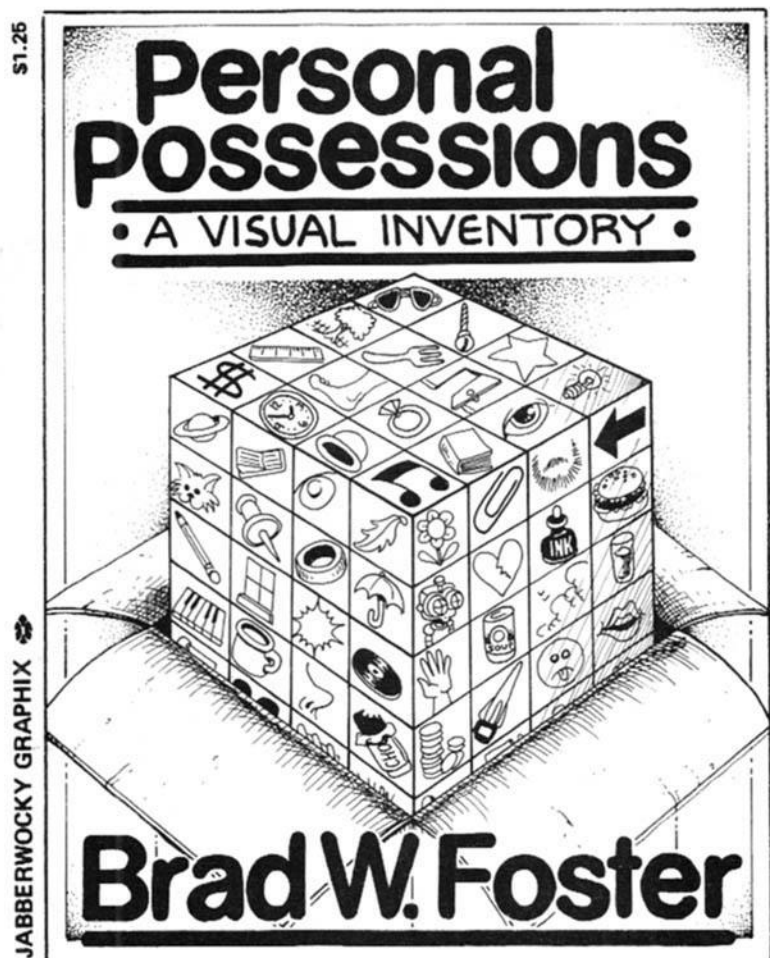
anymore, but I recall getting a much-nicer-than-it-had-to-be rejection letter back from Dennis Kitchen, trying to let me down easy. I've tried to remember that myself whenever I've edited a project and have to respond to, shall we say, less than appropriate submissions.

My "breakthrough" as an artist was from one of my high school art teachers, Mr. Loving. Most of the art teachers I had in school up to then really had no interest in anything that smacked of the lowly art of "cartoonery." Mr. Loving, when he saw that I liked to draw comics, instead of telling me to knock it off, asked me if I had thought of going to the school paper and offering to draw for them. Hey, there's an idea! Started doing odd little cartoons for the paper, then some posters around the school for events, cover for the school literary zine, cover for the school directory. Hey, found out lots of people were in need of drawings, and I could do them. Weirdest thing about it all? Because I went from this quiet little nerd that no one ever noticed, to "that guy that can draw a picture for us," by my senior year I ended up being voted the male "Most Creative Senior." Not bad for a nerdy geek with zero social skills!

Of course, looking back at it, most of that stuff was very amateurish, some things downright awful. There were some good ideas, it but it would take me a while to develop any kind of technical skill to do them justice. I really have no "natural" drawing skills at all. But I loved to draw, and I kept at it. Of course, my family was justifiably horrified at the idea that I wanted to try to make a living as an artist after I got out of high school. (And rightly so!) I had really enjoyed my drafting classes in high school, though looking back it was more for the drawing than the actual design aspect. But, they convinced me (again, rightly so), that I should not pursue art, but to get a degree in architecture. "It's kind of like art, you get to draw. And, best of all, you can get an actual job that has a real paycheck and benefits."

So, that led to four years at Texas A&M University, studying Architecture and Environmental Design. And while taking those courses, I took the lesson my high school teacher gave, and went to the student paper, the various campus publications, student groups, anybody and everybody who might need an artist to draw things for them. Did tons of cartoons, posters, flyers, logo designs, decals, wall posters, on and on for four years. Was great, threw me in the deep end of having to learn how to do all kinds of things beyond simply drawing, of solving all kinds of design problems, learning how to work with type, etc. Loved it.

Did several different comic projects for the school paper. Tried a daily single panel gag strip for a couple of weeks, other ends and ends. But the one that stuck was a weekly strip set up as a multi-panel strip called "Tales of the Gigags," all about the strange little characters that lived underneath the



campus. Did that for a couple of years. Had lots of fun on that, and toward the end of the run had a multi-episode epic where I ended up destroying both the A&M campus, and then moving on to destroy my future college home, The University of Texas.

By time I hit my fourth year, I knew that I really was not going to pursue architecture any further. But I was so close to getting the degree, wanted to have that. First semester of senior year was a single “problems” class, where we were put into groups and given a design project to work on. I told everyone involved to do whatever they wanted, and I would do all the drawings needed at the end of the semester for the thing. Then, final semester was pretty much the same kind of thing. Somehow I worked up the nerve to go talk to the dean/counselor/whoever was in charge of such things (don’t recall the title now), and explained how my plan was to go on to study art, but wanted to finish out and get my bachelors degree. Could I make that final semester a “special projects,” and use all the art and design work I was doing to qualify? Now, he agreed, and my memory was that he said something like “Bring in all the work you create over this semester at the end to your faculty adviser, and they will evaluate it and give you a pass or fail on it.” What I found out, when I showed up at the end, was that I was supposed to have been going in every week to show what I was doing! But, when I dropped the hundreds of posters, flyer, decals, newspapers and whatnot on his desk, it was pretty clear I had not been goofing around. I got the nod, and was able to get my degree.

So, on to the University of Texas at Austin to get into the art program there, and really take this stuff seriously. Had no interest or need for a degree, so just signed up for the more interesting courses I could find, and checked “yes” in the boxes where asked if had taken the courses needed to qualify for them. Took both commercial and fine art classes: drawing in pencil and ink and pastel; painting in oils and water color and acrylic; print making in lithography and serigraphy and intaglio; sculpting in clay; basic design; learning and designing fonts... found out I really wasn’t good at much beyond drawing. But oh, I did so love to draw, and kept at it. Indeed, my drawing skills really had nothing to do with any classes, but simply got better over time from sheer work, doing tons and tons of drawings, each one a little bit better than the one before.

One of my instructors in the commercial art classes was a working illustrator, and cool thing was he would bring in actual assignments he had gotten from magazines and publishers after he was done, and present them as class problems. As close as you could get to learning how to really deal with really working in the really real world as an artist.

Fun side note: got a gig doing a weekly cartoon on the school newspaper. Several other cartoonists there, each of us doing different days. One of them was Berke Breathed, doing his “Academia Waltz” strip, that he then later metamorphosed into the syndicated “Bloom County.” If only I had known where that was going to go, I would have been sure to show up at the offices of the paper on the day he came in!

DBW: When you got to the Dallas-Ft. Worth area after school, did you take on a full-time job matching either of your college degrees? Do you recall some of your first art/illustration/comics work out of school?

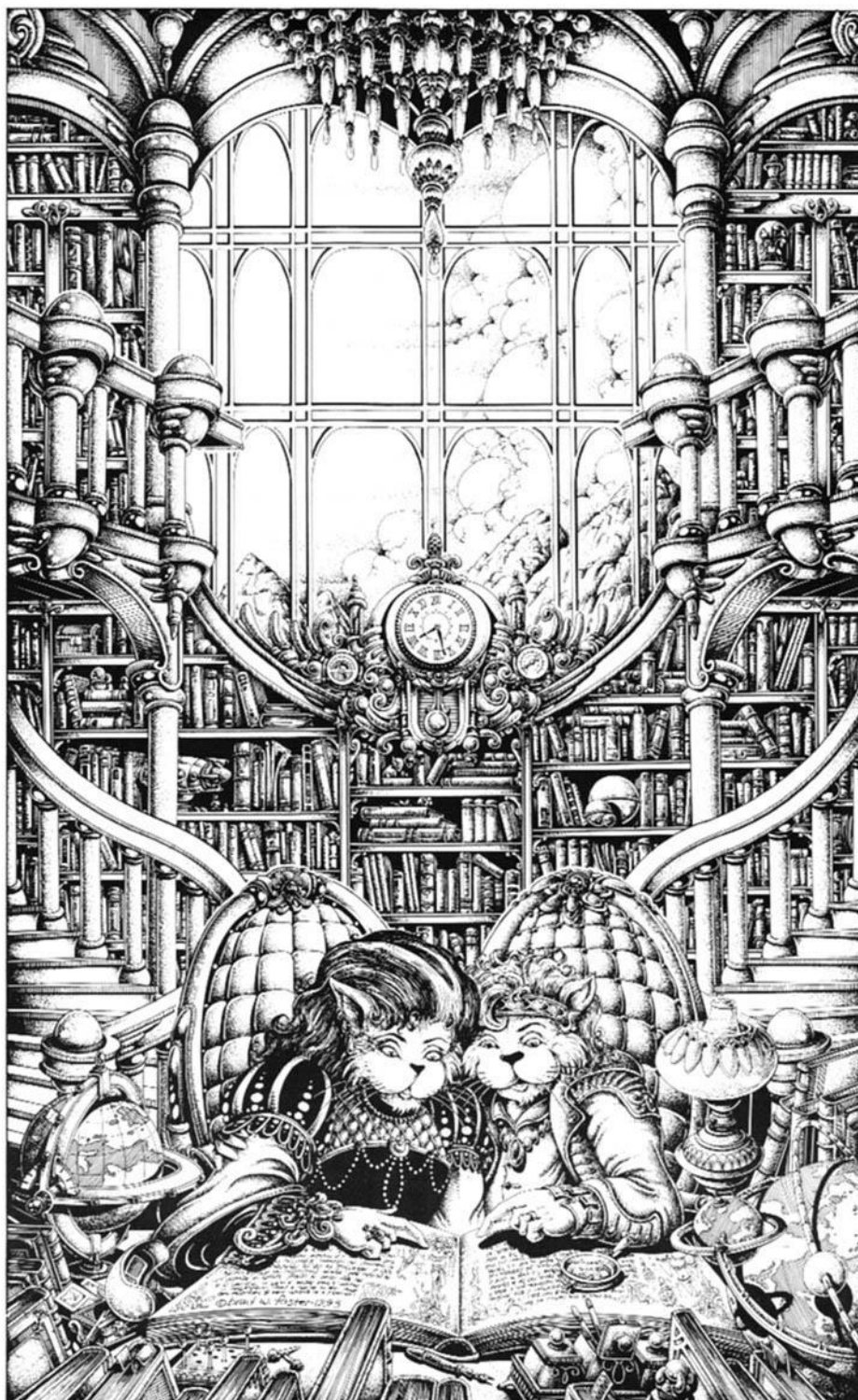
BF: No, I did what I think most college graduates did—ended up taking on any job I could get so could pay my bills.

That's not to say I didn't try and actively look for work as an artist. But I quickly found out that there was no such thing as a full-time job just drawing pictures. You could certainly freelance, be a now-and-then artist for pay. There were lots of don't-call-us-we'll-call-you jobs for sure, or at the very least, the promise of them. But no “regular” job with a weekly check and benefits.

I did get tons of praise from just about every studio and agency that I took my portfolio to though. Lots of praise, which is cheap to hand out.

I ended up getting a job at a cleaning company, driving to houses around the Dallas area to steam-clean their furniture and drapes. Six years of college, and it was all I was really qualified for! But, it paid enough that I could afford my own place, and had me so physically exhausted most of the time that I didn't spend much money on anything else, and was able to start banking some savings. I still dreamed of being an artist, and I was sending out toons and little illos to small press comics and science fiction zines, but it was still very much amateur time.

I do recall that, after about two years of that, I ran into an old friend from my illustration class days at U.T. He was in town, and we met after I got off work, still in my white shirt with company logo over the pocket. While we are eating dinner he explains how he had gotten into an agency right out of school, but that now, after a couple of years, he was



going totally freelance on his own, and how great it all was, and such and so on.... and all I could think of was how much I really, really, really wanted to be a full time artist. How tired I was of being tired. I was doing some art and cartoons, small press stuff, a couple of tiny paying gigs. But knew I would have to really put all my time to it. I had saved enough money that I knew I could pay all of my bills for the next six months, and I was around 26 years old then. I thought I should take one more shot at it. If I couldn't come up with enough work in six

months, then fine. I'd tried, I'd given it more than a fair shot, and I'd go back to doing the hourly work thing, and just draw in my spare time. But, if I didn't give it one more shot, I'd always wonder "what if I had tried?"

I remember I quit my job that week, and the following weekend it was getting late on Sunday night while I was drawing. I thought "Oops, it's after midnight, I'd better get to bed." Then realized I didn't have to do that, since there was no job to go to the next morning. I drew all night long, and when the sun started to come up, I walked a mile or so to a nearby park, sitting on a bench, watching all the cars rushing off to work... and thought, you know, I might be able to put up with this.

And, at the end of those six months, I somehow had made money to pay off a few more months of bills. So I stayed at it. And that was over three decades ago, and I'm still doing it. Sometimes it's been great, enough money in the bank and jobs on line I had no worries at all. Other times, and there have been a lot of them, if a job didn't come up real-soon-now, I was going to be in big trouble. But, somehow, through all those years, I've managed to make my way as an actual, full time artist. And I know what a rare thing that is, and how very, very lucky I am.

DBW: Moving into your mini-comics work, how do you get into that? Where did you learn about them? What were some of your first publications? Or did you start out with contribution to others?

BF: Like a lot of us, I came across Clay Geerdes Comix World newsletter in the late 70's—probably through a small ad he ran in the Comics Buyers Guide or some other more "mainstream" comics pub. And that opened me up to a whole new world of creating comics—more importantly, put me into direct contact with cartoonists and artists all over the country.

In those early days, if there was a mini comic looking for contributions, I'd do one. I loved drawing, cartoons and loved getting minis from other artists. And I found out that, while I could not afford to buy much, I could take the time to do a drawing, and then get a contributors copy, and get to see all that other wonderful art and cartooning from others. The fact that I have so much work in so many things around that time is as much a reflection of my lack of any cash to buy stuff, as it is to my loving to draw!

