



Journey Planet 10  
August 2011



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# The LoC Box

*So, here I am, Christopher J Garcia, responding to the letters from our gentle readers who kindly took the time to drop us a line on the Dune issue of Journey Planet. Claire, or should I say Hugo Nominee Claire Brialey, will be doing a special supplemental that will feature LoCs on other issues that we didn't get to in the previous issues.*

*And, while I'm at it, it makes a little sense that I'm doing the LoCs this time as the Dune issue was my dream issue and I'm so glad that it came out the way that it did and that the folks out there seemed to react to it very kindly. The best reaction I had to it was at Westercon where, after reading it on my laptop, a young lady in a Stillsuit said "You're kidding! We're not the only ones who love that movie?"*

*As always, we get some amazing LoCs and this one had a couple that really turned my head and made me go 'Whoa!' I love it when LoCs can do that. Claire did it last year in a LoC to The Drink Tank that ran something like 6K words. This year I got one from Geri Sullivan on the Mike Glicksohn memorial issue that blew my mind. The art of the LoC is neither dead, nor even sick. Maybe it's slightly less vibrant, at least in zines that I'm involved in. I've often thought that it's my fault that there aren't more LoCs in Journey Planet. People, with a few exceptions, just aren't used to writing in response to zines that I do. Perhaps it's about the beard. They're afraid that if I am not pleased with their comments, it'll attack. I hope y'all'll come along and let us know what you think about this issue (or any of the older issues, because hey, in a post-eFanzines world, no issue ever dies!) and we'll gladly run them alongside geniuses like the ones that follow!*

*Enough of me, here's you with comments from me!*

**Mark Plummer** – Croydon, a place in England  
A thought flashed into my brain late on Monday night at the Eastercon, which is especially remarkable given that it was the Monday night at Eastercon and traditionally a dead zone for any form of cogitation. I was lying on the bed reading *JP#9* when it occurred to me that I was back in the hotel where I first saw the *Dune* movie almost exactly twenty-five years before. At least I think it was the same hotel. That's what I'd assumed when Illustrious first announced their venue, and I'd been hoping for a flare of recognition as I'd walked into reception the previous Thursday but the expected sense of *deja vu* was wholly absent and remained so for most of the weekend. I had these odd flickers of familiarity but the Birmingham airport Hilton Metropole is a pretty generic modern hotel so it could have been simply that it was reminding me of any one of dozens of convention hotels visited in the last two-and-a-half decades.

When we got home I turned to the internet for confirmation. Although I'm talking about a pre-internet age convention, obviously, it must surely have established some after-the-event net presence, but if there's anything there I can't find it, even with a few points of relative certainty to hand. I can be reasonably sure that the convention was called UFPcon; that it was in May 1986 and probably over one of the two bank holiday weekends, mostly likely the second; and the venue was definitely somewhere near the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre. And it was a Star Trek convention. Did I mention that? My only Star Trek con,

because honestly I've never been that much of a fan of the show and I only went along with my then flat-mate John because it was simply a venue in which to party and hang out.

I can recall a bit more beyond those bare bones details. The organiser, who I only came to know in later years, was Nic Farey. The guest was David Gerrold and he invited everybody to a party in his room, at which I may have had a hand in looting his courtesy drinks cabinet. I think I spent some time hanging out in the gaming room, despite the fact that I wasn't ever really a gamer. And there was a bid session where a group made a pitch to run a Trek convention over the the following year's August bank holiday weekend. Somebody pointed out that actually the World Science Fiction Convention was going to be in Brighton that weekend and was it perhaps not the greatest idea to run a competing event? The bid committee said that they'd all far rather go to a Trek con than a Worldcon (perhaps an instructional point for the big-tentists, there).

But I'm having real trouble accounting for that weekend as that doesn't really seem to fill the time. What the hell did I do? The answer, I think, is that I watched stuff. There were I think three episodes of the original *Star Trek*—and as we're talking about 1986 here it was still the only *Star Trek*—that at that point had never been shown on British television and I saw those. And I watched a lot of movies, because the hotel had its own cinema. *Bladerunner*, the second and third Trek films, probably some others. I don't know what happened to the cinema because it's not there now, and I

couldn't really work out where it might have been, but it was there in 1986—and indeed it was still there in 1987 when the Eastercon was in the same hotel and they also showed *Dune*. But I wasn't there for that.

But I was at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole in 1986—at least I think so, if it really is the place I'm thinking of—and that's where I first saw *Dune*. Like you, Chris, I saw the film before reading the book, and perhaps that explains why I too think of it with more fondness than the general body of critical opinion.

I was aware of the books at the time of course. It was hard not to be as they seemed to be everywhere when I was a teenager, the paperback equivalent of Frampton Comes Alive. I rather liked the Bruce Pennington covers that James found uninspiring, although that may be a generational difference. I hadn't entirely registered this until recently but, alongside Chris Foss, Pennington really was one of my personal formative and iconic sf artists. Pennington-adorned NEL books seemed to be everywhere in the seventies and eighties, especially *Dune* and its sequels, so that image that fails to inspire James—and by the way, I always assumed they were Fremen rather than Sardaukar although in truth they don't look much like either — may well be one of the defining sf images of my youth.

The series had been redesigned and reissued by the time I came to read the books, probably within a year or two of seeing the film. Our copies are thus the mid-1980s NEL paperbacks with pale blue covers and hefty gold foil lettering. No credited cover artist that I can see, and it's not one of the designs the features in James's gallery, which isn't surprising as it's not a particularly impressive piece of art. But as a piece of design it is still striking, because of its colouring rather than for the image it portrays. It's distinctive and tends to stand out on the bookshelves, although I'm sure that the fact that the books are so damn thick contributes to that too.

And that's my enduring memory of *Dune*-the-book and *Dune*-the-series. God, it was long. Looking at it now it doesn't seem that remarkable: 562 pages in the first volume, 605 if you count the appendices, at least in the edition we have. Hardly short by modern standards but not exactly stand-out huge either. The average length of a 2011 Hugo short-listed novel is 520 pages and that's if you count the Connie Willis two-parter as two separate books; if you don't then it's 622.

But my twenty-something year old memory is that it felt like a slog, especially as one book gave way to another and another. It was very much something I felt I ought to read rather than something I wanted to read,

and I think it was only completer-finished tenacity that got me to *Heretics*... and even then sheer common sense won out over that when I finally accepted that I just wasn't enjoying the later books and I never even bought *Chapterhouse Dune*.

Would a contemporary sf fan feel it was a book they should read? Miranda and Maura apparently think yes, while conceding that 'something seems to be lost in the generation gap'. And of course the implication is that they only read it because James asked them to. Would they have picked it up voluntarily? I suppose the fact that Gollancz felt it worth reprinting in their Masterworks series may say something about their perception of it as an enduring work, as does the fact that Brian Herbert and Kevin J Anderson have extended the franchise, but I wonder whether it's fallen into deep time, along with so many other books that were once thought essential. It might be interesting to track a number of once-core older works to see which if any are still picked up by sf readers who are under 30.

I can't claim to have seen the film as many times as Chris has, nor do I have any desire to challenge him on his achievement (I can't think of any film I'd want to see more than a hundred times), but I do still have an enduring affection for it that I will never have for the book. I even re-watched it just the other day in advance of writing. I do recall that in 1986 I found it confusing, disjointed—IMDB says that explanatory notes were handed out at some cinemas on its original release—and looking at it now it feels like they're trying to cram the whole plot of a 600-page book into a few cinematic hours and it just doesn't fit so really wouldn't it be better to simply ditch some of it? But given the film's history of edits it feels like an unfair criticism. Rather I like it for its visuals, and for the hidden back-story they imply.

Overall, though, it seems a little odd that anybody would want to devote an issue of a fanzine to the subject in the twenty-first century. Still, as many people think that it's a little odd to produce a fanzine in the twenty-first century maybe there's a degree of balance there.

Best etc.

Mark Plummer

*I have a strong connection with where I see a film. Often I'll see a movie that I love in a specific theatre and it'll always be a place that brings up a certain feeling. There is a theatre in Cambridge, Mass., where every time I go to a film there, I have a terrible feeling of woe because it's where I saw Leaving Las Vegas.*



**Steve Jeffrey** – Kidlington, a place in England

One of the problems about not knowing much about media other than ink on dead trees is that I can never tell when I'm being spoofed, especially when the pieces are filled with quite plausible and convincing detail, but it's only when you stand back and look at the big picture you realise that the whole thing is way off beam. Chunga does this to me time and again, and Chris G does it again in the wonderful 'Alternate Dunes'. Thank god for Google and IMDB. I was almost at the point of logging on to Amazon to see which of the Jodorowsky's versions were available on DVD.

I almost wish these had come off, so I could compare them to the David Lynch film. That's still the only one I've seen. I keep meaning to borrow the mini series, but as I'm still only on disk two of the sixteen DVD *Battlestar Galactica* box set I bought some years ago (in a sale at Virgin Records, before they became Zaavi and then folded a year later), I suspect I'm not going to get round to it any time soon.

As for alternate Dunes that do exist, I've not seen the Reductio Ad Absurdum version but the conflation of Baron Harkonnen with Mr Blobby on a stick is particularly inspired. (I think I would have sorely tempted to follow every mention of "kwizatz haderech" with a refrain of "give the dog a bone" but I don't know how that would work for people not familiar with the original rhyme in these more PC times.

Everybody, it seems, gets bogged down (if they get that far) with the fourth book, *God Emperor of Dune*, and either give up at that point, or skip over it to the last two books in the original series, *Chapter House* and *Heretics*.

My editions are NEL paperbacks, the first three with



the Bruce Pennington covers, and then there is a ten year gap in the printing date between *Children of Dune* and the last three, which all have matching covers but in a completely different (and frankly rather naff) style to the first three.

I was never enthused by the whole sharecropping thing of reconstructing backstories and histories

out of FB's wastebin so I never kept any of these later volumes, although I always was intrigued by the whole Butlerian Jihad thing that is only alluded to in the first series. Strange, I never thought of Andy Butler as a technophobe, and he always seemed far too easy going to declare a war on machines. (Though I have felt like that more than once at work, especially when Word decides to unilaterally reformat one of my reports and disappear all my carefully laid out tables.)

I do, though, have a copy of *The Dune Encyclopedia* by Dr Willis E McNelly (who is he?) and The Harvard Lampoon's *Doon*. Unfortunately, ever since reading the latter all those years ago, I have always thought of Paul Atriedes as the Quizzical Halibut, which does rather derail both the book and film at crucial moments. (Actually checking back, I discover I've mis-remembered all these years, and the actual phrase used is the Kumquat Haagendaaz. I think my version is better, but that may be because halibut has, for no good reason, become an intrinsically amusing word in this house.)

Julian's article, pointing out the many parallels between the plot of *Dune* and the raid on Riyadh by Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud was particularly interesting, and pairs nicely with Andy Trembley's article pointing out where Cameron ripped Herbert's retelling of Saudi 'politics by other means' for *Avatar*. I missed the *Dune* influence when I saw *Avatar*, even when that viewing quickly turned into a game of spot the riff.

"The trouble with *Avatar*", I commented in a Prophecy apa after watching it on DVD, and thus without the hand-waving distraction of 3D "is not that it hasn't got much much plot, but that it has far too many." I spend almost the entire time mentally ticking boxes, including *Last of the Mohicans*, *Aliens*, more than a dash of *Apocalypse Now!* plus a fair sprinkling of *Starship Troopers* and *Metal Hurlant/Heavy Metal*. (I'd not seen *FernGully*.) Maybe Cameron intended *Avatar* to be seen as a knowing and self aware postmodern conflation of references and influences, but I suspect not. As for Lynch's *Dune*, there are some good set pieces, but I must part company with Chris over the depiction of the Baron as a grotesque cartoon villain. That, and some of the clunky stilted or strident dialogue. Alia's closing speech manages to be all three and very near wrecks the whole film at what should be its climatic moment.

Steve

*I loved Julian's article, and Andy's piece on Avatar also gave it to me, even though I have never seen the movie. That's right, the top-grossing movie of all time*

and I haven't seen it. I also haven't seen *Titanic*. Go figure.

**David Redd** – Haverfordwest, a place in England  
Thanks for the paper copy!

Chris was clearly hooked by *Dune* at the right age. Personally, being born a little earlier I came to sf earlier, and so *Dune* never had quite the eye-opening magic which I found in, say, the less-remembered *Sentinels from Space* by Eric Frank Russell. But the articles form a good varied set—with some nice non-*Dune* pieces at the end too. Brief random comments:

Covers. For me THE cover for *Dune* is Schoenherr's original March 1965 sandworm, the last gasp of the briefly giant-size Analog. Had I been the right age to discover sf, this cover would have made me discover it. A fully modern Sixties sf cover too, unlike the wheel-shaped space station on a previous Sixties Analog cover which could have been painted in 1950.

*Avatar*. James Cameron ranged further than *Dune* for his sources, remember. We should never ever mention *Avatar* without also mentioning *Call Me Joe* or *The Word for World is Forest*.

Gollum played as Jar Jar Binks? Inspired!

Some other sf novels with sources in history: van Vogt's *Empire of the Atom* (ancient Rome) and Eric Frank Russell's *Wasp* (WWII Japan). Neither of these writers bothered to file off the serial numbers very thoroughly.

Nice issue, even though it doesn't make me want to read any more *Dune* beyond my original dips into Analog. But that wasn't the point, was it?

Best to all  
David

*I think that I came to the Dune movie at exactly the right time. I truly do believe that the Golden Age is twelve years old. The Word for World is Forest is one of my all-time favorite stories of any length and everything I've seen about Avatar seems to indicate that it's an obvious influence. I've never read Call Me Joe. That sandworm cover is a marvel and I have at least three copies of it around the house. One was my Dad's, one I got from some folks to auction for TAFF (and it's going at Reno!) and one that I've always loved. A marvelous cover.*

**Pamela Boal** – Wantage, a place in England  
Thank you for this *Dune* edition. On the whole I prefer variety of topics in zines but this one is surely an exception to that preference. As is often the case with a zine, you provided for me a trip down memory lane. We were in Singapore where SF was hard to come by when suddenly we found that there was a publication that was available to regularly feed our habit.

That publication was Analog and the first three months ran a serialisation of *Dune*. Incidentally that started a collection of thirty years which we still have and any one who cares to collect it can have it.

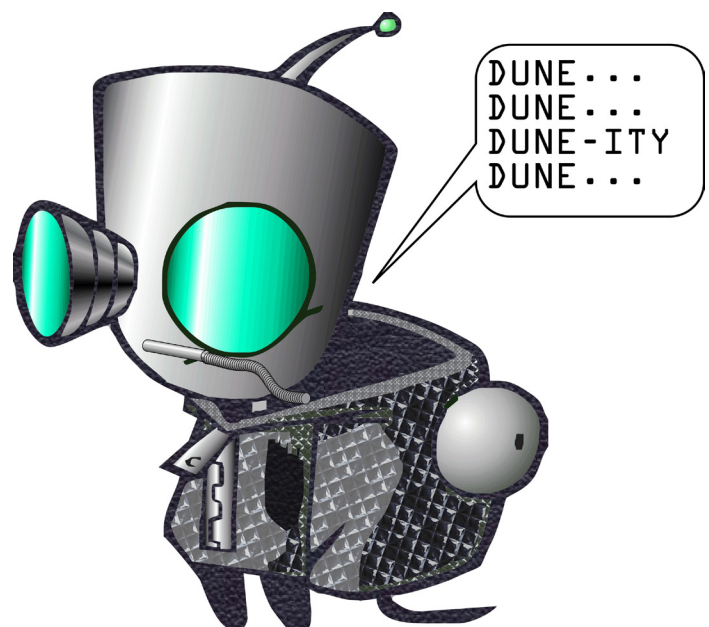
When the film came along I was disappointed, simply in so many respects it was not the book I knew. The articles here gave me pause to think and I now regard the book and the film as two separate entities and can better appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each.

One thing I enjoy about SF is its historical perspective. Looking at the scientific, technological and social events that trigger any given story. Thus I particularly enjoyed Julian Headlong's article.

As one who has dabbled in writing for amateur dramatics I appreciated Ian Sorensen's lucid account of writing parodies. I certainly agree the diversity of SF experience today makes it a difficult if not impossible task.

Thanks Yvonne we are also with Midlands, now HSBC, and inertia has kept us there. You may well have given me the impetus to do something about dealing with our dissatisfaction.

Again many thanks for a great ish,  
Pamela.



**Lloyd Penney** – Etobicoke, a place in Canada

How many editors have you got tucked away in there? Going for the dozen next time? Anyway, thank you all for *Journey Planet* 9, and I get the feeling that this is going to be a very short letter of comment.

How so? I read all six *Dune* novels that Frank Herbert wrote. I haven't read any that his son wrote, and I think Brian's written more than six now with Kevin J. Anderson. I saw the movie with Kyle McLauchlan and Sting, but not the two miniseries that came afterwards. Beyond that, just another long series, albeit one that was, IMHO, good from the start to the end, and for me, the end was the end of the sixth book. I will go through the articles and see what I can add to them. (Look like Steven Silver is thinking the same thing...it's like your favorite restaurant deciding to franchise out. Nothing wrong with the new locations, but I'd rather stick with the original.)

If the *Dune* series was meant to be a parallel of the Saud family founding Saudi Arabia, with a little more in common than the unending sand, I can handle that. The article from the teenage readers perhaps proves that Frank's books have not aged well, but perhaps Brian's books were written for that newer reader.

