



Journey Planet

*Season's
Greetings!*

Journey Planet



Season's Greetings 2021! Happy New Year 2022!

Cover—Sara Felix & Errick Nunnally

[Page 4: Art by Fia Karlsson](#)

[Page 5: Community Christmasses by Chris Garcia](#)

[Page 12: Words from Errick Nunnally](#)

[Page 14: 'Twas the Night Before Discon III by Shana Worthen](#)

[Page 17— Words from Marguerite Smith](#)

Page 17: Photo by Paul Weimer

Page 19: Photo courtesy Sara Felix

[Page 20: The Tomb of Dracula #84—'Twas the Night Before Christmas by Chuck Surface](#)

[Page 24: Where Eagles Dare by James Bacon](#)

[Page 25: Do You Wanna Build a Con Com? By Meg MacDonald](#)

Page 27: Photo courtesy Meg MacDonald

[Page 29: Lucasfilm Christmas Cards by James Bacon](#)

[Page 34: Christmas Ghosts: Past, Present, and Future](#)

[By Lisa Macklem](#)

[Page 36: Merry GrimmMas by Helena Nash](#)

[Page 37: My Dream Holiday Table by Chris Garcia](#)

Images created by Chris with WOMBO Dream

[Page 43: Tamales and Tradition by Sara Felix](#)

[Page 44: Of Hot Buttered Rum and Catamounts](#)

[By Tammy Coxen](#)

[Page 47 : A Wild Boar recipe by Nicholas Whyte](#)

[Page 49: Christmas Cards by James Bacon](#)

[Page 57: Christmas and SFF by Errick Nunnally](#)

[Page 60: A 1972 Christmas Card from Michael Carroll](#)

[Page 61: Words from Anne Gray](#)

[Page 63: Christmas Card from Craig Miller, Drawn by](#)

[Linda Miller](#)

[Page 64: Mugby Junction by James Bacon](#)

[Page 70: Journey Planet: 2022 New Year's Wishes](#)

Featuring Team Journey Planet, RWW Greene, Farah Mendlesohn, Cristina Jurado, Charlaïne Harris, Mary Robinette Kowal, Elizabeth McCarty, James Patrick Kelly, Erin Underwood, C.S.E. Cooney, Carlos Hernandez, Kevin Roche, Fonda Lee, Steven H Silver

[Page 72 : Words from Siobhan Greaney](#)

[Page 74: A look towards 2022 – Something of a Year-Enditorial by Chris](#)

[Page 76: Enditorial by James Bacon](#)

Page 76: Journey Planet logo by Sara

Felix Page 78: photo by Olav Rokne &

Amanda Wakaruk

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James Bacon, Sara Felix, Chris Garcia,

Erin Underwood, and Errick Nunnally





Community Christmases
By Chris Garcia

'Twas the night before Christmas, and Chris' holiday spirit was low as the temperature of his long-forgotten coffee. It's 2021, y'all, can you blame me? I needed to bring things up to match 1/10th of the energy of the two miniature zumakins I call Benji & JohnPaul have for the holiday. I tucked them in to their beds... well, put the blankets over them as they cuddled into the space under their beds in front of the dressers. For some reason, they prefer it down there. I went to my laptop, and fired up Hulu, as our ancestors once had, and found the show that I love more than any other – *Community*.

Community, the masterwork of the Dirtbag DaVinci Dan Harmon, is a sitcom that is both highjinx and higher concept. It's comedy that mines pop culture, makes references to deep cuts that even go beyond my deep-diving into the subject. It's a show that has done episodes centered around parodying *Law & Order*, *A Few Good Men*, *My Dinner with Andre*, and even *Zodiac*. It's funny, and it's smart, and it's the kind of show that obsessives like myself are bound to obsess over because the Harmon & co. are as obsessive about pop culture as we are.

The basic idea of the show is a crew of very different people form a Spanish 101 study group at Greendale Community College who quickly become more like a strange family. The leader is Jeff Winger, a disbarred lawyer who has to get his degree for real. There's Annie, a young woman who suffered a nervous breakdown and Adderall addiction after years striving to be the best student. Troy is a former jock and prom king who's kinda dumb, and his best friend, Abed, is a pop culture obsessed film student who is largely an encyclopedia. There's Britta, the stoner ex-anarchist, Shirley, the single mom who wants to market her baked goods, and Pierce, a wealthy 60-something who is the baby boomer of the group, with all that that entails.



There were 6 *Community* seasons, though only 3 had Christmas episodes, because NBC refused to keep them in a proper schedule that had an episode in December, depriving this Jew who loves Christmas of his Christmas! Well, they actually had 4, but the 4th, featuring Malcolm McDowell, was from season 4—The Gas Leak Season, and thus doesn't count.

The first Christmas episode was actually the simplest, and arguably the funniest straight episode of the series up to that point. The episode starts on December 10th, the last day of Fall semester, with Greendale, a college desperately trying to give the traditional joy of Christmas, while being exceptionally PC. We are treated to the Dean, played by Oscar-winner Jim Rash, making an announcement that “Non-denominational Mr. Winter” will be ar-



iving, in a Santa-like way to the cafeteria. As there are cookies in the cafeteria, Abed has gone to pick up the Christmas tree cookies, when meathead jock Mike, played by a ripped-to-the-gills Anthony Michael Hall, bumps into Abed, and that brings Jeff in to defend him. At the same time, Shirley, our Christian single-mom, has planned a party for her one remaining whole family: the study group, and she learns that they are all of different religions. After Mike bursts into their Spanish class, humiliates Jeff by correcting his Spanish, he challenges him to a fight, which the insane Spanish teacher, Señor Chang, allows. Jeff's never been in a fight, so the males of the study group get together to train him. Once

Shirley finds out that Jeff is going to fight Mike, she tries to shame him and then bans him from her party. Of course, Jeff goes to fight, the party happens and ends up breaking down when everyone wants to see Jeff's fight. They go, and Shirley ends up joining in, likely to try and talk Jeff down, but then when Mike sucker punches him, declares, "Jeffrey, kick his ass," and the entire group starts a massive brawl with Mike and his friends.

Now, that is a fairly simple story, but it's the little touches that moves it so far up the comedy chain. There's this classic exchange

Mike: "Knock-knock, my fist up your balls."

Jeff: "Who's there?"

Shirley's hard-core Christianity bumping up against the multiple religious backgrounds of her study group supplies a lot of absolute madcap comedy. Shirley is a judgment machine, and the way she treats everyone else's faith as silliness compared to hers is hilarious, especially when she discovers that her closest friend in the study group, Annie, is Jewish. We're also introduced to Pierce's religion – a form of Buddhism in which he is a "level four Laser Lotus."

The script is tight, and the performances are top-notch. The study group team is fantastic, as always, but it's the exceptionally smart balance between being the meathead who is out of his depth, and just uber-amped chucklehead. Anthony Michael Hall has played the nerd in so many ways, but here's he's so great as the bully.

The fight is another brilliant thing, because while it's not a long montage, it's perfectly timed and set to Florence + The Machine's *Kiss with a Fist*, and we see what happens when the study group comes together.

One of the funnier things, and the indication that Shirley has come around a bit is the song she sings after the fight that goes as follows –

Sensible night, appropriate night.

Snow on ground, left and right.

Round yon purchase of decorative things.

Tolerant rewrite of carols to sing.

Function with relative ease,

Function with relative ease.



While the comedy does have some simple comedy writing. Britta keeps saying that fighting is gay, which leads Abed to having the funniest line I've ever heard – "She's got a point. You know, in boxing you fight for the purse and the belt."

The series did end tags after the final commercial, and this one was the study group decorating Troy and singing, "O, Christmas Troy."

All in all, it's a lot of fun, and while it doesn't move the season forward much, other than introducing that Annie is Jewish and Pierce is in a cult, it's an incredibly solid episode, and one that got my Christmas

spirit flowing.

The second season saw one of the most complex episodes of the series to that point – *Abed's Uncontrollable Christmas*. It's the first episode I nominated for the Hugo because it counted. It's a bizarre, super-intelligent, multi-phase episode that changed the way the series dealt with Abed, and ultimately everyone else. It's in the style of those old Bass-Rankin Christmas specials, specifically *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *Frosty the Snowman*. Abed is having an episode, disassociative in nature, and thus, everyone has turned into the armature dolls that populated those Christmas specials. The study group, assisted by Prof. Ian Duncan (played by the great/English John Oliver), the group goes into the study room along with Abed's delusions. It's a fascinating idea, and I could imagine actual shrinks throwing remotes at their TVs as they simply play into it.

The story in the delusion is about Abed leading his friends to Planet Abed, where they adventure on the Christmas train to the North Pole. Along the way, Duncan keeps trying to get Abed to let out why he's in this world and to accept his therapy offer. Instead, the study group helps him by being themselves, only as animated toys. This reveals their true nature, and the love they share for one another even when it bounces off their personal belief system, which is a theme shared with the previous Christmas episode.

Where it gets great is when the reveal happens, Duncan leaves and goes to Abed's dorm room where



he finds a letter saying that Abed's mother won't be visiting as she has every other year, because she's got a new family she's going to be with. Abed become frozen in ice when Duncan tells him this in his Rankin-Bass world, but then the study group starts to sing a Christmas song and that thaws him. It also helps that we hear a scuffle in the actual study room that is Jeff and Troy physically dragging Duncan out of the study room while Annie deploys a Christmas Pteradactyl to remove him in the Christmas special world.

See... layers!

This episode changed the way that everyone is portrayed, and especially how Abed is seen as increasingly fragile, but how the rest of the group props him up is both loving and limiting. This theme continues with a bit of a crescendo when Troy (Donald Glover) leaves Greendale, which is a shockingly emotional episode, partly because the framing device is a school-wide game of The Floor is Lava. Here, we see the entire arc that Abed will take laid out, and they spend three seasons paying it off.

There are a few fun songs, and the animation is cute, and the episode is a masterclass in how you set up a new character arc with an established character.

That brings us one year into the future, well, into 2011. The third and final Christmas episode is *Regional Holiday Music*, and yes, it's a musical. I will also go out on the limb and say this is the single best parody done of both *Glee*, which is the framing device, and Christmas episodes in general. It's a 'we've gotta save the orphanage by putting on a show!' story, except instead of an orphanage, it's a glee club that is committed following a collective nervous breakdown after being served with ASCAP licensing papers. I think you'll agree the idea is the same. Glee club coach Cory Radisson, played by the incredible Taran Killam, approaches the study group to replace the Glee club, who have died in a bus accident. It was revealed in a previous episode that they had previously filled in for the Glee club after a fatal bus crash, so they were the natural choice, no? They pass on the offer, but Mr. Radisson starts with Abed, getting him to turn to the Glee side by playing a singing a song called... wait for it... *Glee*. It works and Abed goes about recruiting everyone else through song, starting with Troy, a Jehova's Witness, who he lures using a rap song, which is fucking awesome, largely because Donald Glover himself has a massive career as Childish Gambino, one of the best things going in hip-hop today.



Troy and Abed get Pierce with a song designed to appeal to his Baby Boomer arrogance, and then Pierce gets Shirley by bringing in a children's choir to sing a song about The War on Christmas. That alone is the smartest thing that Dan Harmon ever came up with. It's not the idea that Christmas is good and right, but that Christmas is being held back just like all the Christians are in modern day America that springs Shirley into action. It's an impressive statement on the way that Christians view their place, and how they can be manipulated. This was also before 2016, which is where this could be most easily seen.



Annie, played by Alison Brie of *Glow* fame, basically uses her sexiness to bring Jeff in, which is through a song *Teach Me How To Understand Christmas*, which is basically one of those sexy woman Christmas songs taken to the ultimate degree. The sexual tension that the series had been developing between Annie and Jeff is exploited here in a brilliant, and creepy, way.

Ultimately, they're all in, but as the performance is coming, Abed realizes what it is that he's signed on to, and knows he has to kill the show, which he does by having Britta, who was assigned to be a mute tree, become the head singer, which does, in fact, kill the show.

My favorite moment is the end. Harmon and co. had created a Dr. Who rip-off... I mean homage, called Inspector Spacetime. It's a great idea, as he's a space constable with a partner who travels in a phone-booth, which is cool. Abed goes home to watch the 1981 Inspector Spacetime Holiday Special, which, according to Abed, was so bad the creator had his Knighthood revoked.

It's a straight-up parody of the *Star Wars Holiday Special* (which I continue to believe is a little piece of magic) right down to the idea of the holiday, Life Day in Star Wars and Time Day to Inspector Spacetime, and the weird holographic musical number. It's a like twenty second gag, but it's genius. I'd go so far as to say it's genius.

Taken as a whole, these three are everything that makes *Community* great. It's character development, strange plots, a love for pop culture, a strange sense that everything is or can be genre, and most important, that stories only have to make sense within the confines of the individual episode. That is so freeing, and while cynics will poo-poo it, I will say that makes the series a formalist's dream.

And I am nothing if not a formalist.





Words from Erick Nunnally

What makes the season feel right to you?

Christmas wasn't a big deal with my parents. We had it several times until I got older, maybe in double digits. My dad always felt that it was for children and they weren't particularly religious, so... I've spent many a Christmas with little to nothing to do. Coming home from the Marines was simply coming home. I did spend plenty of time with my extended family, aunts, uncles, cousins, but certain events put that fire out by the time I reached my 30s. It meant a great deal to me when I met my wife and started participating in her family's traditions. She has an enthusiasm for the holidays that I'd always missed. Now that we have children, it has been even more fun to share with them over the years. As I've gotten older, I look forward to Christmas more and more. I like the quiet and I especially enjoy the way this season cools off society's hot spots and rounds the sharp edges a bit. As a society with very little in the way of shared culture, Christmas is one of the few things a majority of Americans seem to get behind, in practice.