I liked to experiment a bit more with the mini-format when on my own, self-pubbing more through Jabberwocky Graphix. In 1981 I did *Interstellar Yuks*, *Creative Discourse*, *The American Apathist*, *Variations on a Theme*, *The Complete Book of BJ*, *Lots of Dots*, *The Foster History of Unknown Comics*, and in 1982, started the first little issue of *Goodies*—which took off far beyond what I had thought it might.

DBW: Right, I've seen your work show up in many different titles and formats. Any estimates on how many contributions you made that have seen print?

BF: Well, being the anal-retentive, mid-level-OCD, compulsive list-maker that I am, I might actually be able to give you a pretty precise number on that. Way back around 1976, I got a little bound book of blank pages, around 4' by 6' (appropriately almost mini-comic sized), and I started to make a note in it every time something I had created got printed up. Big or small, amateur or professional, publication or poster, whatever it was, if a drawing of mine somehow managed to get into some kind of multi-copy format, I put a note in there. And now, thanks to your question, I get to count them all!

I started out making the entries in pretty large handwriting, with a bit of nice space between them. As the years went by, and I kept filling pages, I started worrying I might run out of room, and so the handwriting got smaller and smaller, and I'd go back and add in new items in earlier pages, squeezing them between older entries. It's up to 147 pages now. So, it's all in there, but now it's not very useful as a hard chronological record

anymore, reading from front to back. More like digging up a bunch of fossils that got all mixed up, and trying to put them back in proper order.

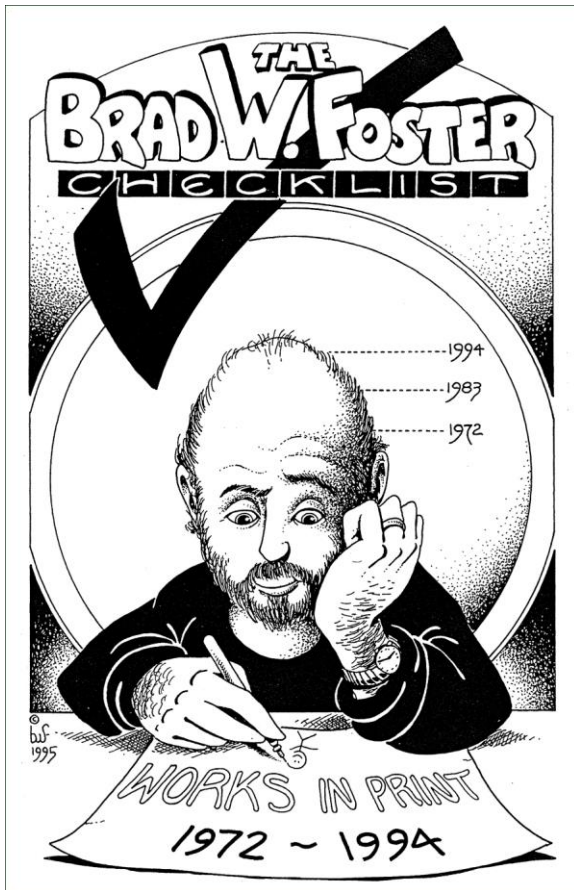
I started using a clicker to count, working on two different totals: making a count of individual entries (single issues of zines, comics, books, posters, decals, logos, etc. And then there are the digital, on-line / pdf only publications.... the definition for what is "published" is becoming confusing. In the modern age. Darn this kids and their newfangled inventions!, and on the number of individual pieces of art printed among those. A single "click" could be for a tiny black & white cartoon in one magazine, and the next single click would be a large, full-color book cover. I did count each individual page of a comic strip, 'cause I'm not counting a 20 page story as "1." I tried not to count those items that were simply being reprinted in something, and I ended up not counting a lot of things that contained only text: a couple of novels, articles, reviews and columns I have written over time. Concentrated just on the drawings.

I started on this project at around 11:00 PM, and finished up a little after 4:00 AM, so took about 5 hours to come up with this rough final. So, officially, at the end of August 2017, it's 3,790 separate entries, containing 8,112 images.

Damn, getting so close to a nice round 10,000. ...the OCD kicking in again.... must go draw more....

DBW: Yeah, you MUST draw some more. Any thoughts about getting some true mini comics together and released? I'd certainly be willing to help distribute to our COPY THIS! readers.



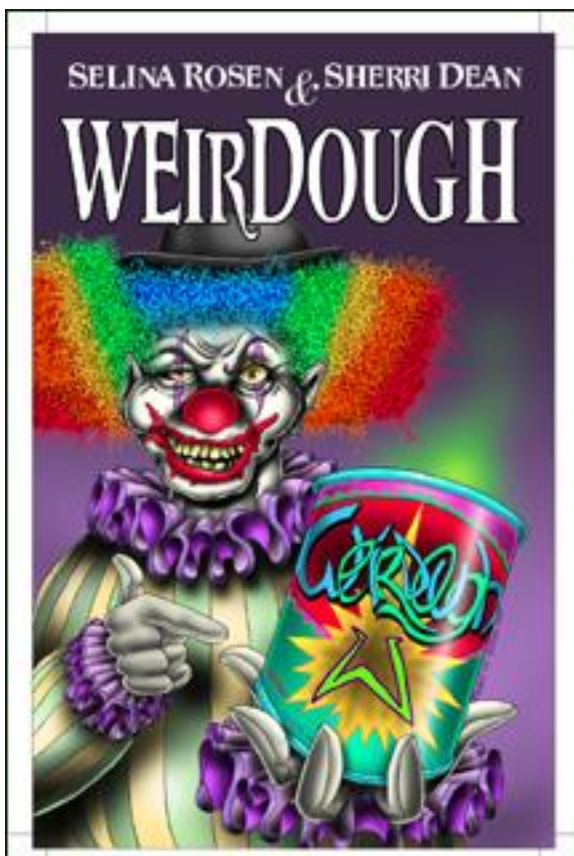


BF: Oh yeah, I've been thinking about it, wanting to do more mini-comics, for years now. I've got a printer right here now, so running off copies no longer even means having to get my ass out to the copy shop. And I've got ideas and notes and doodles, not to mention a backlog of material that would work well. And could do it with full color now, not having to cut all sorts of weird frisket masks and do multi-runs. And would like to play with some other format ideas. And.. so on and so on...

Plus, one of the thing I loved most was putting together projects with multiple artists, and I miss that connection. Indeed, the last mini I did get together was way back in 2007, the "LOCS" project, where I got 28 different artists together all working off the same theme. That was a blast.

I keep promising people I'm going to do it. But then, something always comes up. Every time I see another posting on Facebook of a new one coming out, or another mini pops up in my mailbox, I get that urge again. Maybe 2018 will be the return?

DBW: What kind of relationship did you have with Clay Geerdes? Did you two ever meet?



BF: It was, like everyone else back then, a relationship based very much on letters. Don't think a phone was ever used, always just writing back and forth, sending notes, letters, cards, minis, art, newsletters. It was a relationship based very strong in paper.

The vast majority of our correspondence back and forth was on the "business" of what would the next project be, what was being planned, what was being finished. Mixed in among that would be small things from both of us about what else might be going on in our lives, but mostly it was the business of making more minis.

I did get to meet Clay once in person, went out to the San Diego Comic Con in 1983. Got to meet not only Clay, but other small press/mini-masters like David Miller, Par Holman, Jim Valentino, Jane Oliver, Steve Lafler...heck, I hate my bad memory, I know there were more than that. With Clay specifically though, I don't recall getting to talk much, I think he was always busy with something, and the one time we all got together in one big group, it was one of those things where I ended up talking mainly with those who were seated near me at the table, while Clay was further down and not easy to speak with.

So, like so much then, the paper connected us more than anything else.

DBW: So this may be obvious, but how are you staying connected these days?

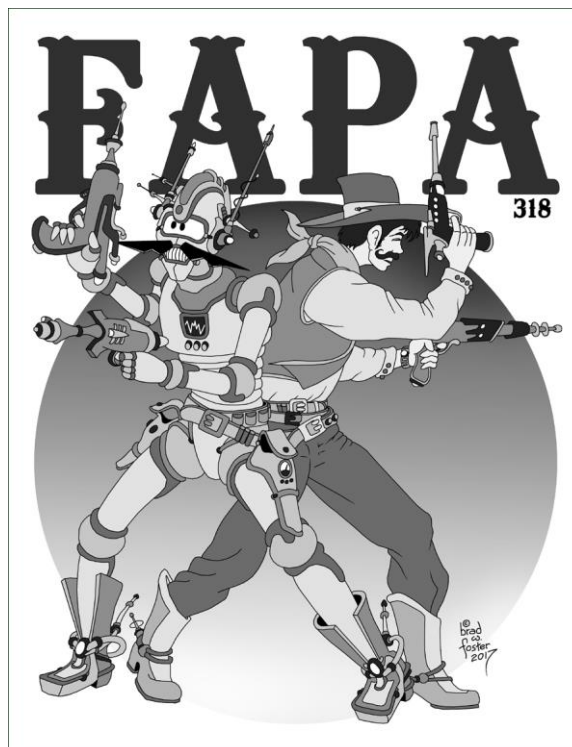
BF: Information about what is going on in our little loose mix of crazy artists and cartoonists comes from a mix of some print items (like, of course, the amazingly regularly appearing COPY THIS!), some email lists I am on that pop up now and then in my in box, and a few Facebook groups I check in on.

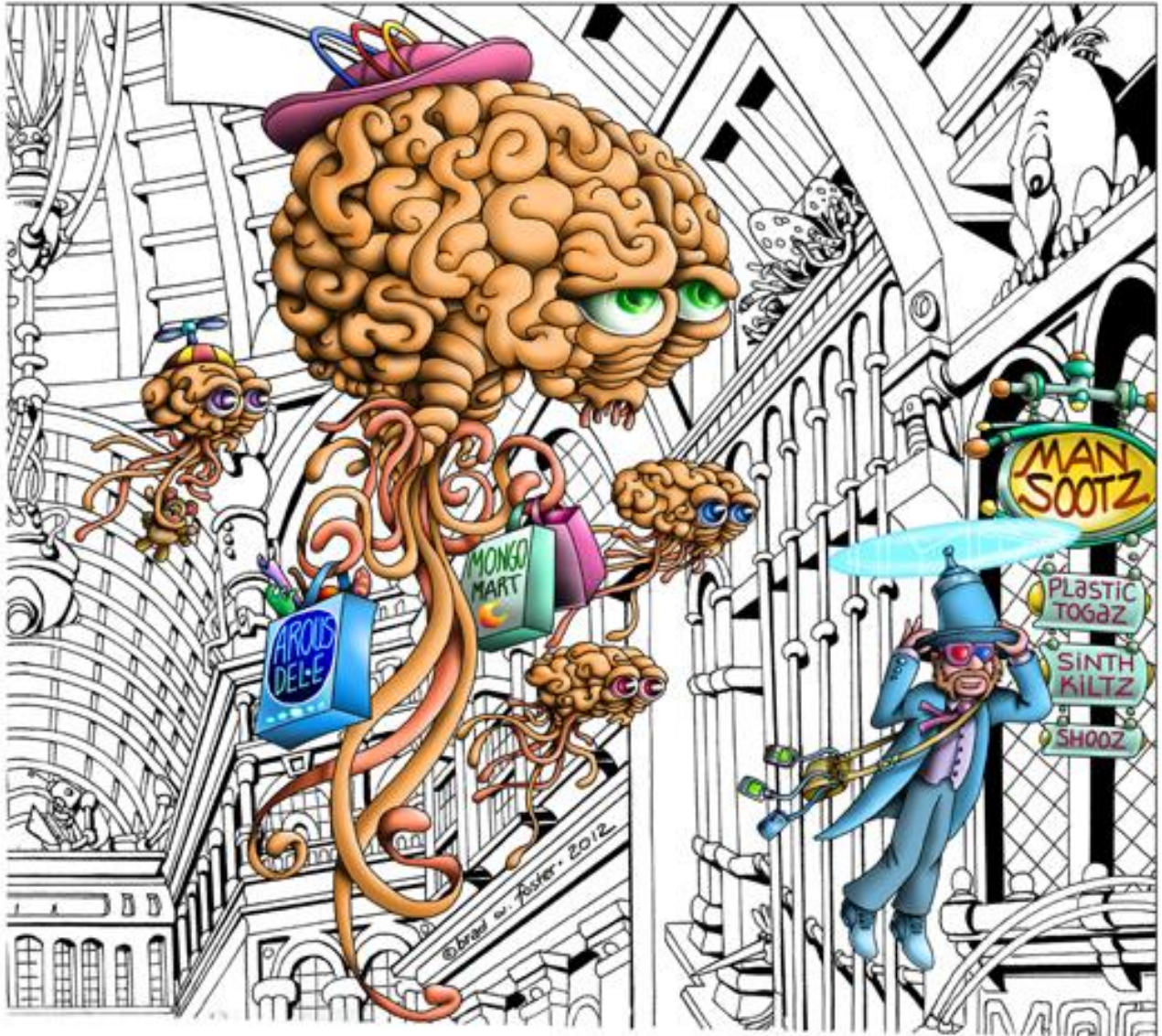
My communications with individuals is now almost totally through emails. The only time a piece of paper correspondence shows up is usually when a copy of a mini is also being sent, and there might be a hand-written note included. And, of course, there are a few of the old-timers who refuse to go over to the evil machine world, and still send out hand-written postcards now and then.

Me, I love email. It's super-quick, and since I still remember having to pay for giant rolls of first class stamps every other week back in the day, each time I hit "send" I mentally note that that is one more forty-nine cent first class stamp I did not have to buy. I think the combination of cheap printing AND the cheap postage when we were first doing all these helped tremendously in spreading things far and wide.

DBW: What types of subject matter inspires you to pull out the drawing supplies these days?

BF: It's not so much needing a subject matter to inspire me to draw, as it is simply finding the time to pull out the drawing supplies and actually get down to work on a new piece. There always seems to be something in the day I have to get to, taking me away from the pens and paper. But, there is no single thing that inspires—everything does. A phrase heard in conversation, in a TV show or on the radio, a podcast, read in a book. An image seen somewhere that makes me think "yeah, but what if you..." and my mind goes off in new directions. A feeling from listening to music. An odd photo or essay someone puts up on the web. The shape of a shadow on the ground, of the juxtaposition of two things seen from a different angle and just now noticed. Sometimes I even can "force" that inspiration of the new idea, of getting something from nothing, by simply taking a sheet of blank paper and start doodling, scribbling, playing with shapes and lines, and seeing what comes out of it. Everything and anything can inspire a new thought or idea to explore.