I would very much like to see some of Ian's musicals. Shtick isn't the word for it... I expect to see lots of Bay area influence in the Reno Worldcon, too. Ah, URLs for three of the musicals...hope I have software that can play .m4v files...

I am hoping that I will see all of you at the Reno Worldcon...we are definitely going. And, we are expecting that our next Worldcon after this one will be in London in 2014, assuming that it wins. It will probably take us that long to save for it. Maybe if we run for TAFF that year...can I get some nominations from you lot?

Anyway, time to go. I have to think about getting to work this evening. I wish time travel existed...it would be the only way I'd get everything done. Take care, all, and I hope to write something a little longer and a little more cogent for the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

*You know, Lloyd, as one of the BArea influencers, expect a lot of fun and frolic from us in what will probably be the closest thing to a local WorldCon for us in the next decade or so. I hope you'll be joining us in the Fan Lounge, where I've got plans within plans. I haven't tried any of the other novels yet, and I'm not sure I will.*

**Claire Brialey** – Croydon, a place in England

I know Chris has already compiled the letters on *Journey Planet* #9 but I'm hoping there's space to slot this in at the end. It might in some way make up for not being able to contribute to the issue, or indeed to sort out your letter column that time. Did I mention I've been a bit busy at work? Yes, now I come to think about it I've mentioned little else. You really need to take me off your colophon when I contribute nothing, though; get the credit—or the blame, of course—where it's due.

On which note it was delightful to see a new Dave Hicks cover on a fanzine again. I'm still trying to work out whether Chris and James are standing in for sandworms or bait, but I think either could be made to work conceptually.

What intrigued me about this issue initially was Chris's experience in which *Dune* is the film—and what I couldn't work out from this was whether you first saw the movie without knowing it was adapted from a different medium, or whether you knew but didn't care. In general I've found that films can effectively address about the same length of story as good short fiction, which leaves a lot of the subtlety of plot, context and character cut short or entirely cut out when a novel—or at least a novel that contains plot, context, character or subtlety—is adapted for cinema. And so I've made some conscious decisions over the years to see a film before I read the book on which it was based, expecting to get more out of both different treatments of the story that way; and sometimes I've just decided to watch a film or TV series without having read the book first because it looks interesting and I can decide later whether reading the book too seems a good idea. When I've done it the other way round I usually find myself being more critical of the film or TV version.

Usually, like Yvonne, I find myself getting more out of the book version no matter what order I do it in. Perhaps it's to do with characterisation, in the same sort of way as the pictures being better on radio although here being about the depth and development of character as well as whether they look right; or perhaps I do just respond better to text than pictures, even moving ones that talk.

I can agree that *Dune* the film looks amazing, though; I could stare at some scenes repeatedly. And in fact I had to, and in this case that may be what influenced me to believe The Book Is Better, since that was also the message being reinforced to me throughout many of the scenes that I had to watch again and also many that were allowed to go past just the once.



I've written in other places about how some of the books I most enjoyed as a teenager were the result of my schoolfriend Corinne having a Saturday job in a library. To say that Corinne was a big fan of *Dune* the book (and subsequent books, at least those written by Frank Herbert) is to wholly under-estimate her enjoyment of reading the *Dune Encyclopaedia* all the way through rather than just, y'know, using it to look stuff up. Let's not knock the *Dune Encyclopaedia*, though. I had read and was rather impressed by *Dune*. I was aware then there were more books, although didn't read *Dune Messiah* until Corinne urged me to do so. Having waded through that, I was slightly revived by *Children of Dune* although had a bit of a relapse when I realised there were three more; and then the *Dune Encyclopaedia* saved me, by telling me everything I felt I needed to know about *God-Emperor of Dune* without actually having to read the novel, and confirming my growing suspicion that, like nearly everyone else I suspect, I didn't really need to know anything about *Heretics of Dune* or *Chapterhouse Dune*—although I gather from Steven Silver's article that maybe it would have been worth hanging in there. (Ian Sorensen's 'Arrakeen Rap' might not have helped quite as much, but it would have been shorter.)

But Corinne remained a big fan of *Dune*, and as such was very very keen to see the film. For some reason this didn't prove possible in the cinema and so, when in the mid-'80s I acquired a boyfriend who had himself acquired a shiny VHS copy of the film, my opportunity arose to return in some small part the favours Corinne had done me in introducing me to so many good books. (Some may consider, given her reaction, that in practice I returned the favour she had done me in insisting that if I carried on reading all six Thomas Covenant novels I would come to love them. But it wasn't on purpose.)

So there we were. Me, Corinne, the video of *Dune*, my parents' video recorder, Corinne's notebook. I presumed she was going to write a review, although I wondered whether making notes on a first viewing might distract her from too much of the subsequent action; I'd already seen the film once, with my boyfriend, and thought it had rather a lot crammed in even though it had clearly had to leave some stuff out. In fact it had struck me that it might be a bit confusing for those who didn't have the context of the story from the book—although I note from Chris's reaction that wasn't necessarily the case. Fortunately, of course, we had both read the book, so I thought maybe Corinne wouldn't really miss anything by making notes.

Indeed, that's not what happened. There were quite

a number of things that Corinne missed, but that wasn't on account of not looking for them very carefully. We stopped the tape quite a bit, and ran it back, and watched some scenes again. Some several times. Some in very jerky VHS slow motion, but some at normal pace in order to ensure that Corinne had been able to accurately note down the dialogue so as to be able to confirm that it was, indeed, not accurate. We watched some scenes again to note that things were missing or contracted, some to note that things had been added, and many to note that they were just wrong. Wrong wrong wrong.

In some ways I think it was so comprehensively wrong that she rather enjoyed it after all. But it was clearly still a big disappointment. I was, as so often, more wishy-washy on all questions; I enjoyed the film well enough – although at the time would have preferred to have seen Sting, with a less startling haircut, play an admittedly older Paul – but didn't consider it either a travesty or a masterpiece. I've had a similar reaction myself, though, against plays that have been filmed, where the dialogue has been cut or moved about or even changed, and it bothers me much more with the medium switch to film than it does with a re-edited version for the stage. But it hadn't occurred to me that the film of a book could ever be the book, shot scene by scene and line by line, because it would take too long and the narrative voice would need to be presented differently. Is there a novelisation of *Dune-the-film*? Does it bear any resemblance to *Dune-the-book* in terms of its authorial voice?

Corinne and I have rather lost touch in the past few years, but some of our mutual friends are still in contact with her. I shall have to remember to ask them to ask her whether she still thinks of *Dune-the-book-series* with affection and nostalgia, or indeed any greater passion; whether she's mellowed on the subject of the film; and whether—as the person, I think, who also introduced me to Brian Herbert's *The Garbage Chronicles*—she's read any of the 'prequel' series for which we may blame (or, I deduce from the article by Miranda Ramey and Maura Taylor, choose to credit) in equal part Kevin J Anderson.

You'll have deduced, of course, that that's the updated stub of the article I would have developed as a contribution to the fanzine itself if I'd have more time and energy—rather than genuinely being a letter of comment AKA engaged response to this issue. But it's always worth reading a fanzine all the way through in order to find a pun on page 32 (and in deference to Ian Sorensen's explanation of parody humour I did indeed



groan) referencing one's own perzine title and thus Christopher Marlowe, for which I will forgive many things.

I'm also glad Gertrude Bell made it into Julian Headlong's informative, educational and entertaining article; if anyone wants to know more I'd thoroughly recommend Georgina Howell's biography *Daughter of the Desert*.

I should mention that I have an enduring fondness for the Bruce Pennington cover artwork that James finds rather uninspiring; but that's probably because those were the copies I saw most often in the library. However, I've checked quite carefully and note that everyone writing about *Dune* has chosen to avoid any use of the word 'phallic', or indeed any other suggestion that the way the sandworms look is, well, noteworthy—even when James used the term 'girth' to describe them as part of the same article. Did you all have a pact to avoid

stating the obvious?

Still, I've made no such pact and so I shall state the obvious a little myself. Maybe sending you a LOC will demonstrate to everyone that *JP* really is your fanzine, which I just struggle uphill against the tide of your collective creativity to copy edit when you haven't got a guest editor. I mean, I do think that's obvious but apparently it's not sinking in universally.

Now I'll confuse people again by going to edit all your older letters...

All the best,  
Claire

## Another Day, Another Dune

M Lloyd

Chris asked me for a *Dune* article and I was unhappy to have missed the deadline. Things happen. Mostly things that are less than four years old crashing and banging all over the house, using the ramps for miniature waterslides and so on. They're monsters, all of them. Little Monsters, like Lady Gaga fans, faces covered in bizarre colors and all.

I've seen *Dune* dozens of times. Chris used to put on the video tape while we were making out in my apartment. If he slipped it in, I knew he'd be trying something. Bless him for predictability. Later, Jay used to watch it all the time, often delivering the lines along with the actors in a sort of personal Rocky Horror. At least he didn't dress as a Bene Gesserit or throw cinnamon at the screen when the worm broke forth trying to eat the mining team. More often than not, when we'd put it on, we'd end up ignoring the last half-hour in a fit of hot bald Lady Jessica inspired passion on the couch. We never played Reverend Mother Meets Paul, though. Put your hand in the Box, I'd have said. They would have reluctantly done so.

It is fair to say that *Dune* turns me on. Red hot. While hot. Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam is a forest fire to my loins. Shaved bald but piercing in every

way. Maybe it's those eyes which seem more dead than alive, or the way her face contorts as she tries to read the mind of the Guild Navigator. Of course, Lady Jessica is beautiful, almost painfully so, like Claudia Cardinale in the middle 60s. In her stillsuit, Jessica's a mistress of movement, the catch-pockets seeming to accentuate the curves of the body underneath. When she become the new Reverend Mother, it's over. I can't resist anymore and lucky is the person viewing with me as it's on.

Kyle McLaughlin's pretty easy on the eyes as well. And Jose Ferrer! Even so near his expiration date and the man could stare sex into just about any camera shot. Virginia Madsen, Sean Young, Brad Dourif, Sting in that loin clothe. Shiver. That boy was cut from so sexy leather!

Jay made the kids watch it one night, I was in the other room for that one. Little Jameson loved the music. It kept him quiet for two hours, not a peep. When Paul brought down the waters of Heaven, he cheered. After it was done, Jameson ran around the house loudly singing the Messiah's Theme.

Duh duh-duh DUM! Duh duh-duh DUM!

It was annoyingly amusing, which might be the best way to describe the kids all the time.

# Melbourne 2010

## James Bacon

I miss Melbourne real bad. So bad. It was such a blast, a trip an amazing time of madness, mischief, miracles and mingling. Melbourne jeez. I am all a buzz at the moment as Worldcon is coming up soon and there is a good chance that I might be going, and that's real nice, but there is a gnawing feeling I get somewhere in my innards, and I realise I secretly wish there was Aussiecon 5, next month, back in Melbourne. I doubt the Aussie fans would appreciate it, but crikey almighty, I sorta fell in love with the place and especially with it's fandom.

The first full day as I walked down Plenty Rd towards Rosanna station, it felt a bit like part of Black Horse Ave, in Dublin; or perhaps the nicer parts of Castleknock or Glasnevin. The way that suddenly, in suburbia, the Rosanna parkland appeared, reminded me of the botanic gardens back in Dublin. The single story detached houses are not far in style from the more salubrious in those Irish neighbourhoods. I remember thinking that it's a cool day and people look like they do at home, in Ireland, a bit wrapped up and long wool coats and scarfs.

And then the sounds, as the electric train approaches the station, the bells on the barriers and horn on the train a bit American, but the train sounding like a Dublin Area Rapid Transit, electrical multiple unit back home, a distinct sound, not often heard in England. As people get on the train, I really have to pinch myself to remind myself these folks are not Irish. There are the three looks: the pristine, heading into work look, in nice clothes and making a real effort, and then the other two, the Oh shit it's a work day, will the vomit wash off this suit, do I look a bit shit, ah crap did I walk in the dog food after last night's drinking session and then the I really couldn't give a damn rough look, with unkempt beards and clothes that could be pyjamas. It's definitely Ireland. Actually the more I look around, I realise that these people, are my people, and they are Irish, whether they want to be or not.

Flinders St Station is such a nice station. The trams fly by, looking smart, and this part of town is distinctly different. I am intent on seeing the Tim Burton exhibit on at ACMI; I am not as big a fan as Stef, but I am indeed a fan. Right there next to Flinders St is Federation Square, a stark, modern and not unattractive space, and in there is the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. Once inside we see one of the batmobiles, and a boy with a massive blue head, and I feel at home. The atmosphere is perfect: the blacks and purples, the swirling strong spirals, the contrast between black and white, the oddness. There is a replica of the deer

from the garden and the actual Scissorhands are also on display next to sketches of the costume.

The artwork is stunning, but first there is much about the man himself, and the movies that influenced him: *Monster on Campus*, *Tarantula*, *Astounding Mr Monster*, *Attack of the 50 ft monster*, *Brain from Planet Auras* and the *Brain that Wouldn't Die*.

The artwork on display in this section is from his youth; I am impressed with some of his work from the California Art College. The giant zlig stands out, a concept sent to Disney in 1976, and a whole wall of cartoon images—29 in total, that he did while at Disney. It's the sheer quantity that astounds me, that gives great value for money, as there is so much entertainment.

Obviously, being a teenager it was an awkward period of life, but you can see the Burton style in his *Boy and Girl* series, the manipulation of shape and proportion. Many pieces of art are drawn with whatever is to hand, and a series of drawings make me think of Ronald Searle; some of the pen work is definitely Ralph Steadmanesque. Yet it's the humour and nasty twist that I enjoy so much: *Dr Brain* the head villain with two assistants who must hold his head up at all times to keep him from falling down.

The venue had been specially prepared, and at the right moment there are oils on black velvet and one





is drawn into a section with leaning trees overhead a windy corridor with black and white tiles. It's very Burtonesque.

There is a section devoted to each of his movies, showing storyboards, handwritten notes, and puppets. In the Nightmare before Christmas section, there is a Jack about 14 inches tall and some 26 heads. There is much about Kelly Asbury and Kendal Cronkite and there are sketches in Tim's hand of The Mayor and Zero.

There is so much love after going into the whole exhibit, whether it be the tragic toys for boys and girls, or all the props from movies: Alice's shoes, her incredible Blue Dress, Willy Wonkas headgear, and the metal and resin armature from Mars Attacks.

From a comics perspective, as well as Batman there are some Catwoman sketches which would make an awesome comic, there are a number of unrealised projects such as Romeo and Juliet where they are a land mass and an ocean mass rather than people, images for Little Dead Riding Hood and of course images for what would be the ultimate: Superman Lives.

I take my time as I wind amongst the trees and ghoulish sounds, and darkness with odd, lights. I am impressed with the school children all drawing and working on their own art but for me it is truly the sheer quality and scale of the exhibit which leaves me breathless.

I ensured that I had a day or two to look around Melbourne, I had travelled very far for what would be a very short trip, but I love comic and book shops, and these were on my list of things to do. I was soon in Flinders bookshop which was pretty OK, and had a small bit of Science Fiction.

Then I found Minotaur comics. This is a massive and modern comic shop, in a huge basement. Manga, books, comics and collectables adorned the shop and it was pretty good, all things being equal. They had an excellent selection of local small press comics and comic fanzines, which astounded me, and I was pleased to pick up a couple of comics. I failed to find Napoleon Books or Basement Books, but then my information was a bit old. I spent a lot of time walking around in a very small circle and then to MacDonald's for the free wifi to work out if Napoleon was really gone. It appears he had left. So would I if I ate in McDonald's. Indigestion most likely.

I travelled about on the trams a lot that day, the older free ones that circle around the city, looking up all the bookshops that I can find. I travel out to Carlton and

find a wonderful bookshop, that has a Tintin on its stairs, and lots of coffee shops nearby and it's all very relaxed and easy going. Following on from Carlton Books, I walk past an Irish pub called Pugs Mahone, with a Pug on the sign. Now normally the rule is 'why would I go into an Irish pub when I want local culture?'. Most pubs I have been into so far are more Irish than anything anyhow, they have that natural feel of heavy drinkers paradise that doesn't naturally appeal to families if you know what I mean. But Pugs Mahone? I go in, and it's very pleasant, and all the girls have sweet country accents from home, and I am not sure what to say or do, but I have an Irish cider and it's good. I have a Pug you see, and a Pug Cross and I have to don't I!

Bev Hope takes me out one evening to the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. This is her home from home and she loves it here. I am introduced to many friendly people and find myself quite relaxed in their library, a room with floor to ceiling bookshelves and many interesting editions. The venue is an interesting one; it is part of a complex of buildings of St David's Uniting Church. All the buildings are square, and the Hall is quite a size. I am tempted to suggest it would make a great venue for a one day con, and it seemingly occasionally does. In a small room a group of about 20 are watching some sort of fan Star Trek movie, I wonder if it's Star Wreck or some such and ask Bev, who tells me it's 'Fuck Knows'—a new one to me, but I write it down so I can find it later. Bev tells me there was a Mini Vampire con, with about eighty people along, which makes me guffaw. Ah the undead have become so impervious to the religious effects. I meet PJ, Ian, Jock, another James, and Peter Ryan who seems to be in charge. It's a good gang and I must admit I wondered why there couldn't be something as awesome as this in London or Dublin. But then it'd be a bit to organised I suppose for the anarchist lovers amongst us.