Do you have a favourite Film or TV programme you always watch and why?

We always look out for modern holiday films. Every year, the medium gets closer to the multicultural, pluralistic society this really is—despite political rhetoric. This is a large population with many different kinds of people. Films like Jingle Jangle, Klaus, Love Hard, and The Christmas Chronicles are a joy.

Favourite foods that make it wonderful for you.

Cinnamon rolls on Christmas morning are a must. A lot of work, but a must! Otherwise, there's plenty of hot chocolate, teas, other baked goods, and twelve days of small gifts that we give to each other and that usually feature snacks of some sort.

Seasonal fiction

I don't revisit a particular story, but I would like to share this themed charity collection:

Winter Animals

<https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/B00HL3ZE46/>

Four stories from the members of The Boston Mad Dogs writing group meant to give you a little extra chill this winter and bring a touch of warmth to others left out in the cold. Christopher Irvin, Errick Nunnally, KL Pereira, and Bracken MacLeod have crafted tales of December creatures in styles ranging from noir, fantasy, magical realism, and crime thriller, all for a single cause. 100% of the author proceeds from the sale of this chapbook will be donated to [PROTECT.ORG](https://www.protect.org/), to support the mission of lobbying for effective legislation to protect children from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Featuring cover art by Joe DellaGatta and a Foreword by Thomas Pluck, author of *Blade of Dishonor*.



Twas the Night Before DisCon JJJ — By Shana Worthen



Twas the night before DisCon. Throughout the hotel
volunteers were MIMO'ing. Excitement did swell!
The fans all flew in, or drove there or took trains,
while thoughts of the program ran 'round in their brains.
On Discord, the virtual members arrived,
self-catering drinks that they each had contrived.
At the front desk they checked in, or else on the net.
Some sat on the chairs near th'electric outlet.

Then down the long hall there arose so much chat,
that I sprang from my chair to see what was that?
Through archways, past plant pots, I slipped through the throng
as the loud murmuration came strolling along.
The light from the chandeliers glinted and shone
on the screens of those still gazing down at their phone.
When what to my speculative gaze then appeared
but the whole committee, whether virtual or here,

with a confident woman so debonaire,
I knew in a flash that she must be the chair!

More distracted than chickens, her team waxing sage,
while new complications their thoughts did engage.
“On Shepherd, Kovalcik, Daneroff, and Beaton
On Bogonrief, Nisbet, Lucas, Mendlesohn
With Green and with Bauer, with Smith and with Snow
and with hundreds of others, mere hours to go!”

As clocks slow right before the wild rumpus arrives,
when there’s too much to do and one bedtime defies,
so down to the lobby – they meant to have drinks –
but with too much to do before their forty winks.
And then in a twinkling I heard a phone ring,
while a child squeezed by, filkers started to sing.
As I turned back to see, was just turning around,
the near-future appeared ‘fore my eyes with no sound.

The con suite filled with sandwiches, soda pop cans.
The newspapers covered the presence of fans.
The Hugos awarded in clear ASL,
and lecturers entertained crowds just as well.
Artists inspired short stories to come.
Laughter ensued at th’Sf Singalong.
Duke Ellington’s choir proved the techies’ best friends.
A dealer sold out of their specialist pens.
A long line for autographs leads to, some day,
a wedding ‘twixt two friends who first met that way.
The WSFS meeting concluded with laughs.

The best-beloved workshop involved lots of crafts.
Site Selection inspired new fanzines to pub.
The newsletter covered some excellent grub.
The Nommos rewarded fantastic beliefs.
Some feelings ran high at the daily debrief.
A ribbon collection's lost under a couch.
A treasurer put the wrong slip in their pouch.
Masked parties proved popular, offline and on.
A future con chair attended her first con.

The chair of the current one raises a cup.
She toasts all the fans who have built this con up,
with a strong CoC and events simulcast,
"Have a wonderful con! Here's to DisCon – at last!"





Words from Marguerite Smith

The convention is only over 24 hours now. How are you doing?

Simultaneously exhausted and excited! As I explained to a friend, I actually got the same amount of sleep as I normally would, or a bit more, but I was more tired. It was a wonderful experience, though.

Can you tell us how you were recruited to Discon III?

Which time? (I would be laughing here if it weren't purely text!) I was first recruited to DisCon III in January 2021, when Nicholas Whyte took on the WSFS Division Head role. He asked me to join as his deputy, to help with the administrative side of things. For various reasons, that division resigned from the convention in June, and I planned to be in DC as an attendee. However, after Mary Robinette Kowal took on the Chair position,

she realised that she needed Vice Chairs to help her create the convention DC deserved. She reached out to me at the end of August and asked me to be her Vice Chair responsible for the functional or "back of house" parts of the convention. At the same time, she had asked Lauren Raye Snow to be her Vice Chair responsible for the conceptual or "front of house" parts.

What were your favourite moments in the run up to the convention?

My favourite moments are probably related to the idea of "confelicity", which is the concept of delight in others' happiness. I loved seeing the team rebuild their confidence and excitement. I was happy as I watched people express their excitement about attending DC, whether that was in person or online.

Can you share with us your favourite moments during the convention itself?

One highlight was definitely the Hugo / Lodestar / Astounding Awards Ceremony. I absolutely adored being one of the "Vannas" on stage, handing rockets to the winners and getting to see their excitement up close. I was also lucky enough to be the presenter for the Semiprozine category and got to announce FIYAH's win, which was wonderful.

You faced many challenges, as a team, what did you learn about yourself during those?

I learned a few things from our challenges, each with positives and negatives. I tend toward a "trust, but verify" method of management, which many people appreciate. On the other hand, I need to watch out for people who need more support but aren't comfortable asking for it, so that they have what they need. Other things I learned: I will stand up for my principles, I have high expectations of myself and my team, I have a strong vision for where I want things to go, I can be impatient, I can take a too-high-level view of things, and I will pour myself into getting things done.

What do you think worked well?

With the caveat that nothing is perfect, I think that we managed to bring a real sense of DC to the convention. We were organising from around the world, and yet that particular convention could only have happened in DC. We worked very hard to have DC present in everything we did while trying to keep the things that define a Worldcon.

How did the 'curse' impact you? and can you explain that to readers?

On top of the pandemic, it seemed that everything else was also going wrong, both for the convention and the volunteers working on it. The Marriott Wardman Park, the main hotel, went bankrupt. We had contractual obligations which limited what we could do in response. We had several high profile staff resignations. We had a surprisingly high number of family illnesses and, even more sadly, deaths. The omicron variant came out at such a time that it put new pressures on us and anyone who wanted to attend in person. Even during the convention itself, we had a few disruptions! The most prominent of those was the technical malfunction during our Hugo Awards Ceremony rehearsal, which was so severe that we had to delay the start by an hour and were looking at moving the ceremony to another room.

What self care do you intend to deploy now?

I am currently visiting family in California, which is a delight. I can't say that the convention work has stopped, neither for DC nor for the other conventions I'm working on, but I'm limiting it to the true necessities until January. I'm also catching up on all of the sleep I was missing, between conventions and the day job pressures.

For those who know the "Jeans and Jorts" internet saga, I also treated myself, my sister, and my brother-in-law to a round of Hot Buttered Jorts as a bit of additional tasty comfort.

What seasonal festivities do you enjoy?

I love catching up with my family, viewing lights in the darkness, and the smell of evergreen trees. One of the things I did for myself last year, when I couldn't travel and was spending the year-end on my own, was to buy a very fragrant wreath and hang it on the door to my living room / work area, so I passed it several times a day.

What signifies these for you, are there are any particular films, stories, or activities that you partake in at this time of year, that makes it feel right, and can you chat through those please

Unusually for me, I have very few specific activities for myself. I know that my sister has listened to the Tim Curry audiobook of *A Christmas Carol* each year for several years, for example. I sometimes use any "down time" I have to write letters and create envelope art, but that's not always a seasonal activity. The closest I have is probably the association with scents. I mentioned the smell of evergreens earlier, but when I was growing up, the house was always freshly cleaned and then full of the smells of seasonal baking: cinnamon, vanilla, cloves, nutmeg, molasses, maple, and so on. I don't need to smell these items in order to feel like the season is happening, but sometimes they throw me back to pleasant memories.

What is your favourite Film at this time of year and why?

A tough question! I don't have one I particularly rewatch, but I will generally go for a "type": they don't have to be romance movies, but they have that "happy ever after" feeling at the end without inducing tears. (My television watching is far more varied—this is when I have time to binge the things I've been missing, so I'll watch things like *The Witcher*, *Wheel of Time*, *Lupin*, *The Mandalorian* and the *Book of Boba Fett*, *the School of Chocolate*, and more "actual play" broadcasts of video games and tabletop role-playing games.

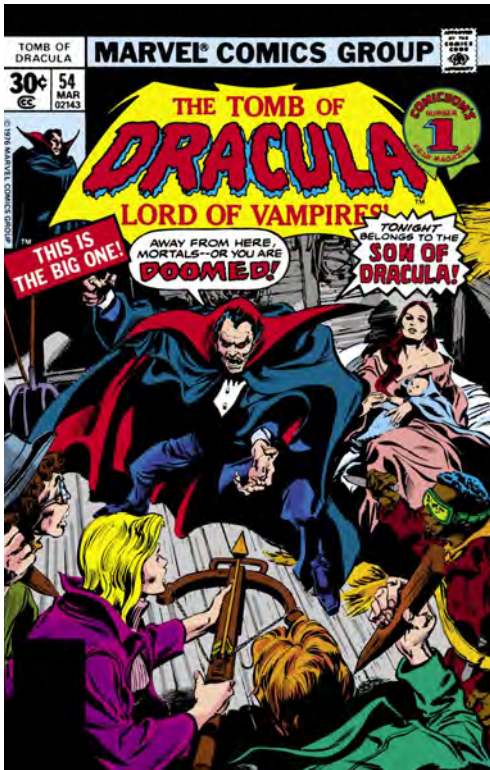


Do you enjoy the cards and post, and if so why?

Oh I do, very much! I try very hard to send post throughout the year, but I like that the year-end seems to draw out everyone's card & letter habits. There's something so pleasant about finding something waiting for you from a friend, where they've taken the time to write something for you.

What are your hopes for 2022?

In terms of Worldcons, I'm working on the bids for Glasgow in 2024 (vote at Chicon 8!) and Dublin 2029, so I hope that those continue strongly. I also hope to dedicate more time to my own art, my health, and my friendships. More widely, I am hoping for happiness for friends and family, including all of Journey Planet's contributors and readers, further effort in distributing vaccines worldwide, and that people are successful in taking care of themselves and each other.



The Tomb of Dracula #54

"Twas the Night Before Christmas"

By Chuck Serface

Horror-themed holiday stories, whether filmed or penned, are nothing new, but clearly, I'm obsessed with 1970s Marvel horror comics and can't resist talking about them. I own all available omnibus collections, and I've written multiple articles where I mention how during the early 1970s the Comics Code Authority loosened its restrictions against horror comics, stating:

Vampires, ghouls, and werewolves shall be permitted to be used when handled in the classic tradition such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and other high calibre literary works written by Edgar Allen Poe, Saki, Conan Doyle, and other respected authors whose works are read in schools around the world.

Seeing their chance, Marvel released titles reflecting classic traditions but progressing well beyond simple adaptations, eventually folding each monster into their overall universe. Central titles include *The Monster of Frankenstein*, *Werewolf by Night*, and arguably the greatest horror comic ever, *The Tomb of Dracula*, which ran from 1972 until 1979, lasting 70 issues.

Over this period, Marvel's Dracula tangles with Doctor Strange, Spider-Man, and the Silver Surfer. To no one's shock, however, he mostly combats vampire hunters, one his descendant and others the descendants of past enemies. Among them is Blade the Vampire Hunter, who first appeared in *The Tomb of Dracula* #10 (1973) and since has become a popular Marvel hero and film franchise.

The narrative achieves peak excellence beginning with issue #45, when Dracula discovers the Church of the Damned, a Boston-based satanic cult led by High Priest Anton Lupeski, who'd been performing a ceremony, a symbolic wedding between Satan and a church member, Domini. An opportunist through and through, Dracula enters the scene, quickly convincing the congregation that he's the Dark Lord and marrying

Domini himself. He assumes power, demotes Lupeski to toady, recruits wealthy members, and builds a formidable organization. It's a power junky's dream writ large. To cement his dynasty, Dracula has Lupeski perform a magical rite that will impregnate Domini with his child, since vampires can't procreate through sex. An immaculate birth? I'm not sure which word best replaces "immaculate," but series writer Marv Wolfman and artist Gene Colan have begun an arc featuring Christian references that will resonate throughout issue #54, a holiday special entitled, "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Christmas Eve arrives, and Domini's ready to deliver her and Dracula's child. So, "immaculate" birth and Christmas Eve – Wolfman and Colan are obvious with their associations, but thankfully they don't delve too heavily into Matthew and Luke. Domini wants her child born in the church Dracula leads, since it's where the magical conception occurred. Dracula demurs at first, because the church houses a portrait of Christ he can't remove. But Dracula relents. He loves his wife and can deny her nothing. With Lupeski's help, off they go.

Alas, no Magi bearing gifts travel from the East. Instead, Dracula's enemy Rachel Van Helsing learns from Lupeski, who despises Dracula, where the couple are birthing their child, and goes to the location. Once there, she tips off her colleagues - Frank Drake, Harold H. Harold, and Blade - but tries confronting Dracula alone, winding up instead bound and imprisoned by Lupeski who acts upon his busy master's orders. The team must rescue her, then move together against Dracula. Knowing his enemies are near, Dracula carries Domini from the church to a barn, placing her where she'll be safest ... in a manger. No need for explication here.