Indeed, simply getting ideas has never been a problem—heck, try not to get ideas in a usual day! I think that everyone does it, but you have to train yourself to recognize that moment when an idea pops up (it's not always obvious) and then make a record of it before you forget, and you have moved on to the next thing.

And, even if I'm not “inspired” in the moment, I have got several boxes, a couple of fat 3-ring binders, and several thousand pages of note/sketch books, that are stuffed with notes and ideas for pieces to work on, large and small, simple and complicated. As I get older, I have realized that, even if I never had any more new ideas, I will still probably never be able to bring to fruition all of those ideas I have had. It's now figuring which ones are worth taking the time to work up, develop, and finish.

Often these days I will use the opportunity of being asked to contribute to a project to go through those piles of notes, and pull out something interesting, and now can justify taking the time to work on it, since it will have a “home” when done. And having some sort of deadline will force me to sit down at the board and work, shoving aside the hundreds of distractions of normal life that seem to keep popping up.

DBW: I can imagine a lot of COPY THIS! readers will envy you for all of the ideas you have just waiting to be fleshed out.... Has it always been this way for you? Can you make any suggestions for those of us that stare at a blank page for more than we'd like to admit?

BF: Well, don't get too envious. There is a lot of material there, but that doesn't mean it's all good. I put all kinds of notes and sketches and idea into those things, then flip through when looking for something good. Sometimes I have to flip past a lot of things. What might have seemed clever when I first thought of it now is not holding up with the passage of time. Or, something that was just a partial bit of an idea suddenly blossoms when I look at it new. You never know.

Wait, what was the question? Oh, yeah, getting ideas. Yeah, I think I've always had a good imagination. It took me a while (a long while) to get the technical drawing skills down to be able to even start to try to get some of those on paper. I don't have a natural drawing skill, took a lot of practice and a lot of bad drawings to get halfway decent at it. But I think I was born to play with ideas and such. But, I've also come up with a few ways to jump start that, and one fits directly to your question of "stare at a blank page."

Which is: don't just sit there and stare at a blank page! What you will end up with 9 times out of 10 will be the same blank page. Plant a seed. Give your mind something to work off of. Make a random scribble on the page. Turn it around and look at it from different angles. Hold it up to a mirror. Look at just a piece of it. Look at the whole thing. What do you see? Do pieces of it make you think of things? Start doodling off to the side those ideas. Maybe you'll come up with one, two, three, or more. Just play. There is no "right" thing. You might throw it all away when done, or you might come up with something new, something you would not have done on your own.

When I started doing that ages ago, if I could get anything once out of every five or six doodles, I was happy. Now, I have been doing it so long, I think I have trained my mind to go with that flow, and can, usually, come up with several things every time, usually only half of which are horrible.

I even put together an 8-page mini-comic to explore and explain the idea. It was called Variations on a Theme. At the beginning I showed this little scribble I had made, then the mini showed the 24 weird characters I was able to make from that same bit of doodle each time—there was a small diagram with each, showing which portions of the doodle had caught my eye each time, resulting in that particular critter.

What was really fun was, on the back cover, I put a different bit of scribble, and invited anyone who got the mini to look that one over and, if they wanted to, send me what they found in the new piece. I had enough people respond that about a year later I did a second issue, this one 16 pages, with 40 new critters from a dozen different artists, all of whom found totally different ideas, and all from the same bit of scribble. It does work!

(I did the original two volumes of Variations on a Theme back around 1981. Years later, after they had long sold out, I wanted to keep the idea and presentation something I could continue to share with people, so in 1994 combined them into a single 28-page mini I called First There Was The Scribble.)

I've since used the technique as a teaching tool when I speak about drawing, particularly when I get to talk to small kids. I don't usually spend much time on "drawing" since, as far as I am concerned, that is just a matter of practice to get techniques down cold. What I concentrate on is showing kids (and adults) that they can think creatively. And this helps to demonstrate that.

DBW: Very good suggestions! Of these ideas you have buried in your books, would you say most of them tend towards your more fantastical "fine art" worlds or do you still have a significant amount of "sequential art"



hidden in there? My assumptions are that you have many more “single pagers” in terms of requests these days—but I could be completely wrong!

BF: It's a little bit of everything. There are tons of little doodle designs for odd small cartoons and such, sometimes with captions, sometimes waiting for something funny/pithy to add, some just sayings waiting for the right image to match them to. (Tend to be a ton of those because I'm almost compulsive about doodling that kind of stuff.)

Notes for larger single pieces that would be more time consuming, and/or still working out ideas for details (I was asked about combining the ideas in two of my bigger pieces, “Athenaeum” (an optical illusion drawing of an endless library) and “Stars at Night” (a single-point perspective inside an immensely detailed spaceship) about three years ago. Been percolating in my head since then, and only this

past summer something “clicked” and I came up with a way to present the basic idea they wanted: an endless library in zero-gravity. Now, working to come up with enough good ideas to fill the damn thing with.)

Couple hundred pages of pure “design” pieces, the kind of stuff I use as detail/background in my larger “fine art” drawings, but just on their own. (Someday I'd like to do some of these on a much larger scale, maybe draw on the walls, floor, ceiling of an entire room. So I save all those doodles.)

There are notes for a lot of single-panel, multi-panel, and full-length comics of all sorts, at various stages of “ready to actually be done.” Small press these days seems to be more solo-artist projects and less “looking for contributors” multi-artist things (thought that could just be me not hooked totally back into the network just now), so I don't pull that stuff out as often.

And then there are “other” things. You just pile all the ideas in one place, and look through it all now and then to see what might be ready to hatch.

DBW: We haven't yet touched on your “tools of the trade.” Care to share with us your favorites? And your mediums you like to create with?

BF: For sketching and doodling, I use the cheapest, most disposable things I can find. Dollar store spiral notepads with lined paper, cheap ball point pens with company advertising on the shaft that I pick up for free here and there. Scrap paper that I can flip over and use the blank back of—I've got tons of that, held together with binder clips to make cheap “sketch books.”

I do have a couple of lovely sketchbooks on the shelf here. Beautifully bound, good paper, I think one or two of them even have gilded edges on the pages. Friends and family would gift me these once in a while long ago, until they realized I was never using them. The problem is, I like to feel free to screw around when I am sketching and doodling. I want to be able to make mistakes, to cross stuff out, to just throw the sheet away if nothing worth keeping has developed on it. I can do that with scratch paper. But, when I open up a beautiful, pristine sketch pad, I feel like everything I put down in there has to be “good.” I mean, it's bound in there, it's permanent, it's going to be part of a “book,” and I really like books. Yes, I know I could tear out a page, but no matter how cleanly I tried to do it, you could always tell that a page had been removed. Plus, even worse, I would be tearing a page out of a book. Did I mention I like books? I really do. So, I freeze up and think I have to

perform, every line has to be perfect, or at least interesting or something, in a bound sketchbook, rather than relaxing and just letting things flow. And, thus, a number of pretty, blank, never-to-be fulfilled sketch books sit waiting on my shelf. Hey, maybe one day I'll come up with a project that needs them, who knows?

So, when it comes to starting work on a drawing that I plan to take to finish, I still start with cheap paper. Usually grab some cheap printer paper from the tray of the copier next to me. (No, that's a lie—first thing I do is look at the stack of used paper that is blank on the back, to see how many sheets are mostly blank on the front as well, only have a little bit of printing, and thus are candidates for drawing for tracing, which is what I need now. Left over from the young starving artist day, when had to maximize every dollar and waste nothing—in my old starving artist days, I keep the same habits.)

So, usually working with a mechanical pencil, (I like that I don't have to keep sharpening it), and still with various cheap pens, I will sketch out the idea from my notes, then trace and re-trace bits and pieces, refining



parts, trying different ideas. For instance, I might have a couple of people in the design, and I'm not sure what exact expression to put on one face. So I will trace that face off in a couple of different ways, on a couple of different scraps of paper. Then compare all those, decide which one I think will work, and save that piece, toss the others out. By tracing variations and changes, rather than erasing something and redrawing, I always have the option to go back to the original idea, if the change does not turn out to be an improvement. It's my old-school paper version of having an "un-do" button on a drawing program, to go back one step. When done, I have what I call the "coloring book" phase: most everything has been worked out in outline, the layout and forms figured out, etc. It could be on one sheet, could be on multiple sheets, making up the various parts.

Then when I get ready to do the final art, I'll pull out the nice drawing paper, and the Rapidograph pens. I've gone through all kinds of paper, but mostly looking for something that has a slick, or "high" enough surface, that when I put a tiny dot of ink, it will not be absorbed and spread out too much. Plus, a good weight, but still be something I can put on a light table and trace through. Years ago I realized that the paper I was printing a lot of my mini comics on fit those requirements quite well. Worked a deal with my printer where bought one of the huge boxes of massive sheets. They cut it up into smaller sheets, and I got a huge stack of paper to draw on that I am still working my way through. I've not actually bought drawing paper in ages.



I've found Rapidograph pens give me the best control, always knowing exactly what size a dot or line will be. These days there are a lot of disposable drawing pens that are quite good, with really sharp points. But, if someone likes to do a lot of drawing and is going through having to buy box after box of those, I recommend they might want to look into Rapidographs. These days the points are not as expensive as they used to be. And once you buy a couple of pens and a large bottle of ink, you are set!

I did not do a lot of color work in the past. When I did, it was either with a combination of pencils and markers, or using an airbrush. I always loved the soft sprayed look and blending of airbrush, but was an amazingly time-consuming process, and I didn't do a lot of it. But when got my hands on a Photoshop program ten years or so back, found I could get that same airbrush look with much more control, and much more detail. My goal has been to create digital color work that does not "look" digital, but has the same affect had it been done by airbrush.

I still create the line drawing by hand, and then scan the drawing in to work on it for color. I've played around with a few old Wacom tablets friends have given me, but I still enjoy the process of pen to paper, and want to continue with that. Though, if things change as far as my physical abilities to draw down the line, I now know I have a new medium I can work in.

Indeed, getting older, and especially after dealing with multiple eye problems in recent years—a torn retina, a couple of cataracts, and then the blow up of my glaucoma that took out about 80% of the vision in my left eye—got me worrying how much longer I could draw.

I sometimes need, sometimes don't need, to wear reading glasses now to draw. It varies from day to day. It can be awkward at times to find that sharp focus on the page, and then be able to just forget about it and concentrate fully on the drawing process as I always have. But, interestingly, when working digital on the computer screen, I do seem to be able to relax. With a bigger screen, and being able to zoom in and out of an image, I can sit back a bit, find that focus. I hope I can always draw, I love doing it. But also embracing new medium has helped to advance the images I want to make.

DBW: Very sorry to hear about the eye troubles. Unfortunately this kind of thing has been happening to several of our CT! alums. Encouraging that the digital world is giving you an option to move to as needed. It does take some work to use those tools successfully without it looking like you're using digital tools. Any tools you stay completely away from these days?

BF: I learned early on what artistic tools I would never be good with. I always liked to draw, so pencils and pens were great. But when it comes to working with a brush, I am pretty much lost. I tried painting using all sorts of mediums—oil, acrylic, watercolor, but was just never comfortable painting. You not only have to have a really good control of your brush, varying pressure and stroke, but conversely have to kind of loose, letting the paint do what it will do. I'm too much of a control freak to be able to do that.

Do you remember the PBS series “The Joy of Painting” with Bob Ross? One of his catch phrases was making “happy little trees” as he dabbed at the canvas while working on a landscape, making a bunch of little trees with each stab. It's a perfectly legitimate painting technique for sure. But, for me, I'd have to sit there and draw every damn trunk, limb, and leaf to get those things down! It is the burden I bear.

I did do a watercolor painting that was the wrap-around cover for Our Story Thus Far #3. But most of my color work pre-digital has been with pencils and markers, basically drawing in color, and using an airbrush, which gave me the kind of tight control over the color I couldn't get with a brush.



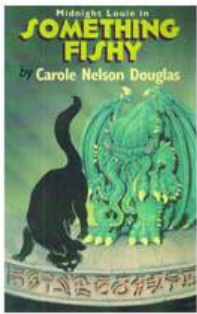
DBW: One more topic before we start wrapping this up: as you were developing the “Brad W. Foster style,” what artists did you look up to for inspiration? Or maybe you were inspired by non-artist types as well?

BF: Who didn't? Which is to say, I just absorbed as much art, as many different looks and styles, as I could lay my hands on. I already mentioned earlier in the interview a lot of the Underground Comix artists who caught my eye, along with a couple of sf/fantasy creators. But along with those are the fine artists, the illustrators, the cartoonists, architects, designers, so many creative people, all with unique visions that got me excited about trying to make my own art, and working harder at it.

Here are others I can think of from back in the early years that might add to that list: Aubrey Beardsley, Michael Kaluta, Al Hirschfield, Barry Windsor-Smith, Bill Ward, Louis Sullivan, Rene Magritte, Edward Gorey, Mike Hinge, Robert Crumb, Salvador Dali, Russ Manning, Chris Van Allsburg, Mike Ploog, Alphonse Mucha, Ian Miller, Steranko, Stan Lynde, V.T. Hamlin, Max Ernst, Richard Amsel, Wally Wood, Roger Dean, Philippe Druillet, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bob Peak, Leo & Diane Dillon, Will Eisner, Erte', Rick Geary, Berni Wrightson, Franklin Booth, Patrick Woodroffe, Al Williamson, Gustave Dore', Edward Gorey, and, of course, Moebius.

DBW: What can we expect from the studios of Brad W. Foster in terms of comics or other fun publications in the near future? Are you working on anything currently we should know about or be looking for soon?

BF: I've been talking the talk about doing some new minis, maybe getting the Our Story Thus Far series restarted/continued as a web-based project, etc, but I have yet to walk the walk. Most of my drawing efforts the last few years have been more in working on illustrations and fine art pieces, though I do still contribute cartoons and short strips to other projects when I stumble across them. But, really and truly, cross my heart and hope to die, I have every good intention to actually, really, sincerely start making minis again. Really!



AND---a few additional questions from Bob Jennings---*I took the opportunity to check out your web site, and I have to say I'm very impressed! In addition to listing all the different material you have done and where it has appeared (!!!), the site map also lists an impressive amount of material for sale. In addition to copies of your own publications, you have a goodly number of art prints for sale, at very reasonable prices too, if I may say so, plus other goodies. The only things I didn't notice were T-shirts and coffee mugs (altho maybe I missed them---there's a lot of material there). Did you do your own web design? Your site is really set up well.*



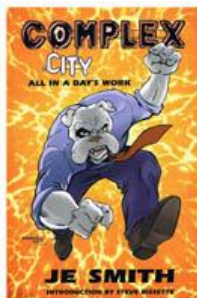
BF: Thanks for kind words on the website. Yes, I designed it and wrote all the code myself, using "old-fashioned" notepad to do it in. Wanted to be able to do something that I could go in and make changes or additions to whenever I wanted, not having to rely on someone else every time. So, I just sat down one day, got a pile of books on writing html code, checked out website tutorials, and got to work. It's nowhere as classy/slick looking as other artist sites are these days, but I like to think it is still serviceable.

