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C H U N G A
september 2007



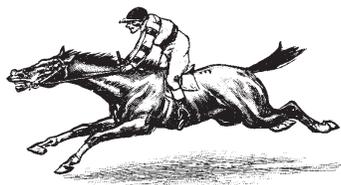
"But wouldn't it be cheaper just to use a man in a suit?"

CHUNGA

CHUNGA is a darkened theater where Lee Hoffman and Ron Bennett sit in the middle third row. Rich brown leans forward in the row behind them, and he won't stop talking. Other fans are expected, and all three look over their shoulders in anticipation. In the projection booth, Bob Tucker is pouring shots from a green-labeled bottle. One for each reel change – two cartoons, a news reel, the serial chapter, the A picture, and the B picture. A pleasant odor of bourbon and popcorn fills the darkness as he throws the switch.

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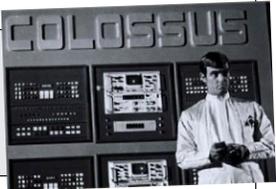
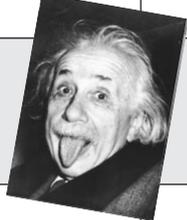
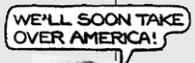
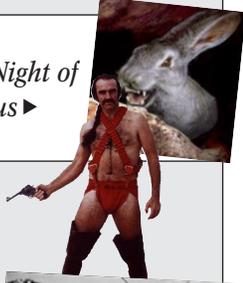
THE ASCENT OF HOKUM

As mystery cheese enthusiast and posthumous Andrew Lloyd Webber confidant TS Eliot said, between the idea and the reality, the motion and the act, falls the hokum. (Do you believe that?) The half-fact, the spin, the ad copy, the white lie, the novelization, the simplification to tell the kids, the stories we tell our bosses and doctors, these have the hokum nature. When 78 year old Pat Robertson declares his special elixir lets him leg-press Olympic-record weights, that's hokum. Yea, and everywhere Richard Dawkins attacks religion as unscience yet suggests science is its spiritual successor, yea

there is hokum. Yet are these publicity-seeking strophes any more or less factitious than other socialized consensual hallucinations like pro wrestling, mystery novels or the American two-party system?

To say more would trigger the Accu-rat Advertizing™ provisions of the PATRIOT Act. We are allowed to sketch, for purposes of our readers' self defense only, below and elsewhere a scale of relative hokum, normalized from 1 (low or none) to 10 (fourth-branch-of-constitutional-government high), along several familiar, and unfamiliar, axes.

— carl

	SF author	Scientist	SF film
1	 Isaac Asimov	Herbert S Zim, Marie Curie  AH! I NOW HAVE THEM UNDER MY CONTROL!	<i>Destination Moon, Marooned</i>
2	Arthur C Clarke	Pierre Curie, Thomas Edison ▶  I'LL DIRECT THEM TO THE JUNGLE CITIES!	<i>Colossus: The Forbin Project</i> 
3	William Gibson, CJ Cherryh	◀ Richard Leakey, Francis Crick 	<i>The Boys from Brazil, THX 1138</i>
4	◀ Leigh Brackett, HG Wells 	Albert Hoffman, Albert Einstein ▶ 	<i>Apollo 13, The Andromeda Strain</i>  WHERE AM I GOING?
5	Andre Norton, Robert Silverberg, Greg Bear, Ken MacLeod	 Stanley Pons & Martin Fleischman	<i>Planet of the Apes ▶ Metropolis</i> 
6	Henry Kuttner, Joanna Russ ▶ 	Issac Newton, Louis Agassiz  WE'LL SOON TAKE OVER AMERICA!	<i>Little Shop of Horrors (1986)</i>
7	 James Tiptree, Larry Niven, Iain Banks, ◀ Barrington Bayley	Nikola Tesla, Jack Parsons ▶ 	<i>Tarantula, Night of the Lepus ▶</i> 
8	Christopher Priest, AE van Vogt ▶ 	Aristotle, Wilhelm Reich ▶ 	<i>Zardoz ▶ Little Shop of Horrors (1960)</i> 
9	 ◀ Alfred Bester, Kurt Vonnegut, Rudy Rucker	 ◀ Immanuel Velikovsky, Brooks Agnew	<i>Robot Monster ▶ Plan 9 from Outer Space</i> 
10	Philip K Dick, RA Lafferty ▶ 	Paracelsus, Bob Lazar ▶ 	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> 

The gentleman under my foot will now give an imitation of a rusty door hinge.



Terminal Eyes

Andy Hooper



UNSEEN SIGHTS REMEMBERED

Why *Celluloid Fantasia*? Once readers have struggled through the question of whether these cinematic references are real or imagined, the next step is to ask why we find the idea so appealing in the first place. I've brushed such inquiries aside for years, but as different contributors offered their own essays on faux-historical movies, the question became more compelling. Why should these writers find it so appealing to make up imaginary science fiction and horror films too? After all, Stu Shiffman invented the franchise, and I'm as much his imitator as anyone here. Why do I keep coming back to this curious form of pastiche?

For one thing, I do enjoy a good hoax. It's fun when the glowing swamp creature turns out to be a mean old real estate speculator in a rubber costume. And I'm even more fond of considering the possibility that the hoax is itself a hoax, meant to hide an unseen truth of some sort. Could some or all of these films be real, and our "parody" part of a campaign of disinformation with the ultimate goal of rewriting history? Maybe you'd better go enter the name "Zetz Tummelman" into the IMDB search engine, just to be safe.

Most if us grow up as fans loving the idea of lost, forbidden and unknown knowledge. So much of science fiction is based on discovery and invention, that it seems a natural component of faan fiction as well. The competitive recitation of trivia is one of fandom's favorite pastimes, and *Celluloid Fantasia* arises from a mischievous impulse to stump the know-it-alls by making up a work they've never read, or seen, or heard.

Movies are such a part of our interior landscape — we recall classic scenes and recite their lines with pleasure, we use them as a social lubricant for a hundred occasions. And even use them

to lull ourselves to sleep. The idea that these flights of fantasy might reflect half-remembered reality seems impossibly appealing, and I hope to build my belief system around this illusion as I eventually become feeble-minded and even more conveniently forgetful.

THE PSYCHOTRONIC INVASION

We're far from the only place that you can find a kind of alternate cinematic history. Recent years have seen a series of elaborately constructed but completely phony documentaries on spurious polar editions, imaginary exploitation cinema and life in a victorious Confederate States of America. The original "Golden Turkey Awards" collection famously included a completely imaginary movie among its litany of the film world's worst crimes — which has not kept it from being listed in other movie guides and databases since then.