Then, as if my Science Fiction overload is not enough, back at Bev's—which over the course of my stay has turned into the Home for wayward fans making it to Melbourne—Bev puts the Bluray 2007 version of Bladerunner onto the telly and I am sure I am drinking.

Bev is a pretty awesome host, and there is always something going on, an adventure, if you will. As we went off to Preston market, we came back to find Liam, her son, also had an adventure, but this involved a visit to A&E. I shall always know Liam as Thor's Hammer in my mind, although to be honest in a time of calamity he was quite calm and composed and damn sensible.

Later on the way to meet John and Fran Dowd, who had travelled all the way from Sheffield to be in Melbourne and had gone some unusual circuitous route, we had another adventure as the car broke down. The engine simply ceased running as we were in a busy three lane street, quite close to the city! Bev cleverly steered a course into a dead area between tram lines and the busy street. Soon we are rescued and in Brown Berthas which is very nice and with fine company, and although we are now too late for food, we're not for the music that started.

From here my culinary explorations continue and Bev suggests a plan for Vietnamese in Richmond, but it's late now and the town is heaving. We all end up on Swanston St, very near Melbourne Central and I have these amazing dumplings and am just stunned by the food. It's a late night when we get back to Rosanna.

I am woken by Bev hooting and hollering, another adventure I wonder, as she crashes into the room where I am sleeping. Bev shares with me a crazy love of trains, and we see the smoke and steam as a train goes by at the end of the road through Rosanna station, it's a special K shuttle tied in with some steam rail festival. This sudden awakening allows us plenty of time to head out to Belgrave and see Puffing Billy. It's an hour and a half out to Belgrave and we take a variety of public transport. I like the Metro in Melbourne, and we encounter Revenue Protection on the journey, but that's all good, they rarely fine people for genuine incompetence. I am excited, but Bev is so excited she'll be wetting herself I think.

Puffing Billy is a preserved steam railway. Built in 1902, it was one of four low-cost 2'6" narrow gauge lines constructed in Victoria to gain access to remote areas. The line between Belgrave and Gembrook runs through amazingly warm and high forests, fern gullies, open farmlands, and the magnificent Dandenong Ranges. Originally it was part of the line which opened on 18 December 1900 and operated over 18.2 miles (29km) between Upper Ferntree Gully and Gembrook and ran until a landslide closed the line and then closed in 1954. The line was reopened a short eight years later, as a preserved affair, and at first it ran to Menzies creek, but over the decades it has been extended to Emerald in 1965, then to Lakeside in 1975, and finally to Gembrook in October 1998. As we walk from the modern metro station along a path it feels like a short journey to a bygone time.

I like the neat clean diesel shunted into a dead end siding, where one can imagine the proper line once joined up with this preserved line. But it is 14A that is our engine and in her shiny blackness, she sits, power harnessed.

The conductor has a wide brimmed hat that I immediately take to, as does the driver. The trains smell perfect, all smoke and oil and grease and steam and sulphur. We sit in an open carriage, and children hang their legs out through the bars as they sit on the waist high carriage side, and we soon and chugging out of the station and on our way. We change halfway and come back on the beautifully green 6A.

Later it is off to Sue Ann and Trevor's. Again, the hospitality here is incredible. Trevor and Sue Ann have a lovely home and I am impressed. Soon Trevor is suggesting a sausage sizzle, and also we make some arrangements about storage of food and equipment for Worldcon. Due to Bev's car breakdown, Trev becomes the saviour of the London Worldcon bid, as we agree to go shopping and store booze in his room and lots of other things which are really an atrocious imposition, but his kindness and tolerance and just 'get it done' attitude overwhelms me. It's awesome. We plan a variety of missions, and drive off in search of a number of things, including visiting some places he wants to see. I suggest we call by the Railway Museum in Melbourne which is over near the Docklands side of town,





where we are headed, and the saddest moment of the trip takes place.

Trevor is ready to take a photo of me with my hands twisted around the wires of a fence, peering in at the wonderful majesty of massive steam and diesel engines, herds of the damn things, and old station buildings and signals and a plethora of wondrous railway nostalgia and heritage. And on the fence the sign, 'Sorry Museum Closed for Repairs'. I wander up and down the fence a little bit like some wired caged animal a bit distressed by this strange barrier between me and Eden. I trudge back to the car, after taking a few photos through the mesh.



I visit Melbourne Zoo, which is pretty awesome. I meet up with Claire and Mark and Ian and Ruth and we wander around the Zoo. To be honest it is a mild and overcast day, very Irish in nature, and the zoo feels like it could be a new part of Dublin Zoo. I am impressed by the design; the zoo is set up so that no matter what the more nocturnal or shy animals were doing, you could see them. I stood for a long time looking at the underground burrow where three very large wombats lay relaxed and sleeping and loved them. The other crazy animals, like the echidna, and the koala were nice although it was truly the duck bill platypus that was unusual in its strangeness, very otter like but for its mouth. It was a good and relaxing way to spend the afternoon.

Two last shops which blew my mind. First, Hyland's bookshop. This shop was down an alley between Swanston and Russell St, on the first floor. It felt rather industrial in a sixties style as I entered into a lobby and went up a lift to the shop. It opened up before me like some sort of Mecca, with many spaces crammed in with every type of Military and Transport book and

magazine. I was quite pleased to go in and slowly work my way around. I cannot really compare it to anywhere in London: Motor Books in St Martin's Lane may come close, but the specialist nature of this shop made it unique. I browsed and found books on Irish Military matters that were new to me. There was an excellent mix of new and second hand and unusual. As I worked my way around the shop, finding great value, I came across a stand full of model planes that never existed. Now I recognised some of these, as I had seen them previously in the work of John Baxter (of whom more later in this ish!), who has written a series of stories in a number of books which tell alternative history, while modellers provide the models to these fictional stories. I made mention to the man behind the counter, who flabbergasted me by stating that John works there on a Thursday and Monday! I knew it would be hard to get back during the convention but I made up my mind to try.

The second shop was Railfan, which was on Market St and Hennessey, and this again was incredible and incomparable to anything I know. It was literally a shop for fans of railways, full of ephemera, railwayana, memorabilia, books and a few models. It was an incredible shop, with massive pieces of railway furniture, signal arms, maps and plans and a conductor's hat which I knew I would have to make my own.

There was something so different, yet so welcoming and familiar about Melbourne. I just find it hard to describe, and in many ways the camaraderie and strength of the local and Australian fans were yet to come to the fore, which would leave such a massively strong impact upon me. So far everyone had been stunningly nice. The convention itself would present a whole set of other problems to surmount, and Trevor and Sue Ann were indicative of the powerful ability and friendliness that I was to continue to encounter, adore and respect.

One night of the convention I had been in the Hilton, for a glass of wine, and I stood outside this modern building, and the rain started to sheet down quite heavily, and it blurred the lit bus stops and taxi rank. It suddenly reminded me of a place I knew in London's Docklands and I secretly wished that I could get a taxi home, if I had enough money, or maybe a bus back to Croydon, and for a weird number of minutes Melbourne felt like the city next door and I wanted it to be that close forever.

# Sean McMullen: My Forgotten Favorite Author

Christopher J Garcia

I am a man of many favorites. I have lists and lists of favorites in every arena. Favorite Albums (Rumours by Fleetwood Mac, Appetite for Destruction from Guns 'n Roses), Favorite Meals (the Fisherman's Platter from Bob's Big Boy), Favorite Movies (*The Blues Brothers*, *Black Swan*, *Dude*, *Where's My Car?*) and so on. It's a mania, I'd imagine. I have a list of Favorite Authors that reads like this: Kurt Vonnegut, T.C. Boyle, Christa Faust, Donald Westlake, Stephen Baxter, Ian McDonald, Carrie Vaughn, Gail Carriger, Cherie Priest, Ted Chiang, Mick Foley. Quite a list, that one. And you'll notice that it's not including many of the folks I read a lot of. But if you were to ask me what my favorite stories are, I would instantly rattle off a list of stories from over the years and of my top ten, at least 7 would be from an author I wouldn't have on my conscious list of favorite authors. In fact, it would be exactly seven from that list of my twenty favorites from that author I wouldn't mention, that author who has far-and-away the most on that list.

That author would be Sean McMullen.

The thing about Sean is that when I think of his stories, I think of his stories. When I think of Stephen Baxter's novels, I think of Stephen Baxter, of the way that his prose feels immediately identifiable. It's heavy, heady, full of a dark depth that seeps into every word. When I think of T.C. Boyle, I think of the way he plays with the potential of every word, how it all feels like he's built the pieces he writes from parts of some other, older language and translated them for today. I don't know what it is, but Sean's stories feel self-actualized, like they wrote themselves. They seem effortless. While there are stories that seem to struggle a bit with themselves, the story *The Pharaoh's Airship* being one of the best examples, but usually, there's a simple feeling to all of them.

It's a clean feeling.

The first McMullen novel I read was a good starting place. *Voices in the Light* was probably the best novel I read in 1997. It had come out a few years before and I had been interested in reading it from the moment I heard about it. It's a world that is beyond ours, not only beyond our own world, but beyond what most of us could ever imagine. It is a post-world, a world where our paradigms have run their course. It's a bizarre sort of world where computers still exist. When you talk to futurists, many of them will point to the



Singularity, but this is a world where the Singularity has come and gone. *The Calculator of Libris* is one of the most unique computer concepts I've ever read about.

I mostly dug on Sean's shorter works. I don't remember who got *The Pharaoh's Airship*, a story in an Australian magazine from 1986, but I read it and was amazed. It was a story that seemed to roll through history and the future and from topic to topic, influence to influence. I remember the issue of *Omega* that a bunch of us passed around was rather tattered with multi-reads. That story, which as I've reread it is a bit rough-hewn, has always been one of my favorites, a piece that seems to have been written for some polymath that I wish I could be. It was a powerful story to the high school sophomore Chris Garcia. It was the first of many added to the list.

Another story turned my head: *Pax Romana*. This one I remember from college, reading it in the common room while the OJ verdict was being read, and late into that night as the guys watched the news, reactions ranging from anger to the darkest cynicism-laced comedy possible. It was a story that I loved, a Roman Centurion sleeps into the Dark Ages and quells a local rebellion. It was the kind of story I love with smart characters. I remember that unlike most stories of this kind, it wasn't about the clash of cultures, the difficult unease of two different traditions coming into contact. It was about differing emotional responses, concepts



of duty, thoughts. It was a story I've only read once since that evening in my dorm over-looking the Boston Common, but it was one that I take with me to this day.

The Devils of Langenhagen turned out to be one of those stories that hits and hits hard. I read it late one evening in a hotel room after a massive book purchase in the afternoon. I was nursing a broken heart, though I'd never had admitted it at the time. I needed books, words, places that weren't the moment and that hotel room was the place for me. The story opens and hits me hard—"Above us the sun was a dirty orange colour from the burning ruins of nearby cities, and the sky had the colour of muddy water." I quote this like some quote the opening of *Neuromancer*. To me, that's a positively immaculate opening, and while I can constantly remember that opening, I don't think of McMullen. I don't know why. Instead, I think of the story, of the characters. It was a World War II story that seemed both playful and powerful. In a way it was a *Flyer* story, and in another, it was a fun little time-travel-type story. In another way again, it was a story that is almost tacitly damning those folks who see war as a distant form of entertainment. It's an interesting story with amazing layers. I've read it a half-dozen times over the years.

To me, the January 2008 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* was the greatest single issue of any magazine I've ever read. It had John Kessel's Hugo-nominated story *Pride & Prometheus* as well as another of the stories on my all-time favorite list, Alexander Irvine's *Mystery Hill*. Michaela Roessner's *It's a Wonderful Life*, one of the best stories I've ever read

that's set in Berkeley, was in there too. Sean's story in it, *The Twilight Year*, was one of the best stories with King Arthur ever. It was a beautiful connection with the eruption of Krakatoa and it's one of those stories told by a Bard that just grabs me when many others of the same kind repel me like a wrong-ended magnet. This one made my list easily, but again, I wouldn't instantly think of Sean McMullen when I read it. I'd think of something from some author who pushes historical fiction, who plies trade with stories like *The Stars Compell* or *In the Masters Castle*. It's a deep story that I thoroughly enjoy!

There are so many more. *The Spiral Briar*, another story set in earlier times that rings of steampunk. *Walk to the Full Moon*, from another wonderful issue of *F&SF*, gives us a feral girl story that turns out to be much more (even with a *Shaymalan* that seems a bit sudden). *Mother of Champions*, a story that posits the most terrifying of all possible worlds: one where cheetahs are Gods. Cheetahs freak me out. There's this one robot that's being tested for battlefield use that's based on a cheetah that really creeps me out because when it inevitably breaks with its program, we're all dead.

Sean McMullen is one of my favorite authors, but he's the one I actively have to think about. It's a shame because when I think of the stories, the novels, I love them, I feel them, but for some reason, I don't think of Sean. I think of the stories. It's like when a film is nominated for Best Picture but not Best Director. It must have made itself. Sometimes, it feels like that.

# My Cats

## Christopher J Garcia

My Grandmother would have disowned me if I hadn't grown up to be a San Francisco Giants fan. I am not exaggerating. I have cousins who she never spoke to because they were Dodgers fans. Baseball was a passion of my Grandma's, and over the years it has been one of mine. The Giants have been terrible at times (we called them the Gain'ts during the terrible 1983 season) and they've been big time winners. They made it to the play-offs a bunch of years, and to the World Series three times in my lifetime. In 1989, they lost to the Oakland As. In 2002, they were within 6 outs of winning it all, only to lose to the Angels. It wasn't until 2010 that the Giants won their first World Series in San Francisco and the first for the franchise since 1954 when they were still the New York Giants. I've always been rooting for the team that had come close but never quite caught the brass ring.

It's summer 1989 and I am about to become a High School freshman. The summer is long, I have my first kiss, my first girlfriend, and I spend at least one day a week at Great America, the local amusement park. It is the year of NWA wrestling, Ricky Steamboat vs. Ric Flair, the Midnight Express vs. The Original Midnight Express, and there is wrestling on ESPN at 1 every afternoon. This is the time of day that I love most, but before wrestling starts on Fridays, there is the AFL, the Australian Football League. Every week they show an edited match and cover the highlights. I watch every week and am dragged in by a single man and his weekly magical performances.

Gary Ablett.

Gazza.

God.

Gary Ablett was the greatest player of the time. No one came close, no one played the game as hard, as furious, as deeply tough as Gary Ablett. Watching him that season was the most exciting thing ever, and they went all the way to the Grand Final, just as the Giants did that year. They also lost in the end, just like the Giants. The parallels were obvious for that year, and as I looked into it, there were so many more. The Giants were one of the oldest baseball teams in the world, just like Geelong Football Club. They both grew out of cricket teams. They've both had some of the most significant records in the history of their sport. They both had extremely successful periods

followed by droughts where they are still a powerhouse, but they never quite made it to the Champion dais. They both had legends who helped redefine the game. In San Francisco, it was Juan Marichall, Willie Mays, Willie McCovey and Gaylord Perry in the 60s. For Geelong, it was Polly Farmer, Doug Wade and Alistair Lord. In the 80s, the Giants had Will Clark, Matt Williams and Kevin Mitchell, Geelong had Billy Brownless, Paul Couch (whose play always bored the hell out of me) and Gazza.

I didn't see much of the 1990 or 91 seasons: I think they were moved to a different time on ESPN, but I came back and started watching in 1992, the year that Couch won his Brownlow Medal for Best & Fairest, and then I didn't watch much in 1993 because for most of the summer (their winter) I was in Washington DC working at the Smithsonian. The one game I remember seeing was when Aboriginal superstar Nicky Winmar lifted his shirt and pointed to his belly after getting taunted by the racist fans at Collingwood. It wasn't until 1994 when I started being able to watch every weekend. It was great. Ablett was on top of the world and Geelong was the strongest team there was! There were a couple of other great players at the time, and they were always shown during the highlight reels at the end of the broadcasts. There was Tony Lockett, a goal-scoring





machine who was like a less-amazing Ablett. Modra, an awesome player who could flat-out go and was just as spectacular as Ablett sometimes. And as amazing as players like those three were, you had Gavin Wanganeen, who was just amazing at times.

And Geelong, just like my Giants, lost in the Finals in 1994 and 1995. Ablett was awesome in every one of the matches I saw with him in it. He rose to the heights, winning the Norm Smith medal in 1989 as the best player in the Grand Final. He played amazingly in all the other games, and when they took on my second favorite team, the West Coast Eagles, he made it look like they were gonna win at times even though the Eagles were easily the best team of the year.

I pretty much stopped watching the AFL in 1997. Brownless was gone, Ablett hurt his knee and retired. I went off to watch baseball and the frustration of 40 years of no World Series for the Giants, a terrible 49ers team that just got worse and worse, and the Sharks always making it to the play-offs, only to be bounced early. I got interested again in 2005, started checking on the AFL website to see how folks were doing. I didn't start to seriously follow it again because there was no television of it in the US anymore. It was a name that got me following more and more closely.

Gary Ablett Jr.

Ablett the Younger was one of the most exciting players I've ever seen, even if he wasn't a goal-kicking machine like his dad. He would run up the middle, through packs, hella handballing and all that. I saw some of his play on YouTube, even listened to a few games on internet radio. Geelong, the team that hadn't won a flag since 1963, were looking like they had the chance to go all the way. In 2007, Gary Ablett led the Cats to the flag, winning the Grand Final which I listened to. It was an amazing story, the kind you would write if you were a wrestling booker. The Cats had only lost once in the season, to Port Adelaide. They made it to the finals against...Port Adelaide. This time, the Cats just stomped them like a glass at one of my cousins' weddings. I listened to it on the internet and was just so happy to see my team finally take it all home. In 2008, they went to the finals again, only to lose it. In 2009, in my new apartment, I watched it on the internet, seeing my first whole game in more than a decade. It was an amazing game against St. Kilda, I was jumping all over the place from excitement. My team had gone all the way. When the Giants finally won the Series in 2010, I got that same feeling. It's amazing to finally have your team break through.