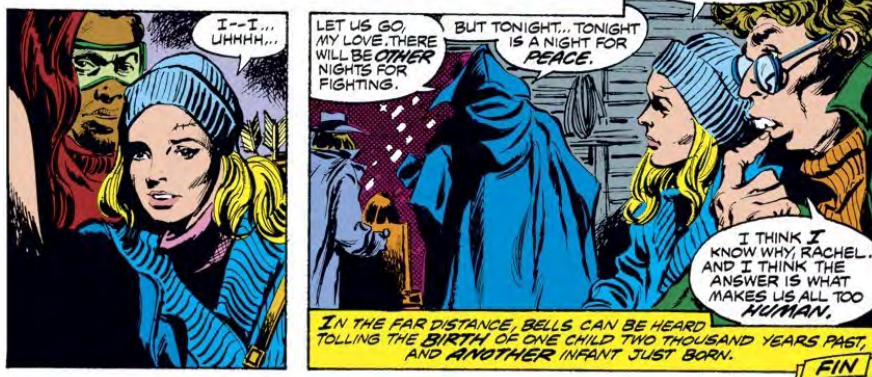
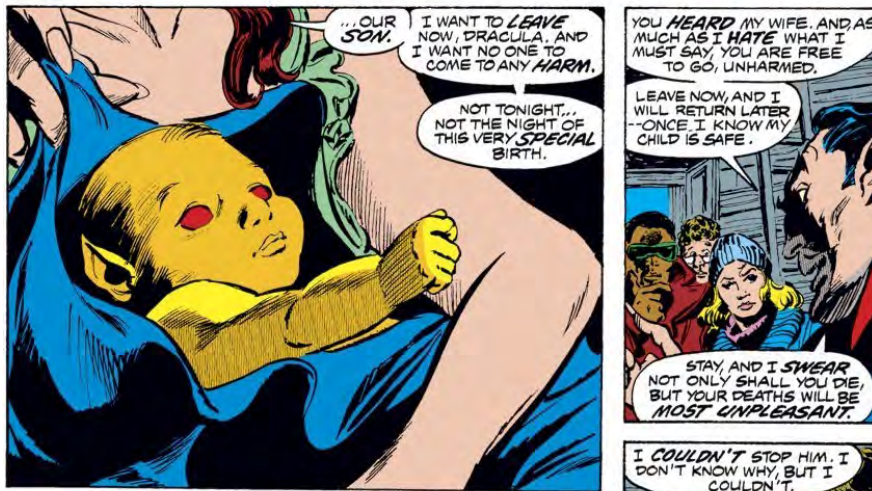


The hunters attack as the baby's head crowns. A skirmish ensues, but soon we hear a newborn cry, and a Mary-esque Domini orders a ceasefire, telling the hunters to leave peacefully. She wants no one harmed on "the night of this very special birth." Dracula and his enemies agree, and all parties exit in separate directions. Dracula even says to Domini, "Let us go, my love. There will be other nights for fighting. But tonight . . . tonight is a night for peace."

Peace? Dracula? A Christmas miracle?

Don't believe the vampire lord's small heart grew three sizes that night. Domini's love has mellowed him but not permanently. Indeed, his son's unusual skin tone reminds Dracula of a golden angel he'd battled before. In later issues, readers will see how this plays out when the Church of the Damned meets a stunning end like many cults do.

For one evening, though, all experience a brief armistice – hunter, vampire, and reader – and Wolfman and Colan with their weird Nativity-related symbology help us celebrate the holiday spirit, "what," according to Harold H. Harold, "makes us all too human."

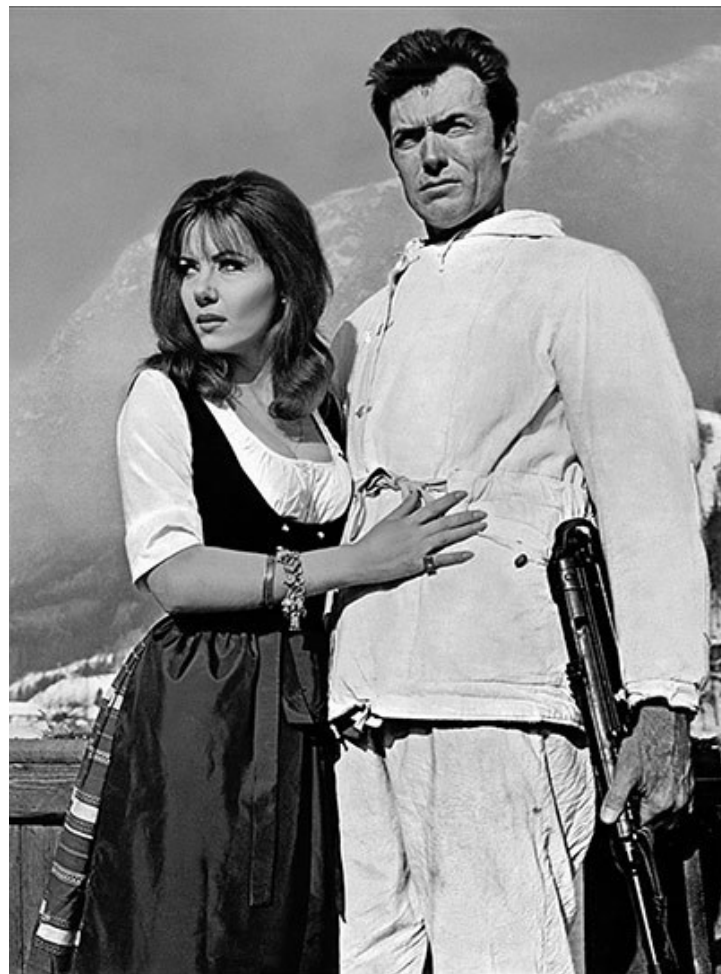


Where Eagles Dare

By James Bacon

'*Broadsword* and Danny Boy had a special meaning to us.' And with those worlds, uttered from the altar of Aughrim St Church, everyone understood, as my father lay in his coffin. weeks from Christmas, a little about the man and our favourite Christmas Film, which required mentioning as we bade farewell, its significance and import, not just worthy of note, but recognised throughout the somber and high-ceilinged building. There was no need to say much more than that.

There is something that is incredible about the Ron Godwin track, the snare drum beat, quietly rising, the alpine snow covered mountains, the red lettering of the stars in a gothic style and then the Aunt Ju, the Ju 52 flying and then the heavier bass drum beats, and then the heavy brass joining and rising in power, and the strings something intrinsically germanic about the music, something Goodwin was a genius with, his Aces High song from Battle of Britain, often thought to be an actual german march. And as it slows down with strings deepening and again the snare beat rising again, it just sends tingles through me, and when we would sit in the house, my brothers and Dad, as men, this would be the Christmas film of choice. Now *Ted* and *The Great Escape* would run close seconds, and indeed we enjoyed *The Great Escape* as so many people do, most years, but the decision often went to *Where Eagles Dare* as the Christmas Film and in 2012 *Ted* was the Big Picture and the support feature was *Where Eagles Dare*.



The music would resound, and we would take seats and the music brought smiles. And that is just the opening credits. The dynamic between Clint Eastwood and Richard Burton is incredible, reportedly Clint hated learning lines, so would ask Richard to do more, and he would just learn them off, and say them, while Mary Ure was brilliant in her role, and we should have seen more of Ingrid Pitt, yet the setting, the castle, the cable cars, the bus, and we won't mention the helicopter, the intrigue, it all worked really very well, an exciting and interesting film with good tension and a nice set up.

Where Eagles Dare was the film we watched at Christmas.

It had been preceded in prominence by *The Great Escape*, because that film was always on at Christmas and another favourite, to the degree that we had learned lines, and knew each moment, and also had a clear understanding of how much directorial licence had been taken with a film peppered with Americans, when there were barely any in Stalag Luft III, but despite having read Paul Brickhill's book repeatedly, and knowing there were inaccuracies with the film, we still loved Hicks so much, his baseball in the 'cooler'. Of course 50 POW's were murdered as a reprisal, and quite diverse, sadly lost were 20 British, 6 Canadian, 6 Polish, 5 Australian, 3 South African, 2 New Zealander, 2 Norwegian, 1 Argentinian, 1 Belgian, 1 Czechoslovak, 1 French, 1 Greek and 1 Lithuanian.

Where Eagles Dare just starts off as a War Film, the mission is set out but it is the men jumping out of a Junkers 52, and straight away having an issue, mystery, and then Burton lifting the notebook, the snowy mountains perfect. Then when Burton goes to the Barn to meet Mary Ure, the dialogue is brilliant, 'I thought you loved me' she says, to which he retorts, 'I can't help what you think' and then they eventually embrace, indicating a previous relationship. Clint cleaning his gun is fab, as Burton fails to make contact, and his line about the storm, just makes one wonder whether it is a cynical comment, his silence and professionalism continuous, allowing the viewer just to see how cool Clint is.



As they walk into town they cross railway tracks, which makes me smile, and then the action in the Bar is fab, clever, Burton is so devious, so in command, so confident, continually giving orders, and setting it out, although engaging Clint, and of course their conversation is not known to us. His clipped English accent unwavering in his orders.

Derren Nesbitt, who played Major Von Hapen, looked wrong in a pre-war black SS uniform, the Gestapo replacing the SS badge for blank when worn, and at this stage it would have been but there is much about

the grouping of medals and a Close Combat Clasp in gold, that he wears. These include German Cross in Gold, Iron Cross 1st Class and 2nd class, unusual one might suspect. Yet Darren Nesbit spoke about this.

He spoke to Brian Hutton and said 'Brian, you know the black uniform, you know that's not right' they never wore the black uniform in 1942 and he said 'wear it you look very beautiful' and he said they didn't have helicopters in 1942 and hutton responded 'they'll never know in Arkansas.'

He continued 'When I got all the medals, what I got was all wrong, I can't be having this, someone might be around who might remember.' He asked a hotel manager, that he would like to meet someone from the Gestapo and so he did, and he described his meeting and how the Gestapo man had a Close Combat Clasp in gold from Stalingrad. It's a fascinating story.

The postbus is an incredible device, the forward planning and setting up of explosives works so well and totally waylays the Germans.

The film though is cold to the end. Throughout Clint is a cold killer, saying little but shooting constantly, ready to kill Germans, Burton continuously has the viewer guessing a little and even at the end there is still time for intrigue.

Now I need to get to Werfen, the main location for filming. The medieval Hohenwerfen Castle is the Schloss Adler and Werfen itself the town at it's foot, with cable car, bus, train station and all the key locations. Zum Wilden Hirsche is in reality Villa Egger, Lofer Haus Egger, and this must be a place to call into.

For a beer.

Darren Nesbit interview from 2013.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POPOHUgC_1M&ab_channel=in70mm



Do You Want to Build A Con Com?

By Meg MacDonald



Do you wanna build a Con
Com?

C'mon, let's SMOFaway.

I hardly see you anymore,

That's what the all-staff's for...

Wait! Stop! Don't Run away.

We used to be DHs

But now we're not

Is your burnout still too high?

Do you wanna build a ConCom?

First it'd have to be a BidCom?

No Way!

Okay, bye.

Do you wanna build a Con Com?

Answer our volunteering calls.

I think some con-running is overdue

I've started talking to the 'Old

Pharts' in the halls.

'Hang in there, James.'

It gets a little lonely

All these empty roles.

Why don't you come and try?

SMOFS, I know you're out there
wanting to be seen.
This community belongs to you,
It's your convention too,
Just waiting to begin.

We only have each other
Just you and me
So what are we going to do?
Do you wanna build a Con Com?
Frist it has to be a Bid Com
(Yes)
Good... Me too!

Set to the tune of Disney's Do you Want Build a Snowman? From Frozen.
Filked by Meg MacDonald 3rd December 2021

Lucasfilm Christmas Cards by James Bacon

In 1977 Lucasfilm sent out Christmas Cards to people involved and connected to the company. The 1977 card featured R2 and C3PO with instruments, on a plain background, a piece by John Alvin that was subsequently used for a Star Wars concert poster. In 1978 Ralph McQuarrie had a rendition of the pair in front of a classic looking store front.

In 1980 we see R2 and C3PO helping Santa, this image also featured on a Christmas to the Stars album. Allegedly.

McQuarrie did incredible art work. 1981 and 82 featured Yoda, the later with a Santa Sleigh and US plate.



Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks" was adeptly parodied in 2005 by Erik Tiemens and Ryan Church for Lucasfilm's JAK Films. They were designers working for the company on the sequels.

Industrial Light & Magic artist Tyler Scarlet's beautiful group of bounty hunters singing carols was incredibly well done for 2013.

The Saturday Evening Post cover style is utilised by JP Balmet, and features Ezra and Zeb from *Rebels* in 2015.

2016 featured a 3D element, a pop up of 3 droids, K-2SO, R2-D2 and BB-8, designed by Industrial Light and magic concept artist Doug Chiang.