Even the final two seasons of *The Sopranos* have featured a subplot about a mob-backed horror film, culminating in a spurious "making of" documentary on HBO. Imaginary cinema might be seen as something of a motif on HBO's series — much of the popular comedy *Entourage* revolved around fictional actor Vincent Chase's efforts to star in a James Cameron production of *Aquaman*. The fictional movie was a blockbuster — and putatively followed by a cheap sequel directed by Michael Bay. In real life, the team that created *Smallville* for the WB/CW networks also produced an *Aquaman* pilot which was not picked up. But following the airing of the *Entourage* episodes with the imaginary Cameron movie, there

HOKUM

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was a sudden resurgence of interest in the character, and persistent rumors that the movie will actually be made.

There are also intermediate steps between existence and nothingness in the cinematic realm. There are thousands of movies that have almost never been seen in their entirety, suffering cuts in favor of commercial time in every airing since the film's initial run. Many films have been recut after their release, which can create rumors of lost or suppressed scenes. Given free rein in the soundstage of the imagination, the suppressed material attains a degree of sensation that reality would be hard-pressed to equal.

MOVIES THAT KILL

It seems telling that so much of the *Celluloid Fantasia* canon has concerned classic horror movies. I know that first watching monster movies was a physically thrilling experience for me as a child, and that I consumed them two or three at a time trying to reproduce those thrills.

The idea that simply watching a movie can have a physical impact on the viewer is also a recurring theme. There's a microgenre of horror cinema that reflects this idea: Movies like Japan's *Ringu* and its American remakes, in which viewing a videotape leads inexorably to the viewer's death, are part of a much older tradition, beginning, perhaps, with Lot's wife. Not only was the sight of Sodom's destruction fatal to her, but it actually changed her flesh into a

pillar of salt, That's more than enough hook to get the green light from most horror producers.

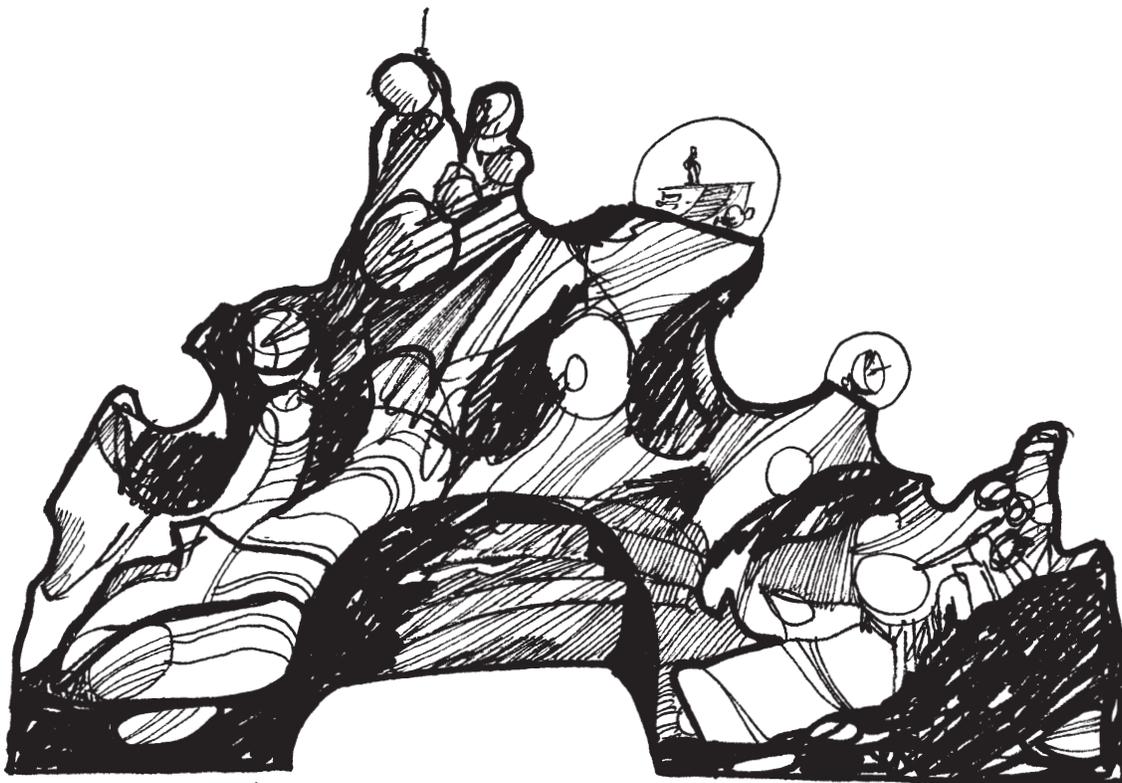
The idea that simply watching a movie, reading a book, or even looking at a work of art can lead to death, madness or transformation, appears frequently in fantastic fiction. I can remember being heartily scared at age seven by a *Star Trek* episode titled "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" Diana Muldaur played the blind, psychic assistant to the ambassador of a race called the Medusans, beings of such terrifying appearance that the very sight of them will drive most other species insane.

Leaving aside the questionable utility of diplomatic relations with a race that literally drives you crazy at first sight, the sequences in which the lid to the ambassador's carrying case (Medusan diplomats appear to prefer accommodations that closely resemble a tackle box or a hibachi grill) creaks open to reveal a pointillist frenzy of light, were classics of low budget SF. It's one of those great light-in-a-box sequences that show up onscreen again and again, from *Kiss Me Deadly* to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to *Repo Man* to *Pulp Fiction*.

Films portraying human torture and death have driven the story of a number of major studio productions, notably Joel Schumacher's bleak *8mm*. But it seems even more popular to propose a supernatural or occult context for movies that show impossible, blasphemous or simply unendurable images. And the real horror in films like *The Ring* or David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, is that

Hokum: Theory

A certain kind of orderly disordered mind (for low values of Asperger's) delights in quantifying qualities and mapping the hitherto incommensurable. There's joy in comparing digits for some of us, and community for others—and for a very few, both, which is confusing, I know. Meantime, as Euterpe dances in the woodlit shadows her protégé Science enters the enameled retaining chamber where history is made, encumbered with the traditional encumbrance of fresh-sprayed plastic string, there to fight for its allegorical life against brain fog, lesser stoat fever, and its dreaded rival suitor, lyrical homeopathy. ...I'm sorry, I'm being corrected...it wasn't Euterpe who was the patron, it was Elsa Lanchester in *The Big Clock*. ...And she was an artist, not a patron. Our abject apologies for this grievous error.



SECRET MOUNTAIN

Chung 2008/1

docked?" then we as an audience can get a deeper understanding into the true nature and uniqueness of her character.

the characters come to completely understand that watching the mysterious images will lead inevitably to their deaths, yet they choose to view them anyway.

LE FIN ABSOLUE DU MONDE

One recent example of this nanogenre stands out for me: John Carpenter's melodrama *Cigarette Burns*, commissioned by the Showtime Network as part of its *Masters of Horror* series, but now available on DVD. The film stars Norman Reedus as Kirby Sweetman, the guilt-ridden owner of a failing repertory cinema. Ostensibly to raise the money needed to keep his business running, Sweetman embarks on a search for a notorious "lost" movie, titled *Le Fin Absolue Du Monde*. Long rumored to be some manner of lost masterpiece, the movie has spawned a small cult of devotees who will do almost anything to see it—despite the reliable evidence that everyone who sees the movie expires shortly thereafter.