It's funny that I've never been to Australia, never seen a match in person. I own two books on footy, both of them massive bug-crusher kind of tomes, three different team scarves (Cats, St. Kilda and Collingwood), a full set of 2010 AFL Cards and a number of other pieces from William Wright. I even owned a game-used football for years. I would take it out to the American Football field at my old junior high school and practice kicking it. I got pretty good from 30 yards... I mean 27.432 meters.

So, as I type this, the Giants are one of the top teams in baseball, my semi-precious Sharks are near to Hockey's Grand Finals, the Stanley Cup, and the Geelong Cats are undefeated having just taken Collingwood down a notch in a tight match. It's a good time to be a sports fan!



Gary Ablett Snr, number 5, in 1994

*Purely in the interests of accuracy, and not because I'm a born & bred Carlton supporter, I feel the need to point out that Geelong is no longer undefeated in the 2011 season. However, as a Carlton supporter, I do appreciate the challenge Geelong have offered to Collingwood, hereditary enemy of every other Victorian team - Emily.*

# An Alternate Australia

## James Bacon

It's probably wrong to describe Australia as a western country. It's dusty and there is lots of desert, and even cowboys, but it's over in the East, well of Greenwich. In Europe, we seem to say western to imply some form of democratic civilisation that has some notional values and standards similar to our own. Of course those standards are variable, and nothing is as savage as our own western governments who will stand by and watch death with a gawking open mouthed gombeen look, or invade and murder for the sake of some oil. Western, it seems to mean something mentally: the nice bits that we like.

This means that countries like South Africa feel very western, as you stand in the massive Victoria and Albert shopping centre in Cape Town and ponder Jimmy Choo heels at 7,000 rand, and contemplate how some people not far away - living in Atlantis for instance, where homes are built in a horrendous patchwork quilt of poverty - won't see that much money in a year. Of course the Shebean I sat in, in a shanty town in the deepest part of the Eastern Cape, where I was welcomed, had more in common with many an Irish kitchen or even a hotel room in the English Midlands, as friends sat around and drank, illicitly. All savages of course, all three groups.

I find though that many places feel very western to me. I wonder since China now has 5,000 miles of high speed train that can out pace anything Britain or Ireland has, if maybe a new term Eastern will come about, indicating new technology and the ability to build it at will. This might rebalance what the terminology means, but for now, most of Australia is a westernised society and culture. The exception is the indigenous Aboriginal people, to be honest, I never saw when I was in Melbourne until I went looking.

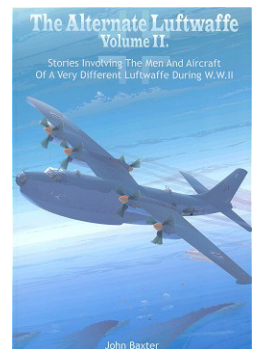
Within that westernised society, hobbies exist. I have a theory about this of course, and it is true that Ireland has not really had a Science Fiction set of voices like America or the UK, but then these countries were not busy struggling in the 20th century for something more than inward looking contemplation through the art of imaginative and speculative fiction.

Regardless, there are shared hobbies that co-exist across continents now, and one area of mind play has been and

may always be the 'What If' question. This is and has been quite a fun thing to do. Of course I do wonder if anyone has predicted the Arab spring, and wonder what the great Science Fictional Thinkers, Mieville, Courtenay Grimwood and McDonald make of all this. Shite. No women in that trio. And you know, I am not sure which female SF author I would ask about these matters. Any suggestions? Who would have an inspired view, Lauren Beukes maybe or Robyn Hobb?

Australia seems to have a selection of works dedicated to the What If, and even though I am quite far away, I admit it interests me.

John Baxter, whom I failed to get in and show proper appreciation to while in Melbourne, is pre-eminent in the world of alternative Luftwaffe. He has created a whole series of books that mixes his fictional stories with accompanying artwork and historical reference and the creations of model makers. There are now three volumes of *The Alternate Luftwaffe* series and I need to get the 3rd, which is set in North Africa & The Middle East. Baxter has also written *The Alternate RAAF & RAN Fleet Air Arm - Australia's Little Asian Wars 1951 – 1975* with loads of illustrations, over 70 B&W photos of aircraft models, maps and aircraft illustrations and two books about the fictitious German Tragerflotten, an aircraft carrier fleet of the 3rd Reich.



What really appeals to me there is real research, not lip service to science and technological possibilities. The care put into both the computer generated and the modelled images that people have made; the line drawings and the maps. These visuals all have very significant relevance to the stories that are being told. Baxter has a very clever methodology; his attention to detail is phenomenal. He creates works which feel like a real history, taking on the technical aspects as well as human triumph and failures building a history lovingly crafted in words and artwork, with real care to the whole 'what if', so we can see what would have been.

'Resistance' is an Australian movie from 1992, that astonished me in its brilliance and portrayal of women



as stubborn and strong personalities that will confront military might. It's about a group of women, transient harvest workers, working in a small town. Big business suit types try to squeeze these workers, and the workers riot, the money men and state collude to break such dissent and impose draconian measures, which amount to martial law. Things escalate, but it's not so much about violence – it's about how these women cope, and what life is like in Oz. Now, I am foreign so perhaps the portrayal of things is a bit exaggerated, as life before martial law is imposed seems tough to begin with, but the affinity amongst those at the bottom of the ladder, labourers of all colours and ethnicity, is quite clear, and it's really a very thoughtful and mature dystopian story.

Of course for true Dystopia, we should look to Eric Arthur Blair, and he wrote about Australia a number of times. (Of course when he wrote about comics he was rather nasty about them, but we won't mention that.) There are quite a few references to Australia in his War Commentaries, published by Penguin, particularly to the possible invasion of Australia by Japan. These are texts of his war commentary broadcasts between 1941 and 1943 for the BBC Eastern Service.

The broadcast from the 21st March 1942 is especially awesome, well from my perspective, it starts...

'It is now clearer than it was last week that the Japanese are preparing to attack Australia. Their main aim is what it always has been - to join hands with the Germans in the Middle East...'

continues later:



'...whether a landing on the Australian Mainland can be prevented is not yet clear. Whether once they have landed the Japanese find their task an easy one is a different question.' (page 64,65)

Of course, this was not so much 'What If' as, 'Oh Shit, What If' which may be a new genre.

Orwell is indeed very popular, and an Australian, Denis Glover, has written a book, *Orwell's Australia – from cold war to culture wars*. One can get a feel for his thinking in a speech he gave for the Fabian Society;

'...it was in Orwell's third book, 'Homage to Catalonia' (his account of his experiences fighting fascists and communists during the Spanish Civil War) that he found his true literary and political role: to expose how democracy, equality and freedom are threatened by a combination of outright lies and evasive, flaccid, gutless language. This became the great theme of Orwell's most famous books" 'Animal Farm' and 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'.

As Orwell himself put it: "bad political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and give the appearance of solidity to pure wind." A description of the Howard Government that our political journalists are only now starting to recognise.

You can read more of his thinkings here: <http://www.fabian.org.au/907.asp>.

Obviously the Mad Max movies are awesome, and there was much debate between the merits of 1 and 2 back when I was a kid. They are very violent, but there is something quite unusually harsh about the first one. Max Rockatansky, what a great name! Set in a future where things are grim, the first movie is my favourite and of course only moderately alternative, unlike the next two, where the world has dramatically changed. The clarity of the violence is unsurprising, given that the director George Miller was in fact a doctor in an ER, who had seen these types of injuries.

I wonder if you could get a 1973 Ford Falcon XB GT and if it would be that good a car, now, compared to what exists. Holden and Fords. Amazing really, how such a rivalry could start up about cars. Outside of Australia no one really knows what Holden is, although many people drive the exact same car badged up as Opel or Vauxhall or some General Motors subsidiary.

UNdead is a good Aussie zombie movie and again the lead roles are women. It uses the excellent premise that meteorites fall, and suddenly people are changing into zombies in a small town. It's quite clever the way the zombies are dealt with, and the science fictional

element of the meteorites is only the start of further extra-terrestrial involvement. There is always a uniquely Australian feeling to the strength of the characters and how they can deal well with many pretty weird situations.

Ned Kelly, and the legend that surrounds him, is fascinating. What makes this man so interesting is not so much the question of whether he had been wronged many times by the British Powers or if he was just a genuine scoundrel and law breaker, but the 8,000 word letter that he dictated, known as the Jerilderie letter, written 10th February 1879. He starts his brilliantly written statement with 'I wish to acquaint you with some of the occurrences of the present, past and future' and explains himself, the wrongs that occurred to him, and his kith and kin. It's a detailed explanation of his actions, misfortunes, and his killing of constables.

It's a hard place and also one which can be reflected in our own realities now. How many police stops, or searches or questioning result in charges of public offence, or disorder or assault or some other crime that would not have occurred only for their intervention or provocation. Kelly was not a stupid man; one detects from his words that he was stubborn, and saw himself as targeted. Some of his language is colourful especially his insults and descriptions of officers, but there are also political elements to be drawn from it. Here are a few out of context sentences that make me wonder:

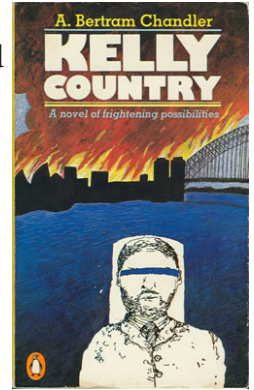
'It will pay the Government to give those people who are suffering innocence, justice and liberty. If not I will be compelled to show some colonial stratagem which will open the eyes of not only the Victorian Police, and inhabitants, but also the whole British Army. No doubt they will acknowledge their hounds were barking at the wrong stump, and that Fitzpatrick will be the cause of greater slaughter to the Union Jack than Saint Patrick was to the snakes and toads in Ireland.'

'What would England do if America declared war and hoisted a green flag, as it is all Irishmen that has got command of her armies, forts and batteries? Even her very life guards and beef tasters are Irish. Would they not slew round and fight her with their own arms for the sake of the colour they dare not wear for years, and to reinstate it and raise old Erins isle once more from the pressure and tyrannism of the English

yoke, which has kept it in poverty and starvation and caused them to wear the enemy's coat? What else can England expect?'

I am not the only one who wondered about Ned Kelly and the best thinkings and further extrapolations on potential futures have been realised by A. Bertram Chandler in his book *Kelly Country*.

Chandler was a Science Fiction fan as well as writer, and many of his writings appeared in SF Fanzines. I think his thoughts on the book, as outlined in some of his introduction, clearly show the thought that went into it.



'...This is an If History novel. There have been many such. One popular "If" in recent years has been If Germany had won World War II. It could have happened, you know. If Hitler had launched a damn-the-expense invasion of England immediately after Dunkirk... If the German scientists had been first with the atom bomb... After all, Germany already had the means of delivery, the V2 rocket—and another rocket, capable of striking the eastern seaboard of the U.S.A. when fired from European launching pads, was on the drawing boards.

'A battle used as a deviation point by more than one novelist has been the Battle of Tours in 732 A.D. It was at Tours that Charles Martel turned back the Arab advance into Europe. But what if the Franks had lost? It can be said with certainty that the course of world history would have been entirely different. More unpleasant—possibly. Less unpleasant—possibly. Different—most certainly.

'Another crucial battle was Gettysburg, regarded by most historians as the turning point in the War Between The States. There, for three days, July 1, 2 and 3 in 1863, the Union and Confederate armies slogged it out. If Pickett's charge had achieved its objective the Confederacy might well have won the battle and gone on to win the war. And then, probably, the U.S.A. would have become two separate nations, neither of which would have been able to exercise the influence on world affairs that the United States have done and still do....'



of *Kelly Country* itself he says:

'Whether or not there was an actual revolutionary organisation of which the Kelly Gang was the nucleus is still something of a mystery. There was that firing of a rocket, a signal rocket, during the siege of Glenrowan. Who was supposed to be watching for that signal and taking appropriate action? But there was that brief glare of pyrotechnic stars in the night sky over Glenrowan...

'Anyhow, about six years ago I got bitten by the Ned Kelly bug. I wanted to write an Australian If Of History Novel, featuring an Australian War of Independence. I wanted a good deviation point, some well known event, some historic occasion when things just might have gone the other way. The Siege of Glenrowan was—to me—the obvious choice. The key character was Thomas Curnow, the man who flagged down the special train. If the train had not been stopped... If the train had been derailed, with a subsequent massacre of the police party... If the authorities had over-reacted to such an extent as to antagonise the entire countryside...

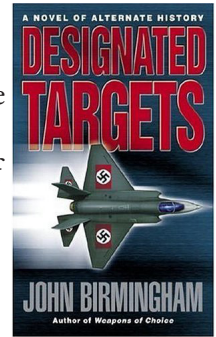
'If... If... If...'

*Kelly Country*. It's a superb book.

There are a number of not bad examples of a different second world war for Australia. In *Rising Sun Victorious: The Alternate History of How the Japanese Won the Pacific War* edited by Peter G. Tsouras, John Gill writes an essay called 'Samurai Down Under: The Japanese Invasion of Australia' which is pretty strong. More at the thriller end of the market is *The Bush Soldiers* by John Hooker, which sees Oz invaded by Japan and we follow a bunch of soldiers as they fight against the harsh land to defeat a Japanese target. The cruelty of nature is the real villain and of course the ability for people to fight against nature and an enemy is well played out.

There is a book which I have only heard about – and must track down. I failed to do so last year while I was in Melbourne, but then I was focussed on the Worldcon. It is a 'What If' collection that Melbourne University produced, edited by Macintyre, Stuart, and Sean Scalmer, and entitled *What If? Australian History as it Might Have Been*. It is another example of how this genre - if that's what it is - continues to fascinate.

Finally, there is the John Birmingham series, *Axis of Time*. Having Prince Harry as officer in the SAS seems a little far-fetched, but not that far. After all he is at the moment a Captain and pilot of an Apache, how long before he falls off the radar and appears in a war?



In this series, a multinational task force dealing with a global jihad near Indonesia in a near future 2021 gets accidentally transported back to 1942. It is caused by an experimental super stealth ship, the Nagoya, which is testing top secret weapons systems that use a form of quantum physics. It screws up, generating a massive rift in time which completely destroys the Nagoya and sends this fleet back in time to 1942 where they materialize in the midst of the US Battle Fleet on the way to the battle of Midway. Initially there is a massive friendly fire incident. The multinational fleet is diverse, and the modern ship's computers defend themselves, but eventually there is a truce between these two fleet's commanders.

The Nagoya flung ships to many parts of the world in 1942, so all the major powers - the Japanese, the Germans and the Soviet Union - also get hold of ships, and then criminals nick stuff too, so that there is massive spillage of the futuristic technology and this pollutes the overall historic time line. Immediately, the Japanese learn of the future, and the Battle of Midway never takes place; Germany learns of how terrible barborasso will be, and so does not invade Russia, but concentrates on Britain and seals a pact with Russia and the world becomes very different. I like the way that Birmingham also makes use of real people's names as characters in his books, a massive tuckerisation project, with dozens of people getting in, including a spec ops team on the USS Leyete Gulf made up of Dale Brown, Tom Clancy, Stephen Euin Cobb, and Garth Nix. Other names I recognised: Eric Flint, William R. Forstchen, S.M. Stirling, Harry Turtledove, René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, the creators of Asterix, and SAS Troopers Peter Hamilton and the aforementioned SAS Colonel Harry Windsor of the British SAS. It's not at all a bad series of books.

But dear reader, what have I missed, what great alternative views of Australia have I failed to find?

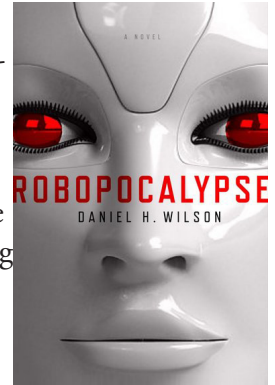
# Daniel H. Wilson Q&A

## Christopher J Garcia

Several years ago, Daniel H. Wilson hit the ground running when he wrote *How to Survive a Robot Uprising*. It was one of the better faux survival guides that came out back in the middle-ish part of the last decade. He wrote several other pieces and then this year came out with a humdinger: *Robocalypse*!

*Robocalypse* has taken the Science Fiction world by storm, providing an excellent read that has gotten great press and reviews from all over the place. NPR has had Daniel on and there are some who are saying that *Robocalypse* will be the biggest SF novel of the year. It's already being made into a movie with Ben Garant and Thomas Lennon, both of *The State* and *Reno 911*, writing the script.

He's worked as a researcher in the fields of robotics and machine learning at places like Carnegie Mellon, Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) and Microsoft Research. Here's a guy who not only writes the Good Stuff, but who has actually worked in the field! Daniel was kind enough to answer a bunch of my strange questions about both his fiction and his time as a roboticist and reader. You can find out more about him at [www.danielhwilson.com](http://www.danielhwilson.com) or follow him on Twitter @DanielWilsonPDX



And away we go!