There are a couple of "hidden" parts as well, with no direct links to any of the main pages.

Having my own website makes it a nice place to be able to put up "special" pages that can only be reached if I give someone a direct link. Have used it for limited-time pages which, once the person I made it for saw it, I removed it from the web.



The biggest of these sections that I still have up came about in 2006, when I got nominated for a Hugo. I think I got something from the committee about how it would be nice if I could direct voters to something on the web, where they could get an idea of what I had actually done the previous year in sf fandom, which qualified me for the nomination. So, I



put together a page for that, with a list of "qualifying" pubs, and a few art samples. I continued to do that each year when nominated after that, 2006 through 2015. It's kind of a year-by-year history for that period of my sf fannish work. You can see them all, if you really want to, by clicking on any and using links to go to the others. This is the first one for 2006: <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/2006fanwork.html>

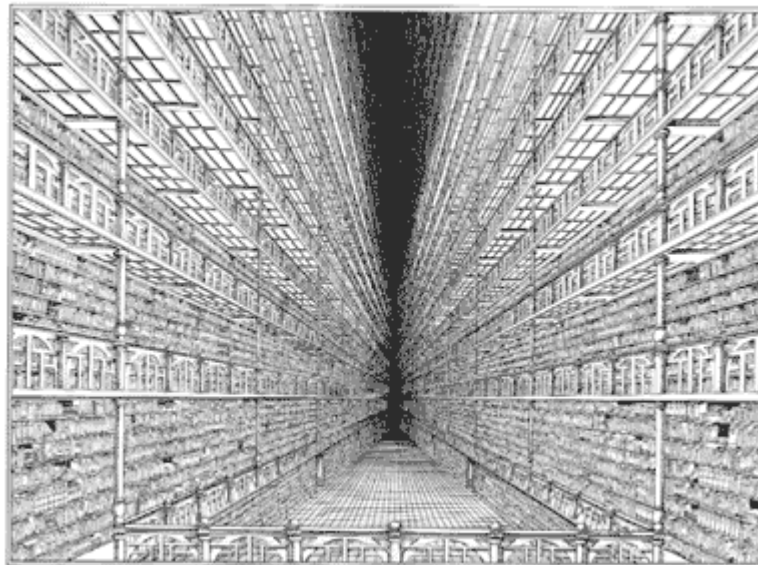
I just clicked through all of that myself for the first time in a long time, and it was kind of fun to watch the progression of more and more full-color pieces showing up, as both fanzines and conventions started being able to be able to use and publish in color more

easily.

No, I do not offer t-shirts or coffee mugs, or any of a long list of other possible merchandise spinoffs. I do have a note around here somewhere to look into offering such things one day. Maybe. For now, it's just either zines or prints of my own art and the work of others that I have published, plus a small selection of items from other publishers that contain my work, and which I have a few extra copies left.

BJ--How many different items are you offering for sale anyway? How often do you add not items? Does anything ever get dropped from the list?

BF: Well, right now, counting between the main site and the naughty adults-only section, there are some 175 or so things up for sale. I've done a number of new prints in the past year or three that I have been "trying out" in the art festival market, to see which ones would be worth offering on a wider basis, and which I should drop. I'll probably add a few of them later when I decide on that.



And yes, when I sell out of something, it gets removed right away. I hate sites where they say they have something, and then when you order, are told it is gone-- and you go back to their site, and it is still up! So I try not to let that happen on mine- which is another good reason to have built the site myself, so easy to make changes as soon as needed. You can see the complete list of everything I have published through Jabberwocky Graphix on a page on the site, with notes on dates, print runs, and which items are sold out. <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/jabpublist.html>

BJ--You did spot illos for Amazing Stories Magazine in the early 1990s when it was being published by TSR. How did you get involved with that? Any plans to reconnect with the newly revised Amazing Stories?

BF: I sent them samples of my work, like I did with so many, many other magazines. The majority of such enquiries usually came up blank, without even a response back from the editors, but that is the way it works in freelancing. Amazingly, as it were, "Amazing" actually did respond, and positively as well, and I got a few assignments and did illustrations off and on for them for about four or five years. And yes, I'd love to hook up with them again. Be kind of fun to have work in the same title again after such a long gap!

BJ--You do a lot special commissions, particularly band and sports team logos, and book covers. I didn't realize you had done covers for so many different SF/fantasy books. Is this an ongoing effort, something you would like to get more involved with?

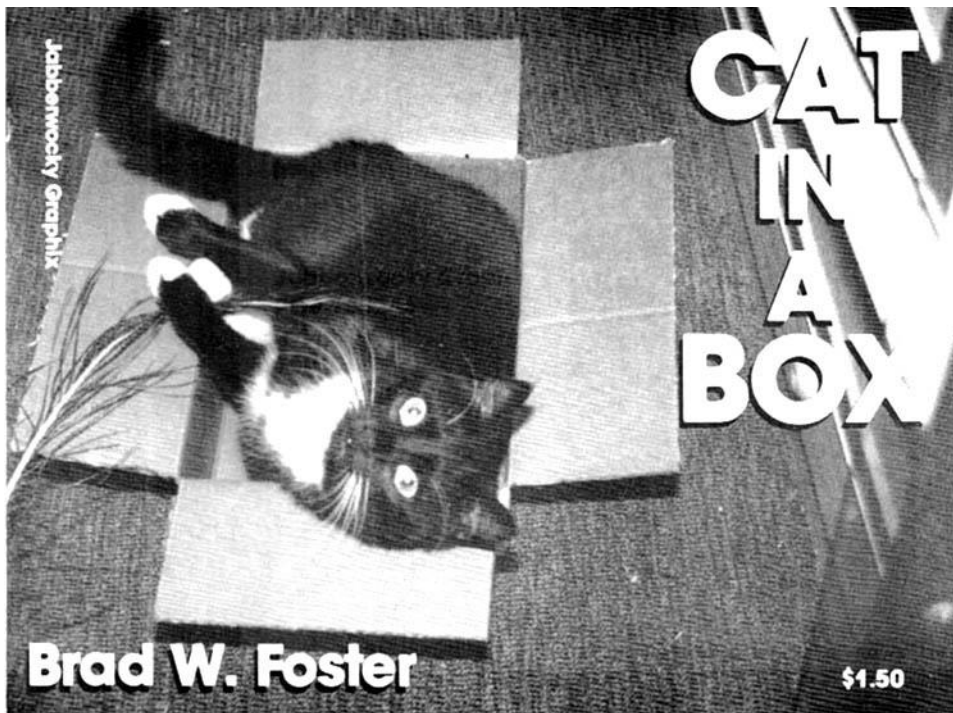
BF: I like to tell people that in the long years I've been working as an artist, I've done a whole lot of stuff, spread out over a whole lot of different fields. Not enough in any one area to make a really big splash, but the odds are that you will have run across something of mine somewhere at sometime, I basically have only one interest, and one skill-- I can make pictures. And any place I can find that might want to publish some of those pictures, and maybe even pay me for them, so I can pay my bills and continue to make pictures, is something I want to do more of. It's not just an ongoing effort, it's the only thing I know how to do. Always looking for new places to create for, new challenges. Part of the fun of this type of career has been taking on so many different projects I never would have thought of, and not knowing what I will be involved with next.

BJ---There are a fair number of on-line science fiction and detective story magazines, and it seems that every one I've checked out is seriously deficient in interior art. Have you considered doing more straight realistic art for these kinds of venues?

BF: It is usually the case that, should you run across an online zine of any sort that is text only, that was a decision of the editor. And those that do use any sort of illustrations often tend to run to easy-to-obtain clip art, or even simply images copied and pasted off the web. As I think I've noted earlier, I am always looking for new places to do art. If any of those on-line magazines are open to artwork, I hope I can find out about them!

BJ---I was also impressed that you have received awards for the cat artwork you have done for magazines targeting cat lovers. How did you get involved with that? How many cats do you folks have at the moment?

BF: It was like most everything else in my career: digging around, doing research, and finding out what markets there were out there that what I did might fit into. I would often hit the magazine racks at local bookstore and go through every single magazine, from one end to the other, seeing which ones were even using illustration, then finding out which were open to submissions, etc etc. (The life of a freelance artist is often less about making art, and more about a continual search for the next job.) I found that "Cat Fancy" magazine was running small b&w drawings of cats as "fillos" with their articles, so I would do up a bunch of those, send them off, and occasionally get lucky and they would buy a few to use. If you think about it, pretty much the same thing as sf fandom, sending out odd little drawings that I do and seeing if the editors would be interested in using any, save that this was for a professional market, so I got paid.



At the moment we have two cats inside, and there are two and a half more semi-ferals outside that we put out food and water for, and will occasionally let us pet them. (The half is for the one cat who actually hangs around a different house more often, but shows up here for meals.) I've always had cats in my life since I was a little kid. I think the max at any time was around five or six, though it's usually two or three. I love them furry little nut jobs!

BJ---You won an impressive eight Hugo Awards as best fan artist. I don't think anybody else has ever matched that record. I presume at least a significant part of that was due to your work with File 770. How did you get involved with the fanzine?

BF: I doubt people would have noticed my toons as much if it was just having drawings in any single fanzine title. I think, looking back, it was more that I was pretty much drawing and sending work to hundreds of zines every year back then, and you would probably have been hard-pressed not to have run across something of mine no matter what zines you happened to get. I think it's the sheer volume more than anything else that kept my name in people's heads. As far as File 770, I think it was much like all the rest: I either came across a

review in another zine and wrote for a first copy, or I got sent one because Mike saw my locs in other zines. And, like with every other free fanzine, minicomic, or small press pub I got, I felt guilty getting this nifty thing for free, so I started sending him artwork as my way of paying my fannish subscription.

BJ--You have been a guest of honor at a number of SF conventions. I've always wondered, what is expected of an artist guest of honor? Do you have to make a speech in pictures, or perhaps turn out a painting or commemorative drawing during the convention, or stand up on stage and demonstrate how you created the art that brought you to the attention of the con committee, or what?

BF: I am always amazed, surprised, and highly flattered when I am invited to be an Artist GoH at a convention. I expect people to notice my artwork, and hope that they like it. But when they want to meet me, personally, it's almost embarrassing. I mean, I think my art can be almost well done from time to time, but me? I'm just the guy who draws them, who would want to meet me?

So I always feel I have to do more than just show up, or they will be disappointed. I think it's the same odd mind-twist that has me submitting art to just about every zine I get: you people are treating me so nice, I have to pay you back somehow! So I will usually offer to do new artwork specifically for the convention-- the program book cover, drawings for the progress reports, badge designs, do you need a logo? Also, it's just fun to play with the themes of coming up with something around the convention.

When I was AgoH at Reconstruction (The 10th NASFIC in 2010), they were planning two digest-sized pre-con progress reports that would be in black and white, then having the big magazine sized, color-cover program book at the con. I took that as a chance to play, and ended up with the idea of a couple of little aliens crash-landing on a planet of robots. For the first images I did a straight-up pen and ink illo of the crash site. For the second one, a b&w tonal piece of the robots showing how they planned to repair the ship. And for the big wrap-around color cover, the factory floor where it was all being done. Plus lots of little pieces of robot-related artwork for logos and such. Had a blast with that. *[[those illos are reprinted in this issue--BJ]]* When AgoH at Worldcon in Spokane, took off on the legends of that area and came up with a Big Foot/Sasquatch character that showed up in much of the artwork I did there.

Also, to your direct question of what is expected of the GoH, the fact that so many committees have been surprised when I offered to do all that new art, plus what I have seen at most cons, it would seem that what is usually expected is that the artist shows up, they might do a new piece for the program book cover, (but often even that is just an older one already completed), and do a presentation at some point during the convention on their art. It's the same with the other guests-- no one expects them to actually write or draw or edit or whatnot something new just for the con, but my guilt makes me want to do more.

As for speeches, I beg off saying much at opening ceremonies-- my mind is always going "Everyone in this audience is here because of all the other guests, not you, ya lowser. No one cares." However, I do ask for an hour or so slot to talk about my work, and I figure anyone who shows up there has at least been warned that it will just be me. So I can drone on and on about what I do to my hearts content. It's always been this odd mix of





emotions in my head: I'm quite proud of what I do, and I think that among the thousands of pieces I've done, there are a handful that I might say are even very good. And I like that people like the work. But I am still, after all these decades, surprised when they want to talk about me, and not the art.

I'm hoping to get a few more invites to other conventions, as it is so much fun to do. Finances have always been such that we can only really afford to go to nearby conventions on our own dollar, so getting the GoH invites has helped to let us see different parts of the country, meet other people, that we never could have done on our own. However, I'm starting to think that getting that amazing GoH stint at a Worldcon might have ruined things-- maybe once you hit "the big one", you are un-officially retired? But, if any sf conventions out there are looking for an Artist GoH, and can bring both me and Cindy in (I need her there to make me look good.) I'd be up for doing more.

BJ---On a similar thing, any special thots about recently receiving the Rebel Award for outstanding service to

Southern Fandom? Are you a member of the Southern Fandom Group?

BF: When you said it was "recently", I had to look that one up., as it seemed it was quite some time ago. But, I guess 2011 could be considered "recently", just my crappy memory cells working up (or not working) again. I do remember that it came as a complete and total surprise. They tricked me into showing up at a room at the convention one evening, not sure what exactly they told me, but certainly nothing about any awards. Then they made me stand up in front of a lot of people and accept an award, something I am very bad at doing, as I get quite embarrassed when people are that nice to me. I'm sure I mumbled something incoherent, and blushed various shades of red. It helped that my buddy Selina was there also getting the Phoenix Award-- she is much better at working a crowd than me, so took a lot of the pressure off! I was and am quite honored by the honor, I am always surprised to find out that people notice me and do nice things like this for me.

No, I'm not a member of any group. Never been a joiner per se, though always willing to be a contributor.

BJ---I'm sure you are working on some future projects right now. Any info you might care to share?