Of course, the trail proves to be all too amply littered with evidence leading Sweetman to the only surviving print of the film. Along the way, he encounters a number of witnesses to the riots and mass murder that accompanied the film's original release, as well as people driven mad by the sight of only brief passages of the film. Sweetman also encounters one of the film's subjects, a willowy, other-worldly being, kept in chains since the movie was shot.

Sweetman is easily beguiled by the quest, despite its probable consequences. Haunted by his wife's death from a heroin overdose, he clearly sees himself as having much in common with the amoral auteur who created the film, and the depraved collector who commissions him to find it (portrayed by the ever-reptilian Udo Kier, who else?). After exposure to the *Le Fin Absolue Du Monde*, Sweetman begins to experience a phenomenon described as "cigarette burns"—black holes in the fabric of reality, edged with a red fire consuming all existence. And hallucinatory visitations from his late wife sap his last particle of resistance.

When the movie is actually shown on the screen of Sweetman's theater, the small snatches we see are reminiscent of *Un Chien Andalou*, with grainy, black and white images of mutilation. There is also a sequence in which the willowy being—to all appearances, an angel—has its wings amputated by a man wielding a machete. It's ironic that the film itself proves to hold no more than particularly exotic forms of violence, while the visions that emerge from the black "cigarette burns" in space are far more seductive and horrifying. Still, it does

the trick, as various guilty parties including Sweetman, are destroyed. In the end, the now-released angel appears outside the theater, and mercifully takes the two reels of *Le Fin Absolue Du Monde* with him to parts unknown.

KNOWING TRUE NAMES

Sweetman begins *Cigarette Burns* with a profound skepticism about the existence of *Le Fin Absolue Du Monde*. Later, when it becomes clear to him that the movie is both real and terribly dangerous, he can't bring himself to stop. It never occurs to him that his own ardor—for revenge and atonement for the death of his wife—might be powerful enough to warp reality on its own.

But *Celluloid Fantasia* and similar mental experiments in film-making, really do have some kind of power. For decades, fans imagined and discussed how they would cast and shoot a movie based on *The Lord of The Rings*. Only a handful of them got to see their own visions on screen, but surely the collective speculation of all those others helped to make the expensive, lavish trilogy economically possible. The producers knew that there were literally millions of people who wanted to see the movie—the only issue was finding a way to please them all.

Proposing these alternate versions of Hollywood and its denizens is also a backhand way of paying homage to our favorite people and movies. Once you know them well enough, it's easy to imagine a dozen works that they should have made instead of or in addition to their actual body of work. One of the best things about Alan Moore's ground-breaking graphic novel *The Watchmen* was the way he showed how comic books would have been changed by the presence of real superheroes in the world, how too many miracles eventually exhausts the sense of wonder. If these movies were all real—if we had a James Whale interpretation of *The Call of Cthulhu*, or could see Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye in de Camp and Pratt's *The Incomplete Enchanter*, what we would have to give up in their place? If the world begins to change to match our dreams, won't we soon miss the familiar shape of reality as we have suffered it??

Such cautionary thoughts will restrain me for only so long. Alternatives will always flicker in and out of existence in the mind's eye—the Henry Fonda 20th Century-Fox version of *The Space Merchants*, Edward G. Robinson's memorable role in *Monkey Planet*, and Anissa Jones in H. Beam Piper and Dick Clarke's *Little Fuzzy Goes Hawaiian*. Go ahead and try to stump me. There's no end to what we can imagine we remember. ☠

The Diodochi

- 1 Antipatros
- 2 Antigonus I
Monophthalmus
- 3 Ptolemy I Soter
- 4 Alcetas
- 5 Seleucus I Nicator
- 6 Antigonus II Gonatas
- 7 Ptolemy Keraunos
- 8 Demetrios Poliorcetes
- 9 Pyrrhus of Epiros
- 10 Lysimachus

Take the Hokum and Run

With virtually this entire issue of *Chunga* devoted to imaginary movies, I'd like to take a moment to thank Stu Shiffman for inventing the "Celluloid Fantasia" series of articles almost 30 years ago. Long before *Chunga* took up the banner of existence-challenged motion pictures, Stu was pondering the history of a Hollywood even more fantastic than the real thing. To acknowledge our debt to him, here are some excerpts from Stu's early investigations in the field, published in the pages of *Janus* and *Holier Than Thou*. I've found the premise fascinating ever since Stu's first article sent me searching fruitlessly for a print of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and I hope you enjoy this look back at the evolution of Stu's invention.

—Andy

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (MGM, 1968) couldn't fail with its starting team. Stanley Kubrick (with the doomsday experience of *Dr. Strange-Love* behind him) and Robert A. Heinlein (Dean of science fiction) came together in a synthesis that transformed Heinlein's novel of a computer-lead rebellion on the moon into a film that fell into synch with the "revolutionary" fervor of the time. Kubrick has emphasized the movement of mass concepts, while scaling the struggle down to a few people the viewer can empathize with. Paul Newman is Manuel, Heinlein's Capable Man, the archetypal *Astounding* engineer character. Newman plunges into his role with fervor, giving life to the words on the page. The Holmes 9000 computer "Mycroft/Mike" is evoked to an amazing extent. The voice of Hal Holbrook gives a character to the machine as "he" develops in complexity and depth of personality. Holbrook's Mike and Newman's computer programmer have wonderful interplay, humorous yet character revealing. As the supporting characters, Kubrick picked the vivacious Diana Rigg (of *The Avengers* fame) to play the revolutionary Wyoming Knott, and the talented Peter Ustinov as Professor Bernardo La Paz. The mixture is dynamic — talented actors, thoughtful script and direction, and well-executed sets and special effects combined to make this adaptation of Heinlein's novel one of the greatest films in the genre. And one of the most successful — until *Star Wars*. Arthur C. Clarke has said, "Robert Heinlein is a giant among the writers of science fiction, and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* is as great a monolith above the anthills of Hollywood."

—Janus #16, Autumn, 1979

The Regency theater near Lincoln Center is still in the grips of its MGM retrospective. It had a double feature of *The Incomplete Enchanter* (MGM, 1948), discussed in my last column, and *Land of Unreason* (MGM, 1950) for three days last week. They stand up much better without the cuts done by WPIX, channel 11 (the station of "The Daily News: The Picture Newspaper").