*What led you towards robotics? Were you a robot-lovin' kid? What role did science fiction play?*

I grew up reading about robots in science fiction and playing with them as toys. But I didn't get into robots for real until I discovered machine learning and artificial intelligence during college. Creating a brain is no fun unless there is a body for it, hence robotics.

*You studied Robotics and Machine Learning at the Stanford of Robotics, Carnegie Mellon (the Harvard of Robotics is Stanford, of course). What was your area of research? How did that influence your writings?*

My research at the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute was in smart homes that monitor the activities of elderly occupants in order to keep them living safely and independently in their own homes for a long as possible. Conducting this or any kind of robotics research is great because it forces you to look at human beings from an alien perspective, trying to figure them out.

*How do you see robotics progressing over the next decade? What about the next century?*

As an industry, I believe robotics will continue to grow tremendously. I look forward to more robots in our day-to-day lives and the ethical challenges that will entail. Currently, we can't figure out whether it's polite to use a smart phone at the dinner table. How will we ever figure out how to interact with robots in our buildings, homes, and highways?

*I know I'm terrified of the robo-cheetah Boston Dynamic is building for the Department of Defense. Are there any actual robots that frighten you? Do you worry about robots being used against the general population?*

I typically don't worry that our government is going to employ militarized technology against the general populace. And although the creations out of Boston Dynamic can be frightening, I'm about as worried about them as I am of battle tanks and blackhawk helicopters. Which is to say, not very.

*As far as application of robotics and AI goes, how far is too far? Should we allow machine intelligences to drive our cars? Perform our surgeries? Birth our babies?*

We currently trust technology with every aspect of our lives, no matter how intimate. I see no reason for that to change.

*What author's writings led you to become the most significant writer of robotic doom since Asimov? Are there any you can think of who do machines particularly well?*

I love the short story "For a Breath I Tarry" by Roger Zelazny for the author's remarkable job of getting into a robot's head.

*I loved How to Survive A Robot Uprising, but I wonder if you consider robots as big a threat as the obvious zombie hordes that will inevitably attack. How would you compare the two threats?*

Zombies are scary, but robots are real.



*In Robopocalypse, there's an amazing almost Splatterpunk-esque chapter called 22 Seconds. It's an effective part to me because it's an attack on a vulnerable member of our human society by the very things meant to assist him. Is that what you were hoping for as a take-away from Robopocalypse, that the more dependent we get on machines, the more likely they are to rip our freakin' heads off?*

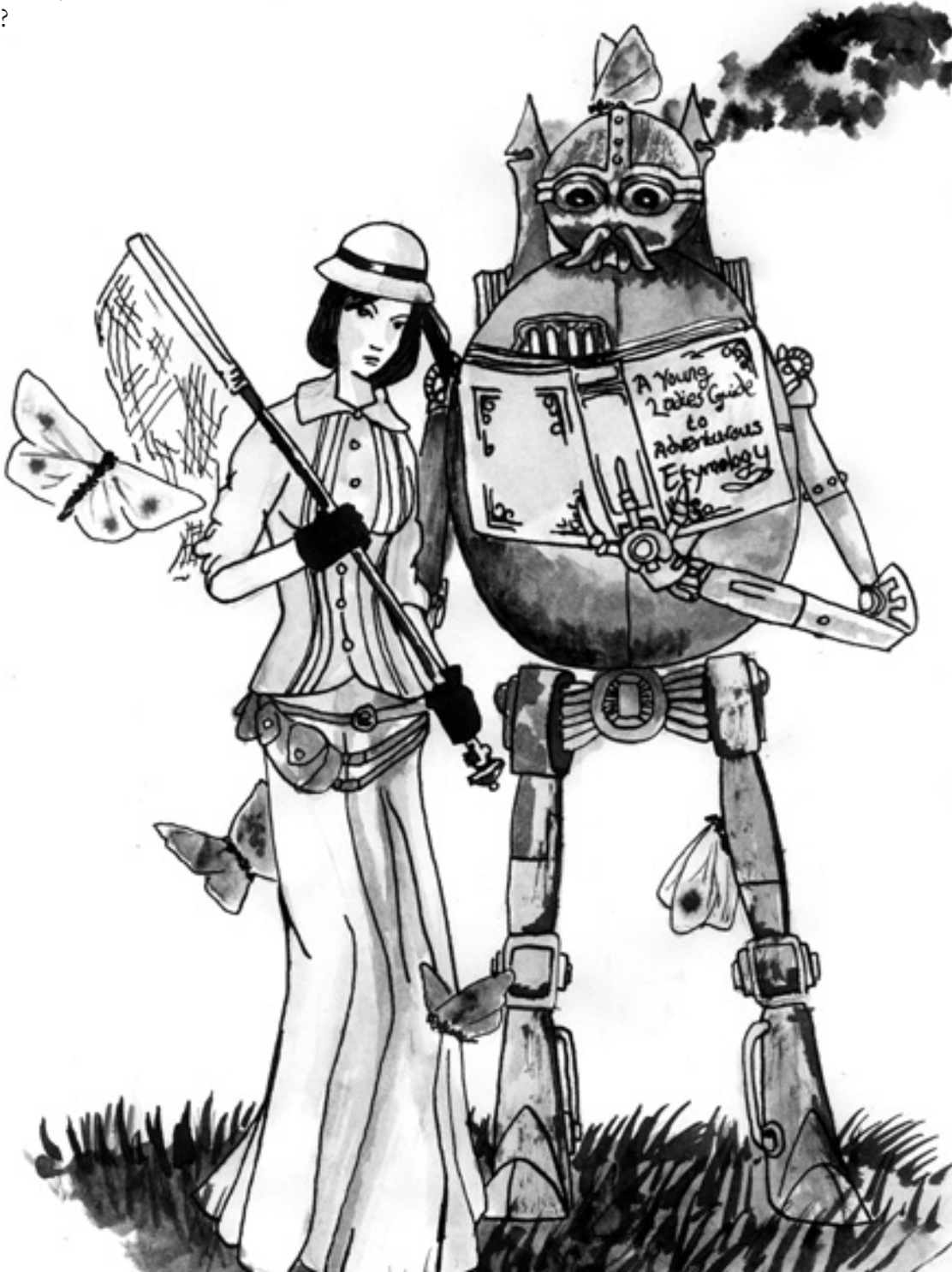
Nope, I love technology and robotics. My goal in *Robopocalypse* was not to offer a cautionary tale. I just wanted to scare the pants off my readers and leave them thrilled and thinking about robotics technology.

*Can we even survive without robots anymore? Could we survive without computers? Could we survive a time with working strong AI?*

Our civilization rests firmly on an infrastructure of technology. Removing any kind of existing technology decreases the stability of our civilization. Even if we stop building, we risk disintegrating. It's sink or swim, kid.

*And finally, I just have to ask... are you a robot?*

I may be a skin job and I may not be – but don't you think the story is better if we're left to wonder, than if we found out?



# On The History of Video Games

Chris Garcia

I love Film History. If I could have one job, I'd choose Film Historian. No question. It would be my way. It's interesting looking at the way that film history grew as a field. There was some film history work done in the 1930s, mostly on the silent, but it wasn't until after the Second World War that the field of film history really took hold. In the 1950s, the biggest piece of Film History work up until that point began, and it could be said that the field of serious Film preservation began when Kemp Niven at the Library of Congress discovered and then moved to preserve thousands of paper prints of films from the 1890s through the early-teens. That was followed rather quickly by Kevin Brownlow's famous movement to document the lives of the remaining, and almost entirely forgotten, Silent Film stars. The field of Film History really took shape in the 1960s.

The History of Video Games has just entered the 60s itself.

One of the things I've been doing since I started at the Computer History Museum back in 1999 is keeping us thinking about games. I'm not that big a gamer, I love games but don't have the scratch to be a serious gamer. I find my favorites, play the hell out of them and then come back to them over time. Most of my favorite games are old. Oregon Trail from the 1980s. Tetris. Mario Cart 64. Pro Wrestling for the NES. These are the ones that I'm excited about. As I've worked at the museum. It's become more and more apparent that there's a movement that is just starting to preserve and archive old video games.

The first major project in the history of video games was done at the Computer Museum in Boston in 1986. Steve Russell, Alan Kotok and Shag Graetz all got together to recondition and restore the PDP-1 and as a part of that, they documented SpaceWar! and made it playable on the original hardware. I point to that as the first significant project in the History of Video Games field. There were individuals doing collecting at that point, a book or two had been written, but no one was looking deeply at doing preservation and restoration at that point on an institutional level.

Over the last decade or so, there's been some great video game history stuff done. California Extreme was one of the first major Arcade Expos, where hobbyist collectors bring hundreds of classic arcade games, as well as pinball machines, to a large hall in Silicon Valley. It's

great fun and it has been a significant part of presenting classic arcade games to a new generation. The loss of the arcade over the last two decades has been a major bummer and having an arcade with games that cover the period from 1972 to the 1990s is awesome. There are a couple of very important collections of arcade games, most notably Starcade and Twin Galaxies. Twin Galaxies, in fact, is the official record-keeping body of Video Gamedom, and has the high score records for games dating back to the early 1980s. Twin Galaxies is the provider of scores for the Guinness Book of World Records.

The preservation of games is a difficult matter. Computer games are somewhat easier than those massive arcade games. Computer games are already digital and can, for the most part, be read and stored on ever-newer media. I know what you're saying: "Chris, who's to say that CDs are going to be readable in 20, or even 10 years?" and I'm here saying that they're probably not, but CDs are viable now and will be for a good while. Preservation means multiple sources; multiple storage means multiple copies. If we burn them to CD or DVD today, that doesn't mean that in the future we don't burn them to eneron cubes or store them in our DNA. It means that we have a stable platform for them today and that we commit ourselves to updating. That is expensive, but there are a number of films that were transferred to Safety Film and that was expected to last forever since there was no danger of explosion like with Nitrate film. Then the Vinegar Syndrome hit and those films were at risk. The ones that survived were ones that had VHS or DVD copies made. Those are the films that are in the safest zone.

Computer games are safe because the code is easy to deal with. Console games are safe to a degree as well because of the sheer number of them that were produced. Many game consoles had millions of units shipped, and many of them are still working today. Games for those consoles are also numerous. It's likely that only 1 or 2 percent of Atari 2600s sold in the 1970s and 80s still work, though that's still almost a million units. Keeping these machines up-and-running is an important thing and must be a priority. There current level of thinking is about emulation, making PC-based programs that mimic the old hardware. Then you go and copy the ROMs from the games and play them



on the new hardware. I think that's crap for a number of reasons, the biggest being that the hardware and its problems are a part of the experience and it's not easy to duplicate that in emulation. Keeping original hardware running is key, and part of that difficulty might be solved in the near-future by the ability to produce new versions of old parts in low quantity without being overly expensive. This has already started to show up in a number of places, but when wide-scale adoption comes, we'll have a possibility of keeping older hardware running indefinitely.

There is a meeting of Video Game Preservation types that I'm going to in September. I'm really the least academically vigorous, but by far the most populist. I believe that to make any subject significant or long-lasting, you must bring it to the people in a way that they will appreciate. The concept of giving hard core academic treatment to games is foolish in my eyes if there isn't a treatment of them that allows for fun to be had. Just producing case studies is far weaker than

what California Extreme is doing. The most powerful of all is a combination of both: a fun interaction method where the joy of the games can come through, plus an accessible back-end with significant information and data that is well-researched and detailed. That combination is hard to beat, even if only one-in-one-thousand encounters the deeper material.

And that last point is something that I don't think that academics tend to get. If you give the public only the dessert, they'll say, they'll never taste the veg course. I disagree. The play of the game, the enjoyment of the material, the fun that it creates with the exposure is the entrée. It's what matters. The rest of it is important, but really, it's the dessert. It's the thing that comes after you've been through the meal, that ties it all up. That dusting of knowledge should never be the focus for the public, who are the ones we must convince, but it has to be there.

Then again, maybe that's why I'm not taken seriously...

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## A Census of Humour

Despite being the ~~fannish pedantic form-filling-out~~ librarian representative of the McLeay family, the first census I remember was the 2001. This, of course, was the year everyone decided that if 10 000 of us filled out Jedi Knight as our religion, the Australian Bureau of Statistics would use it as one of the options in the next census. Sadly, although 58 053 Australians are, according to statistics, Jedi Knights, the official form lists only the 10 most common religions in Australia.

Censusmas was just this week in Australia, and even without official recognition of the Jedi Knights, the people in charge of their twitter account @2011census do indeed have a sense of humour. Or a sense for terrible puns. You decide:

My Mum was right. I am one in a million.

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? We should ask one of Australia's 866 tree fallers!

I love to have a beer with Duncan, I love to have a beer with Dunc, we drink in moderation, thanks to Australia's 55,995 bar attendants.

Urgent clarification. Muggles will be counted in the 2011 Census

Is anyone feeling a bit shabby today? Maybe the result of a beverage made by one of Australia's 6649 grape growers.

You want the truth? You can't handle the truth! Well the truth is there are 2507 Church of Scientologists in Australia.

Jedi Knight is not the only creative response to the religion question in the #AusCensus. Moroccan Chicken has also been received.

and of course this useful fact: #AusCensus data reveals 98 per cent of @2011Census Twitter followers are awesome.

*-Emily McLeay*

# The Pencil-Necked Weasel

Mary Robinette Kowal

*You might have heard that a Minnesota politician named Matt Dean was complaining about the wasting of Legacy funds in areas including paying Neil Gaiman a 45K appearance fee for a four-hour event (that I know folks who were at it and say it was AMAZING). He referred to Mr. Amanda Palmer as a “pencil-necked little weasel who stole \$45,000 from the state of Minnesota.” Now, this kind of thing happens and is a sign of the deep divide in the world of US politics at the present due to shrinking budgets and partisan rhetoric. And, as is equally typical and far more entertaining, a creative person took it upon themselves to have a little fun of it! Paul Cornell, instigator of all good ideas, suggested that SF’s leading puppeteer/writer Mary Robinette Kowal go about the task of actually making a Pencil-necked Little Weasel. The author and puppeteer built the little guy below and kindly allowed us to re-run her blog post about said creature!*

I realized that I talk about our cats Harriet and Marlowe quite a bit but that I’ve never introduced you to our pencil-necked little weasel.

His name is Neil and he’s an exceptionally friendly and intelligent pencil-necked little weasel. While he can be a little grumpy in the morning he’s quite playful the rest of the day.



Now, I do want to point out that he is a pencil-necked little weasel as opposed to his cousin the pencil-necked greater weasel which is native to Argentina. The primary difference is in the length of their necks.

In this close-up, you can see that Neil has quite a short neck. While the pencil-necked greater weasel has a larger body-mass, the longer neck means that they aren’t as good in a fight.

The pencil-necked little weasels, on the other hand, are incredibly good at taking down snakes in the grass. They have a ferocious bite when provoked.

Friendly and curious fellows, the pencil-necked little weasel is also handy to have around the house when you need to compose a shopping list. Most of the pencil-necked little weasels are quite good writers. This photo is from one of Neil’s competitions where he won best in show.

We are very proud and fond of our pencil-necked little weasel.





# Our Readers Write Again

## ...and eventually we pay attention

### Letters, edited lightly by Claire Brialey

We had a letter column in *JP* #8. We didn't have many letters in it because, as I explained at the time, we had been rather inefficient about our distribution. I encouraged lots of you to write to us, about #7 (the Pete Young guest-edited issue on space), and indeed on #8 itself (the one that wasn't so much like a *Journey Planet*, because I wanted to do something that felt more like my sort of fanzine); but then there wasn't a letter column to pick up on all that in #9 (the Dune one, guest-edited by Yvonne Rowse) because I've been spending most of my waking moments at work until now. But in the meantime people kept writing to us; your expectant, trusting, sensitive little fannish faces haunted my dreams although there weren't many of those, due to the need to have more waking moments and spend them at work too.

Still, fanzines thrive on response; otherwise they're just a soapbox on which someone is standing to shout out their opinions while wearing earplugs. So no one – not James or Chris, nor any of the guest editors who'd probably appreciate knowing that someone noticed what they were doing, nor me who just tidies things up in the background and despite all our failings in the letter column department would very much like to encourage more engagement within and between fanzines and their readers – wants to ignore the responses we've had, and indeed would like to encourage you to keep responding on the issues raised in letters as well as the main body of each issue.

So this is the catch-up letter supplement, with the aim of doing better next time. Letters on #9 appear in #10 itself, almost as if we were doing it properly. But here's where you'll find all the other correspondence that should have been encouraging you to keep on writing.

As Eric Mayer mentions in a letter featured here, I only lightly edit the letters because, usually, *JP* is primarily published electronically and space is not at a premium. Light though it is, I do still edit; I don't want to publish anything that neither interests me nor seems likely to interest other readers. On that basis, you don't all need to read 'Dear *Journey Planet*...' at the start of every letter, nor do you need to see us reprinting simple statements of general praise and enjoyment – although all fanzine editors are always pleased to receive those; those directed to particular contributors do remain so that they get a similar chance of pleasure. Otherwise, I edit to present people's comments and opinions to their best advantage, and aim not to annoy them by inadvertently destroying the point of their arguments in doing so.

This time round there might be an opportunity for a greater paper presence, depending on the kindness of

strangers and on the magic Chris has worked to obtain funding on that basis. But, given that we've already appeared, rather churlishly, to ignore these comments for so long already, I won't do correspondents the disservice of cutting them further in the interests of either paper-saving or a snappier exchange in the letter column – indeed, in some cases the fuller letter provides the context needed given how much time has passed. I have also responded a bit more than I often do, with comments at the end of relevant letters. We hope you enjoy the long-overdue conversation on this basis. Shorter comments are also acknowledged, as usual, at the end.