There are a couple of dozen half finished large pieces scattered around the drawing board right now. Notes for larger projects/collections. Folders stuffed full of doodles and notes and sketches for ideas for things big and small, some that would only take a short time to complete, others that would require years to bring together. Got to finish up that jewelled snow fox commission I've been working at off and on for a while. And that large image of an endless library in outer space I promised someone else. Several ideas for mini-comic collections I need to bring together. A long list of things I want to draw to send out to other folks. Oh, and got to get the new tee-shirt design for the Denton Jazz Fest worked on. And there's a new Inner Robot portrait I've had to set aside for a couple of weeks I should get back onto. And there's an interview I've promised to finish answering some questions on-- oh wait, that's this one! Awright, so this is almost done, one more I can cross off the "to do" list! Lots of things. I can't recall if I have ever had a day in my life where I had to try to find something to do. And every day, there will be new ideas. Finding the time and selecting the right ones to work on, now

that's the hard thing. I don't know what will be coming up next. I'll be as surprised as anyone else when it happens!

BJ--So far as Fadeaway is concerned, I continue to get comments from readers complimenting you on your "Zero Heroes" series and wondering when/if there will ever be a collection of the series. I don't think there are quite enuf toons right now to make up a decent collection, but have you given this some serious consideration?

Yes, doing a mini collection would be nice, and this is something I've been thinking about. I'd like to get back into doing some minicomics anyway, and this might be one way to go. In that format, each one is two pages, so at this point I have 48 pages filled. Of course, if done in larger format, would fill less space. Or, could do it as a series of 8 or 16 page minis, or... And, like everything else, would mean me getting my ass in gear to put it together. Some day? Also, the "Zero Hero" title came from Jim Main (he actually called the series "Zeroes", but I think he also coined the "Zero Hero" phrase, so I would probably have to either track him down to get permission to use it, or come up with a new title for it all. I think maybe using that subj heading of "Fosters Forgotten heroes" might work? But would need to redesign all the text pages.... so many questions!

BJ--On a related point, two or three times I tried to make some suggestions for possible Zero Heroes entries, but you politely brushed them aside. Besides paid commissions, where the customer has specific demands, do you listen to suggestions from your fans for pictures, or do you use any of the ideas they might offer?

BF: I brushed something aside? I don't recall that, hold on... just dug back through the letter files, and found where you told me about a couple of weird characters in one letter, and in two others you kind of took one of my ideas and did a "and then he could do this and that" thing. It was all very clever and fun, like most all of your letters-- but I have to admit I didn't know you were sending them to me as suggestions for actual cartoons to be drawn, they just seemed like your usual clever letters where you toss out things. It never crossed my mind to make use of them-- heck, now that I look back at them, if I thought about it at all, it was probably more a "this is really clever, I'll need to work even harder on my own ideas" kind of response in my head. I think I just saw those the same as the rest of your letters, more fascinating stuff in interesting letters. It's what fans do when we write to each other! I apologize if you felt I was ignoring or brushing anything off, that never was my intent, and I'm sorry if you felt I was doing that.

I don't actually get suggestions from fans for cartoons. It's the rare loc that even comments on them, so it's nice to see those now and then. Now, fan editors might request specific themes or ideas for certain illos or covers from time to time, and I'll decide if I can work with that, or offer them something better, but the weird little cartoon stuff is just me goofing around. I've got a couple of folders stuffed full of sketches and doodles for ideas yet to be drawn that, at this point, I could go through for a couple of years without getting a new idea and still not have time to draw them all up. That's why the discovery of sf fandom was so much fun, a place



where I could send out these weird ideas I had that had no other real market value, and maybe some folks would get a few grins from them.

BJ--A fair number of artists are not interested in connecting with their fans (beyond the check-book level), and try to stay at arms length from fandom. You seem perfectly happy being deeply involved in the fan world. Any thots (or maybe regrets?) about being so completely immersed in both the fan and the professional side of the fantasy/comic/science fiction art world?

BF: I'm not sure if I could say I have "fans", that seems like too intense of a word. Maybe more that there are people in fandom who happen to like some of my cartoons and drawings. I'm just pleased enough people have liked what I do to give a home to so many of my odd little scribblings over the decades. And that they have shown appreciation as well with some awards, and asking me to be a GoH at conventions. Fandom has been very, very kind to me and my work. And it's fun and interesting to have a foot in both the fan and professional sides of all this. Sometimes I have to explain to people that I am, indeed, a professional artist. I make my living from my art. But I also do a -lot- of art just for the fun of it, which I then let people who do fanzines and small press mags and such use for free. I'm a pro and a fan, and I don't see any reason to ever stop doing one or the other.

View Brad Foster's incredible web site at <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/index.html> , but **first**, go to his site map at: <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/sitemap.html> to see the full range of all the artwork he has done and all the material he is also offering for sale. **Brad Foster—Artist For Hire**, may be reached at PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246

The bulk of this interview was reprinted from *Copy This #44*, published by D. Blake Werts. *Copy This* is a monthly publication devoted to independent and underground comic art, particularly as seen thru the medium of mini comics. A sample issue may be obtained by contacting Blake at bwerts@vnet.net If you have any interest in independent comic or cartoon or humor art you should be getting this fanzine every single month.



Technicolor Nightmare: Mystery of the Wax Museum (1933)

by **Nora Fiore**



Florence: Listen, Joan Gale's body was swiped from the morgue! Have you ever heard of such a thing as a death mask?

Jim: I used to be married to one.

Florence: Then it came to life and divorced you. I know all about that.

It says a lot about pre-Code Warner Brothers that the studio couldn't even make a horror movie without throwing in a couple of wisecracking reporters, a coffin filled with bootleg hooch, and a junkie.

And, I, for one, couldn't be happier about that. I revel in *Mystery of the Wax Museum* for the sublime, unintentionally postmodern jumble of a film that it is. This 1933 thriller vividly stands apart from every other horror film of that early talkie cycle.

Even if you were to imagine *Night Nurse* remade by Robert Wiene or *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* by William Wellman, the result probably wouldn't be as mismatched and entertaining as this crackling, genre-bending spine-tingler. We're basically dealing with *Gold-Diggers Go to Transylvania*.

Before we go any further, folks, don't say I didn't warn you about plot holes that could conceal an elephant. You should also brace yourself for one of those irritatingly conservative 1930s denouements.



However, it's all worth it to hear Glenda Farrell casually ask an unsuspecting cop, "How's your sex life?" [Insert spit-take here.]

Part newspaper screwball comedy, part Gothic terror, *Wax Museum* pits one of the most refreshing horror protagonists I've ever encountered against the most endearingly clichéd of horror villains. A gutsy platinum blonde sob sister, Florence Dempsey, thwarts the sick fantasy of a

disfigured, deranged sculptor, whose name is... Ivan Igor.

(You can practically hear the screenwriters arguing whether Ivan or Igor sounds more evil, before deciding to go with both!) It's like watching two different movies, two different casts, whimsically spliced together. And, in my humble opinion, it works pretty well on the whole.



But I'm getting ahead of myself. I should really explain why Warner Brothers, known for their brassy comedies and hard-hitting crime dramas, made this flamboyant foray into horror. In 1932, to get their share of the audiences flocking to Universal's monster hits, Warner Brothers, the sassy studio of the people, launched their own prestige sci-fi/horror thriller.

To give it a real edge, Warner had *Doctor X* filmed entirely in two-strip



Technicolor. Following close on the heels of that shocking fright-fest, the studio tried to replicate the success with *Mystery of the Wax Museum*. With characteristic tracking shots and panache, Michael Curtiz helmed *Doctor X and Wax Museum*, which both also star Lionel Atwill and Fay Wray.

I consider the latter film far superior and I'll give you three guesses as to why. (Hint: Glenda Farrell, Glenda Farrell,

Glenda Farrell! – playing reporter Florence Dempsey)

Horror films of the 1930s spent an awful lot of time trying to cope with the disturbing power of images or with the idea of some process that preserves life while ironically destroying. I'm not one of those loonies who attest that every film is actually "about the cinema." Still, I dare you to watch this film without pondering the parallel between Igor's wax museum as a macabre attraction and *Mystery of the Wax Museum* as a macabre attraction!

I hypothesize that the filmmakers working on nightmare pictures in the 1930s were some of the first people to grasp the inherently uncanny nature of film, how film reproduces reality, how it can, in a way, resurrect dead things.

Nevertheless, no matter how convincing or complete the likeness is, it's never the original. Just as a lifelike wax figure cannot move and speak, a film painfully recalls to us the reality of the past without ever letting us live that reality or be with those people we see on the screen.

In *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, Igor longs to duplicate human beings through what are essentially wax mummies. He doesn't just want to make wax figures that resemble people—he needs those figures to be existentially bonded to the people they represent, molded around their bodies, like a death mask. And, to paraphrase the great French critic André Bazin, what is film if not another kind of embalment? The cinema is 24 death masks per second.

Where am I going with this? Well, what interests me about *Wax Museum* is how Igor chooses his victims. On the surface, these choices seem logical: he seeks individuals who look like his wax statues of historical figures that were destroyed many years ago. For instance, when he meets Fay Wray's character, Charlotte, we see her through Igor's eyes as she morphs into his long lost Marie Antoinette.

But what really intrigues me is that Igor spares no interest at all in his primary opponent, Florence, even though she persistently asks him questions and threatens his whole project. Is he that clueless? Interestingly enough, when Igor first spots Charlotte in his museum, Florence, who had been standing right beside Igor disappears in the following shots. Eventually we realize that Florence has sneaked off to investigate the suspicious waxworks. However, her sudden dematerialization strikes me as more than poorly cheated staging or a continuity error. Curtiz insinuates an absence into our midst. Whether we recognize this or not, a part of our mind subliminally picks up on something missing. It's an uneasy spatial ellipsis.

She's here... Then gone... Then there... Then gone...



cyclone. Her most precious qualities—her verve, her celerity, her personality—lose their value when stilled into silence and inertia.

Igor resents Florence because her very existence refutes his concept of human beings as wax figures—and of wax figures as humans. It speaks volumes about Igor that his cherished masterpiece was Marie



Why doesn't Igor pay more attention to Florence? Because Florence's best attributes cannot be rendered in wax. As viewers, we intuit this. The crux of Igor's obsession reveals itself in his reactions to the divergent charms of Charlotte and Florence—and, more broadly, of Fay Wray and of Glenda Farrell. Fay Wray possesses the classic, serene beauty of a cameo. Glenda Farrell although no belle, hits you with the force of a

Antoinette, an icon of stiff, stagnant materialism. By contrast, Florence's spark of life and mobility saves us from the idea of people as little more than glorified set pieces.

Wax, that lesser embalming fluid, might well capture the loveliness of Fay Wray. Yet, it takes the superior mummification of celluloid to deliver Glenda Farrell's you're-gonna-need-Dramamine charisma to spectators eighty

years later. Her modernity demands a modern medium. And two-strip Technicolor was as modern as it got in 1933.

Today's spectator, in particular, cannot ignore the eeriness of *Mystery of the Wax Museum*. We spend most of the film trying to accustom ourselves to the incongruity of seeing what we're used to seeing in black-and-white transpire in color. The obvious unreality of black-and-white

cinematography can serve as a quaintly distancing device. The illusion of presentness furnished by early Technicolor emerges with unexpected power.

Like Igor's creepily lifelike wax statues (actually thickly made-up extras!), two-strip Technicolor leaves us spellbound and a little alarmed. I remember tweeting along with this film on #TCMParty last October; almost every participant remarked on the strangeness of watching a pre-Code film in such phantasmagoric shadings. I think, on some level, we modern viewers tend to forget that the world wasn't black-and-white back in the 1930s!

Rather than using two-strip Technicolor as a pallid imitation of real life, Curtiz amplifies the creepy otherness of the early color process, giving each shot the look of a sun-faded painting. A sickly



symphony of mint greens, peacock teals, and shades of peach sherbet achingly hint at what the actors and sets



look like, yet fail to furnish the true realism that we crave.

The limitations of representation become more apparent as they approach zero. The closer you get to the thing-in-itself, the farther you feel. To quote an original poster for the movie, “Images of wax that throbbed with human passion! Almost woman! What did she lack?” Igor’s statues are identical to their subjects, but you can sense the missing souls. Two-strip

Technicolor brings a now-dead cast to life more fully than black-and-white could and thus paradoxically emphasizes our distance from them.

As you watch *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, notice its breakneck pace and its abundant smash cuts. Bodies are being stolen from a morgue—cut to: a newsroom. A junkie begging for dope—cut to: a Christmas



tree in a police station. What the...? The urban velocity of this film gives us a startlingly heterogeneous breed of horror by grafting Gothic elements onto everyday city life. Unfortunately, the stolid 1950s remake *House of Wax* regressed back to pure Penny Dreadful stuff and lacks all the pre-Code genre-scrambling that made the original so memorable.

Keep an eye out for oodles of smart visual touches.

For instance, get a load of the long crane shot that moves back from a vat of boiling wax to the operating bed where victims will lay to the spout from which the scalding liquid will spew... to the villain entering his lair with a new victim. This camera movement (remember how hard this would've been in the early talkies!) tersely shows us the gruesome fate of anyone selected to be immortalized in wax. Once again, Curtiz highlights an absence; we never see the human-to-wax-figure process, but he morbidly implies it with this graceful shot.

The switch from a high angle to a low angle when Igor reveals his insanity also impressed me. His sudden inebriation with his godlike power allows him to tower over us. It's an old trick, but a potent one, resulting in one of the film's most spooky moments.

As you might expect, Glenda Farrell commits grand larceny, stealing every single scene she's in. Years before she tackled her signature role of Torchy Blane, Farrell soared as this prototype character. If Florence Dempsey doesn't get to do half as much as we'd like her to, she remains the conduit of the film, weaving together the many plotlines.

Her deductions and detective work lead to the bad guys getting caught and the damsel getting saved in the nick of time. Whether she's spouting Great Depression slang at the speed of light, grabbing bottles of bootleg whisky in plain view of the police, or screaming at the top of her lungs, Florence wins our love and respect.



Devoid of Stanwyck's barely repressed anger and Harlow's frivolousness, Farrell gave us portraits of working women who looked tired, but chic and acted nervously, but competently. No superwoman, she declines to challenge the order the universe, but circulates through it with such vitality and persistence that even the strongest pillars of that universe budge a little—for the better. She's not making a statement about how women need to fight to exist in a man's world. She blithely exists there. And that's enough. Try and stop her.

Costume designer Orry-Kelly aided and abetted Farrell with a wardrobe to die for; I really need a pair of pistachio-green lounging pajamas and a full-length leopard coat with a matching-trim dress. Add them to my wish list.

I encourage you to hunt down *Mystery of the Wax Museum*. Interestingly enough, the color version of this film was believed to be lost for many years before Jack Warner's personal print turned up. How ironic would that have been if this exotic jewel of a film had disintegrated into nothing like the wax figures at the beginning of the movie? Thankfully, it was spared from the flames.