Danny Kaye is excellent, in the latter film, as

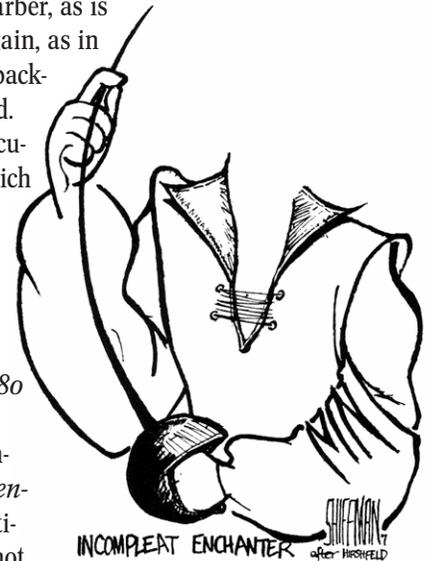
de Camp and Pratt's diplomat Fred Barber, as is Bing Crosby as King Oberon. Once again, as in *The Incomplete Enchanter*, the MGM backlots become faerie and wonders unfold. Sylvia Fine's songs are thrilling, particularly Kaye's "Albert Magus!" (upon which Tom Lehrer's song "Lobachevsi!" is styled). Virginia Mayo's Malacea (an apple-tree dryad), Avricola the Vole and Queen Titania are a bit strange, but effective.

—Janus #17, Summer, 1980

With 1934 came the first Yiddish-language motion picture serial, *The Adventures of Zetz Tummelman*. This scientific series of cliffhangers ... was not particularly sophisticated and owed more than a little to the Flash Gordon series. Emmanuel Goldberg was "Dr. Alexei Zhidoff," a rocket experimenter — his sole appearance in Yiddish, and under his own name. Munye Weisenfreund portrayed the evil tsar of the planet Shaygitz, the ever-rotten Pinkus the Pityless. With Zhidoff and his beloved Perel, Zetz Tummelman travels to Shagitz in the doctor's rocket, *Di Freylakh fun Bruklin* (The Joy of Brooklyn), and pursues numerous picaresque adventures among the Florist People, the Eaglemen (Aldermenshn) and in the skyscraping palace of Tsar Pinkus the Pityless....

Basically, it was a matter of Tummelman on Barsoom, the Mars of Edgar Rice Burroughs' fiction. It picked up the story line of the serial, with Tummelman in Germany to secretly obtain parts for Dr. Zhidoff's rocket. Beaten severely by a gang of Brownshirts and left for dead, Zetz groggily spies the light of the planet Mars and is transported there. On Mars he finds himself in the ancient city of Varhun, among the giant green Martians (referred to as *di Varhuner griner*). He meets the rebbe of the title, the *Varhuner Gaon* named Spurs Spulkis, and the red-skinned Jewish-Barsoomian princess named Dejah Tsores. I imagine that you can guess the rest of the action...

—Holier Than Thou #17, September, 1983



Woody Guthrie, the Singing Sidekick

a Celluloid Fantasia in Western Song

Stu Shiffman

Woodrow Wilson “Woody” Guthrie (1912–1967) found a grub-stake in our hearts. To some he’ll always ride and sing across the range with Bob Livingston, Crash Corrigan, Duncan Renaldo, John Wayne and Max Terhune in great B Westerns from Monogram and Republic. He’s part of the Western landscape, still working the old Corriganville Ranch, in the movie cowboy Valhalla.

This son of Oklahoma wrote two memoirs, eight western novels, five screenplays, published over one hundred fifty songs, scripted a newspaper comic strip, and became a major influence on the “urban cowboy” movement of the 1960s. He was a mentor to neo-cowboy songwriters like Dave Van Ronk (“The Mayor of MacDougal Street”), Robert “Zim Dillon” Zimmerman and Elliott “Bronco Bill Eldon” Adnopoz. He appeared in fifty films, from 1938’s *Where the Coyotes Sing* to his sad 1963 cameo as muleskinner Catfish Marmaduke in *How the West Was Won*. Set to play a frontier troubadour in Jane Fonda’s comic western *Cat Ballou* in 1965, he was too ill to perform. It took both Stubby Kaye and Nat King Cole to replace him.

Woody Guthrie’s compositions have been recorded by such diverse popular singers as Pete Seeger, Bing Crosby, Bob Wills, Michael Feinstein, Kinky Friedman and Marty Stuart. He appeared on country music shows such as the *Louisiana Hayride*, the *Grand Ole Opry* and the *Ozark Jubilee*, as well as *The Steve Allen Show*. Because of his politics, he waited until 1979 to be inducted posthumously into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. In 1988, Woody was inducted in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Guthrie was born in Okemah, Oklahoma, of then middle-class parents. But when Woodrow was only six, disaster struck the family. His older sister died from burns, and his mother Nora began to act erratically. Eventually Nora Guthrie was diagnosed with a hereditary degenerative disorder known as Huntington’s Chorea. The Guthrie family life disintegrated, and Charlie Guthrie lost his land and livestock.

Just before his fifteenth birthday, Woody was practically orphaned, after his father was also severely burned, and his mother committed to a mental hospital, where she later died. His father was cared for by a sister in Pampa, Texas, but Woody remained in Okemah. For two years, he stayed with different families during the school year and was otherwise on his own.

In high school he sang in the choir, served as “joke editor” for the school annual, and often entertained with his harmonica, his wit, and his jig dancing skills. He was a popular student, but in 1929 at the end of his junior year, Guthrie joined his father in Pampa. A decade of drought and dust storms began the following year. Even though he was known as the “Oklahoma Dust Bowl Balladeer,” Woody experienced his Dust Bowl years in Texas. Those events in Guthrie’s life are described with his usual verve in his fictionalized memoir, *Hard Trav-elin’* (1943).

Down in Pampa, young Guthrie learned to play the guitar, fiddle, banjo and mandolin. He worked for a bootlegger and painted signs, but really found

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himself as an entertainer and funster playing dances. In October 1933, Woody married Mary Jennings, with whom he was to have two children.

As a child, Guthrie heard his father sing cowboy songs and his mother play piano and sing “old” ballads.” Materials in the Guthrie Archive at the Autry National Center show that he was already writing poetry and popular song parodies by 1933. Even then, when he made money from singing, he’d often pass it to someone he fancied was in even greater need. His childhood experiences instilled in him a compassion for the poor and the underdog that stayed with him throughout his life.

California Will Be Your New Home

Guthrie’s desire to become an entertainer drove him westward to California, a few months before his second daughter was born in July, 1937. He was inspired by the success of fellow Oklahomans like Tom Mix, Gene Autry, and Will Rogers, the renowned Cherokee cowboy, humorist and movie star.

So what exactly is cowboy music, western music? “Much of it was Scottish and Irish tunes given new lyrics about Jesse James or something,” says songwriter Tom Russell. “There was also a big Mexican influence with the guitar.” Just as much of the mythology of the Wild West “was created by traveling shows such as Buffalo Bill’s 80 years ago,” the most famous singing cowboys were made by Hollywood: Gene Autry and Roy Rogers.