Now, cast your minds back to March 2010 as the background goes all wibbly and we remember *JP* #6, the London issue with the Back Section. Our next correspondent not only suffered our tardiness but had previously been afflicted with a computer glitch, so that he had to resend his letter early this year; otherwise it would have appeared sooner...

#### **Jim Linwood**

I won't be the first person to point out that St Pancras Station shown on page 26 is in the London Borough of Camden and not the City of London. In fact, even the designations of Inner and Outer London gave way in the '60s to the megalopolis of Greater London. One myth that has sprung up in recent years is that many underground rivers lie beneath Inner London – popularised by Nicholas Barton's book *The Lost Rivers of London*. Many people believe there is a network of hidden rivers like those of the Paris of Phantom of the Opera. In fact, the Fleet, Tyburn, Westbourne and Effra have long since been culverted as public surface water sewers, diverted to run under main roads before eventually discharging into the Thames. The Wandle, which runs from Croydon to

Wandsworth, was classified as a sewer until the '60s and is now a main river and open for most of its length.

The three items by the two Anons and Kari were disturbing as I'd always regarded fandom as a safe place for females, not taking into account the present day mega-cons. With one exception, I'm not aware of any females being harassed in early '60s Anglofandom. Most women fans at that time were either already in relationships, could take care of themselves, or were unattainable; any sex taking place at conventions was always consensual. The one exception concerns two infrequent Globe attendees whom no one now will have heard of. The woman was separated from her husband and lived in a North London flat. She was related to a Globe regular and had no real interest in SF. The guy seemed to be in his 20s and was regarded as a creep. He took to stalking the woman, much to her distress, which culminated in him trying to break into her flat in the middle of the night. The stalking only ceased when the guy committed suicide soon after the break-in attempt. I can't say that many mourned his demise.

I'm all in favour of the CONFIDENTIAL Hotline – a great idea which I hope is a feature of future conventions.

Isleworth, Middlesex (UK)

**Claire:** That's a disturbing story all round; part of what concerns me is the potential for there to be other things like that happening in fandom without anyone knowing or realising how bad it might be.

On your local history, here in Croydon we do prefer to think of the Wandle as a river and not a sewer; it has fish and everything. (Finishing this off in the wake of rioting, looting and burning that afflicted west Croydon along with other parts of London and other towns and cities across the UK, there are all sorts of ways I'd prefer people not to think of Croydon. I like it here, and am keen to do more to ensure it doesn't feel like a war zone as well as being pretty intolerant towards those who wish to make it one.) On a lighter note, I was also entertained recently to see a news report about the events a year in advance of the London Olympics which claimed that 'Locog chairman Lord Coe and Colin Jackson will have their footprints set in clay at St Pancras'.

We move forward now. Fanzine covers spin and we focus in on *Journey Planet* in spaaaace...

## **Pamela Boal**

While I found every item interesting, I am finding this issue difficult to LoC. Such a high density of information on one subject, is (as one previous letter writer mentioned) somewhat indigestible.

But I'm with Chris Garcia on love of the oceans. There is still so much to learn from and about the flora and fauna of the deeps. Much about the where and why of changes of currents such as the Gulf Stream is still speculation and still more yet to learn about the ocean's effect on climate – much known but more to know. There was an interesting episode of the TV programme *Time Team* concerning archaeology under the North Sea: evidence of man and beasts who lived there when the UK was part of mainland Europe, from the Neolithic until the sea invaded. Maybe some pointers on how to survive and cope with rising sea levels can be learnt from early man.

I think James Shields is right in his belief that if we are really going into space it will be commercial interests and bodies that take us there. One thing he and others seem to ignore about Mars or asteroid settlements is the effect of no or very low gravity on the human body over a prolonged period of time. For instance, lack of load-bearing exercise is a prime trigger for osteoporosis.

Claire, you have given me a reason for being happy to be getting on in years. I was there when it was all so fresh and exciting! Well at least in spirit, as I watched the launches on TV. So familiar are those images that it never occurred to me that a fan would not know about the separation of the first stage rockets.

– 5 February 2011  
Wantage, Oxfordshire (UK)

## **Philip Turner**

There's a hell of a lot in the *JP* space issue and someone must have had a lot of fun trawling through their stamp collection for the space issues.

I found the articles on the British space programme of particular interest as sagas of the bandwagon mentality of politicians, who chuck the taxpayers' money at anything they think will make them look good or 'up to the minute', regardless of how wasteful and pointless it is.

How does Alastair Reynolds propose to 'put Hard SF out of its misery'? Get the EU to ban it? Shoot everyone who writes and/or reads it? Shoot anyone who has a Hard SF book in a bookcase somewhere? And who died and made him the arbiter of SF taste?

There was quite a surprise at the end – Claire's revela-



tion that she went to see the film about Apollo 13 and didn't know the story. That was a real 'stops you in your tracks' moment for someone who lived through the episode, hanging on everything the TV and radio news, and the newspapers, had to report about the progress of the stricken spacecraft.

– 2 March 2011  
Romiley, Cheshire (UK)

**Claire:** Pamela and Philip make me feel now as young and crass as I probably was when I went to see *Apollo 13*! But I was less than a year old when the real thing happened, and really wasn't grabbed by the space programme more generally when I was a child to thus want to know any of the detail about what had happened or why, beyond the fact that someone had wasted lots of time and effort and money sending men to the moon where no one could live. Indeed, the Apollo programme as a whole was already over by the time I was paying any attention even to pictures on the news; my partner was born in the mid-'60s and said that it was a feature of his childhood that they were always sending up a rocket, but I didn't get that constant exposure. Now I'm completely captivated by images from space, including separation of the spent stages and other images of one spacecraft (or part of one) as seen from another – although still keen to be assured that that was meant to happen...

### Steve Jeffery

I have just come across this passage in Richard Holmes's *The Age of Wonder* (2008, HarperPress) which struck me as a possible early premonition of the shock and awe effect of the Total Perspective Vortex in Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* that Claire refers to in 'My Life As a Space Alien', and it nicely gels with the theme of this issue.

'Standing under the night sky observing the stars can be one of the most romantic and sublime of all experiences,' Holmes writes, before leading off into the following footnote: 'It can also be oddly terrifying. A hundred years later Thomas Hardy took up amateur astronomy for a new novel, and in his description of Swithin and Lady Constantine sharing a telescope in *Two on a Tower* (1882) he captured something of the metaphysical shock of the first experience of stellar observation.

"At night ... there is nothing to moderate the blow which is infinitely great, the stellar universe strikes down on the infinitely little, the mind of the beholder; and this was the case now. Having got closer to immensity than their fellow creatures, they saw at once its beauty

and frightfulness. They more and more felt the contrast between their own tiny magnitudes and those among which they had recklessly plunged, till they were oppressed with the presence of a vastness they could not cope with as an idea, and which hung about them like a nightmare."

Encountered a little way further into *The Age of Wonder*, Byron wrote, after visiting William Herschel and looking at the sky through Herschel's 40 foot telescope, 'It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and our world, when placed in competition with the mighty whole, of which it is an atom, that first lead me to believe our pretensions to immortality might be ... over-rated' (p205).

Nicholas Hill's 'The British Space Programme' was a particular entertaining and instructive delight in this issue, and wonderfully complemented by some impressive photographs, particularly the vertiginous shot down the body of the Black Knight rocket at the Royal Museum of Scotland.

Alastair Reynolds sent me checking my shelves for a copy of Sterling's *Schismatrix* with a desire to read it again, only to find, to my considerable chagrin, that I don't appear to have it. How can I not? And how can it have apparently escaped the Gollancz Masterworks series? However, a little light Googling showed that all is not lost; as well as copies of the original going for quite boggling sums on Amazon, there is apparently a new edition titled *Schismatrix Plus* which brings together the original novel and a number of related stories.

Good articles too from Ang Rosin, Jean Martin, Anne Gray and a neatly provocative one from Liam Proven, but one that felt oddly truncated. Liam mentioned two companies taking radically different approaches to going in space, and with markedly different corporate profiles; yet the remainder of the article dwelt on the Burt Rutan and Scaled Composites's SpaceshipOne and SpaceshipTwo, but seemed to run out before we got to hear much of their rivals. Or I may have missed something.

– 28 February 2011  
Kidlington, Oxfordshire (UK)

### Yvonne Rousseau

In *Journey Planet* #7, two articles vividly reminded me of the 1960s.

The first was Anne Gray, 'Women in Space: the program that almost started twenty years earlier'. Reading this, I remembered a report by Bob Graham, 'Right Stuff: Wrong Sex': the cover story for the *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 23-4 January 1999. As the introductory

ry summary expressed it: 'In 1961, thirteen women were judged Nasa's top astronauts – better than the Mercury Seven, who were later immortalised in print and on film. The women stayed on the ground.'

Graham's article reports a comment from Chris Kraft (later to become director of NASA) to the congressional hearings into space programs in 1963: 'The thought of a US spacewoman makes me sick to my stomach. I'd prefer to send a monkey into space than a bunch of women.' (Many years later, Kraft would fail to 'recall using those precise words'.)

Such attitudes might have inspired a short story I read long ago (in the days before I automatically recorded authors and titles). Like one of Heinlein's or van Vogt's youthfully keen heroes, a young man has reached the age to take a longed-for test—for suitability as a rocketship pilot. After he has failed, we learn that in his world women alone have so far proved psychically suitable as space pilots. The males keep on succumbing to the 'Phwoar! power, power, power: me, me, me!' effect. By contrast, Sheila Finch's 1986 novel, *Triad*, is less specific: in that culture, men are judged to be no good, not merely at flying rocketships, but for anything at all. Sharyn McCrumb's 1992 novel, *Zombies of the Gene Pool*, is more relevant. Brendan Surn is the SF genre's grand old man, author of novels such as *The Galactic Watchfires* and *Starwind Rising*. He is said to be required reading in NASA. For several years, Surn has been succumbing to dementia. With the aid of Lorien Williams, a youthful fan who has become his unofficial secretary, nurse and housekeeper, he nevertheless continues his monthly contributions to the fannish letterzine, Phosgene.

'Lorien Williams consulted her notes. "Let's see... We have Lois Hutton talking about women in combat, and you wanted to say..."

'Surn waved his hand. "Tell her that NASA experiments proved that middle-aged women would make the best astronauts. Surely they could be equally effective as soldiers." He giggled. "Besides, who'd miss them?"

'Lorien wrote everything down except for that last comment. She felt that Surn was a prisoner of his generation, but that he should be protected from the scorn of his more enlightened younger acquaintances.'

The other *Journey Planet* article evoking the 1960s was Nicholas Hill, 'The British Space Programme'. This strongly reminded me of a television documentary screened by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in

March 2010, five months before I saw Nicholas's article about 'Blue Streak' rocket testing at Woomera. The documentary was *Contact*, directed by Bentley Dean and Martin Butler in 2009, and summarised as follows:

'In 1964 ... a group of 20 Martu women and children walked out of the Great Sandy Desert into a new universe of European modernity. The event was only captured on film because scientists were testing the Blue Streak Rocket in the desert at the time. Many of the players on both sides are alive to recreate and tell their story.'

*Contact* was based on a book by Sue Davenport, Peter Johnson & Yuwali: *Cleared Out: First contact in the Western Desert* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005). In May 1964, Yuwali was a 17-year-old girl. She had never seen 'whitefellas' until the arrival at Percival Lakes of Walter MacDougall and Terry Long, 'native welfare' patrol officers for the Weapons Research establishment. They were making sure that nobody strayed into the reputedly uninhabited 'dump area' where remnants from the first Blue Streak launch were expected to land.

Smoke signals and fresh tracks revealed an Aboriginal presence, but the whitefella efforts to communicate with the group only frightened it and drove it deeper into the dump area. MacDougall and Long had no idea that they were pursuing a group who had never before seen whitefellas, and who consisted only of women and children. The group had survived in the desert without men for the past two years. As Yuwali remembered later: 'Us women and kids were the last ones left in the desert.' Yuwali's father had moved away north, taking three of his five wives with him. One of the remaining wives had presumably met up with him during those past two years, since she was caring for a 9-month-old baby in 1964. Other kinsmen had died or had also gone away. In the documentary, Yuwali remembers how she explained the patrol vehicle to the younger ones: 'You know those big rocks we play on? The rock has come alive. Look, it's rolling around our camp.' She remembers: 'It looked like a monster. Big eyes. It made big noise.' Yuwali thought that the monster could see their tracks, and that the patrol officers were 'devil men' and cannibals.

Eventually, the group fled to the bulrushes marking the place of their Ancestor, Yimiri the Watersnake, and invoked his protection. It appeared to them that Yimiri then drove the devils away. From the patrol officers' viewpoint, there was a sudden storm (20 hours before the projected launch) with an unprecedented amount of rain, washing away all tracks. The officers withdrew from

the area because they were unable to tell where the group had gone, and because they had received news that the launch was being delayed.

As Nicholas reports in *Journey Planet* a 'hiccup' then spoilt the F1 launching on 5 June 1964. The rocket veered off course and had to be destroyed – many hundreds of kilometres south of the Percival Lakes.

When MacDougall made his second excursion to Percival Lakes, in preparation for the second launch in October 1964, he was accompanied by two indigenous trackers who were able to interpret his words to the Martu people. When the trackers persuaded the group to enter MacDougall's camp, he filmed the arrival. Apart from the 'hair belts' worn by the women and boys around their waists and as pubic coverings, the people are naked. They look intensely black and to 21st-century eyes extraordinarily thin: moving in silence – straight-backed, strong and lithe. Medical tests soon afterwards revealed that they were all in good health, except for one woman afflicted with leprosy.

The group lived on traditional desert food: seeds, bush yams and tomatoes, goannas and feral cats. They became less healthy when confined to eating MacDougall's food, much of which they simply buried, since they found it disgusting and feared that it was poisoned. The Western Australian Vermin Control used to drop poison baits for dingoes in areas where the Martu group camped.

As Terry Long said of the Martu group in *Contact*: 'A couple of civilisations were trying to fling rockets at them. And these people were living entirely off the land.' By October 1964, several publications had readied the public to be fascinated by the idea of this kind of a meeting between stone age and space age.

In 1962, Elias Canetti's *Masse und Macht* (1960) had become available in English translation as *Crowds and Power*. One of its sections, 'The Pack', grippingly described rites of the Australian Aboriginals and their Ancestor mythology – drawing on works by anthropologists whose work was neglected by Australian readers at that time. In the same year, Douglas Lockwood had a great popular success with *I, The Aboriginal* (Adelaide, 1962) – soon adapted as a television film (*We, the Aborigines*; Melbourne, 1963).

In 1964, J. B. Priestley published *Man and Time*, in which he suggested that 'It was not passing time but the Great Time that had meaning and reality for [primitive man]' and that 'Probably the best remaining examples of primitive men are the Australian aborigines, whose beliefs have been scrupulously studied...'

Meanwhile, Australian government policy towards desert indigenous people was being vigorously criticised in parliament and in the community. Native Welfare officers were now instructed to let desert Aboriginal people make up their own minds: to refrain from persuading them to move to mission life.

In *Contact*, the adult Yuwali makes it clear that the group did not want to move to Jigalong Mission. Nevertheless, Terry Long – who had joined MacDougall about three weeks after the first meeting with the Martu – was convinced that the group was fanatically keen on being taken to the mission. This misunderstanding might be blamed on the trackers, who were free to invent whatever messages they chose, since they alone understood both languages.

There were other misunderstandings. MacDougall had radioed Terry Long to join him because: 'Those girls think that they owe me something. I don't want it!' In *Contact* Terry Long concluded that MacDougall might have been 'panicking for no reason. But he'd locked himself each night in his cabin' (in the truck). From the adult Yuwali's viewpoint, MacDougall 'was looking at our bodies, getting fresh. But we didn't go with him.' She says: 'We were collecting bush tomatoes and giving them to the whitefella. He was staring and asking us to sleep with him. We had no clothes on. We only had hair belts on. He never took his eyes off us. He gave us clothes, but we didn't want them.'

The youthful Yuwali bore no resemblance to the most admired film star of the time – Marilyn Monroe – but MacDougall's film reveals her as devastatingly attractive: a blazing incarnation of the 'Spirit of Delight' extolled by the poet Shelley. Nevertheless, she was about to suffer the sadness of being forced to abandon her beloved pet dingo at Yimiri. In Terry Long's view, the pet dingo 'could hardly totter, it was so emaciated' – but the adult Yuwali is tearful all over again when she sees the image of her faithful but bewildered pet in MacDougall's film: 'Poor fella.'

On 20 October 1964 (the day after Lang arrived at MacDougall's camp), the second Blue Streak rocket passed overhead. The Martu people were terrified and buried their heads in the sand. Six days later, the group was dumped at Jigalong Mission – to be surrounded by interested observers and instantly abandoned by the patrol officers who had escorted them. Terry Long reflects, in *Contact*: 'We ought to have handled this much much better.'

– 4 February 2011

Adelaide, South Australia (Australia)



**Claire:** I always feel both much more informed after a letter from Yvonne and so much more generally ignorant, in a new-found awareness of all the things I evidently don't know – but which I always suspect that Yvonne does or, if not, that she knows where to run and find out.