READER REACTION

Tara Wayne; tara@bell.net

I'll look at this in detail, later... but at a glance, we've long known one of the solutions to the problem of zero gravity. We need to build some sort of "spacewheel" ... but we seem obsessed with building a space station that is stationary! Of course, a full size wheel as in 2001 would have to be pretty large to be effective, and that would mean a robust construction that can tolerate the centrifugal forces ... if it was a full wheel. But why should it be? Rotating a

much smaller inhabited section around a counterweight would be far less heavy, cheaper and just as effective. But it would still not be really cheap, I suspect. A turning weight has its own engineering challenges that are by no means insurmountable, but will be by no means effortless.

And then there are all those OTHER problems...

I suspect humans will go deeper into space, if only just to prove it can be done. But practical exploration is almost certainly going to be limited to robot probes for a long time.

For instance, if a human expedition is mounted to Mars in the next 20 years, we would be total fools to try to land on the surface. The gravity well alone would triple, quadruple, quintuple the difficulties. On the other hand, it would be much easier to land on Phobos, and use the moon as a base from which to explore Mars with telepresence!

It would still be a terribly risky thing, however, no matter how enthusiastic how many IT billionaires are.

///The Spacewheel idea for generating artificial gravity in space is an interesting theory that has never been really tested. I know very little about the physics involved, but it seems to me that even to create something approximating the gravity of the planet that the spacewheel would have to spin at a fairly high rate of speed. That would require regular fuel, among all the other difficulties.

I think you are correct that humans will try to explore the solar system more deeply, mainly to prove they can do it. Bragging rights for enormously wealthy individuals probably count for something in the yet-to-be-written history books.

I am convinced that we are sending all those rockets off to look at Mars mainly because of all the science fiction stories and fanciful speculation from the past. Lowell's canals on Mars and the possibility of intelligent life there are still powerful shadows from yesterday affecting our decisions in the present. I note that there seems to be not that much interest in sending multiple robot landings on, say, Venus, or Europa. I will mention again that even on planet earth exploration has always been done with a profit motive as the driving force. I don't think mere curiosity is going to be enough to keep a viable space exploration program going. There has to be some kind of positive economic gain to make the incredible risks of space travel worth the effort.///

Michael Dobson; 8042 Park Overlook Dr.; Bethesda, MD 20817



Speaking of interstellar travel and alien life forms, the Benford brothers gave me a copy of an anthology they edited, *Starship Century*, the proceedings of the 2011 DARPA-sponsored 100 Year Starship Symposium. Most of the papers required one or more major technological breakthroughs to lead to a viable starship. Jim Benford offered, I think, the most feasible solution, a laser-powered solar sail, with the laser located on the Moon. It's always been the case that carrying your own propulsion with you is not as effective as leaving your engine behind. It's why, though I like the Space Elevator, I think a catapult is the most practical way to reach Earth's orbit.

When it comes to interstellar travel, though, there's one option I haven't seen proposed (though I'm sure it has been): longevity. Why is it such a problem to go to the stars? We'll die of old age before we get there, and even if we travel at relativistic speeds, everyone we left behind will be long dead at our return. With lifespans in the high centuries, though, a fifty year round trip isn't much worse than a several year long sailing voyage to the furthest reaches of the British Empire back in the day.

Although I'm the right age to have seen some of the early television sf shows (though not quite *Johnny Jupiter*), I grew up in the wrong country. My father, an insurance salesman for an Alabama life insurance company, had the American military community in Germany as his territory, and as civilians, we lived "on the economy." Televisions were still rare in Germany, but our landlord had a tv and radio repair shop, and we would get a loaner from time to time when someone didn't pay for their repairs. I do remember a show that ran in the afternoons, *Abenteuer Unter Wasser* (Adventure Underwater), starring Lloyd Bridges. When we moved stateside in the early 1960s and I caught my first *Sea Hunt* rerun, I found out I hadn't been watching the original after all.

It's always great to get *Fadeaway*; I'm not a great writer of letters of comment, but I do enjoy the fanzine. Given that you're not that far away, perhaps we can encourage you to attend the 2019 Corflu fanzine fan convention here in DC.

Ken Faig; carolfaig@comcast.net

I printed *Fadeaway* out for reading, but I have to admit that the color in the digital version is a big plus. Especially those Sumuru covers. Sometimes I wonder if paper books and magazines are a dying species. I don't see their becoming extinct any time soon, but I do see reduced values impacting used books and magazines.

Great article by Dale Nelson on libraries. When I was an adolescent, I used to make a monthly bus trip down to the main Public Library in Cincinnati. I would take a small suit case along for my book haul. I could return any books borrowed to my local branch library in a pinch.

With limited shelving space, I guess I can't fault libraries--especially public libraries--for pruning their collections. I wonder if shelving space will eventually start dropping, instead of just staying stagnant--e.g., as demand for more computer stations increases.

The used book sale room at our library won't even take the library's own discards. I think they go to an outside service. Of course, library discards are a benefit to readers or researchers who want certain titles cheap.

Great article on Rohmer's Sumuru series. I remember that J. G. Amedeo (Bookfinger) out of New York reprinted at least some of these titles in the U.S. Too bad that Robert John Colombo's collected edition of the



Sumuru books is so hard to get. I love his YEARS OF LIGHT on Les Crouch. Paul La Farge's novel NIGHT OCEAN has a major character based in Parry Sound, Ontario and I have to wonder if La Farge based his character in part on Les Crouch.

Dennis Wheatley and Sax Rohmer had in common lavish lifestyles. I used to own biographies of both of them. I think Cay Van Ash did the one on Rohmer, but I might be wrong. I only read a few books by Rohmer. I wish someone would do his collected supernatural tales--but the rights situation might be difficult. I see that Dark Regions has out the collected supernatural tales of Nictzin Dyalhis--fascinating name.

Thanks again for another great issue of *Fadeaway*. You sure must be a busy fellow between *Fadeaway* and the N3F zine.



Franz Zruch; 4004 Granger Rd.; Medina, OH 44256-8602

I have *Fadeaway* #54. NASA, 15 months ago, revealed the existence of a straight-out all-electric drive system for use in deep space that does not require propellants. Instead, reaction against discharge of electrons is used. Part of this work dates back before NASA was created, wherein the Glenn NASA facility in Cleveland was involved in several programs officially described as ion-drive, and in the 1940s as hyper-drive, but which include two or three "anti-gravity" drives.

Officially known as electro-fravitic drives, and dating back to work in the early 1920s (using research work by Thomas Townsend Brown), the systems Brown had designed and tested in Cleveland resulted in the 1950s in a massive, long-term expenditure of money, with very little yet declassified.

Robert MacNamara gave DRAPA long term projects to fund paper research into eye-opening fields including potentials for FTL. In the late 1970s I was hired to accumulate a hundred pounds of photocopies from academic journals on the topics, which articles I then abstracted, analyzed, summarized, and was not allowed to discuss.

I also worked at two defense firms who had spent a lot of money analyzing the production angles on some strange craft. Goodyear Aerospace had small teams from the early 1950s working on such items as the Goodyear Mercury Space Ferry an early version of a space shuttle that was taller than the final space shuttle design. TRW, for whom I did not work, had carefully designed low-cost, over-sized single stage to orbit launchers as did some other firms. Chrysler Aerospace with SERV, and Glenn Martin Aerospace with Alderbaban, a quarter line long flying boat that could (in theory) carry 22,000 pounds to the moon. Extremely detailed reports were churned out filling multi-volumes.

The current buzz word is meta-materins, which appear to be structural elements built with each atom precisely located so as to permit a space craft to seem to violate the norms of physics. Stuff like this is now in limited production for use in other, non-aerospace purposes.

With space travel as it currently exists, the big problems are safely related: weightlessness, the hard radiation, etc. These proposed electric drives seem to offer very rapid travel times to a planet like Mars. Obviously, very substantial force fields would be needed to handle particle impacts at those speeds. Meta-materials may permit getting around the radiation problem, and might, in theory anyway, help with the problem of cheap, light weight force fields.

Whole libraries of speculative research is being turned out almost on a monthly basis...//Franz then details five different weird research projects he has personally read about....which is a lot more hard and speculative science than Ye Editor could handle, so it won't be included in the letter column, altho anyone who is really interested in such things could contact Franz direct.//

Dale Nelson's article on libraries he has known was interesting. Yes, *Ramparts* had a Molotov cocktail on one cover, also some nude coeds inside.

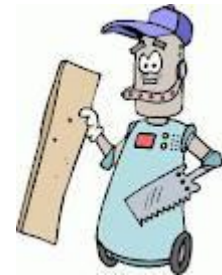
My exposure to SF first started at the Brunswick Public Library with "Elevator to the Moon", then on to H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, and then to 50-100 books at Medina County Main Library, and also a Carnegie structure named Franklin Sylvester Library. My Dad owned one of the four drug stores in Medina, three of which sold SF paperbacks, but only one sold *Analog*. I began reading *Analog* in 1964.

Downtown Cleveland had several used book stores, two of which were top drawer places, plus downtown Cleveland had Damschroeder's Newsstand, which had more foreign newspapers than did the periodicals room at the main Cleveland Library across the street. The newsstand had lots of SF mags. My

Dad's store carried Edgar Rice Burroughs paperbacks and the Lord of the Psyciton in addition to magazines. It was all an ongoing remarkable experience to a young person like myself.

///And where are the newsstands and stores that carry magazine racks these days? They are almost all gone, and the ones that are left don't carry much variety in their magazine offerings, and almost never do they carry the current SF mags. An age has definitely passed.///

Jefferson P. Swycaffer; P.O. Box 15373; San Diego CA 92175
abontides@gmail.com



Crikey, it has been a while! My last LOC to you went out just a year ago! But you're doing *sterling* work with *Tightbeam* for the N3F, and, as you noted, you recently had a snowstorm to dig out from under.

Fadeaway 54! Hot dog! Didja know "54" is my very favorite number? Douglas Adams fans will know that it's what you get when you multiply six by nine. My first (and best) job was at 2727 Kurtz St. And my mama had an obsession with the number also.

Huzzahs to Dan Carroll for his front and back covers! The front cover may be the most explicitly risqué picture I've ever seen of his, but I adore it for its liveliness, its class, its raw fantasy, and, too, for artistic effect, such as the indication of the line of the dragon's belly by the place where the shading for the sky in the background ceases. "Negative space." Nifty! I wish I could do that! The back cover is also a charming and inspiring work, one of those "pictures that tell a story." One can almost see the whole beginning, middle, and end implied by this conference between an older, avuncular swordsman and the sad-faced hapless princess. Lucky is the writer whom Dan Carroll favors with cover art!

Re space travel, it's sad, but I'm pinning my strongest hopes on what is the *weakest* possible reason to go to space: national pride. I hope the Chinese continue to make strong progress there, because there is little else that will spur *us* to spend the necessary money. National pride is a stupid reason to go to space, but, hey, it gave us the Apollo program, so I'll take what I can get, however I can get it.

Dale Nelson's memoirs of classic libraries was a fun read, and definitely a tickle for the book-lovers among us! I jotted down quite a few names of authors to try to track down as my reading list gets shorter.

I've read all of the Fu Manchu books, and quite love them. I'd never heard of Sumuru! Gosharooty! I'll need to try to find one or two of these books. I had heard of "Captain Billy's Whiz Bang," but somehow I had always thought it was a fictional work, like the Necronomicon (and, of course, we who "play the game" insist it's quite as real as real can be!)

What's a little fun about Rohmer and Fu Manchu is how he grew (slowly) into a proper appreciation for Chinese culture and tradition, so that, by the *last* of the novels, the dire threat was not "the yellow peril" but Maoism and communism, whereas the hero of the novel was a Chinese man who was trying to defend freedom. Rohmer finally "grew up" and wrote a reasonable, mature, respectful novel, transcending the cheap racism of his earlier days.

I'm sorry to learn there's a black market on the "dark web" for pirated comic books. It makes terrible sense, given how easy it is to scan and share, but it's grimly depressing, if it poses a serious threat to the future of the medium. Double bummer, because these are really good days for comics! The writing and art are *infinitely* better than ever before. (I really, really hated the 1980s, with the Lee/Liefeld/McFarland style. There's a pic from that era that shows Captain America with an absurdly large chest. It looks like he inhaled a refrigerator! That intensely exaggerated style was butt-ugly, and I'm so very, very glad it's dead!)

Re old books, I need to take a load to my favorite local used-book store, and lighten the load on my bookshelves. I've reached that stage -- and I'll bet most of you are familiar with this! -- where there are books lying on their sides *on top* of the books put vertically into the shelves. That's sort of like when trash falls out of the trash-can onto the floor: it's a sign that a load needs to be taken out and disposed of. But oh, the sorrow of having to rid myself of my beloved treasures, even the ones I know I'll never read again. They're *mine* and they are *part of me.*

Life is tough...but there's still M&M candies, so we can make it after all!

///I don't think national pride will get the human race very far into space. The Chinese do seem to be into outer space pride & bragging rights, but the rest of the world--hardly at all. In addition, being the first, or the biggest, or the fastest, or whatever, may provide bragging rights, but it doesn't do a whole lot to advance the push to explore outer space on a wide scale.

I remain convinced that only a solid, achievable profit motive will get the human race out into space, and even with that kind of incentive, there will still need to be some heavy tech advancements to protect the human bodies that actually dare to go out there beyond the protective shields of planet earth. I am hopeful that adequate safeguards are achievable, but I don't see those kinds of developments coming into being for a long, long time into the future, and maybe never unless that elusive profit motive proves powerful enuf to pay the costs for that high-tech research & innovation.

You can get digital copies of the first two Sumuru novels by Sax Rohmer for a very small amount of money on most book seller sites, including Amazon. As I indicated in my article, the other books are harder to come by and tend to be more expensive, altho I have discovered (after I finished the article) that some libraries have copies of at least the third and the fifth novel which can be obtained thru inter-library loan.

The pirate comic biz isn't even on the dark web. It's out there everywhere. New comics from Marvel and DC and IDW are regularly posted on at least five different sites that I have seen. I do not view or download from those places. First, I am opposed to this kind of blatant piracy, and second, I really prefer my comics in dead tree form. But there are plenty of other people who are not so particular. I also don't download music or old movies off the web. Some friends who do that have found their computers badly infested with malware and ransom ware. I was torn between offering my sympathy and shouting "I told you so!"