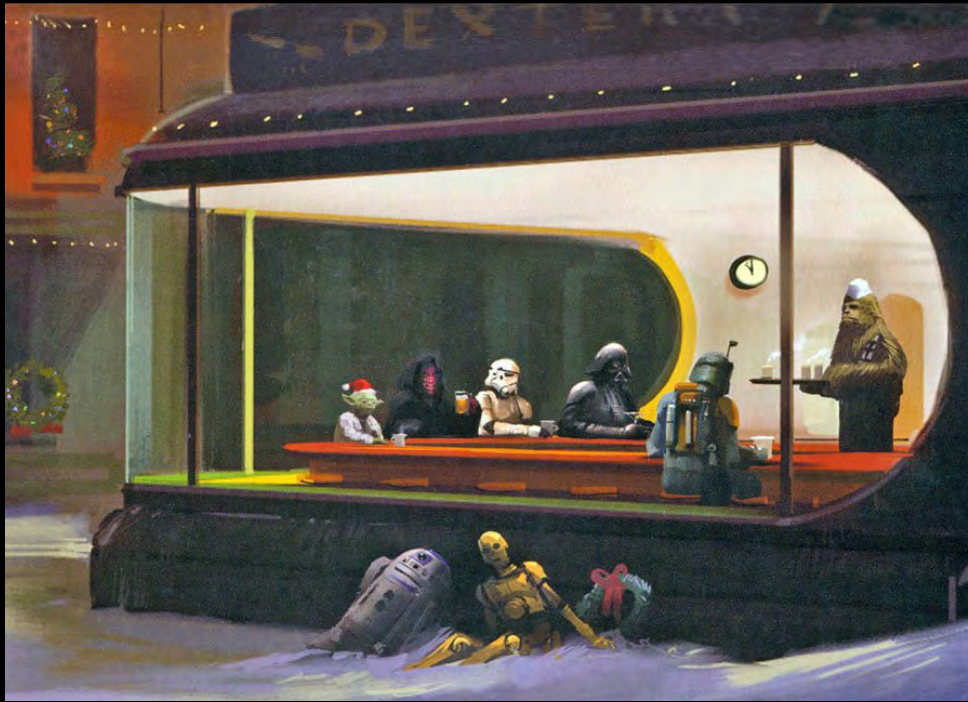
Christian Alzmann, another concept design artist, did an incredible Mandalorian and Grogu image in 2020 which coincided the release of the season 2 finale on 18th December.

This year's card, with a 50th notation and an interesting selection of characters, all quite current in the scheme of things, is also quite nice. With art by Amy Beth Christenson, I'm pretty certain that all those featured while from the past, have a future part to play, loke Eben the Loth cat.









Christmas Ghosts: Past, Present, and Future

By Lisa Macklem



They aren't wrong when they say that Christmas is for kids – whether you are one or have a few dozen of your own. Neither being one, nor owning any, Christmas has lost a bit of sparkle. It all seems like one long gallop, regardless of how early you start/finish shopping, and it doesn't help that as an academic, the 'holiday' lands squarely between the end of one semester and exams and the start of a new one. All that said, I do enjoy the challenge of finding the perfect gifts for those certain someones and try to squeeze in a few Christmas traditions: some old ones and some new. Never having been a fan of turkey and with only two of us for the actual dinner, we've pivoted to Cornish hens as a new tradition.

Presents always include a rather large stack of books. This year the stack was supplemented by a quick trip to The Beguiling in Toronto and a large number of graphic novels on my 'to read' list. I immediately stole *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe from my husband's pile. The books legitimately wrapped for Christmas, included *Fan Fiction* by Brent Spiner, *Graphic Justice* by Thomas Giddens, *The New World* by Chris Reynolds, and *Solutions and Other Problems* by Allie Brosh.

One Christmas staple for me is *A Christmas Carol*. I have fond memories of watching this with my Dad when very young – always the Alastair Sim's black and white version because anything else is just heresy! My father is responsible for igniting my interest in Dickens, though unfortunately, I didn't truly become a lover of Dickens until after my father had passed. How I wish I could be visited by his ghost so that we could discuss Dickens now!

As I got older, I would watch the movie while trimming the tree, drinking eggnog, and eating my mother's delicious shortbread. By this time, my father generally retired out of the general hustle and bustle to the little television he kept in his room.

This year, I've listened to *A Christmas Carol* twice – once last January recorded by Hugh Grant and once this Christmas recorded by Tim Curry. In fact, I've been sharing the Curry version with my husband as we drive about during the holidays. However, we also re-watched the classic. I was struck by just how perfectly Sim hits every note and inflection – both verbally and physically. The film has had a lasting impression on me, and to this day, I can't sit through a meeting without picturing Marley and Scrooge lounging back in their chairs as they smugly take over controlling interest of their business!

There are other “Christmas” movies and shows that come and go over the years, depending on our mood – and location! – on the day. The *Supernatural* Christmas episode is a favorite, and now the *Schitt's Creek* Christmas episode joins the list of television shows. *Die Hard* and *Deadpool* are both Christmas movies in my book too. Covid meant avoiding the 5 hour round trip to visit families, and the worry over what exactly the weather would look like on our Canadian highways. I remember one fateful trip to Toronto one year for a Christmas luncheon that took well over 11 hours when all was said and done due to a blizzard.

Each Christmas brings different weather, presents, family configurations, and unique challenges. How we celebrate may change, and even how we share our Holiday spirit. Does anyone under 60 send actual Christmas cards anymore, or does everyone simply post a general Happy Holidays/Merry Christmas on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikToc, etc? This has been the second very different Christmas for the world, but we still managed to reach out, send presents, and sit down to a special meal with a special film. Our Christmas present might not have been as shiny as our Christmases past, but we do have the hope of Christmas future when we can all celebrate in a more traditional way – whether it's back to old traditions or incorporating some of the new ones.



MERRY GRIMM MAS



My Dream Holiday Table *By Chris Garcia*

As the world knows, I associate just about every thing with food. Names, times, places, it's all about how it ties to food. I may not remember who the hell you are, but I will remember how you take your burger, whether you want regular or curly fries, soup or salad, white or wheat or rye.

Holidays are food, of course, and not even meaningful foods. They're based on the time of year, the fact we needed to feed visitors come for festivals in the olde days. I have an idea of my holiday table, and it's a little different, but it's based on everything from my attachments to philosophy, to how I deal with my family, and what just brings comfort.



So, picture it, New Year's Eve Eve. Why the 30th instead of Christmas or NYE itself? Well, Christmas I don't wanna be cooking, and with the meal I have in mind, I'm gonna knock out pretty much 20 minutes after I'm done, so it's best to not make it possible to not miss midnight of the new year, right? It's gonna take most of the day to prepare, but it's also gonna be a marathon of cookery.

Course 1 – A hearty Chicken soup

My family rarely does soup. I'm not sure why, but I freakin' love it. I associate soup with warmth, and lightness, and most importantly, with chicken. So, a Costco chicken, a crockpot, a bunch of chicken bone broth, celery, carrot, onion, both green and yellow, and as it's about to be done, shake in Tajin in large amounts. The fruit-spice adds a tang and a sour perfection to the soup. Serve just a cup of it, because you're gonna be eating the rest for a couple of days.

I grew up living in the middle of a couple of different ethnic identities, and Tajin, often shaken onto fruit sold from carts with bells that jingle on the corners of heavily Hispanic neighborhoods, is a flavor I picked up from visiting Gramma and Grampa with my Pops a few times a year. I had pretty much stopped buying it until I moved in with Vanessa, the Polish-Czech woman of my dreams, who swore by the stuff. Another reason we were meant for each other.

Course 2 – Tamales

Making tamales is a long process. It's work, and my great-aunt was the queen of them. Of course, I have only made them a few times, and honestly, store-bought are almost as good. It's hard to mess up tamales.

I make at least three kinds – mojo de ajo, al pastor, and tikka masala.

Hold on, it will make sense.

There were always tamales at Christmas Eve at Gramma's and they were always super great. Always al Pastor, always a whole olive in the middle. I would eat around the olive. They were great, and I would find myself having four or five, which is only impressive when you realise I was maybe 4 when that became the tradition. The masa was always a highlight, but it plays with the meat so perfectly. The moist, but somehow



slightly crumbly texture of the cornmeal mixed and the silkiness and spice of the meat is a perfect marriage.

Of course, I could not leave tradition well-enough alone. Mojo de ajo, more specifically carne asada marinated in a mojo de ajo sauce, then chopped, is slightly tougher, but so very tasty. just make sure to drain it fairly well. It's a delight. The second, al pastor, is basically what I grew up with, so it's a must since I want to give my kids, who haven't had the chance to grow up with my side of our family much, to have at least a little of our traditional ways, that are actually kinda untraditional.

Then, there's tikka masala.

I came late to the Indian game, but it's great, and my kids love it. Making a simple tikka masala, and then using it as you would the al pastor, is a fantastic combination, and one that actually says something very true about my family. We're adopters; we love to fold things from outside our traditions into our traditions. I think that's a part of the

whole growing up in a couple of different worlds thing, but it makes us want to go into new areas and see what they're about, and how they might help make our world a little brighter. I think this course is certainly the reaction to the Sepia-toned side of my family, and every time I eat a tamal, no matter what type, it reminds me of Christmas Eve, of singing *Gramma Got Run Over by a Reindeer* and listening to Vicente Fernandez, and playing rowdy with my cousins.

Course 3 – Meat, Starck, Veg.

This is the big one.

My family traditionally always did Turkey and ham, which was fine. I like turkey, and ham is great as a left-over or diced up and put into au gratin potatoes. When I grew up, I moved closer and closer towards beef, and seafood. My mother, bless her, hates seafood, but shrimp, lobster, and calamari are some of my favorites, even if they're not kosher. The meat course, the main course as far as I'm concerned, is brisket, shrimp, scallops, sausage stuffing, mashed potatoes, brussell sprouts, and peas.

OK, none of that is that simple.

First, the Brisket. I have thoughts on brisket, and as anyone who has long-termed paid attention to my Twitter or Facebook, my life's goal is to create a brisket recipe that is a world-beater. This has to be done low-and-slow on a grill, and it has to be properly seasoned. Me? I like a brief dunk in salted wine. That may sound weird, but 30 minutes in a salt-and-wine bath will do wonders. I like a nice sweet red, a cheap port does real nice, and then you wrap it in foil, put it on the grill with salt and pepper, and wait. Hours later, it's delicious.

The shrimp are also easy. Take deveined, preferably butterflied shrimp, put them in a pan with olive oil, some herbs, a little garlic, toss for a bit, turn 'em out on to a plate and hit 'em with lemon juice. Simple.

Scallops aren't hard either.

Pan sear the scallops briefly, add a little brown sugar, salt and pepper, then a little white wine and boom, it's a delight.

Vanessa has been making her Hot Italian Sausage Stuffing for as long as we've been together. It's amazing. We dry an entire loaf of gluten-free bread, mix in some bone broth, herbs, carrots, celery, mush-

rooms, and most importantly, hot Italian sausage. The combination is so good, and it's surprisingly spicy. It's a good thing my kids love the spice!

Sprouts are not my thing, but firing them up in bacon grease is awesome. Hit 'em with some lemon pepper and it's done. Easy.

Now, mashed potatoes are going to weird you out, because I don't use butter (Vanessa can't do dairy) and I discovered a weird and wonderful way to bring it all down – mayo. That's right, mayo does the trick, adding a tang and a lovely smoothness. I know, you can't stand the idea, but it is the best. They go great with the brisket, especially.

Peas need to be simple and cooked in the microwave. A little fake butter, a little salt, a little lemon, a little pepper. It takes about 1 minute to make enough for the family.

This course is all about my life with Mom, Uncle Wayne and Aunt Susie. Growing up, we weren't



fancy, but for the four of us, we ate a lot. Often, the meal was fast and I'd run off to watch wrestling or whatever VHS tape we'd rented the night before, but it was a meal that effected me, and has stuck with me. Yes, the ingredients are different, but the idea of a meat and starch-heavy meal is the same.

Course 4 – Pie.

There is no better dessert than pie. Pipe down, cake people, you're wrong! Pie is perfect, and you've got 4 kinds that are most perfect – pumpkin, banana cream, cherry-apple, and Sheppard's.

We'll leave that last one for a while.

Pumpkin pie is everything it needs to be, which is a perfect flat surface for whipped cream. No, not hand-whipped, are you nuts? From a can, like Ghod intended! Seriously, I've never had fresh whipped cream that comes anywhere near the joy that is canned. It's one of those things like Taco Bell tacos. Cherry-Apple is an annoying invention of some Internet-type that I love. It's easy – pie shell, fill with apple filling in the usual way. Then a central layer of dough as a separator. Then cherry on top. The key to this one? Bake it the night before and enjoy no warmer than cold. It's truly a magnificent experience.

See, I have a series of traditions that are only mildly connected with one another, but are deeply connected with my admittedly unusual background. There's a little of my Mom, a little of my Dad, and a lot of my time trying to figure out what exactly it is that defines me as myself. When you've got a wide net of life influences, you need to dig about for what matters to you, and to me, being a part of everything that made me is what matters. I may have to check the 'it's complicated' box on census forms, but really, I guess I'm just a little bit of everything I love, and the holidays are a time to bring our the things you love, not only for yourself, but for those you love.

Or maybe I just watch too much Food Network.



Tamales and tradition

By Sara Felix

S have been in fact on a search for good tamales in Austin since I moved here in 1994. It is a dream of mine for years to find this magical unicorn somewhere. There was once a restaurant here that was pretty good... then it closed down and once again there was a sad Sara.

Nothing will ever compare to the batches of tamales made by the whole family. My dad and grandmother making the filling while all the children spread the masa. Adding the olive in the center for good luck. It was a thing I didn't like as a child until we were all there as a family working together and now it is one of my treasured memories.

I got in a debate once with some friends here in Texas who were horrified by the olive in the center of the tamale. That is not traditional they cried. In my family it was, and that salty bite in the center of the tamale always rounded the flavor of the whole thing.

My dad would get so mad at the sheer number of tamales I could eat.... 20, 30, no problem. I get that anger now, when I make tamales I don't want to share. Ha. My dad's solution was to make them hotter and hotter so we couldn't eat them. Never worked.