The 1920s were a time of enormous growth for Los Angeles. Historian Kevin Starr, in *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (Oxford University Press USA, 1990), said that Los Angeles “envisioned itself, then materialized that vision through sheer force of will...the Great Gatsby of American cities.”

Los Angeles, Starr wrote, “invited Americans from elsewhere to settle there, and they did in heroic numbers.” Los Angeles had 1.47 million people by 1930. Its population tripled in 10 years and was the fifth-largest city in the country. “I attended a dinner this morning given by the Old Settlers of California. No one was allowed to attend unless he had been in the state for two years,” said Will Rogers in 1924. California changed even more after the Stock Market Crash. By 1934, over a million of her citizens were on public assistance and poor migrants no longer found an open welcome. Over 650,000 arrived during the 1930s. The state feared being over-run. It tried every means, legal and otherwise, to bar “unemployables” from entry.

“If you tilt the country sideways, Los Angeles is the place where everything loose will fall,” said Frank Lloyd Wright. And so fell Woody Guthrie,

with a guitar and a dream.

Woody and his cousin Jack Guthrie became a popular singing duo in Los Angeles and earned a show on Hollywood radio station KFVD beginning in August, 1937. After Jack left the show for better paying work, Woody formed a new team with a family friend, Maxine “Lefty Lou” Crissman. The *Woody and Lefty Lou Show* drew thousands of fan letters and earned the two performers a bit of money.

During the Depression, the image of the cheerful singing buckaroo represented tradition, independence, faith and renewal to people dislocated by adversity. Producers wanted Guthrie to adopt that stereotype, but he preferred to build his own persona. Guthrie biographer Ed Cray wrote “Though he played the rube who just fell off the turnip truck, the fact is he was a very sophisticated man who played a role and offered a public persona of this rube-like character who told droll stories and in the



Cowboy Woody *Woody Guthrie* © 2006

The works of Elvis Costello

- 1 *Imperial Bedroom*
- 2 *Get Happy!*
- 3 *Almost Blue*
- 4 *Armed Forces*
- 5 *Spike*
- 6 *My Aim is True*
- 7 *Blood and Chocolate*
- 8 *Trust*
- 9 *Punch the Clock*
- 10 *The Juliet Letters*

The works of Frank Zappa

- 1 *Hot Rats*
- 2 *Playground Psychotics*
- 3 *The Grand Wazoo*
- 4 *Freak Out*
- 5 *Chunga's Revenge*
- 6 *Joe's Garage, Part III*
- 7 *Zoot Allures*
- 8 *Ship Arriving Too Late to Save a Drowning Witch*
- 9 *Cruisin' With Ruben & the Jets*
- 10 *Live at the Filmore East, 1971*

end topped whatever the slick Yankee was trying to sell him.”

He didn't see himself as hillbilly crooner or one of the Sons of the Pioneers. He became acquainted with some of the “Popular Front” crowd, and attended meetings along with movie stars and first became acquainted with longtime pal Cisco Houston. He also composed many songs during this period, including “Oklahoma Hills.”

In 1938, Guthrie moved his family to Los Angeles. That same year Lefty Lou left the radio show due to poor health. This left Woody at loose ends, and he planned to ramble the migrant camps of the San Joaquin Valley. Instead, his life took a different turn: Hollywood called.

I Can See By Your Outfit

In February 1938, Monogram chief Ray Johnston called Guthrie and asked to meet with him at the studio.

When Guthrie looked in the mirror, he saw star quality, a leading man type. Everyone has a dose of self-delusion. Unfortunately, the Hollywood moguls (if Poverty Row had moguls) looked at Woody (and listened to his exaggerated Okie accent) and saw a character actor, a sidekick and a stooge. So he was cast in the mode of Smiley Burnette, Andy Devine, George “Gabby” Hayes and Fuzzy Knight. His first appearance, in *Where the Coyotes Sing*, reached the screen that same year. Woody Guthrie was now a working Hollywood contract actor. His wife was ecstatic that he was finally earning a steady income.

Singing Cowboy costumess ranged from the predictable to the bizarre: fringed and embroidered shirts, jeans with chaps and fancy boots were always appropriate. A Singing Sidekick almost always wore a bedraggled hat with a pushed up brim, and a costume more like working cowboy than a reel buckaroo. Villains almost always wore black and sported a pencil mustache.

Diana Serra Cary, in her book *Hollywood Posse: The Story of a Gallant Band of Horsemen Who Made Movie History*, tells of meeting Woody with her father Jack Montgomery at a gathering of movie cowboys. She found him charming and very funny. Some of the silver screen buckaroos, like Jack Montgomery, really had been working cowboys in Texas, Oklahoma or Wyoming. Chief Thunder Cloud (Victor Daniels), best remembered as Tonto in the two Republic *Lone Ranger* serials, really could claim Native American descent. Others, like the Oklahoma-born Tom Boyd (“Hopalong Cassidy”), were romantic leads before being cast in Westerns.

According to scandal-monger Kenneth Anger's *Gower Gulch Babylon* (sequel to *Hollywood Baby-*

lon), Guthrie was drawn inadvertently into the occultist circle around rocket scientist Jack Parsons. There he allegedly first encountered the notorious western and scientification pulp fictioneer Lafayette Ron Hubbard and began a casual friendship that lead to Guthrie's involvement in Dianetics and Scientology in the 1950s. Guthrie turned to Hubbard's organization as he suffered increasingly from the effects of Huntington's Chorea. Despite higher and higher (and more expensive) levels of auditing and pronouncements of being “clear,” his life ended in California state mental institutions. Many of Anger's claims are refuted by other sources, including Guthrie's highly fictionalized memoir *Bound for Glories*.

Arlen Guthrie, himself a noted actor and singer/songwriter, wrote that “Anger's version has as much validity as those stories that called my father a Communist during the McCarthy era.” According to the son, his father was a rationalist who didn't have time for either that old time religion or the occult. What attracted him to Dianetics had been its aura of the scientific. He actually met Hubbard on the set of Monogram's *Bronco Buddies*, based on one of Hubbard's western pulp stories. This was also during the production of *The Secret of Treasure Island*, the 1938 Columbia serial adapted from Hubbard's unpublished novel, *Murder at Pirate Castle*. *The Secret of Treasure Island* is better known as the basis of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg's *Revenge of the Jeddaks* (1983), last in their John Carter of Mars *Barsoom Wars* series.