There's still plenty of bad artwork and anatomically ridiculous poses being published in today's comic books. And despite its popularity with younger fans, I've never been happy with the proto-type 'manga' style of comic artwork either. Fortunately publishers these days often offer some sample art pages of new titles added to the mix, so it's easier spotting the crude or preposterous art styles before investing much time or money in the stuff.///



Jerry Kaufman; PO Box 25075; Seattle, WA 98165

Fadeaway #53 - Big Bear issue---John Cody's cover by coincidence (or maybe deliberately) echoes the recent release of Jeff Vandermeer's novel *Borne*. It's set in a post-apocalyptic city controlled by a giant bear. (I haven't read it yet, but have seen a number of reviews.) In Vandermeer's novel, the bear can fly - so John has missed one element.

The dangers of contact with a more technologically advanced society, have, as you say, been demonstrated in modern times. Even when the "higher" civilization doesn't intentionally overwhelm the "lower" one, things happen. The Cargo Cults of Pacific Islanders that developed after US military forces left the islands after World War II were examples of this. In fiction, stories of humans damaged by their contacts with fairy folk, and stories like Tiptree's "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" explore the theme.

"The Secret Files of Dr. Drew" sounds pretty interesting. Thanks for the full-page repro on page 5.

Rich Dengrove makes a good case for watching Johnny Jupiter, but the illustrations make it look quite crude. I don't think I would have the patience or the ability to suspend my disbelief to watch more than a few minutes.

Dale Nelson in his "Lovecraft's Comfortable World," and Darrell Schweitzer in the letter column, add to the on-going discussion of Lovecraft that you and Tom Sadler (in *The Reluctant Famulus*) have been hosting. I don't have much to add, having already said I like much of HPL's work while accepting his shortcomings both as a writer and a person. But I'll happily continue read what other people say about him.

But as a side note, I'll mention two recent books, one of which I've read. That one is *Lovecraft Country*, by Matt Ruff. Despite the title, it does not directly engage with Lovecraft or any specific story of his. Instead, it's about an African-American family in the early 1950s that keeps running into both mundane discrimination and supernatural threats and horrors. The strength and resourcefulness they need to deal with white America comes in very handy when dealing with evil sorcerers, hauntings, portals to alien planets, and so forth.

The Night Ocean, by Paul LaFarge, is the other book - I've read very interesting reviews but haven't seen it yet, much less read it. It's about Lovecraft and the possibility that he had a sexual relationship with a

young fan he exchanged letters with, and with whom he lived for two months. The main character in the book is a woman whose husband is obsessed with this relationship, but disappears when he seems to have figured it out. From there, the reviews say, more mysteries develop.

Coming to the letter column, I see that you've tackled the subject of the meaning of "fascism," in answer to me and several others. Thanks for the explanation of the "formal" meaning of the word and the system it represents. I've mostly thought of it as "bad," thinking not just of the Nazis, but also the governments of Italy and Spain at the same time: systemic rule from the top, benefiting mainly the ruling group, suppressing opposition through controlling all available media, jailing or killing political opponents, etc. I didn't think much about the economics involved. On the other hand, you seem to have thought about it a fair bit, and with each repetition of your explanation, you sound more and more like you favor at least that aspect of fascism. Am I reading too much into this?

Fadeaway #54--The Dan Carroll covers were both good, and impressed other people. I was in an office waiting area a few weeks ago while Suzle was inside talking to a client. I was reading *Fadeaway* at the time, and when Suzle and the client finished their discussion and came out to where I was, the client saw the front cover. She "oohed," so I showed her the back, too. She "aaahed." I hadn't thought a woman who wears socially conscious teeshirts would like the "barbaric" subject matter, but I was wrong!

Regarding the likelihood of commercial space travel, I believe it's quite likely, at least in Earth orbit and possibly to the Moon. The existing space companies are already delivering supplies to the ISS and planning to put multiple communications satellites in orbit; they're already taking serious reservations from wealthy people who want trips beyond our atmosphere. (There are lots of multimillionaires, it seems, who are willing to spend their money for thrills.)

Dale Nelson looks at many libraries he has known. I have not known many myself, as I've bought or borrowed books from about the time I started attending Ohio State University in 1968. But I did go to a sweet brick library in Cleveland Heights that was across the street from my elementary school, starting in the fourth grade until I left Cleveland. They had one section of science fiction, and I read nearly everything in it. Searching through their general fiction, I was always fooled by SF Rabbi - no matter how many times I pulled it from the shelf, it was always about a rabbi in San Francisco.

On the other hand, the librarian knew what I liked, and recommended a trilogy of novels about creatures called hobbits. (This was before they were published in paperback in the US.) I recall some difficulty getting through the first chapter or two, but after that, I was enchanted.

I've never read any of Rohmer's work, Fu Manchu or otherwise. Your run-down of his career and the specifics of the Sumuru books was interesting, and if I run across any inexpensive copies of any of the books, I will have to give his work a try. I especially enjoyed the covers, and their sleazy promise of hot stuff inside. But can you tell us about the one on page 35, for Sand and Satin? I couldn't find this title in the article anywhere. Is it a collection of shorter pieces, or is it one of the novels you discussed, but retitled?

I look forward to your next issue, with hopes that it doesn't come out a year from now.

///You can get the first two Sumuru novels, and a lot of other Sax Rohmer material, in e-book format for a couple of bucks. It's well worth the modest investment. I find that many of his Fu Manchu books have not aged well (and to be frank, often he was turning them out because of his always desperate need for money), but most of his other material, and especially the Sumuru stories are still fresh and very readable.

Sorry, I should have mentioned that the illo for "Sand and Satin" was the UK paperback title of the fourth novel in the series. The cover art naturally has absolutely nothing to do with the story inside.

I don't doubt that limited space travel, as a novelty for the very rich thrill seekers, may find a niche in the travel industry, just as lighter-than-air balloons and blimps were popular novelty rides back around the turn of the twentieth century. But so far as sustained travel to and from Luna, or establishing commercially profitable ventures in outer space, I remain very skeptical. Unless the enormous health risks and the obvious dangers of shooting people off in those giant sized roman candle firecrackers is dealt with, travel beyond the orbit of planet earth will remain a novelty for rich thrill seekers.

I always found plenty of interesting material in every library I ever encountered. The problem was that there was a lot more material that interested me on the racks of retail books stores or even the mag/paperback racks of the nearby corner drug store. Libraries back then didn't stock comic books (or even comic strip collections), and their science fiction sections were usually small and filled with pretty much the same titles I had

seen (and already read) many times before. Like Dale, for most of my life the bulk of my reading material has been stuff I purchased myself.///



Tom McGovern; 1418 Macopin Rd.; West Milford, NJ 07480

I'm just writing with a few thoughts on *Fadeaway* #54. First off, on the matter of whether you issue *Fadeaway* as a print zine or merely an e-zine: I can certainly understand the inclination to save big bucks on printing and postage. There was a time when we had no alternative for fanzines; if we wanted to publish them, we needed paper and ink and a means of printing. Surely you remember the adventures we had with that "free" mimeograph machine that I acquired back in the early 1980s.

Having said all that, I'd be perfectly OK with just receiving *Fadeaway* in pixel form. While I do have a very strong propensity to read stuff in "dead tree" format, the option of printing out the issue (or specific parts of the issue) is always there. In fact, that's what I generally do with *Tightbeam*, which arrives exclusively in pixelated format. When it arrives, I might skim through it on my iPad or PC, but very soon after that, I hit the "Print" button so that I have a hard copy to read in more depth. And, as you note, since my printer does print in four colors, I get the zine in all its colorful glory rather than drab B&W.

The only thing I would suggest if you do decide to go all-digital would be that you actually send the zine (preferably in pdf form) to those you want to receive it, and not just post it on efanazines.com or some similar site. This is what N3F does with *Tightbeam* and its other zines, and it works well for me. If that's a problem, at least send out an e-mail with a link to the online zine. Don't just post it on efanazines.com without somehow connecting the readers to it, because I know that, at least in my case, I will probably not remember to take the initiative to go look for it.

Your story about the Dill Ovals was hilarious. It's almost hard to believe it really happened that way. I felt as if I was reading a short story that was crafted so as to be humorous, or else the plot of a sitcom episode. It seems the group hasn't endured the years well, as I Googled the name to see what their music sounded like and the only hits I got were for actual pickles. Vlasic weighed in heavily there, so apparently they have the best internet promoters.

I see that Rich Dengrove disagrees with me – nothing unusual there, I might add – but in this case, I think we actually do agree, at least in the bigger picture. While I did speculate that a college writing course might have helped with breaking into professional writing, I admitted in practically the same breath that it would have been an uphill climb nonetheless. That, I think, is pretty much what Rich was saying in his comment on the topic. If I were a young, aspiring writer nowadays, of course, I'd just start a blog and hope it was good enough that people took notice. But I suspect (though I can't prove) that the easy availability nowadays of getting one's words out to the public makes it even harder to break into writing professionally. There are gazillions of bloggers out there and the overwhelming majority will never get paid a plug nickel for their writing. It was hard to break in back then; it's got to be dang near impossible now. You might have a better chance of winning the lottery.

By the way, did I date myself using the phrase, "plug nickel" in the last paragraph? Now that I think of it, it's been years since I heard anyone use that term.

I dread the day that the comics companies decide to go all-digital. That might very well be the end of my comic book reading career. I have occasionally downloaded a digital comic (usually because it's free) and I find it to be a major pain in the neck to read them. The pages usually don't fit the screen well, and you have to scroll around, moving the page up and down, back and forth, to read the whole page. I've complained plenty in the past about e-books, though I occasionally read them, but whatever negative things I've said about text-only books in electronic format, you can multiply by 50 when it comes to e-comics.

And, in addition to the formatting problems, there's the fact that print comics do have the potential to become collectibles. I don't buy comics with a view to their future value and never have (except for a brief flirtation with dealing used comics in the 1970s), so it's not a primary issue for me, but that possibility disappears completely with e-comics. I may not be looking to sell off my comic collection, but I'm not going to

live forever, and it does represent a potential thing of value I could leave behind for my family. It's pretty hard to sell off used pixels, though.

Another good issue, Bob; I'll be looking forward to the next one.

///As I said in my editorial, the primary issue is not the buckos that it costs to produce the print version of the fanzine, it is the fact that I only print in black & white, and also the enormous amount of work it takes to print, assemble, staple, stuff envelopes, stick on stamps, and lug the tubs of zines down to the Post Office that bothers me. If I ever decide to go all-digital I will certainly send out PDF copies to regular readers who prefer it that way. The switch to electronic format would also allow me to prune some more people off the mailing list who have not responded to *Fadeaway* for the past few issues. Clearly sending copies in any form to those folks is a waste of time and resources, whether they be printing/ mailing costs or innocent pixels.

I think it is very difficult to break into professional writing these days, especially because there is so much stuff out there on the internet for free (or almost for free), and because it is so easy to get your material self published in electronic format. I am not a big fan of college writing courses, but those courses, and also the writing workshop events like Clarion force the would-be author to write to a specific subject, whether s/he is inclined to do that or not, and also exposes the writer to criticism. A lot of amateur writers never get any better at creating readable stories, and most of the people casting their creative thots out into the ether refuse to listen to criticism and advice from anybody. But listening, and paying attention to what other people are saying about the style of writing, or dialog, or plots, or characterization, or whatever, and taking the worthwhile suggestions/critiques to heart is the only real way a raw writer is going to get better. Practice may make perfect in some crafts, but if a writer keeps turning out oblique fictions that is a pain to read thru with plots that make no logical sense, that person will never become a professional author, or even an accepted writing dilettante.

I have real problems reading comics on most computer screens. I can get the things to work OK on the desktop, but not on the tablet or even the laptop. In addition to the formatting problems you mention, pages often load at their own speed, so that going from one page to the next takes longer than I am comfortable with. Maybe if I were more of a computer wise person I could overcome these problems; or maybe not.

As long as the comic companies continue to demand that electronic comics retail for the same price (or close to the same price) as print comics, the electronic versions are not going to force the print comics out of existence.

As I have probably mentioned hundred of times before, comic books are not an investment opportunity. People should read and collect what they enjoy, and then if, sometime in the future, something they bought turns out to be worth money, they will have a pleasant surprise. But most comics never accumulate any value, and are so common that many comic shops will not stock most of them in their back issue bins, at any price.

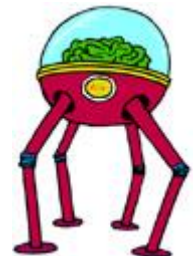
Collections sell for very little money and wind up in the quarter boxes, which are stuffed to the brim. Most comic stores have back rooms stacked floor to ceiling with back issue comics they cannot turn into money. On any day of the year ebay carries offerings for two and a half million back issue comic books, quite a lot in bulk lot quantities, and the sell-thru rate is less than 1%. The stuff that does sell on ebay is mainly golden age comic titles that really are rare and hard to find. There are so many new comics coming out each month that the average collector can barely keep up with what he wants to read, let alone worrying about back issues.///

Ray Palm; raypalmx@gmail.com

In *Fadeaway* #54 you asked for reader feedback on continuing with the print edition. I don't miss putting out a hardcopy version with my own zine. Like you mentioned---all the work -- printing, collating, stapling, stuffing and stamping envelopes -- is a chore. I'd rather spend the time researching and writing instead of running my own zine postal distribution operation. The only reason to print out a hardcopy is to have a paper backup in case your computer crashes -- or is fried from EMP thanks to Trump and Bolton, Chickenhawks Inc.

Regarding your Lunch Time Reminisces: I Googled search terms like "Dill Ovals Band," "Glass Lake Alabama," and "Burn Onion Records." I wasn't surprised when I found no hits since #54 was your APRIL-May edition. Or did the Russians hack into your computer, planting some fake history?

Sinister Madonna: I never got into Fu Manchu. The closest I came was reading the Marvel Comic *The Hands of Shang-Chi: Master of Kung Fu* in which the hero was Fu Manchu's son. I heard about Christopher Lee



starring as Fu Manchu in a movie series that featured some female nudity. Now would Sax Rohmer's mother say?

I never caught any of the Lee-Fu Manchu movies. I noticed that they're available on YouTube with *The Million Eyes of Sumuru*. Until I read your article I was unaware of Sumuru in print and movies. The only reason for me to watch one of the movies would be Shirley Eaton, seeing her sans gold paint.

Once again more great art by Dan Carroll. Is he doing any professional work? His quality looks pro.

///Dan Carroll could be a professional artist, and has done some commissions and sold his artwork particularly to gaming companies such as Steve Jackson. He did some comic work for DC and some of DC's sub-contractors, but then, after I dunno, maybe a thousand years of saying he wanted to be a professional comic book artist, he suddenly decided he didn't want to do that after all. He also does fantasy paintings. He is about to be retired from his regular job and in theory will return to doing more artwork. I suppose time will tell.