And now, as the pages rip off the fanzine-a-day calendar (pat. pending, C Garcia) and I try hard not to think about work any more, we come almost up-to-date with *JP* #8, published for Corflu (aka E Corflu Vitus – just go and Google the Clampers) in February 2011. First of all, in fact, a story about the lengths to which people will go to get hold of a paper copy of *Journey Planet* even while they're engaged in one of their other fandoms:

### **Taral Wayne**

Got a paper copy of *Journey Planet* #8 from Murray Moore yesterday. Rather an adventure, actually...

I thought Murray was going to be downtown on Friday, and waited for him, but it turned out he meant Saturday. I sat and waited at home, then finally phoned him at around 10 pm to be told the awful truth. He had said Saturday, not Friday.

The problem was that I was free on Friday, but not on Saturday. I had plans for a coin show up near the airport, where I would meet my friend Simon. I didn't need to be at the show any later than 3 pm, though, so I thought I could make it home again before 4.30. Murray wouldn't be free any sooner than that, anyway.

Well, it was a vile day. Warm enough, but a low pressure system was blowing through Southern Ontario, bringing fresh snow with it. My back always kicked up a row in bad weather, so I should never have attempted the trip. There were too many reasons why I had to, though, including that I told Simon I'd be there. When I got out to the airport's hotel strip, the snow was right in my face, wet and fluffy like little white dust bunnies that stuck in your eyelashes and melted immediately. As fast as you brush them away, you catch still more. The only public transit out that way is an express bus, which leaves you about a quarter mile from the hotel. I managed to hobble along with some difficulty, swearing under my breath. The express bus had actually zoomed right by the front door to the lobby. Normally I'd find steps or brick fence to sit on when my back is too sore to soldier on, but, naturally, on the hotel strip there was nothing like that. I avoided sitting in the snow by just standing until the ache died down.

The show was worth attending, though. My favourite dealer in antiquities had a lot of material not catalogued

for his website, which could only be bought in person. Buying is almost obligatory. Otherwise, how to justify spending 75 or 80 minutes in buses and streetcars to get to the show? I found lots to buy. Kings' ransoms and treasures beyond compare. Fortunately, I was able to buy a little of what I found.

I saw a perfect Athenian tetradrachm for sale – the owl was unmarred, the head of Athena was bright as the day it was minted. Only \$700! Ow. In fact, there were quite a lot of things that were out of any reasonable budget I could have set myself. As it was, I spent too much. I put \$90 down on three coins and have three months to pay the balance, but the dealer trusted me enough to let me take the coins. I don't think it'll be a big problem to manage the payments... and by then the coin show will be back in town again, no doubt.

I bought a follis of Constantius I Chlorus, father of Constantine the Geek. I had one follis of his already, but this was in pretty nice shape, not exquisitely expensive, and had an interesting reverse side. It showed the goddess personifying money, carrying scales, with the inscription SACRA MONETA AVGG ET CAES NOS-TRA. This translates more or less as 'the holy money of the emperors'. Imagine if US money said 'In Wall Street We trust' instead of 'God', and 'E Pluribus Moneta' instead of 'Unum'. I think this was unusually frank, don't you? Never saw a reverse like that before, so I had to have it.

The second coin was a half-groat, minted in 1604 or 1605 by James I. A thin sliver of poor quality silver, but Good to Very Fine for what it was. Elizabethan era coins were still in circulation as late as the 1660s, when Isaac Newton took charge of the Mint and reformed Britain's medieval coinage. I have a Henry VIII (though a posthumous issue), a number of Elizabeths, and a Charles I. I'd love to find a Bloody Mary to complement this rather disturbing stretch of the English monarchy.

Coin number three was a denarius of Clodius Albinus. Often called an usurper, that's not precisely the case. He may well have been in on the plot to murder Commodus, as was likely Septimius Severus, the eventual successor. With Severus's approval, the senate nominated the ex-British governor Pertinax to replace Commodus, but the new emperor was quickly murdered by the Praetorians, who objected to spit 'n' polish emperors on principle. Besides, they hadn't gotten their bribe... Didius Julianus paid off the Praetorians to be emperor but was murdered so quickly he barely managed to warm the curule chair with his bum before he was dead.

Severus moved to take the purple and made an ar-

rangement with his supporter, Albinus. He would be Caesar to Severus's Augustus. Albinus moved to Britain to administer from the frontier, while Severus went east to deal with an upstart named Pescennius Niger. Tension between the two colleagues grew, and one suspects that they were both sharpening their knives from the start, and waiting for just the right moment to strike. Severus polished off Niger and struck first, moving north when Albinus's troops elevated him from Caesar to Augustus. When the dust settled, there was a Severan dynasty instead of a Albino one...

The guy had about four years in which he was legitimate Caesar, and not so legitimately Augustus, so should have minted a reasonable amount of scratch. In fact his coins are somewhat rare. Not fabulously rare, like Otho or Pertinax, say, but rare enough that I'm mainly paying off this coin for the next three months, not the others. It was a reasonable price all the same, and I didn't think I'd find a better or less expensive one later.

Prices just keep going up. I saw several other coins I would have loved to taken home with me just because they were in such lovely condition – but, whenever I asked, the price was \$350, \$400, \$500 etc. Maybe ancient coins are the next speculative bubble after worthless credit instruments... in which case, I can't wait for it to burst.

While I was handling the \$700 Greek tetradrachm, a guy looking over my shoulder asked if I was going to buy it. I said no, be my guest. He took a wad of \$100 bills out of his pocket that looked like a Big Mac and peeled off seven... When the bubble bursts, maybe he'll sell it back to me for \$20? Naw... he'll probably just get Congress to bail him out with \$100,000,000 of the taxpayers' money.

The trip home again was much the same as the trip out, although at least my friend Simon drove me to the subway station, reducing the trip by one leg. By the time I was outside my apartment building the snow was no longer melting. It was accumulating. Also, I was about 15 minutes later than I expected. If Murray had turned up on the dot at 4.30, he would have missed me.

There was no sign of Murray hanging around the lobby, or asleep outside my apartment door, so there was a still chance that he was late also. Around 6-ish, the phone rang. It was Murray. He had come with my things, and gone. Damn!

Fortunately, there is a used book store virtually across the street from me. I live on Dunn Avenue, a few hundred feet from the corner of Queen, and The River opened last summer on the other side of Queen. They

were already quite familiar with my presence there. Murray knew about the place and had apparently spent a little time there before leaving an envelope with *Journey Planet* and other things there for me to pick up later.

I could just walk over that night, actually. Luckily, The River is open to 10 most nights. I was already pooped from getting home from the coin show, though, and more than a little hungry. I had a light meal and read for while before suiting up for the cold again. Around 9 or 9.30 I was prepared to brave the winter a second time, and headed out. By then, snow had piled up an inch or two deep. No big deal in itself. But it was wet and extremely slippery. I had to watch every step and walk carefully. The unnatural gait threw my back into convulsions almost immediately, so that a distance that was hardly any greater than from one end of a Worldcon dealers' room to the other was an agony. I reached the book store in a sweat, despite minus temperatures.

It seemed to be 'readings' night at The River. It was crowded. Instead of staying to chat, I picked up Murray's envelope, gave thanks, and turned right back out into the wet snow and wind. If I hadn't found a couple of plastic milk crates to sit on, about half-way home, I think I would have laid down in the slush and given up.

But every *Journey Planet* comes to its end, they say, and I was pleased to find in Murray's envelope the said fanzine, my copy of Banana Wings, a one-shot and some unexpected video on DVD of the Toronto Ditto and Corflu. All in all, I thought it was very nearly worth dying in the vast, trackless, snowy wastes of Parkdale between my apartment and the book store across the street.

– 27 February 2011  
Toronto, Ontario (Canada)

### **Steve Jeffery** (again)

After the sercon 'Space' issue, this issue feels almost like a relaxacon, or perhaps time out chatting of more fannish things in the bar. That's what I like about *Journey Planet*. It's not afrighted to do themed issues or sercon SF, like *Vector*, but the next issue might change tack entirely. Lloyd Penney's long letter is, as Claire remarks, practically an article in itself. Is SF a 20th century phenomenon, as Rob Sawyer claims? Futurism almost certainly is, as Joseph Nicholas pointed out in *Chunga 17* (another themed issue – it's catching) and perhaps harder extrapolative SF falls with it, as others, such as William Gibson, have also observed. (Gibson was making statement about core SF being 'largely a historical project' back in late 1999.) Leaving... what? Science fantasy, perhaps – Space Opera of the Wide Screen Baroque variety, or techno-

thrillers of a near future so closely placed that it's constantly in danger of becoming the near past by the time the book hits the shops? But perhaps announcements of the death of hard SF are still premature. Just a few days ago, I was given a copy of an anthology titled *Engineering Infinity* (2011, Solaris) edited by Jonathan Strahan, which sets its agenda firmly on the back cover quotes 'hard science fiction where a sense of discovery is most often found and science fiction's true heart lies' and promises to 'bring the good old sense of wonder back to SF'.

Lloyd and I would disagree, I suspect, in our respective attitudes to today's culture of infantilism and expectation of freedom without responsibility. By all means we should help those who cannot help themselves, but I feel no such compunction to generosity for those who wilfully will not help themselves and think society (in effect, you and I) owes them a free ride.

Warren Buff comments approvingly on Al Reynolds's selection of Cordwainer Smith and Herbert's *Dune* as examples of SF that has a sense of 'distinctive otherness'. I too, like my SF (and fantasy, for that matter) to have a little strangeness thrown into the mix. Good SF should entertain. Great SF, in my opinion, should aspire to evoke an almost poetic sense of awe or wonder – the sort that Shelley gets in the closing lines of 'Ozymandias' (which also meets Aldiss's short definition of SF as 'hubris clobbered by nemesis').

The more I read Chris's columns, the more I think he might have one of the coolest jobs ever. You've actually got AARON? And a Connection Machine. Now that's a proper computer. I've always thought the ultimate SFnal computer ought to have myriad little blinking lights to show it's thinking (or, failing that, vent lots of dry ice), and the CM does that in spades. Does the Museum want an Oxford annexe? In the loft of the Kidlington Home for Retired Technology, we have a pair of Pong handsets, an IBM XT (10MB hard disk, 12 inch green monitor and an astonishingly heavy and solid keyboard), a 286 with a 5¼" floppy drive, an external Iomega Zip drive and a Kurta graphics tablet. There may even be a ZX Spectrum up there somewhere, but I haven't seen it in a long while, though I did find the power supply. Still in use is a 1995 Sony Vaio laptop running Windows 98 and an unbranded Win ME 386 acting as a MIDI recorder/sequencer.

But hey, 'what people older than 30 think of...': Chris, you young whippersnapper, that's an outrageously ageist statement. I'm well over 50, but mainframes are what you get in old SF or Bond movies: a wall of dials

and panels with reels of tape spooling back and forth. (There's also one in a delightful Katherine Hepburn/Spencer Tracey screwball comedy whose title I forget, but was shown again one Sunday afternoon a month or so back.) Personally, I cut my coding teeth on a rather more modestly scaled 1982 vintage IBM PC and BBC Micro, apart from a couple of less than inspiring earlier encounters with punch cards and paper tape at school and at university. Like the invention of the first affordable and portable analogue synthesisers, the advent of the micro was liberating

'What I find myself edgier about is publishing pieces whose creators aren't fussed about the publication being in a fanzine,' writes Claire in 'One more thing'. This is a strange statement. Even *Banana Wings* uses 'found' artwork culled from the public domain which almost certainly wasn't primarily intended for inclusion in a fanzine. Or is there a two-tier system where the provenance of text is considered more important than that of illustration, and artwork is thought of as just something to give the eyes a rest between blocks of text. I hope not. In fact, one of the things I particularly like about *Journey Planet* is that it seems to give some thought to how the use of art or images complements the textual content, and that the editors are willing to look further afield than the immediate catchment of known fan artists. So I should say that as well as the covers by Ditmar, I was particularly taken by the art from Claire Garcia, Ana and Nathan, all of which (and especially the latter) look even better in colour in the PDF version. I shall have to check these artists' galleries and favourites in deviantart.

I realise I haven't said much about the central portion of the zine, the different responses to the question 'what makes you a fan'. However, apart from being intrigued by the different ways in which various people chose to answer this, I'm not sure how much more can be said on the subject. Most of the responses, with the SF serial numbers filed off, could equally well apply to other hobbies, like fishing or flower arranging. Nobody mentioned the allure of sex, drugs and a hedonistic 'read fast, die young' lifestyle on impressionable teenage fans. Or that they might finally discover who sawed Courtney's boat.

– 9 March 2011

Kidlington, Oxfordshire (UK)

**Claire:** Good challenge to me on the intent behind contributions. I think I hold art to both higher and lower standards than text in this respect; is that a good admission for a Rotsler Award judge? I particularly enjoy art and text working together, where art genuinely illustrates



a piece and also where the layout enables the words to showcase and fit with the pictures. I really like to be able to commission art and text on that basis; but, given our common just-in-time-delivery approach to fanzine publishing which really militates against editors, writers and artists all having and giving one another the time to contribute in a way that feels anything like promptly, 'found' or 'borrowed' art is often the best compromise to achieve that match.

I also think that it is easier for a good piece of art – whether a 'picture' or a cartoon that contains several elements including some text – to work well by itself, without needing to be associated with an article. Yet it's more likely that art will end up being considered by some readers as merely a filler, something to break up the text or intersperse the articles, than even a short snippet of text (the exception being adverts or announcements). I'm glad you like what Chris has been doing in featuring other artists in *JP*; but I'd also like to hear from some of those artists whether they particularly like being included in fanzines, don't care so long as someone's enjoying it (or so long as they're being published somewhere), whether they get the whole SF fanzine ethos or don't see a distinction between this and any other type of publication, and whether they'd now consider creating something specifically for a fanzine.

Because what I most value here is SF fanzine fandom, and people's participation in it. Even if that starts by accident or – as my participation did – without extensive knowledge yet of all that had gone before or what was possible/expected/normal-for-us, I'd like it to be conscious and consenting. Mindful, as my friend Kay explained that to me recently. So I'd still rather that someone whose art is used in a fanzine knew that was what they were doing, and had created the piece with fanzines – ideally that fanzine – in mind, just as I do with articles.

### **Hildifons Took**

(aka Gary Hunnewell)

Thanks very much, Chris, for handing over a precious *Journey Planet* at Corflu. You never can be sure whether you should ask for one of these things or just look longingly when someone else gets one... and congratulations, everyone, for winning your Nova award. Chris did a very impressive happy dance at Corflu and only time and well placed over-ripe fruit kept him from continuing the effort.

I received a goodly stack of non-fiction space books last year and here's a fact that should appear on one of

your lists. 'The worst space-debris event happened on Jan. 11, 2007, when the Chinese military destroyed the Fengyun-1C weather satellite in a test of an antisatellite system, creating nearly 2,800 fragments, or more than 25 percent of all space debris. Within two years, these fragments had spread out from Fengyun-1C's original orbit to form a cloud of debris that completely encircled Earth and that would not reenter the atmosphere for decades.' *Unmanned Space Missions* (Gregersen), p.167. I would like to think of a clever comment at this point, but it seems wiser to just shake my head and sigh.

I am in the same spaceship as Rich Coad. Growing up, my introduction into space and really neat space illustrations came from the insides of tea boxes. Red Rose Tea (Brooke Bond in the UK) issued a set of space cards, one per box. I picked up a large stack as a kid in a Lion's Club auction, evidently from a very busy tea drinker. They were wonderful views of space with descriptions of space ships, planets, satellites, and the like. Each had a description on the back in English and French (the tea was sold in Canada). I fear that I'm one in the camp of Thales of Miletus, falling into ditches while looking into the night sky. (As a kid, I remember standing in a field at night, looking at the moon with my grandmother, wondering if I could catch a glint of sunlight off the Apollo lunar module.) I am always surprised when driving through dark, moonless Central Illinois that I don't drive off the road, as I try to catch the bright stars in a summer's sky. I finished up my collection of Red Rose tea space cards today with a purchase on ebay. So, at long last, I'll get to learn the names of all of those other planets in our solar system. Do I keep the Pluto card or hide it from the International Space Police?

Well, someone *has* to remark on Tom Lehrer's song 'Wernher von Braun' (obviously, Mr Lehrer was not a fan of space exploration) and I'm surprised that David A Hardy didn't bother. I remember even seeing it quoted in my first year college German book (!). I learned a lot from the article and it's a wonderful thing to have acknowledgement from a man who planned space travel. I watched two lectures by von Braun, which came on a DVD with *The Rocket Team* (Ordway and Sharpe). One is from 1955 from the Office of Armed Forces Information and Education (Department of Defense) called 'Challenge of Outer Space'. It's a fascinating view of how von Braun felt travel into outer space might be accomplished, even if the illustrations are a bit stilted (perhaps they didn't want to give anyone an idea on rocket design?). There is even one that looks like a space shuttle as the third stage of a three-stage rocket. The other lecture

is from 1965, where he describes the Saturn-V rocket.