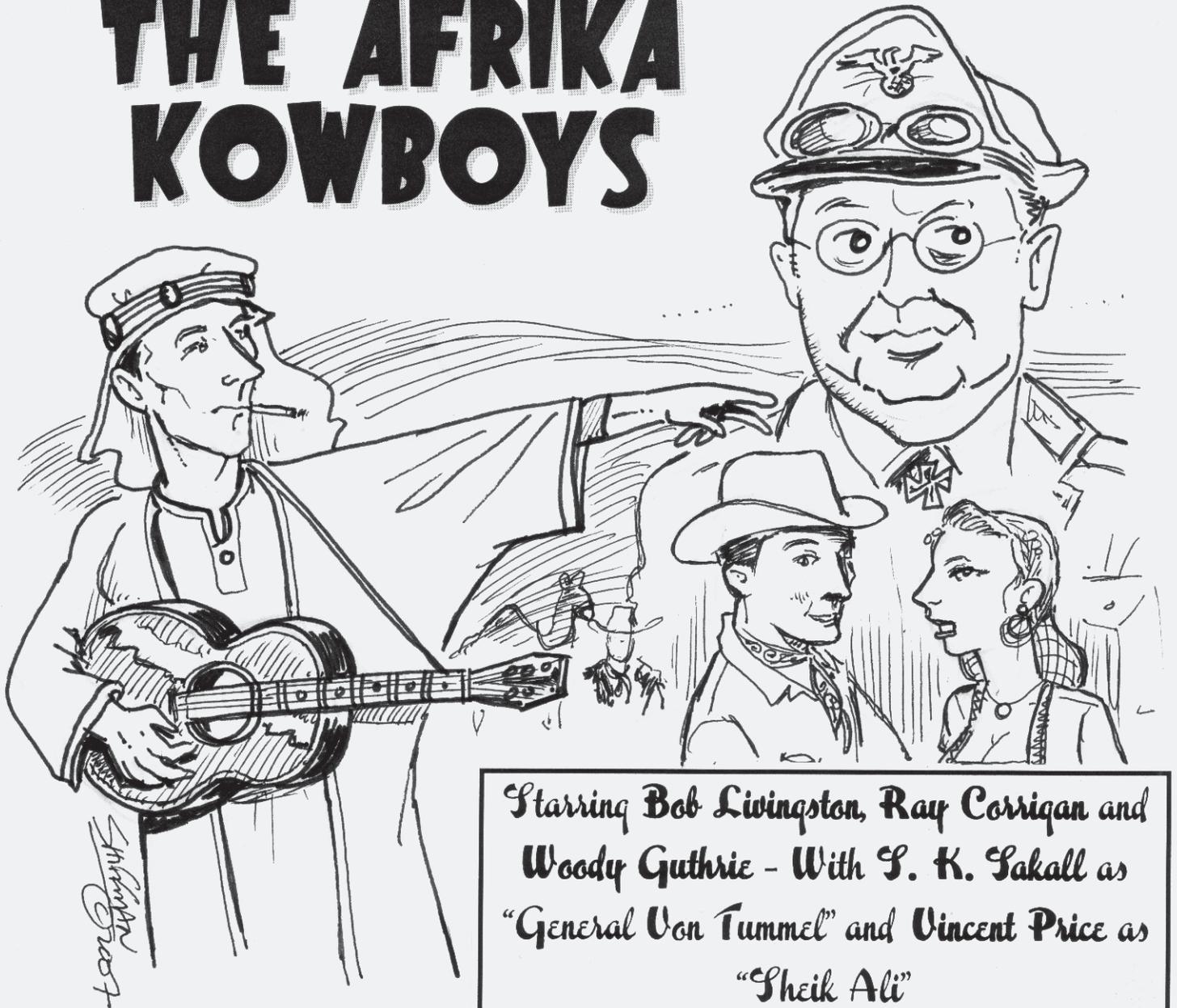
Woody Guthrie, as a man who opposed Hitler and Stalin's tyrannies and the right-wing bullies McCarthy and Nixon, later despised Hubbard's personality cult as well.

Mesquiteers Assemble: Man in the Iron Masquelero

It's hard to explain to twenty-first century kids the impact the old Westerns had on the American psyche. Back in the 1930s and 40s, adults and children would spend their Saturdays at the local movie theater watching a Western or double feature, a serial chapter, some cartoons and a newsreel. Westerns were always a big draw, from the work of silent pioneer Broncho Billy Anderson to the “A pictures” of John Ford or Howard Hawks. The so-called “B western” was an essential entry in the genre and all the majors and the poverty row studios made them on the slimmest of budgets. There was plenty of action, shot on studio backlots or rental locations like Ray “Crash” Corrigan's ranch. Sustained series were always popular, their familiar plots and characters comforting to audi-

THE THREE MESQUITEERS IN NORTH AFRICA!

THE AFRIKA KOWBOYS



Starring Bob Livingston, Ray Corrigan and Woody Guthrie - With S. K. Sakall as "General Von Tummel" and Vincent Price as "Sheik Ali"

ences. Among the most successful was Republic Pictures' *The Three Mesquiteers*.

Popular Western author William Colt MacDonald wrote scripts for Columbia in the early 1930s, including several Tim McCoy Westerns. He published the first of his *Three Mesquiteers* novels, *Law of the .45s*, in 1933, and subsequent books included *The Singing Scorpion*, *Powdersmoke Range* and *Riders of the Whistling Skull*.

Republic's decision to make the *Three Mesquiteers* series is another Hollywood mystery, but it appears that Nat Levine was the first executive to express interest (Levine was the one-time owner of Mascot Pictures). The *Mesquiteers* series consist-

ed of 51 films and lasted through mid 1943 when the final entry, *Riders Of The Rio Grande*, was released. During these 51 screen adventures, there were many cast changes with an even dozen actors handling the lead roles in nine different *Mesquiteer* teams. The first was *The Three Mesquiteers* (1936), starring Bob Livingston and Ray Corrigan. Third member Syd Saylor was replaced by Max Terhune after one outing.

The best-loved *Mesquiteers* were Bob Livingston, Ray Corrigan and Max Terhune, with the eight films that John Wayne made in Livingston's place coming a close second. Woody Guthrie replaced Max Terhune, cast as the carefree "Woody Joslin,"

cousin to Terhune's "Lullaby Joslin," beginning with *Wyoming Outlaw* (1939) and *New Frontier* (also 1939). John Wayne replaced Livingston as "Stony Brooke," while Corrigan continued as "Tucson Smith." This trio remained together for eight installments in the series through 1943.

My personal favorite in the sequence is *Riders Of The Whistling Skull* (1937), which mixes the Western with mythic lost races, haunted house comedy, and adventure archaeology.

God Blessed America for Me

In late April 1940, Woody Guthrie borrowed a typewriter from Texas-born Western screenwriter Robert "Two-Gun Bob" Howard (creator of Breckinridge Elkins). The two friends were relaxing after seeing a Henry Fonda picture. At the time, Guthrie was working on songs that would make up RCA Victor's *Dust Bowl Reunions* (1941), and he had an idea for a ballad. "When we woke up next morning," wrote Howard in his autobiography *Sower of Thunder*, "there was Woody curled up under the table with the finished song on top." This was the well-beloved song "Tom Joad," a perfect summary



enlarged detail "WOODY GEETAR"

of *The Grapes of Wrath* in six minutes of music. Author John Steinbeck later complained that "in seventeen verses he got the entire story of a thing that took me two years to write." (Guthrie seemed to find a muse in some of Fonda's characters, and later composed "Poor Charlie Pike and the Lady Eve" (1941), "Wyatt Earp" (1946) and "The Ballad of Mr. Roberts" (1948))

It was a prolific time for Guthrie's songwriting. In 1941, Kate Smith's popular rendition of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" irritated him into replying. Woody found Berlin's patriotic song was treacherous and simply dismissed the many people still devastated by the Depression. Traveling to New York by rail for a movie promotion, he saw the migrant camps and hobo jungles and wanted to write a different song for America.