What! You couldn't find references on the inter-web-thingee about the Dill Ovals or their singing career with Burnt Onion Records? This is astonishing! Are you sure you are using the proper search applications? Are you implying that my vivid memories of Willie Longarm and his bizarre career as an innovative diner chef and leader of a doo-wop singing group are false? That perhaps my memories have been artificially planted? I've only had one or two recent encounters with flying saucers (that I recall anyway), and altho my memories are a bit blurred of these encounters, I'm pretty sure the little gray bug-eyed creeps stressed they were blanking out parts of my memory, not adding new fake memories in the process. How come my credit card statements say I bought three copies each of the Dill Ovals two LPs and all eight of their singles? That doesn't seem like artificially induced memory planting to me. Are you sure you did a complete search? I've got three copies of "Pickup Truck Full of Love" right here (well, over there in the stack of vinyl records anyway) to back up my memories. Your inference is very disturbing.///



George Phillies; 48 Hancock Hill Dr.; Worcester, MA 01609

Thanks for the latest issue of *Fadeaway*, which I much appreciate. Nelson's report on libraries was most interesting. There are vast numbers of book storage facilities, all different, each with its own tale lurking behind it. I was particularly taken, because there is a stfnal reference, to the *American Heritage* set that is in someone's hands. You see, once upon a time, *American Heritage* ran an article on the Douglas DC-3, the first sort-of-modern passenger plane. It was also the first passenger pane on which I flew, though not the oldest that I have seen. I am one of the modest number of people still alive who has seen a Ford Trimotor

in commercial operation.

The stfnal link is that the DC-3 was large enough, and sturdy enough, that you could take it up, go on exactly the right trajectory, and have zero-gee inside at least for a few seconds. NASA now does this with a Boeing 747. We return to the late 30s, and someone had the brilliant idea of tearing out all the seats from a DC3, building a motion picture set inside, and filming.

It worked. One of the Flash Gordon films has a series of zero-gee scenes with actors floating in mid air. No wires. They were actually in zero-gee. More recently, another SF film has been made this way. I have been looking for a photocopy or scan of that part of this article, but *American Heritage* is not on the internet yet.

You mention "*Comic World*". We are now engaged in reviving the N3F zine *Mangaverse*, which has not been published in some years. Mr. Trainor is spearheading the effort. We shall see how that does.

Ah, yes, Sax Rohmer. 50-some-years ago, I read some number of his Fu Manchu novels, in paperback (or once in hardback). I think I remember seeing one or two of his Sumuru novels, but I do not recall reading them. By period standards the covers were quite titillating. You certainly make a fine case that she was a more well-developed character than Fu Manchu was.

Page 38...the image of the radio televuew device is quite startling. I have someplace a 1919 or so *National Geographic*, which proposes that come 1928 men will be able to retire to their favorite bar and watch election coverage on a television radio. That was a tiny bit optimistic, though the 1936 Olympics were

telecast by Deutsche Telefunken. They used one of the flying spot schemes, which made it possible to have huge screens, say eight feet on a side, the sort that have only become possible recently with modern devices. The first American President to deliver a televised speech was FDR, opening the 1939 World's Fair in New York. (Yes, commercial TV broadcasting had just gotten off the ground in the USA before World War 2 started.)

Your comments to Jefferson Swycaffer echo discussion on MadGeniusClub.com, a 10+-author blog on SF publishing notable for the feature that the contributors are all published SF authors. Your idea that we need a systematic review of all published SF novels is a fine one, but it is not clear how human beings will be able to pull this off. Surely no one reader will do it.

As always, keep up the fine work!

///So far as I know, *American Heritage* issues are not available on the web in any form. This is a shame because I always found the hardback magazine to be very interesting. I could never afford to subscribe, but most of the libraries I frequented in past years had extensive files of the issues that could be read on the premises. I haven't checked lately, but I doubt any local libraries around here still have back files of the title.

The Douglas DC-3 was the first successful mass produced mass movement passenger airliner that was a financial success from the transportation of passengers alone. It was also easy to maintain, exceptionally reliable and could operate out of short runways, a very important factor when it was introduced back in the middle 1930s.

The Ford Tri-Motor has a lot of romantic appeal, and it looks good on the ground and in flight, but my understanding is the three motors often did not synchronize completely which made the ship slightly unbalanced even in the best of times. Pilots had to be able to adjust to the peculiarities of each individual ship. Once the DC-3 hit the market (actually, I guess it was more likely the DC-2), Ford decided to exist the aircraft business due to the Depression, and concentrate on automobiles.

I was unaware of the use of the DC-3 as a zero-gravity simulator. I'll have to recheck my Flash Gordon serials to see if I can spot that sequence. I don't recall where it might have turned up in the story plots (altho maybe the sequence when the floating city of the Hawkman begins to plunge to its doom might be appropriate for some zero-gee shots).

The Hugo Gernsback mag *Science & Invention* was noted for offering not only up-to-the-minute scientific information, but also a considerable amount of maybe-it-will-work speculative science, a bunch of it extremely speculative. It's easy, nearly a hundred years later, to point out to the successful or almost successful predictions, but most of the issues I have are also full of fantastic concepts that have never become reality and likely never will. I have a pile of those mags, and recently bought a CD with a whole bunch of other issues scanned in. They still make interesting reading, even in this modern age, and the issues were profusely illustrated. I'll probably be cribbing a few more of those illos for future issues of *Fadeaway*///

Dale Speirs; Calgary, Alberta CANADA opuntia57@hotmail.com

On the subject of ebooks, I highly recommend www.gutenberg.org for free public domain books and magazines. They do have a few pulp magazines by issue. Lots of obscure stuff which I generally find by searching for a subject or theme and adding the word 'fiction'. The material is available in a variety of formats. I download as html in Firefox Mozilla, then use the browser's "Page/Save as pdf" function.

Another good location is www.archive.org, which I use for finding old-time radio shows. These can be downloaded as free mp3s. The shortcut to OTR listings

is: <https://archive.org/browse.php?field=subject&mediatype=audio&collection=oldtimeradio>

www.efanzines.org is a good site of course, where I post my zine OPUNTIA. www.fanac.org is a treasure trove of old fanzines and convention reports.

N3F began as a welcoming committee for new fans but I wonder if it couldn't adapt a bit by helping electronic fans. For example, SF books and magazines posted at Gutenberg Project are mostly at random. N3F could organize systematic projects to preserve palaeo-SF literature by theme or magazine title. I see a few people are working on specific authors. The Fanac people can advise what materials they need.

I have scanned the pitiful few Calgary zines I have from before 1980 (I moved here in 1978) but there is a pocket universe of Cowtowners who are forgotten because no written record remains. I'm sure the same situation applies in many other places. *Litera scripta manet*.



///Turning old books or magazines into electronic files is a lot of work, altho new book scanning gadgets exist these days that make the process a lot easier. The problem is that those gadgets cost good money and still need dedicated hands to operate them effectively.

These days a lot of the work of preserving old out of copyright material has fallen to universities or operations like the Hathi Trust. A considerable amount of this material is posted on the online ebook library at: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/new.html> Most of this material is of no real interest to readers of fantastic literature, being heavy into early religious, legal, medical and engineering material.

On the other hand, Rutgers' University and the University of Minnesota are scanning thousands of dime novels and story papers, and posting them for free on their websites, and also making the text only versions (with a scan of the front cover) available to Gutenberg.org.

The N3F is trying to locate all fanzines ever published under the auspices of the club, scanning the material, and sending it along to the fanac.org site. So far as scanning other fanzines, the University of Georgia has a tremendous selection of fanzines (including the extensive collection of Ned Brooks, and a complete run of all SFPA mailings) that they are trying to organize.

In my opinion, anyone seriously interested in preserving fan history in digital form would be better to contact Gilbert Head, who is in charge of the Univ GA effort and ask what kind of help he needs. Mostly they need money to hire people to do the digital work and organize their boxes of fanzines, but he is also interested in obtaining copies of any fanzines not in the collection already. Gilbert can be reached at edhead@uga.edu. You might consider sending him the scans you did of the Calgary fanzines you processed.///



Brad Foster; PO Box 165245; Irving, TX 75016

I was indeed starting to wonder if you had given up pubbing (and hoping it was nothing bad), considering how regularly *Fadeaway* had been appearing in my mailbox. I was starting think of it as how *Fadeaway* had, indeed, faded away.... So a very nice surprise to find the new issue waiting on my weekly trip by the post office.

And, certainly can understand the reason for the delay, as you outlined in the issue. Life has a tendency to get in the way sometimes of letting us do what we want to do. Pub when and if you can, certainly not going to complain on this end if it is not a "regular" schedule!

I did note you wrote both "I am concerned about postage costs and printing costs", followed in the next paragraph with "I can afford to foot the printing/postage costs of this fanzine..." So, not sure if that is or is not a concern. I know I appreciate the time, effort, and costs that any fanzine editor puts into getting a physical copy of their zine to me. Indeed, I feel compelled to try to respond when such an effort is made, whereas, when I just stumble across a zine on efanzine, less of a feeling that I -have- to respond in any way.

By the way, I know I have seen pubs that do both on-line and in-print versions, and they go ahead and take advantage of the opportunity to have color on-line, but still print in b&w to keep those costs down. It would always be nice to see the color in the print version as well, but certainly not required.

Which makes me think of one example, not so much a fanzine as a small-press pub, but definitely a title you should look into (and, most likely, already have), as it seems to have the kind of content I think you would enjoy. It's called "The Digest Enthusiast", 7 issues so far, and some wonderful reading there. (I've even done an illo of two for them.) You can get info on back issues here: <http://larquepress.com/digests/>

The Dill Ovals on Burnt Onion Records? Yeah, pull the other one.

Was surprised how involved I was in reading Dale's reminiscence on libraries in his past, then realized that just showed what a book nut I also am: of course I would find it interesting! I have nothing like his fantastic memory of my past like that, but do recall the earliest cool library was -not- the tiny one at the Catholic elementary school I started out in, but the San Antonio City Library Bookmobile that would show up once a week up the street, and which I would raid each time it arrived. Worked my way through the kids sf, but salivated to get to the "adult" section as well. I think the fact I was reading so many huge books, not the "usual" thin kids books, the librarian there let me start checking out the adult stuff as well.

Dale's comment about authors who gave their stories "drag titles", and thus he would overlook them at first, struck home in a different way. When I am scanning the close-out shelves of the local Half Price Books,

where books get their final offerings at \$1- \$3, things are pulled off based solely on that title I see on the spine. An interesting title will at least get you a first look over.

On your article "Sinister Madonna", I think your opening description of the character of Doctor Fu Manchu is the most sympathetic take on his ultimate goals I have ever seen. I know that I have had discussions with people where, when they ask about what the "best" form of government would be, I always hold it is a "benevolent dictatorship". Unfortunately, they seem to zero in on the "dictatorship" part of that description, and totally ignore the "benevolent" part of it.

And regarding the Sumuru character not considering herself to be an evil person-- reminds me of something I heard last year or so, I believe it was an ex CIA agent who was talking about the people she had dealings with, and noted that: "No one thinks they are the bad guy."

Oh, and I have certainly heard of "Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang" before, but had never encountered the tagline "explosion of pedigreed bunk" before. When I saw that illo on page 25, I figured it was some sort of "joke" cover someone had done recently... then, doing my due diligence, found out that it actually -was- a real tagline on the magazine. The things one learns. I so much want to steal that and use it for a collection myself!

No new Zero Heroes to send this time. Also been lots taking up time recently had hoped to use for both reading and getting creative work finished. One day, one day, will get time back again and I can catch up on - all- the art projects I want to get to.

///Book titles are a constant source of aggravation so far as I am concerned. Clever titles often get a second glance, but a lot of SF/fantasy volumes have very mundane titles so it is hard to recognize the genre unless you know the author. This is where the paperback racks have it all over the hard covers. Until relatively recent times the hardback djs were very sedate, but the paperback editions always clearly identified what genre the book fit into with bright covers designed to attract their target audience. No matter how pedestrian the title may be, spaceships, aliens, ray guns, or even surrealistic blobs of color identified a SF book just as clearly as a guy wearing a bandanna and holding a blazing sixgun identified a western.

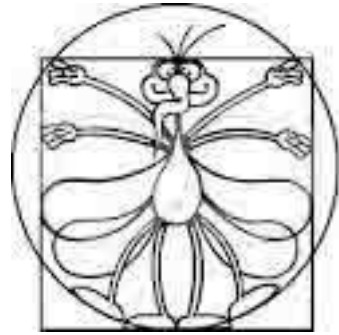
The problem is more acute when trying to figure out whether material published pre-1940 was actually SF/fantasy or not. Books like the Day Index and Tuck's were very useful to at least pointing out potential authors and titles. These days the online Speculative Fiction Index does a much better job, and helps to separate a writer's fantastic material from his mundane publishing efforts.

The problem with a benevolent dictatorship is that the dictator or king may not leave a viable heir when he retires, plus absolute rulers can abuse their powers with ease and very often do. Handing out sinecures and special favors to family and friends got a lot of kingdoms and dictatorships into plenty of trouble over the years. Despite the problems with democracy, I have to agree with Winston Churchill's assessment: "democracy is the worst form of Government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...."

I'm not so sure people do not regard themselves as evil when they do evil things. They may believe they are working for a greater good, but I think a lot of people feel great guilt at doing things they know are wrong, particularly when it comes to deliberately hurting people. I think a lot of people also wonder about the justification of the cause that is forcing them to do awful things. Was maintaining segregation worth beating/arresting/torturing/killing people protesting against racial segregation in the United States? Did racial purity justify murdering millions of Jews/gypsies/religious protesters/trade unionists in Nazi Germany? Was the unification of the communist state worth the punitive work gulags/purges/torture chambers/malicious internal secret police network Stalin established in Russia?

Lots of people in those situations decided that the ends did not justify the means; that those methods and plenty of other actions for the nebulous "cause" were wrong. Many refused to participate, and others broke ranks and tried to defect from the 'cause', while a good number of people who committed atrocities they knew were morally wrong suffered extreme guilt for their actions. History has shown that the primary motivating force for these kinds of 'causes' is fear, fear by the victims, and fear of reprisals by the people who follow the brutal directives of their leaders.///

OUR ESTEEMED ART STAFF & WHERE THEIR WORK MAY BE FOUND HEREIN:



BRAD FOSTER---Front cover & bacover,
pgs 4 thru 30 inclusive

John V. Cody---page 38

clip art from the internet---39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50