Happy holidays to everyone whether you make your tamales with an olive or without. Or don't even like tamales.... More for me. ;)



*Of Hot Buttered Rum
and Catamounts
By Tammy Coxen*



It's not the holidays for me without Hot Buttered Rum. My first encounter with Hot Buttered Rum was at a bar called Scofflaw in Chicago a very cold December night in 2012, and it was just a tiny bit life changing. I've been teaching it ever since in my Tammy's Tastings Holiday Cocktails class and it is in the top 2 of drinks in terms of popularity with my students. (The other one, since I know you're wondering, is my Mojito, which many people have told me is the best they've ever had. Come to a class sometime, and I'll teach you make one, so your friends will tell you that!)

Hot Buttered Rum dates back to the 1850s in New England. We think of rum as coming from the tropics, but a lot of it was made on US soil as well. Tragically, a lot of that rum was used to fuel the slave trade, but a lot of it was drunk too, and in a lot of different ways. Facing down a Nor'easter, I can see how a glass of hot sweet spicy rum would sound like just the right idea. No one actually knows why there's butter in the drink, but in the 1939 Gun Club Drink Book, author Charles Browne says it's there only to lubricate your mustache. Lacking a mustache myself, I'll just appreciate the added richness it brings to the drink!

While the drink dates back to Colonial times, its popularity spiked in 1937 with the publication of Kenneth Roberts' book *Northwest Passage*, a best-selling novel about British soldiers fighting in the American Frontier. And you can see why, with his claim that it would let you take down a wild cat, saying "After a man's had two—three drinks of hot buttered rum, he don't shoot a catamount. All he's got to do is walk up to him and kiss him just once, then put him in his bag, all limp." How could you not want to try something with that kind of press?

Not everyone was a fan, though. In his 1948 cocktail book, *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks*, David Embury definitely weighs in on the no side, saying "The lump of butter is the final insult. It blends with hot rum just about as satisfactorily as warm olive oil blends with champagne. I believe the drinking of Hot Buttered Rum should be permitted only in the Northwest Passage, and even there, only by highly imaginative and overenthusiastic novelists."

A lot of classic recipes just call for adding a little butter to the top of the drink, but as Embury bemoans, this can lead to a bit of an oil slick effect in your mug. I like to use a pre-mixed spiced butter, which tends to incorporate in the drink more readily. And if you keep a container of it in your fridge, it's easy to just mix up a hot buttered rum whenever you need one. Which will be frequently – not just at the holidays, but all winter long.



Hot Buttered Rum

2 tbsp spiced butter (see recipe below)

4 oz hot water

2 oz aged rum (see note)

Garnish: lemon wheel

Put butter in bottom of heat-proof mug. Add 2 oz water stir to mix. Add both rums and remaining hot water. Float lemon wheel on top.

Note on rum: Rum is an annoying confusing spirit category. My ultimate Hot Buttered Rum uses 1 1/2 oz of Mount Gay Eclipse (a lightly aged rum from Barbados) with 1/2 oz of Cruzan Blackstrap Rum. The Cruzan is a dark and richly flavored molasses-based rum and is the secret ingredient that takes this drink over the top, so grab a bottle if you think you'll be a hot buttered rum fan (which you will). You won't regret it. But if you don't have that brand, use 2 ounces total of a full-bodied flavorful aged rum.

Spiced Butter

4 oz (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened

1 packed cup brown sugar

1/4 tsp freshly ground nutmeg

1/4 tsp ground cloves

1/4 tsp ground allspice

1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

Cream butter and sugar and spices together until light. Keep refrigerated. Yield: 8-12 cocktails

A Wild Boar recipe

By Nicholas Whyte

Many years ago, I decided that I hated eating turkey, and as the person in charge of the holiday season cooking in our house, I have autocratically decreed that we will eat Wild Boar on 25 December every year.

We live in Belgium, where it's normal for supermarkets to stock boar, venison, pheasant, etc, but I am sure you can find a local provider if you look for one.

I have three recipes; the one that takes most forethought (but is correspondingly yummiest) is as follows:

INGREDIENTS :

1.4 kg boned and rolled loin of wild boar (feeds 4-6 depending how hungry they are)

Marinade :

200 ml red wine

40 ml vinegar

2 sliced carrots

1 sliced onion

2 shallots, roughly chopped



2 cloves of garlic, mashed
2 bay leaves
small bunch parsley
few sprigs fresh thyme
few sprigs marjoram
9 whole juniper berries
10 g salt

Sauce :

400 ml stock
30 g flour
20 ml olive oil

METHOD

On 22 or 23 December, bring all the marinade ingredients to the boil, and simmer for 3 minutes. Leave to cool. Score the fat on the boar loin lightly across the top, and place the meat in a deep dish, covering with the marinade. Leave until 25 December, turning the meat twice a day. Remove the meat and wipe it dry. Place it in a heavy oven-proof dish over heat, and add the oil. Brown the meat well and remove it from the pan. Bring the marinade to the boil in a second pan. Mix the fat and the flour into a roux in the pan, and gradually add the strained hot marinade, stirring until smooth. Add enough warm stock to thin the mixture. Put back the meat, cover the pan and cook in a low oven (170° C) for 2½ hours (ideally use an oven thermometer and wait until internal temperature has reached 75° C). Cover meat in foil to rest for 20 mins. Transfer the sauce into a pan, skim off the fat and bring to the boil to reduce.

Remove the roasted wild boar joint once rested for 20 minutes and slice thickly. Serve with the gravy and with seasonal steamed vegetables.

Christmas Cards

By James Bacon

Christmas cards are a great pleasure for me, both sending them and receiving them. I send more than I get, which is fine, because it's about reaching out and saying hello. Some include letters or a short note, some will accompany a thing that made me think of the person, but out they go. Into the post boxes.

It's a seasonal greeting, I am not at all sold on the whole baby Jesus stuff, so I evade a lot of that, but especially with cards, which for me signify the end of year, the turning at the Solstice, the lengthening of days and of course general winter celebrations, which I've enjoyed and participated in. One may have to admit that Christian religions misappropriated Christmas, New Grange and it's wondrous light one day a year built three thousand two hundred years before baby Jesus, sorta set that out early for the inconsistencies of the season. And Santa... well.

Pass a Coke zero.

For myself when I find nice cards, I buy them all, for instance, I saw a 40 pack of 4 *Star Wars* cards after *The Force Awakens* came out and I bought a stack of packets. This year I found a card which appealed with a Train on it, I will buy more of them if I can.

Over the years, there are cards I have received that I really like, and I keep them, some years they have stayed up on the unused curtain rail with the Star Wars tinsel but they can come down and are minded for another year. I know many fans have their own approach.

Here are some of my favourites cards that I'd like to share.

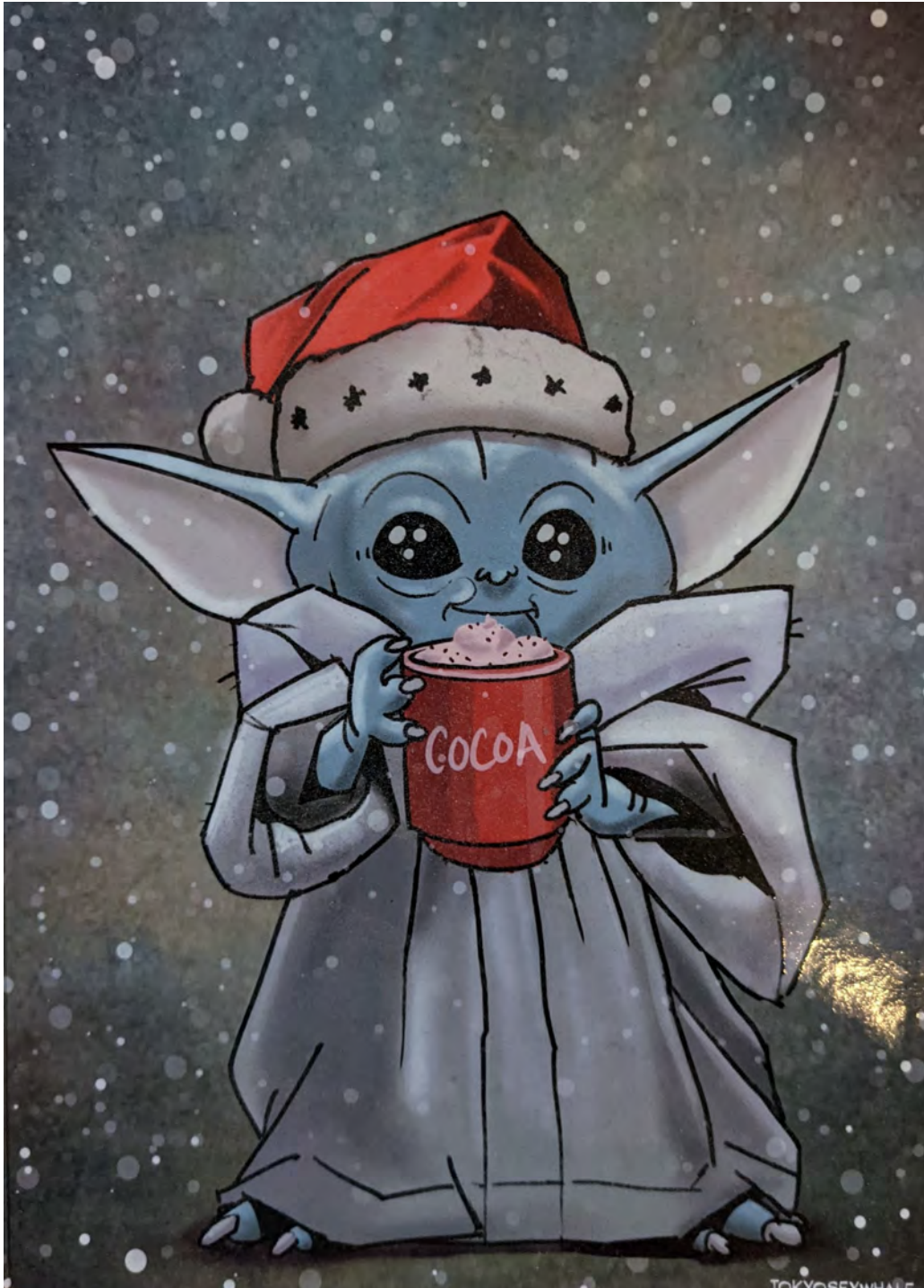


Irish post box.

I love this scene, it rarely snows in Ireland at Christmas but the green post box, the dog and of course post heading on its way are all good things for me. Our own postbox on Blackhorse Aave some 120 yards from the house is now a pillar, but it was a wall box across the road in the Phoenix park wall, until it moved and it's a good box that we use.

Grogu and Cocoa.

Well, *The Mandalorian* has been two Christmas in a row and I'm slightly sorry that Lucasfilm broke that track, it was great TV and even now we have *The book of Boba Fett* today (29th December). *Hawkeye* did a good job this year, but it broke the run. This card nicely mashes up Christmas and the cutest *Star Wars* Character really well, and make me think of Scout Troopers...





Peanuts So Merry Together.

This is a simple piece of Charles Schultz art over a plaid or tartan that is made out of fabric and is quite tactile. I like it's simplicity, the eyes are drawn to the art across the top, Charlie surprised or shocked and all the happiness.

You'd be crackers not to.

This is a home made card from the head of Driver Training Policy, enthusing and encouraging all to deploy Risk Triggered Commentary, a non-technical skill that train drivers deploy to keep concentration and focus when they perceive a risk. I like it because while it's incredibly on brand and very company, it's also a message I totally buy into and it makes me smile.



**You'd be *crackers*
not to!**

Merry Christmas

Festive Greetings. Tharg.

Steve MacManus is one of the nicest chaps in comics, and in the industry close to 50 years. He sent out Christmas Cards with himself as Tharg, the science fictional editor of *2000AD* which he was, and it's really quite wonderful.

Seasons Greetings GWR.

As our driving corps was unceremoniously moved across to GWR, a new adventure for us, the strength of corporate branding and systematical approach from a company with thousands of employees as opposed to hundreds was new. For the first two years we got delightful Christmas Cards, with a class 800 in a wintry scene, which I like. They've ceased doing this; cut backs.



GWR

SEASONS GREETINGS





Seasons greetings snoopy ornament.

The Snoopy card with a swinging ornament is unusual for us, and I just like it's image and it's one that stays up all year round.

The Empire Commands.

Darth Vader, planet killer, murderer, torturer and bearer of orders to enjoy Christmas. The 'Merry Christmas' sticker a possible sales after thought, to ensure its clear it's a Christmas Card. It's hard to understand why this makes me smile, the inconsistencies of *Star Wars* and redemption of Vader perhaps occlude reason.



Charlie, Snoopy and the gang.

My favourite Christmas Card is this one. The image belies the details. The snow is glitter and raised, the characters are strong and therefore feel slightly recessed, the stars in the sky also have glitter. The strong black lines and vibrant colour make it stand out from a distance. I love this image.





Christmas and SFF Errick Nunnally

ALL HAIL THE JOLLY FAT
MAN!

So begins Santa Claus' introduction in the *Teen Titans GO!* third-season episode, "The True Meaning of Christmas." The Titans have been on Santa's Naughty List for nearly three years and have received no presents, so they mount a mission to the North Pole and take matters into their own hands. In true Titans fashion, every subject in the episode is skewered by their hyper-childish hot-takes, enormous appetites, and Robin's aggressive leadership. When Santa discovers the Titans' destructive plot, he insists the true meaning of Christmas isn't presents. The Titans eventually blow up Santa's factory forcing him to admit (falsely) that presents are the meaning of Christmas. Evidence abounds that Santa is a cruel, dictatorial monster who compels his elves with fascistic tendencies. None of this matters to the Titans, however, since their profound absurdity is the show's broad parody of Teen Titans comics and DC's bizarre continuity. It's also not the point of this writing, just a great example.