When he was a toddler, Arlen Guthrie says, his father gave him a Gibson acoustic guitar for his birthday. Years later, when the boy was old enough to hold it, Woody taught him all the words of "This Land Is Your Land" in the back yard of their house in Beverly Hills. In addition to the familiar stanzas ("As I went walking that ribbon of highway," etcetera), Guthrie had composed a couple of others, including this:

*One bright sunny morning in the shadow of the steeple
By the Relief Office I saw my people —
As they stood hungry, I stood there wondering if
God Blessed America for me.*

"He wanted me to know what he originally wrote, so it wouldn't be forgotten," wrote Arlen Guthrie. It was a clear-eyed and, in its way, unsentimental snapshot of America.

In New York, he appeared on popular radio shows singing songs and promoting his movie, *High Desert Danger*. There he met the Lomaxes, Huddie Ledbetter, and youngsters like Pete Seeger and Oscar Brand. Seeger met Woody at a *Grapes of Wrath* migrant-worker benefit concert.

He went into the studio for his *Dust Bowl Reunions* sessions, recording his songs "Tom Joad," "Pretty Boy Floyd," "Dust Bowl Refugee," "Do Re Mi" and "This Land is Your Land."

This Land was Made for You and Me

Back in Hollywood, Woody worked steadily until the attack on Pearl Harbor. His friend Cisco Houston wanted them to join the Merchant Marine together, and Guthrie was tempted. Mary Guthrie would have none of it, lambasting him for wanting to flee his responsibilities. So he stayed in Hollywood, but

the urge to run remained. They divorced in 1943.

The war made Guthrie into a patriot. He had already put *This Machine Kills Fascists* on the front of his guitar. If he wasn't to enlist, then he'd plunge into a flurry of song-writing for victory, singing at the Hollywood Canteen and defense factories (no problem with his security pass then) and with the USO. He fought the Nazis in his films too, like *El Quivera Quisling* (1943), the dreamlike fantasy *Sagebrush Sixth Column* (1944) adapted from Robert Heinlein's story, and the Two-Gun Bob-scripted *Hour of the Desert Dragon* (1945) and *Vultures of Whapeton* (1946).

All in Color for a Dime

In 1946, Dell licensed a comic book based on Woody's film persona. The entire run (1946–1955) is archived at the Autry Institute for the Study of the American West in Los Angeles. In the midst of this run, Woody also appeared five times more in the *Dell Four Color* series, both with photo covers. Many Western film heroes and personalities had comic book series (including Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Lash La Rue). *Woody Guthrie Western* number one was recently available for a "Buy It Now" price of \$90 on eBay. The series was illustrated by such top artists as Tom Gill, Alex Toth, Bob Oksner, Frank Springer and John Severin. A Carl Barks caricature of Woody appeared in "Sheriff of Bullet Valley," (*Dell Four Color* #199, October 1948) and in Uncle Scrooge as "Woody Geetar" with the typical Barks canine cast.

Around this time Guthrie got the co-lead, with Smiley Burnette, in a short series of films at Republic, beginning with *Prairie Blues* (1947). They played a pair of singing saddle tramps who traveled the West resolving crimes and other mysteries. The

two sidekicks were charming together, and Smiley Burnette's character appeared in the comic book as Woody's pal Jolly Button.

By 1950, the symptoms of Huntington's were worse, and his creativity, his personal and family lives slowly disintegrated. His legendary restlessness increased; this produced impossible tensions with his second wife Marguerite de Nuit (born Marjorie Greenblatt), a dancer whom he married in 1945. They divorced, leaving their three children (Arlen, Joad and Nora) with Marguerite.

Woody briefly hosted the television show *Death Valley Days*, an anthology series that began on radio in 1930. The television incarnation ran from 1952 to 1972, and was hosted by "Old Rangers" Stanley Andrews, Ronald Reagan, Robert Taylor and Dale Robertson. Guthrie took the role of the "Old Ranger" from Andrews in 1953 and returned it to him in 1955.

A third marriage also ended in divorce after Guthrie was hospitalized in 1955. It is quite possible that this allowed him to avoid appearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee like his friends Pete Seeger and Howard da Silva.

During his approximately thirteen years of hospitalization and following his death on October 3, 1967, numerous tributes increased his fame and recognition. He was elected in 1966 to the National Cowboy Hall of Fame & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. In 1979, he was posthumously inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Association Hall of Fame and in 1988 into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 2000 the Recording Industry Association of America named "This Land Is Your Land" as the third most important song written in the twentieth century, essential for teaching appreciation of music in the lives of Americans. ♣

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the Most Monstrous Show on Earth!



by Bob Webber

During the original monster culture boom of the 1930s, many small-time impresarios tried to turn a buck by pandering to the same taste for gothic and ichorous entertainment that proved so lucrative for the majors. Vicious movie monsters such as Frankenstein's creation, the Wolf Man and Joan Crawford became so famous and popular that they all appeared in many derivative ventures, often without the knowledge of their originators. The failure of these enterprises was so profound that most evidence of their existence has shared the fate of monsters in general: burnt, buried, torn to bits, or drowned, only to reappear decades later, transfigured but stronger and ever more horrible.

In addition to the products of poverty row studios, any number of low-budget, low-talent live monster extravaganzas were attempted in disused theatres, synchronized swimming tanks, and on ice and roller rinks. They took advantage of the lax standard of copyright enforcement to create live-action "entertainment" based on the studios' interpretations of monsters from folklore and literature. Some of these, shown in theaters gone dark during the depression, are well-documented by anecdotal, if not photographic, evidence. But many less conventional shows are now almost completely forgotten.

The end of Vaudeville had come, but the Ice Follies and Aquacade persisted. Hollywood's attempts

to co-opt these were largely failures, as exemplified by Reinhold Schünzel's *The Ice Follies of 1939*, which showed Hollywood that a star like Crawford could not guarantee the success of a film in this mode, particularly if the star in question could neither skate nor sing, yet was asked to do both. It fell to other American showmen to provide the spontaneous color and spectacle (i.e. spangled leotards that might creep up or slip down at any moment) that the movies could not.