I feel badly that I did not visit the Computer History Museum while I was in Sunnyvale. When I started to work at the Phone Factory in 1984, I started work on one of the Univac's grandchildren, the Sperry-Univac 1100/70. There is the adage 'No one ever got fired for buying IBM.' For me, it was 'No one ever got respect for working on Sperry-Univac.' Still, with its 36-bit word memory and its Fielddata character set (all capital letters but you could put six letters in a word vs. ASCII's four), it was a good learning experience for me and kept me busy for 11 years (most of them on call). I picked up a \$1 DVD of old television shows and I was surprised to see that Univac sponsored the game show *What's My Line?*

No doubt the lettercol will be full of SF fan remembrances and comments, so I may as well throw my hat into the ring. I am only an SF fan by cross-pollination. I met my wife (lovingly called 'The Frau') at the 1980 Worldcon. She was a hard SF fan. Her dad grew up the son of a sharecropper in the 1930s but had a love for SF; he once told us about the *Doc Savage* magazines he used to paw over. She grew up reading Heinlein and Asimov, while I am one of those fans that you, Claire, do not quite understand; I'm a fringe fan – a Tolkien fan and a fanzine fan. Yes, I will admit that. Although Tolkien fandom grew out of SF fandom, it soon went its own way, very much like the Tolkien 'movie' fandom has gone off in its own direction. Tolkien seems like a closed universe but there are still unpublished papers (I just received Tolkien's *Quenya Phonology* published in a fanzine just last year). No ray guns, no cross-cultural encounters and misunderstandings, or futuristic politics, but you get to see how a brilliant mind works on *his* own particular hobby. It is not that I don't like SF; it's just that I don't go out looking for it and part of that is that I have far too many interests as it is.

There are a lot of similarities within these fandoms. A common example is the enjoyment of company, meaning you can sit / stand there listening into some conversations without taking part, while in others you become the narrator. (I don't think that fandom is for shy people because they either open up or drift away.) Fandom expects a level of involvement. I remember the BBC interviewing me during Tolkien's centenary and I heard myself say, 'The books are all right but the people are what make it fun' or some such tripe. I mean, 'The books are *all right*'? Still, it was not a pilgrimage to Tolkien's grave that brought me to the U.K. It was the

ability to share a common love with people that I otherwise wouldn't know or (probably) much care about. For the record, I did not commit the nearly unforgiveable Tolkien fandom sin (one of the fans did, however); I did not say, 'I want to live in Middle-earth.'

– 2-3 March 2011

Arnold, Missouri (USA)

### Lloyd Penney

Fanzines can be fun, yes, and not competitive, but there is some measure of achievement in them. We want to participate, we want to do our best in participating, and we want to produce a publication of quality. I think about that with every letter I write. If you have a theme in mind, or you don't, just remember that in the long run, we want to stay in touch, we want to participate – and no matter the theme, I am happy when *JP* arrives. It's another challenge to respond to it.

We'd really like to see the display at your museum, Chris, the one about 2000 years of computing. Yvonne has some ideas for an addition to the display:

'Lloyd gave me a thumbnail sketch of your article and you missed something important in the article... the languages. The list includes: Fortran, PL1, RPG, Assembler, COBOL, JCL (Job Control Language) and other industry specific languages such as Donovan, which was used in market research. I took many courses in those languages in an effort to get into the computer industry in the late 1970s and yes; I did operate a keypunch station. When Y2K was around, the company I worked for sent out a company-wide request for anyone who knew RPG, I stupidly put up my hand and told them I still had my school books – boy, was I popular! Yvonne.'

Claire, you're editing the letters, so do what you should do to fit in what will fit in. And no problem in editing the large letter I sent in. Looks like it filled some space! Taral's comments remind me of an old Rotsler cartoon. 'Fandom...so neat, so nifty! Too bad it's full of fans.' There are times it's easy to be jaded about fandom, especially if you've been around for some years, and your interests start to change. I'm starting to feel that way, and we might make some hard decisions soon, who knows?

I like Warren Buff's idea of committee and staff ribbon that says 'Here to help'. Anything that does not say what you are, but what you can do, is more helpful. At Ad Astra, I was pressed into service to answer questions, and I did so for at least two first-time attendees. One will be coming back next year; I tried to make them understand that there was probably a reason why the

convention didn't answer their email. Responding to Warren's comment on what his generation would prefer, books or movies/TV: books are the basis, but as I am discovering and trying to keep in mind, what is important to me may not be so important to anyone 25 years my junior.

I am glad you asked 'that question', Claire... It's something we need to examine in ourselves from time to time, anyway. And our answer might change between the askings. Is fandom one big happy family? No way. But, there's a relatively happy assemblage of my friends that pleases me, and I couldn't ask for more.

– 11 April 2011  
Etobicoke, Ontario (Canada)

### **Kim Huett**

Old, old debate done to death before you were born, I'm afraid. Indeed, I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't done to death before even your parents were born. Consider the following comment about fanzine content I've lifted from a letter by Lynn Bridges that appeared in *Nova #2* (published by Al Ashley in May, 1942):

'Too many these days are catering exclusively to that small, select group who comprise the so-called "inner circle" whose proudest boast is the fact that they never buy nor read the horrible professional publications.'

I'm pretty sure that of the various cyclical topics this is one of the oldest, and perhaps the oldest, since I've read that an argument broke out in the pages of either *Science Fiction Digest* or *The Fantasy Fan* due to the publication of some material which wasn't serious commentary/news about science fiction. It's a topic that becomes inevitable the moment the breadth of experience contained within the fannish community includes both those still excited by the genre as a whole and others who have become very selective about their enthusiasm. The former want to take advantage of the unique opportunity fandom provides to write or talk about their favourite reading matter, whereas the latter have largely exhausted the need for such debate and want to move onto fresh fields. Am pretty sure this point was reached about 1932 at the latest.

– 27 February 2011  
Canberra, ACT (Australia)

**Claire:** Well, 1932 was indeed before both my parents were born... Still, after both correspondents and contributors telling me there was no point trying to get anyone to be interested or indeed interesting on the subject of what makes people an SF fan – notwithstanding

the many different ways that carefully-phrased question *could* be interpreted and thus answered – I was absolutely delighted to read the following letter (well, once we stopped talking about baseball, anyway). Eric might call it off-the-cuff unpolished conversation but I call it a letter of engaged response:

### **Eric Mayer**

I'm with Chris in that *The World Almanac* was one of my favorite books as a kid. The day that was bought for me was one of the best days of the year; not as high on the list as Christmas and Halloween, but pretty high. It had endless rankings and lists, and even season baseball statistics. Hard to believe, but baseball stats weren't readily available to a kid back in the early Sixties. Of course, baseball is about the greatest thing for making lists that's ever been invented. There's the Hall of Fame, a listing of the greatest players, and lists of World Series winners, players who lead the league in batting average and all the other statistical categories. But you can make up any list you want: greatest left-handed pitchers; greatest left-handed pitchers of the past fifty years. You can make up subjective lists, like best fielding shortstops of all-time. You can make lists of physical attributes of things: shortest right field fences, fastest fast ball as measured by radar. Or make lists of players having nothing to do with their baseball play: players born in Canada; tallest pitchers; midgets (OK, there's only one on that list).

Claire says the loccol was only lightly edited and I think that's appropriate for an ezine. Space is no concern and, given Internet culture, just letting people have their say trumps, for me, tight editing for readability. I used to edit my paper zine loccol very severely. It was necessary, if for no other reason than the cost of paper and postage. If *JP* is primarily a paper zine, well, I can see where chopping at the loccol might still be preferable.

David Hardy writes about Wernher von Braun and about all I can say is that, as a young child, to me von Braun appeared a heroic figure. After all, didn't he build rockets for the USA that were better (I hoped) than the rockets being built by those evil Russians? Gradually, however, I learned about his Nazi past, and the damage he helped inflict on humanity, in my mind, now far outweighs his technological accomplishments.

I enjoyed Chris Garcia's stroll through the museum exhibits – although where's the website, Chris? Thinking about computers reminded me I should try programming another text adventure someday. Also that I never could get anywhere in *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*.



While I also enjoyed the essays on SF fans I can see myself going on for twenty pages trying to remark on or argue with what the writers have to say. And really, what is the point? It's a question we are all entitled to answer in our way, so instead I'll just answer the question.

'What makes you a science fiction fan?'

I am not surprised most of those you asked didn't respond. If you had asked me, I certainly would have responded – to say that regrettably I just wasn't up to the task. To write a reasoned, coherent essay on a topic that is so complex... I wouldn't have been able to face it. However, since I approach LoCs as off-the-cuff unpolished conversation I can ramble about the subject a bit.

Short answer is that I am not a science fiction fan.

I was a fan of science fiction literature while I was growing up and gorged myself on it until sometime in the mid-Seventies. Since then I have rarely read the genre. Although I do sometimes; by chance, right now I am loving Robert Silverberg's *Nightwings* which I somehow missed. To me the genre seems to have changed drastically from when I was reading it as a kid and a young adult. It 'feels' different in a way I can't quite identify. I can almost never get into a modern SF book picked up at random, and the same is not true of mysteries or something like, say, Anne Tyler. I find most current SF novels off-putting for some reason. Perhaps they are skillfully and accurately aimed at a generation or at least a specific set of readers to which I do not belong.

However, I believe that reading so much senseless stuff during my formative years has shaped my entire outlook on life. Basically I am always thinking: It doesn't need to be this way. This is just the way it happens to be, but there are endless alternatives.

Around 1972 I got involved in fanzine fandom and found it a comfortable and interesting place, perhaps because so many people there shared the mindset I had from my SF reading. I was already beginning to lose interest in the SF genre, so it wasn't so much a shared interest with other fans that attracted me as that they tended to think along the same lines as me.

However, what really grabbed me was the idea of people publishing their own little magazines and writing back and forth and contributing to each other's efforts. That, I loved. Coincidentally, in the brilliant essay on fandom by Mike Glicksohn that I've seen only recently he includes a quote from Richard Bergeron who perfectly explains my fascination with fandom: 'I will argue that magazine making is the single most fascinating aspect of fandom with its infinite permutations of words, images and styles – and for those who discover its joys,

an endlessly refreshing form of mental play which we will probably have with us for centuries: unlike science fiction.'

I guess during the Seventies I would have considered myself a 'science fiction fan', since I equated it with 'fanzine fan'. No longer, however.

Actually I still consider myself a fanzine fan, in an ensmallled sense since I decided if I resumed some activity I would limit myself to ezines. (I saw how fanac will expand endlessly if left unchecked and at this point in my life I find it preferable to be moderate in just about everything.) I am not sure how meaningful the term fanzine fan is these days. It does not, I believe, qualify you as a science fiction fan.

I am not a science fiction fan because today, and probably forever unbeknownst to me, that involves attendance at SF conventions. If you don't attend cons and meet other fans in person you aren't accepted as a full fledged member of the club, although you may be treated cordially as an associate member. That was made very clear to me back in the mid-Eighties. At the time I didn't grasp that all my publishing and LoCing and contributions didn't qualify me for full membership, but being older and maybe a bit wiser (we can only hope...) I now appreciate that none of us can feel as close to people we never see as those we've met. And science fiction fandom is very much about the interplay between people.

So I am perfectly happy to enjoy fanzines, and write LoCs, and even do a little publishing myself, without any longer considering myself a science fiction fan.

As for Claire musing over the value of the prize-winning fanzine she co-edits... or, ummm, copy-edits... well, I guess driving yourself crazy over your fanzine is part of what's really fun about fanzine fandom! Seriously though, fanzines are not professional publications. When I am writing professionally I am very careful about spelling and grammar and all that, but I just don't care much about those things in a fanish context. For me ideas and personality are what it is about. But don't I think it's important how people present their writing, no matter where it is? Well, no. If they want to goof off in a fanzine but are still interesting and engaging, they can be as sloppy as they like. So I'm a slob. What can I say?

Thanks all for a most interesting read, but consider that you have kept me away from reading one of the few science fiction novels I am likely to peruse this year!

– 23 March 2011

**Claire:** The other interesting thing for me about Eric's letter is that I can find it so engaging without agreeing with big chunks of it – but I think we've exchanged views in other people's letter columns before about how seriously to take fanactivity, and in fact this just backs up the point I was making in the previous issue. For me, just because something is a non-professional publication doesn't mean it has to be unprofessional, or that I take less pride in what I do for my hobby than what I do for a living. Other people aren't fussed about that and thus the contribution that I can make to this fanzine, compared to James and Chris and their big ideas and inspired enthusiasms, isn't anything that's actually necessary to many people other than me (although thanks to other correspondents who indicated I'm not entirely alone there).

I'm still sad about that; as I said, I don't think a fanzine is 'only a fanzine' with an expectation of low standards and low quality – and it's much less likely I'll find something interesting and engaging if it seems that the contributors and editors don't care enough to avoid silly mistakes and slapdash errors. So – while accepting that making such comments makes it entirely inevitable that I will have missed or introduced both here, or that Chris will have helped me with that in the layout stage – it's much better all round if I carry on doing what I care about in publications and other projects where it doesn't involve imposing it on other people who evidently get by quite well enough without it. (Anyway, that means I can LoC *Journey Planet* too – or at least feel guilty about not LoCcing this fanzine either.)

I'd also take issue on a personal basis with the notion that someone has to engage with people in person at conventions in order to be an SF fan. That isn't to deny Eric's experience of being told that, obviously; it's simply to disagree with the opinion. I take Eric's own point that maybe we feel closer to people that we've actually met in fandom; but I feel I have more meaningful exchanges, and have more common interests, with some people through the letter columns of fanzines than with many who happen to attend the same convention, or even the same programme items as me. To me, being an SF fan means being a fan of science fiction and engaging with other fans about it; how anyone does that is not particularly important, and – for instance – fanzines seem like a pretty good way to me. Sorry, Eric, we're claiming you back; you are an SF fan again after all, even if you don't really have time to be one. In which case I'm particularly sorry for distracting you from your book...

## David Redd

Thank you to Lloyd Penney for the useful tip on gdooradio.com, and for his entire mini-magazine-length letter.

Much shorter but equally interesting is Taral's 'digression' where I felt compelled to interject 'But... but!' every couple of lines. The Mack Reynolds bio (and maybe a selected few of his stories) might be a little more interesting than Taral allows, if we take into account the New Mexico and Eastern Europe episodes. As for Taral taking an interest in the fiction of people he knows – I suppose I can agree with that. Currently I'm keeping an eye on the career in *Asimov's* of Ian Creasey, having met him at the Milfords, and noting both his appearance in anthologies (last year with 'Erosion') and my increasing enjoyment of his stories such as 'Crimes, Follies, Misfortunes, Love'. And yes, surprisingly I can agree again: knowledge of the personal lives of current SF career writers generally matters much less than with the old pulpsters whose life stories often read like 'help wanted' columns.

Good article from David Hardy. He's typically more charitable than I would have been towards some of von Braun's life choices, but he scrupulously gives evidence for both views. And Claire almost makes me wish to read some of those recommended books, only one of which I have in the house; the others will have to wait their turn after the accumulated READ SOON! of the previous century. Incidentally, Claire seems to be demoting herself to Managing Editor or even Production Assistant – surely not; the blend of all three approaches is what gives *JP* its cool, its unique personality. (A touch of added Pete Young certainly helps too, of course.)

– 7 March 2011

Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire (UK)

## Thanks also to:

**Pamela Boal** again: 'Love the front cover of #8. Unless I am mistaken that is Robbie the Robot from *Forbidden Planet*, arguably the best SF film of that era. The back cover is also a beautifully drawn and put together piece of art work that reminds me of illustrations that grabbed my interest in the past. ... For all the reasons given for reading science fiction and for being a fan I just say 'Me too' and emphasise as far as fandom is concerned it is the people. Of course some people would not regard me as a fan as my only activity for many years has been, perforce, LoCcing zines. That of course is their problem; I am a fan and always will be. ... I particularly enjoyed David A Hardy's article; while the contents are not exactly new to me I think it is good to be reminded of the facts that

started our journey in to space, by such a well-written piece.’

**David Hardy** himself, with some constructive criticism which chimes with the way I approach fanzines – although mine never look anything like the visual feast that *JP* can be – and which I thus pass along to Chris as layout editor: ‘If I might offer a comment, I’d like to see titles and authors separated in some way: italics, bold, or perhaps a dash – or colon – instead of “by”? “Defining our terms by James” or “Wernher von Braun by David A Hardy” somehow makes me pause and say “What?”! Likewise, I’d like to see the credits for art dealt with differently. For a while I thought the art was uncredited, and I looked at the back where you often find such details. But, again being in the same typeface as the rest, it took me some time to realise that the art credits were included on the main title page. Personally, although I realise it complicates the layout very slightly, I prefer to see the details alongside the illo itself. It can be vertical, alongside say the righthand edge, but at least the information is right there for the reader to see. ... I presume this ish is available as a PDF to download (and in colour!), but I haven’t found any reference to this inside *JP*? (PS: I’ve found it now – and I could have sent you a colour image of my painting, y’know!’).

**Murray Moore**: ‘I am in no doubt, Chris, that my congratulations on your fan career are among the many congratulations you are receiving. A great, short, arc of a fan career, a blazing comet: Best New Fan, 2006; TAFF delegate, 2008; Nova Award winner, 2010; Corflu chair, 2011. Obviously you have peaked. I speak for many when I say “We’ll miss you, Chris!” This letter of comment brought to you by my New Year’s resolution to LoC every paper fanzine that I receive.’

**Henry Welch**: ‘Congratulations on the Nova Award. I have taken the Chris Garcia led tour of the Computer History Museum and would highly recommend it should you ever have the chance. Maybe it had a special place for me because I’ve used so many of the machines and spent 18 years teaching engineering students the technology that made many of them work.’

If you want to appear here – rather more promptly next time – send your letters:

- By email to: [journeyplanet@gmail.com](mailto:journeyplanet@gmail.com)
- By post in Europe (c/o James) to: 54 Bridge Road, Uxbridge UB8 2QP, UK
- By post in North America (c/o Chris) to: 1401 N Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA
- By post from anywhere else in the world to whichever of those addresses you prefer