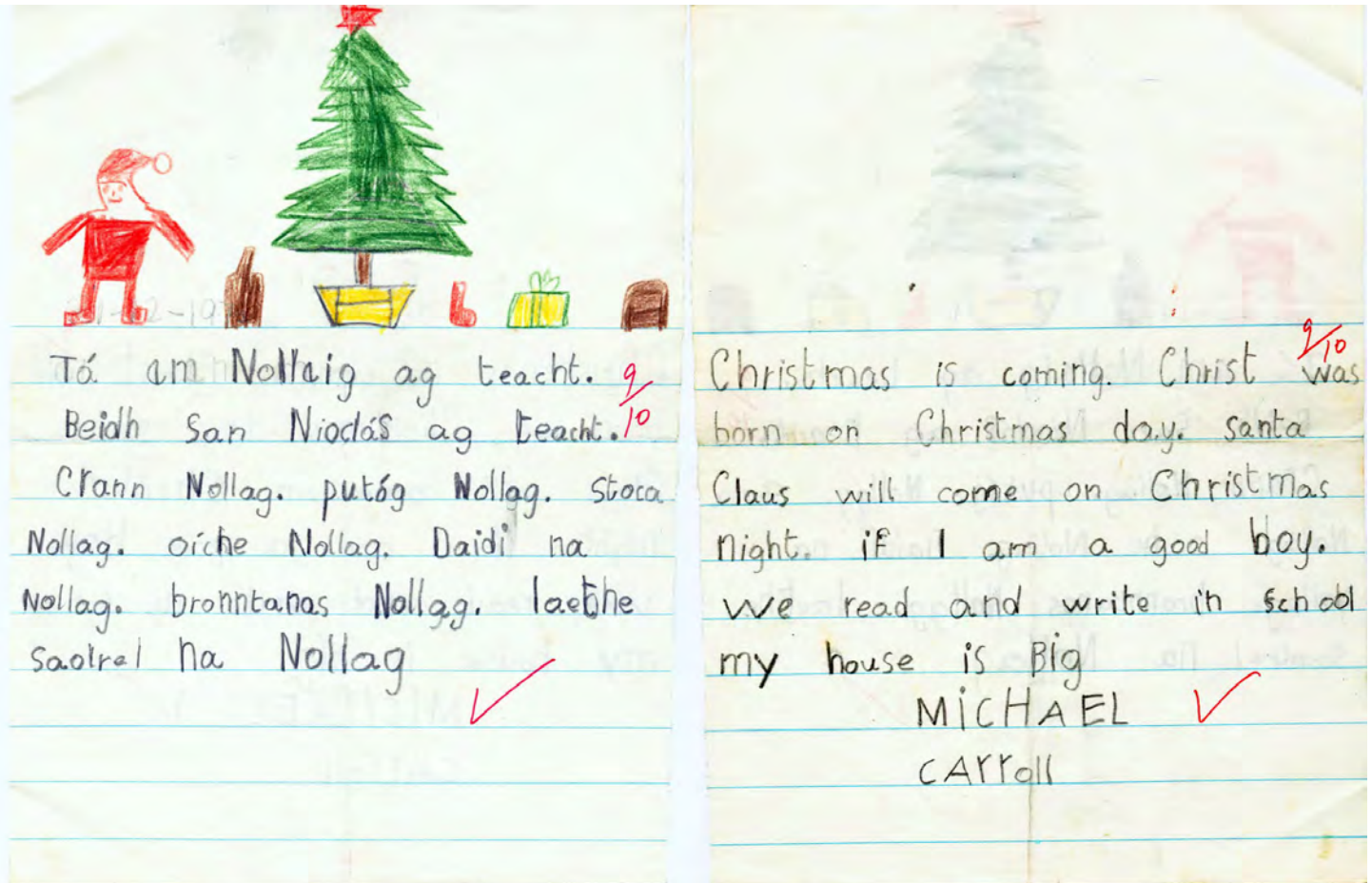
Christmas has become so embedded in our greater society that everything hews to its coming and going. Especially our entertainment media. Nearly every cartoon, sitcom, drama, what-have-you features a Christmas episode. (I think most attempts are cringy and “*Teen Titans GO!*” did it right.) This tracks with the thousand-year tradition of assimilation that Christmas seems to be. Despite Christianity’s claim on Christmas—I mean, it’s right there in the name—the holiday’s origins predate the religion’s origins. Pagan fertility rites, fir trees, gift-giving, carols, etcetera were all likely folded into Christianity as a ploy to draw more people into the fold. The date, December 25, stems from the end of Saturnalia; caroling from pagan wassailing, the pagan worship of trees such as fir, spruce, and pine. All of these customs and traditions have been swirling in a cultural blender for thousands of years, so that no single group can claim Christmas as its own. Even though the holiday’s spread is directly tied to the colonialist spread of Christianity around the world, the holiday has evolved with every culture it has come in contact with. Overall, the primary, enduring feature is one of giving and sharing that makes the holiday so compelling. This is why as cheesy and predictable as it is for episodic media to produce a “Very Special Christmas” episode nearly every year, it’s even more fun when science fiction and fantasy genres dip a few toes in.

Terry Pratchett’s *Hogfather* has very much taken on a life of its own, toying with the idea of Death as the Hogfather (Santa Claus, Father Christmas, etc.) who takes an opportunity to do un-death-like things. *Futurama* has gone to the well multiple times, establishing a Robot Santa Claus, Robanukah, and other traditions as well as extrapolating Xmas and Kwanzaa well into the 31st century. *The X-Files* episode, “How The Ghosts Stole Christmas” is a goofy episode with Mulder and Scully investigating a puzzle-box of a haunted house on Christmas Eve. Pinky and the Brain manage to weave Christmas into a take-over-the-world plot that unravels itself when Brain’s heart grows three times larger. Doctor Who gets in on the spirit with a few episodes, one of which features killer Christmas trees. *Wonder Woman*, *The Six-Million Dollar Man*, and even *The Dead Zone* have entertaining episodes rooted in Christmas. The only time it gets really weird is when a genre show tries to invent some kind of Christmas adjacent holiday. You know what I’m talking about. The Star Wars Holiday Special of 1978. Nothing more shall be mentioned about that, but if you want to reminisce, there’s a video titled “The Most Disturbing Moments Of The Star Wars Holiday Special” on YouTube that covers the broad strokes.

There are dozens of other Christmas specials in SFF from multiple *Twilight Zone* episodes, to *Black Mirror*, to *Eureka*. All of them are everything from cheesy fun to cringeworthy attempts at schmaltz. In between there’s some real creativity. And they’re all totally worth it to see Christmas reimaged, reborn, and enduring for centuries.



A 1972 Christmas Card From Michael Carroll



Words from Anne Gray

Nothing makes the season feel right to me quite as much as a tumbler of egg nog with a dash of nutmeg on top, and perhaps a splash of rum mixed in beforehand. Warms and pleases the mouth, the belly and the heart, it does.

A nice jigsaw puzzle done together with good friends has marked many a fine holiday season. Rosie and I gave Brian one featuring the cast of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, this year. That is also the theme of the nutcrackers on our piano, as well as the frame of a picture of Rosie with Santa and an elf, taken at our local library a few years back. Cheerful with just a hint of dark and twisted. That's us!

(*Star Wars*) LEGOs and gaming (via zoom) have been big features of this winter break. Brian ran a *Star Wars* game online on Saturday December 18, in fact, while I helped run the Hugo Awards Ceremony at Dis-Con III, keeping the Awards themselves in order. He and Rosie both brought laptops and ran their game from the hotel via Zoom and Roll20.net. Tomorrow is our second session this week of a D&D campaign I'm part of, as well. Not as much exercise as slinging 8 lb granite-based awards around, but just as much adventure!

Rosie is almost done assembling her Mandalorian Razorcrest LEGO set, while Brian finished his Imperial droid within a day or two of starting. He has also been enjoying the chance to relax with a good book *away* from the computer and out of his office (often known as "the grading mines" during the semester), and is working his way through the bag of books he picked out in the Worldcon Dealer's room.

My favorite part of the Worldcon was either conrunning with beloved old friends again, getting to work with the amazing tech crew led by Syd Weinstein, or meeting Andrea Hairston in person and having the chance to witness her process as she prepared to co-MC the Hugo Awards ceremony. Hmm. Hard call. Andrea is amazing, and I've wanted to meet her ever since I read her novel *Redwood and Wildfire*. Maybe next time I can geek out with her about American history and alt-history, but learning how she sets the beats of a theatrical production in her head was pretty cool, too. And it was fun joining her in teaching stage lingo to Sheree Renée Thomas, who was very adaptable and a joy to work with as well.



And then there was that moment on Friday around 10 PM when Brian Nisbet passed by in the lobby and declared to John Day and me that ours was an awfully open Info Desk for that time of the night. (*happy sigh*). What can I say? I just love being useful.

Doing the things we love with our favorite people is a big part of what this season is about, I think. That and appreciating having each other in our lives in the first place.

Hope to see you at Grayhollow Manor sometime!





Craig Miller says...

'This is the Christmas card I sent out in 1979. Art by Linda Miller (no relation).

Inside it said "Hope you enjoy your Christmas surprises!"

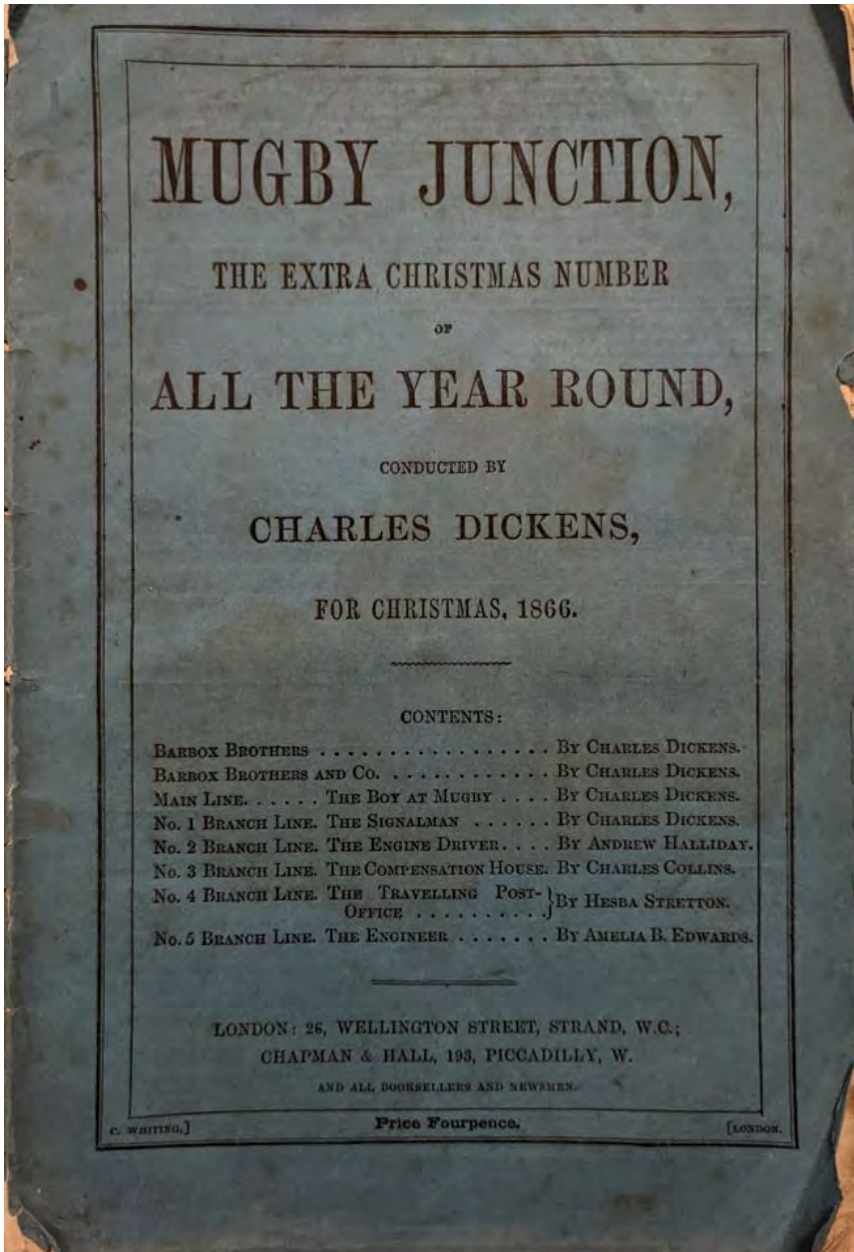
Mugby Junction By James Bacon

Mugby Junction is an interesting and unassuming place, a train station, a place where trains converge and continue their journey, but only in the imagination of Charles Dickens. Dickens, who was born in 1812, lived through the rise and expansion of the railways.

Mugby Junction is a collection of stories, published as an extra issue of 'All the Year Round' at Christmas time in 1866. It was set out by Dickens as an anthology, formed of eight stories, 4 of which were by Dickens himself, including the best, "Branch Line: The Signaller", which is a ghost story. Other stories included, "The Engine Driver" by Andrew Halliday, "The Compensation House" by Charles Collins, "The Travelling Post-Office" by Hesba Stretton and "The Engineer" by Amelia B. Edwards.

Dickens had a controlling hand, dare I say editorial role, and set up the framework. The magazine is unassuming and small, in its blue wraps, although the insurance advert on the rear is chilling capitalism at work. 'Accidents will happen'

"The Signaller" is a great story, and its haunting and the realities of it, are cold to contemplate, the 1976 adaption by the BBC starring Denholm Elliot as the Signaller



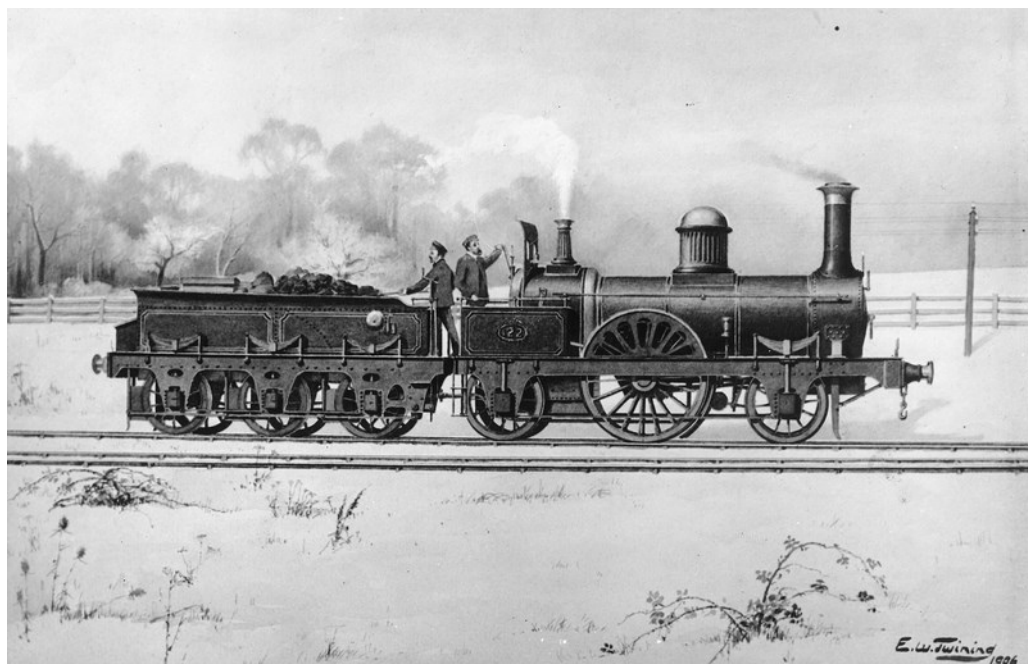
man and Bernard Llyod as the unnamed traveler, do the story an incredible justice, bringing to life the solitary work of a signaller, the pressure the mind can put on one, the way the mind wanders and loses concentration and how tragedy can weigh on one so heavily. Andrew Davies and Laurence Gordon Clark as writer and director, do a fabulous job and the Severn Valley Railway is the perfect setting, the hollowness of the cold and dank Railway Cutting perfect, on the Kidderminster side of Bewdley Tunnel. The interior shots were filmed in Highley signal box and while there are some changes to the nature of the technological aspects, the trains and equipment, and uniform are of the 1900's rather than 1860's. It really works beautifully well to tell a haunting story in the long nights.

It is often said that the Railway Rule Book is written in blood, and this unfortunately is true. Today, a person in charge of the movement of trains, is considered safety critical, and must not work more than 13 consecutive days, more than 60 hours in one week, and must have 12 hours in between shifts.

Two incidents may have been influential. The Clayton Tunnel crash saw a collision between two trains in a tunnel, with a signal box at its entrance, on Sunday 25 August 1861, five miles north of Brighton with 23 fatalities and 176 passengers injured.

The Staplehurst derailment of 1865, which Dickens was actually on board returning from France with Ellen Ternan on 9 June 1865, saw 10 fatalities and 49 injuries. Dickens distinguished himself by his heroism and tended to the dying and injured.

Dickens wrote to his friend Thomas Mitton on 13 June 1865.



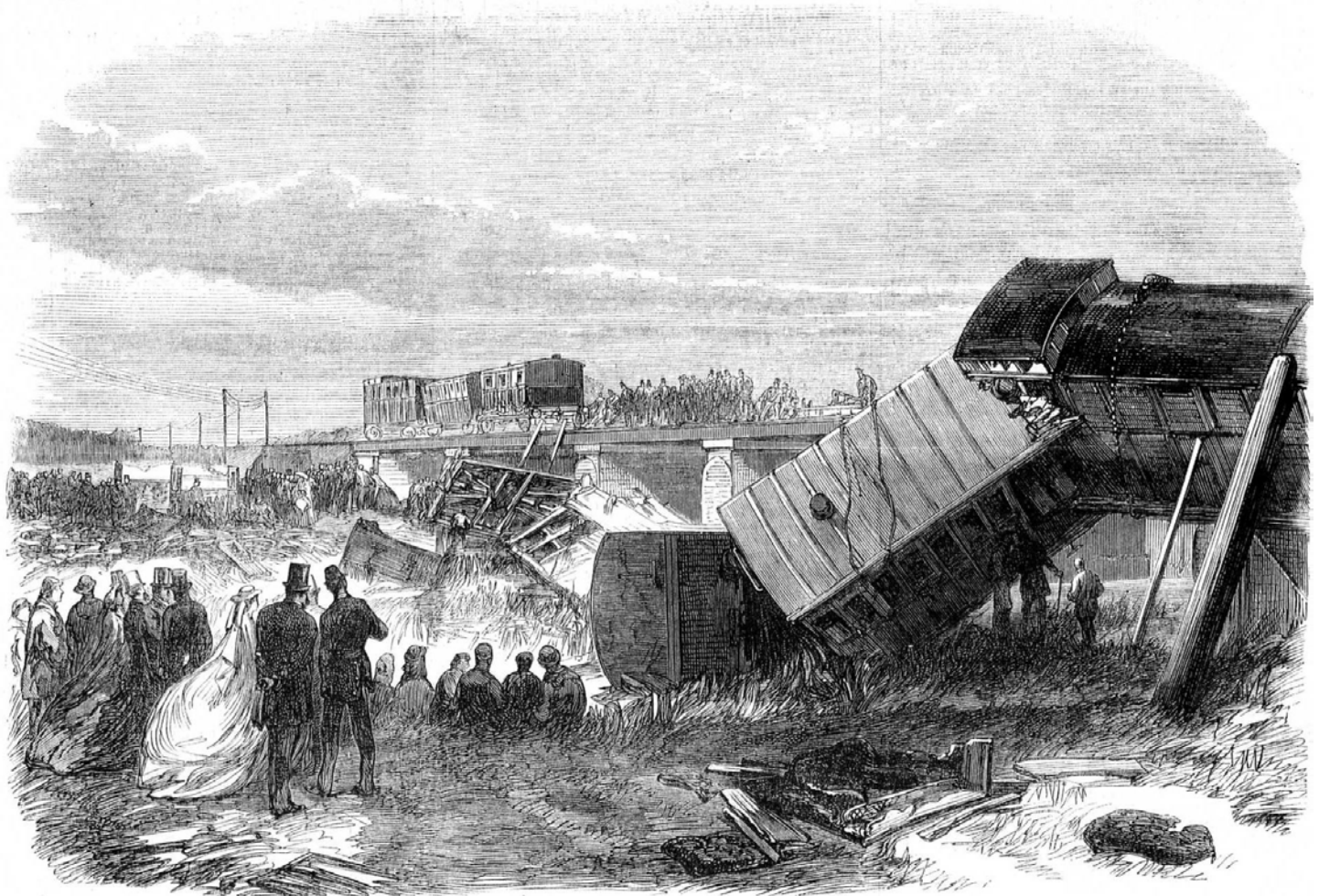
My dear Mitton,

I should have written to you yesterday or the day before, if I had been quite up to writing. I am a little shaken, not by the beating and dragging of the carriage in which I was, but by the hard work afterwards in getting out the dying and dead, which was most horrible.

I was in the only carriage that did not go over into the stream. It was caught upon the turn by

some of the ruin of the bridge, and hung suspended and balanced in an apparently impossible manner. Two ladies were my fellow passengers; an old one, and a young one. This is exactly what passed: you may judge from it the precise length of the suspense. Suddenly we were off the rail and beating the ground as the car of a half emptied balloon might. The old lady cried out "My God!" and the young one screamed.

I caught hold of them both (the old lady sat opposite, and the young one on my left) and said: "We can't help ourselves, but we can be quiet and composed. Pray don't cry out." The old lady immediately answered, "Thank you. Rely upon me. Upon my soul, I will be quiet." The young lady said in a frantic way, Let us join hands and die friends." We were then all tilted down together in a corner of the carriage, and stopped. I said to them thereupon: "You may be sure nothing worse can happen.



Our danger must be over. Will you remain here without stirring, while I get out of the window?" They both answered quite collectedly, "Yes," and I got out without the least notion of what had happened.

Fortunately, I got out with great caution and stood upon the step. Looking down, I saw the bridge gone and nothing below me but the line of the rail. Some people in the two other compartments were madly trying to plunge out of the window, and had no idea there was an open swampy field 15 feet down below them and nothing else! The two guards (one with his face cut) were running up and down on the down side of the bridge (which was not torn up) quite wildly. I called out to them

"Look at me. Do stop an instant and look at me, and tell me whether you don't know me." One of them answered, "We know you very well, Mr Dickens." "Then," I said, "my good fellow for God's sake give me your key, and send one of those labourers here, and I'll empty this carriage."

We did it quite safely, by means of a plank or two and when it was done I saw all the rest of the train except the two baggage cars down in the stream. I got into the carriage again for my brandy flask, took off my travelling hat for a basin, climbed down the brickwork, and filled my hat with water. Suddenly I came upon a staggering man covered with blood (I think he must have been flung clean out of his carriage) with such a frightful cut across the skull that I couldn't bear to look at him. I poured some water over his face, and gave him some to drink, and gave him some brandy, and laid him down on the grass, and he said, "I am gone", and died afterwards.

Then I stumbled over a lady lying on her back against a little pollard tree, with the blood streaming over her face (which was lead colour) in a number of distinct little streams from the head. I asked her if she could swallow a little brandy, and she just nodded, and I gave her some and left her for somebody else. The next time I passed her, she was dead.

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Then a man examined at the Inquest yesterday (who evidently had not the least remembrance of what really passed) came running up to me and implored me to help him find his wife, who was afterwards found dead. No imagination can conceive the ruin of the carriages, or the extraordinary weights under which the people were lying, or the complications into which they were twisted up among iron and wood, and mud and water.

I don't want to be examined at the Inquests and I don't want to write about it. It could do no good either way, and I could only seem to speak about myself, which, of course, I would rather not do. I am keeping very quiet here. I have a – I don't know what to call it – constitutional (I suppose) presence of mind, and was not in the least flustered at the time. I instantly remembered that I had the MS of a Novel with me, and clambered back into the carriage for it. But in writing these scanty words of recollection, I feel the shake and am obliged to stop.

Ever faithfully,
Charles Dickens

The Staplehurst derailment was straightforward in that the track had been removed for engineering works at a viaduct. The foreman was not aware that the Tidal Ferry train times varied with the tide, had not been expecting a train as he read the wrong timetable. Subsequent errors included not advising to lay detonators, as it was a clear day, up to 1000 yards away and the warning flag man only walking 550 yards and not the 1000 yards required of him, thus not giving the engine driver sufficient time to stop. The track was lifted and so the train was certain to derail, pitching some of it into the mud below, Dickens himself helped bravely with the dying and injured, it must have been a massively traumatic and haunting experience. The foreman received a 9-month jail sentence.

The Clayton disaster, while not so directly connected to Dickens, was a collision in the Clayton tunnel. This disaster occurred because train movements were controlled by the interval of time, on all of the line except for the Clayton Tunnel, the intervals between trains was too short by operation, the signalling system in use at the Tunnel failed, confusion occurred because there were too many trains, the signaller had no time to warn or work, and he was over-worked, working a 24 hour shift, so as to get a day off. A calamity of errors. It is no surprise so many changes were borne from it.



This disaster involved three trains, Portsmouth Excursion 08.28, Brighton Excursion 8.31, Brighton to Victoria 08.35 departures from Brighton. There was an interval requirement of 5 minutes between trains and these departure times were not what was scheduled, and as one can see, the correct minimal interval did not occur.

Signalman Henry Killick was on duty at the south portal of Clayton Tunnel. The 08.28 passed the clear signal, but an alarm went off to alert the signalman that the signal had not returned to danger in time for the 08.31 train to be stopped, so he went to manually stop the train with a red flag, and the driver saw this, and stopped the second train but a half mile in the tunnel. Killick was unaware that it had stopped, or seen the flag.

He telegraphed signalman Brown at the northern portal, a beautiful ornate structure with two castle like turrets : "Is tunnel clear?" and of course Brown confirmed that the 08.28 had cleared the tunnel, unaware that two trains had entered.

The driver on the 08.31 started to reverse, to return south, meanwhile the 08.35 was drawn to a halt, but Killick, thinking that the Tunnel was now clear, flagged it onward to proceed, and at this moment a collision was inevitable, and both trains travelling towards one another.

The 08.35 hit the 08.31 with such force that it propelled it forward, the locomotive of the third train destroying the guard's van, then smashing into the last carriage, rising up upon it and crashing into the roof. Many died in this carriage. A steam train is a concoction of scalding hot steam, boiling water, coal fed fire, embers, steel, iron and cannot be imagined in such a state in a tunnel, smashed asunder.

A subterranean fire in railway infrastructure gives me the heebie jeebies there can be nothing as bad, the heat, the smoke, the death.

Following the disaster, changes were made, the block working system was extended, interval workings just not being robust enough and the telegraph and signaling equipment was found to not be good enough. Killick was not charged, while the Brighton assistant Station Master was tried, but found not guilty, for negligence, for allowing such dispatch timings, which were not the scheduled times to occur.

That these incidents contributed to one of the greatest ghost stories ever, "The Signalman." One can only speculate at, but Dickens was renowned for trying to get to the reality of the situation, and there is no doubt that he understood the horror of tragedy, responsibility and loneliness. Sharing this story amongst the others at Christmas time.

References

[Parliamentary Accounts and Papers, Railways Turnpikes and Miscelanioius, Vol 53 1862](#)

[Reports of the inspecting officers of the Railway Department](#)

Journey Planet - 2022 New Year's Wishes

As 2021 comes to a close and we look toward 2022, it seems like a good time to take stock of what's important both inside and outside of the fannish community. In the spirit of journeying on the planet together into the next year, we want to share our New Years' Wishes for 2022. We also invited some friends to share their own wishes for 2022 in 22 words or less.

We wish you a happy and safe fannish New Year and a 2022 filled with happiness, joy, and fantastic stories!

Team Journey Planet

Be kind, and cross your fingers that the near-future apocalypses and dystopias we've written stay on the page.

R.W.W. Greene, Twenty-Five to Life

For me: I get my concentration back and can write again; for the community, that we lead Best Practice for Covid precautions.

Farak Mendlesohn

I wish for authors from all cultures, ethnicities, genders and beliefs to have the opportunity to reach the world audience.

Cristina Jurado

I wish we would hate less and love more, and that we would all read a lot of books.

Charlaine Harris

May you have a time of rest and healing.

Mary Robinette Kowal



I wish we would all remember that behind every keyboard is a human being. We must collectively do better in our communications.

Elizabeth McCarty

My wish is that the rest of the world catches up with the science fiction community in honoring the sciences.

James Patrick Kelly

I wish for everyone the first of many happy New Years to come in which we can all see each other again.

Erin Underwood

I wish all who languish to flourish. I wish for sitzfleisch and poetry, energy and focus, and a truly Vorkosiganian forward momentum.

C.S.E. Cooney

My wish for 2022 is nothing less than a renaissance. May we re-devote ourselves to the best of what humans can do.

Carlos Hernandez

May 2022 be full of joy engaging the things you love, while sharing the joy others find in their favorite things!

Kevin Roche

My wish for 2022 is for the pandemic to be under enough control to allow a safe return to regularly writing in coffee shops and libraries. I know many writers, myself included, miss our usual writing haunts!

Fonda Lee

A New Year's Wish in slightly less than a quarter of a drabble: to be able to see friends without health concerns.

Steven H Silver



Words from Siobhan Greaney

What makes the season feel right to you?

Getting home home (as opposed to just home). Seeing family. The lights and greenery all over the house to warm and brighten the darkest month. The fire lit. Wrapping presents. New tradition of watching the New-grange live broadcast and sharing our solstice with the world.



Do you have a favourite Film or TV programme you always watch and why?

Muppets Christmas Carol - as they say themselves "it is the summer of the soul in December". You have to throw yourself into the songs and feel the joy that film brings.

Favourite seasonal reads, or stories.

Hogfather by Terry Pratchett. Favourite quote included below. It helps explain how telling kids about Santa an important part of life lessons and social development rather than a cruel prank:

***"humans need... fantasies to make life bearable."

REALLY? AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PINK PILL? NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.

"Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little—"

YES. AS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO START OUT LEARNING TO BELIEVE THE LITTLE LIES.

"So we can believe the big ones?"

YES. JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF

THING.

"They're not the same at all!"

YOU THINK SO? THEN TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER AND SIEVE IT THROUGH THE FINEST SIEVE AND THEN SHOW ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY. AND YET—Death waved a hand. AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME IDEAL ORDER IN THE WORLD, AS IF THERE IS SOME...SOME RIGHTNESS IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH IT MAY BE JUDGED.

"Yes, but people have got to believe that, or what's the point—"

MY POINT EXACTLY"***

Favourite foods that make it wonderful for you.

The tin of roses. The delicious Irish cheese board my Dad'll put together. Mam's sausage stuffing and gravy. My neighbour's mint chocolate cupcake.

Sprouts....

Hell no

A very happy and safe festive season to you and yours.



A look towards 2022 – Something of a Year-Enditorial

By Chris

2021

had ups-and-downs. In 2020, I lost a lot of folks I knew, both to COVID and otherwise. It was a rough year, though working from home was awesome! Being evacuated for a 1/3 of the year due to fires threatening our home, BAD! It was a rough year, but we made it through.

2021 was harder.

I got fired, a first for me. Oddly, I was somehow more ethical than they were! That's not why I got canned, but honestly, I didn't mind too much because of it.

I got hired as an Archivist. If I hadn't needed the money much more quickly in 2019, I would have looked harder for the kind of job I ended up taking this time. I work with the work of the legendary author William Saroyan, and so many magazines! I love it, and it's fairly low impact. Low impact enough that I wrote the pieces for this issue at work, everything else just sorta sitting there waiting for me.

That was also not why I got fired from my last job, I know what you're asking!

I signed my first book contract in 2021. That was a shocker. I've got a podcast called *Dial-A-Crime*, it's about non-violent true crime stories. It's had maybe 500 total listens, but one of them was a contracting editor for a place called Pen and Sword in the UK, and they asked if I'd ever wanted to write a book. I said yes, pitched them my book concept about Crime & Food, and that was that. I'm 1/5 of the way through, but I have until July.

We were nominated for a Hugo! Yay!!!

We didn't win, and I couldn't go to the ceremony. Boo! I miss the crew.

We did a couple of really fun issues, like King Arthur, which is still one of the ones I look back on saying *maybe I know what I'm doing*.

That's 2021. I dunno what 2022 is gonna be like.

I know that some folks think there's gonna be a battle for the Senate and House, and that's certainly true. Some say a Civil War. Maybe, limited Civil War. There's gonna be continuing COVID issues, that's a given, and maybe we'll have to lock-down tighter again if the vaccines don't work like we hope. It could happen. Maybe not. I do hope that we all get vaxxed and play a little smarter anyhow, but we will see.

2021 saw *Journey Planet's* own Sara Felix win a Hugo for Best Fan Artist! I hope she repeats, because she's awesome.

One thing I hope we can do with *JP* is not only release new issues, and I really wanna hit ones we've been thinking on like Vietnam, Tim Powers, *Warrior*, and more. And there are issues I've been thinking about just in the last few weeks, like The Atomic Age, Irish Film, and the genius of David Lynch. Some of these will happen. Most won't. 2022, like every year before, will be unpredictable. The beauty of an issue idea is that it won't go away. I'd wanted to do King Arthur since 2008 or so, and it finally happened, after 2 or 3 false starts. Issues like this one, launched just a week-and-a-half ago, will pop up. Someone will pitch an issue our way, and it might happen, or it might not. You never know the direction things will go until you're well down the track, and sometimes, even that ends. We always try to get to a ton of stuff, but then again, we're human, no?

Here's what I will say about 2022 – it's a year we're gonna get through, just like 2021, just like 2020. Just like every year before. Yes, some of us may not be along for the ride as we move forward, but we move forward. There's a story by Saroyan called "The Hummingbird that Lived Through the Winter" about a hummingbird who didn't fly south for warmer climate, but who ended up sick in the middle of winter, only to be nursed back to health by Saroyan and an old Armenian neighbor of his. The hummingbird flies away immediately, and when the Spring comes, Saroyan asks the old man if their Hummingbird survived. He points to all the hummingbirds outside saying 'all of these hummingbirds are our hummingbird' and that's what it's like. *Journey Planet* is here, and that's all we can know, and it's what we're gonna keep going.

So, to you, our reader (and also to you, our proof-reader) I say thank you and stick around. Drop us a line at JourneyPlanet@gmail.com and let us know that you're still our hummingbird... because you all are.



Editorial

By James Bacon

Well, seasonal greetings to you, readers. We hope that you have been enjoying whatever festivities you enjoy. We hope you are well. We hope you are surviving. We hope that you have time to enjoy this issue.

We hope you join us next year. You too can contribute to Journey Planet, with a vast number of subjects on the schedule for 2022, do let us know if you would like to write for Journey Planet, and we can tell you what we are working on.

YOU ARE WELCOME! Do not self exclude, we want to hear you.

journeyplanet@gmail.com goes directly to Chris.



For our part, we must pay huge thanks to you, readers, contributors and co- editors.

Thank you.

It has been hectic.

Corflu, Thought Bubble, Novacon 50, Smofcon, C2E2 and onto Worldcon. All had aspects that were unique, but one thing for sure, there was at least one factor of commonality at them all, but like all adventures, you can choose your own favourite. Friendliness, passion for writing, appreciation for fans, smiles, a few drinks, fanzines, good people, our people. It was amazing, and I was privileged to get some travel in, after working flat out for so long.

At each of these conventions, Journey Planet had a part to play, be it planning something for next year, arranging an interview, or contact, finding out an aspect, or talking about the fanzine, and what makes it work. You do. Our readers, our contributors, our editors.

Corflu was fab, it was good to pick up fanzines, to chat about duplicators, to hand out the ish, to listen to stories, Thought Bubble was amazing and David Mack made my weekend, kindees and genius, combined, Novacon on the same day was great, and I am grateful to the youthful kind who gave me lashings of Aldi Rum, Smofcon was all about the booze and great food and amazing people, and such a variety of nations represented, with so many younger fans coming along who want to do something in the future, so bloody exciting, and they need our support, C2E2 and giving away thousands of books, meeting Garth who was kind, Afua who is amazing, Gene who was brilliant and Leprechauns in the X-men.

At Worldcon, we were honoured, by those of you who kindly nominated *Journey Planet*, and while we cheered our co-editor Sara Felix, who deservedly won the Best Fan Artist Hugo award, with hard competition from Iain Clarke, another favourite, it was a huge honour to be a finalist in the Fanzine category even as we lost.

Thanks to Mary Robinette Kowal, Marguerite Smith and Lauren Raye Snow along with the Discon III committee and hundreds of volunteers, the impossible occurred, the Worldcon was held the week before Christmas, a logistical challenge and of course also in the time of the Global Pandemic.

I went, I was well met by many friends, and made new ones. I met such nice people. My goodness, it's terrific just to connect and smile, and chat and hang out and listen and do stuff. It was good to be with our people, but it had been a roller coaster of conventions. I helped host three parties and they went very well, I made it my business to offer people drinks, and try and make them feel warmly welcomed. A convention that was allegedly cursed, with a monstrous number of real life issues impinging, it succeeded, and a lot of it was very good against such incredible challenges, overcoming so much, it was phenomenal, and a huge achievement, and a lot of hard work. And I am proud to have been there.

Prouder still to see, *Journey Planet*, edited by Michael Carroll, John Coxon, Sara Felix, Ann Gry, Sarah Gulde, Alissa McKersie, Errick Nunnally, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, Chuck Serface, Steven H Silver, Paul Trimble, Erin Underwood and the pair of us, on the big screen, was wondrous, and we are all grateful. Thank you.

Sara Felix, Sarah Gulde, Errick Nunnally, Chuck Serface, Steven H Silver and myself made it along, and we were there to represent our fellow editors, our contributors, our readers, and we did. As Olav Rokne shows, in the wonderful photo he took. I was of course sad Chris and our other co-editors could not make it.

Yet it all energized us. Chris wanted to do an issue in a day, and started a marathon, and it is terrific with some amazing contributions, springing on people the idea to cram in some writing or dedicate a bit of time collectively, and this worked real well for some. And that's what we are about, finding and hearing new vices, offering new ways to contribute, offering avenues that are welcoming. When we got home, we just wanted to say thank you, to wish you all the best, to finish off 2021 with an incredible cover by Sara Felix, wishing you the very best. And we did it.

We've had some excellent co-editors on board this year, Jean Martin on the Hugos issue, where we looked at finalists, Steven was joined by Evan Reeves on our Cancelled too soon issue, Chuck joined us for the Arthurian issue and here, this Seasonal Greetings issue we have had Sara Felix, Erin Underwood and Errick Nunally join us, for the push we needed. I needed it. These fans are all terrific, they give up their time and efforts, help publish thoughts, ideas, notions, and of course we look at the main work of Imagi-neers, the great people who come up with the stories that excite us, and for which we share a common pas-sion. We are fans, some of our team are writers, artists, imagineers themselves, and we may do an issue about that, but we like all this stuff, we read one another's thoughts, ruminations, and cogitations. Chris and I need their energy, their positivity, their impetus and drive, sometimes that's what we inspire, or we just en-gerise and go, but it's about a team, and they are all, all our editors, contributors, are all amazing.



If you enjoy fanzines, check out Bill Burns efanzines website, efanzines.com, there are many fanzines out there, they all operate their own way, and you can always start your own. Let us know. Just do it. Looking forward to doing more good fun stuff next year. Seasonal Greetings. Picocon, Chillercon, Eastercon, Chicon, Octocon, Novacon, I hope to meet you there, James

2021 Best Fanzine

The Hugo Awards Finalists

nerds of a feather, flock together - Adri Joy, Joe Sherry, The G, Vance Kotrla

Unofficial Hugo Book Club Blog - Amanda Wakaruk, Olav Rokne

Journey Planet - James Bacon, Chris Garcia, Michael Carroll, John Coxon, Sara Felix, Ann Gry, Sarah Gulde, Alissa McKersie, Errick Nunnally, Pádraig Ó Méalóid, Steven H Silver, Chuck Serface, Paul Trimble, Erin Underwood

Quick Sip Reviews - Charles Payseur

The Full Lid - Alasdair Stuart, Marguerite Kenner

Lady Business - Ira, Jodie, KJ, Renay, Susan

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DISCON III



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