This was also the last age of the traveling circus as a mainstay of American entertainment, another institution that Hollywood, embodied in no less a luminary than Cecil B. DeMille, failed to replicate on the screen. Some argue that *Cecil B. DeMille's The Greatest Show on Earth* was merely technically primitive and might have succeeded with sufficient support from theater owners for the wafting of artificial greasepaint and sawdust to the audience's nostrils. However, recently discovered studio memoranda show that DeMille tested such an odor-generation system in an effort to capture more of the spirit of the circus and that the approach was a failure. As Associate Director Henry Wilcoxon wrote, "The elephant is not ready for his close-up, Mr DeMille."

HOKUM

8

The attempts to cross a circus with a movie monster were not limited to that latter-day effort from Paramount: long before 1952 circus acts with titles like *Vlad*, *The Highwire Vampire* and *The Wolfman on the Flying Trapeze* turned up on handbills recently rediscovered and scanned into digital image archives. Combining familiar movie characters with suggestive acrobatics—the star was always the vampire’s comely victim, not the hard-working bat—such blackouts and routines were performed into the 1970s.

Of course, in those simpler days it was always an open question as to just how much horror, sex and violence could be portrayed in a live performance without violating community standards. A circus act might be brief and mobile enough to get away, with trapeze-mounted groping and clothes-rending, but a stage play, ice show, or aquacade needed an actual plot and other superfluous additions to the basic monster themes in order to stand up to social scrutiny.

Other nations had less censorious sensibilities. A legendary cabaret production preserved in a notorious early “smoker” or stag film, *The Water Closet of Dr Caligari* (1933) was an ambitious attempt to combine elements of Expressionist film making, bathroom humor, and synchronized swimming. The unknown director also undoubtedly intended satirical comment on the German fetish for health and physical fitness. In the aquatic version the madman Cesare is locked in Dr Caligari’s bathroom while murders and stalkings take place. What the audience can see but Francis cannot is that Cesare comes and goes from the asylum via the drain pipe of the toilet, curiously anticipating the plot of notorious episodes of both *Futurama* and *The X-Files*.

When Cesare is outside the asylum we enter into his distorted, schizophrenic world through the dramatic mechanism of synchronized swimming. The swimmers are meant to represent Cesare’s perception of his potential victims. In the climactic nocturnal prowling he finds Jane and climbs toward the high-dive board, falling back into the pool when his heart fails, and indulging in one last delusional episode before washing ashore, dead as a lox.

Audiences seem to have understood this presentation even less than the original film, with the psychodramatic subtleties of the pool and synchronized swimmers perhaps escaping them. The nudity of the swimmers seemed to inspire ennui in those who actually viewed it. A more contemporary, all-male interpretation, *The Enormous Basket of Billy Calgary* (Falcon, 1993), seems to have been executed without ironic self-knowledge.

One can only speculate on the chain of influ-

ence leading from Henry de Vere Stacpoole’s 1908 novel of innocence *The Blue Lagoon* through its 1923 silent production to the 1937 staging of the “aquadrama” *The Creature from the Blue Lagoon*. The waterplay was apparently innocent enough in its early drafts to be rehearsed in the synchronized swimming arena left by the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games. But hints gleaned from water-damaged pages of the diary of the late Richard “Red” Skelton suggest that the entire production might have resulted from the lecherous interest of a wealthy oil speculator, or possibly an oily wealth speculator, in a 15-year-old swimmer who later became star of A-list productions and a sponsor of pools and swimwear.

The actress was cast as Emmeline, the girl growing up on the island of the Blue Lagoon and also as the perpetually nude Nahema, a succubus exiled to the island by her enemy Oberon. No direct written record of her participation in the production exists; according to biographies, her career began when she reached the age of majority and was hired for a part in *Andy Hardy’s Double Life*. But Skelton’s notes indicate that the producer insisted on playing the part of Mr Button the sailor, first “victim” of Nahema’s watery seduction, and that female cast members gave him the nickname “Mr Fly Button.” This might explain why the production does not appear in the future star’s list of credits.



Although *The Creature from the Blue Lagoon* never opened to a paying audience and allegedly helped send its producer to San Quentin prison, its very existence points to the widespread enthusiasm for monsters in the collective American psyche of that era and perhaps points to a reason for their popularity: sex. The monster, as outsider, could express sexual impulses banned from the screen by the rules of the Hayes office. If the producer of *The Creature from the Blue Lagoon* had been better able to sublimate his impulses, he might be remembered as the pioneer of a genre, the monster-horror-thriller aquacade.

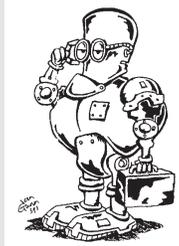
In reality, success eluded all live monster knock-offs for one reason or another. The productions rarely opened commercially: *Frankenstein on Ice* folded expensively when Sonja Henie left the cast, her contract broken by Fox due to the unexpected success of her debut movie, *One in a Million*. In his memoirs the German skater Ernest Baier, Henie’s fellow 1936 Olympic gold medalist cast in the title role, bitterly accused Henie’s agent and the studio heads of deliberately sabotaging his career, taking as evidence Henie’s continued participation in and leadership of more conventional ice shows.

American Presidents

- 1 John Tyler, James Madison
- 2 Dwight Eisenhower, Grover Cleveland
- 3 Jimmy Carter, Rutherford B. Hayes
- 4 Calvin Coolidge, William Jefferson Clinton
- 5 James K. Polk, Theodore Roosevelt
- 6 Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson
- 7 Richard M. Nixon, Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- 8 Ronald Reagan, Ulysses Grant
- 9 John. F. Kennedy, Warren Harding
- 10 Thomas Jefferson, George W. Bush

Hokum: Practice

Ratings of persons and products were based on works; there was no personality event. All individual observations are subject to narrative violence, bound as they are to successive quanta of implicitly experiential space-time. (Note: Your path through space-time will vary.) Lists have been normalized to fit ten- (or nine-) fingered species; the enchantment of hokum, however, is at heart comparative rather than enumerative.



In fact, Baier's skating form never recovered from the stiff and awkward poses he struck while balancing the wood and plaster superstructure of the monster's head and shoulders.

In a 1952 interview, Heinie's only comment on the production was that frostbite was a continuing problem, and another reason for Henie's decision to favor Hollywood over Buffalo, original home of the *Frankenstein on Ice* company.

For some reason the ice rink particularly attracted man-shaped monsters cobbled from inanimate parts. Another significant failure in this regard was the 1939 "blade opera" *The Avenging Snowbank* (translated by the author, Austrian Johann von Putz, from his manuscript *Der Eisgolem*), produced by banker Ute Erb. In this modern retelling of the story of the Maharal of Prague, Jews defend the German immigrant children of New York from kidnapping by murderous mobsters with the help of a mysterious frozen protector. Born from the intersection of a scientist's secret formula and a late-season snow drift in Washington Square, the *Eisgolem* is truly the embodiment of the very spirit of New York.

Certain technical problems with the *Eisgolem* costume were discovered during rehearsals — specifically, the actor in the costume was half frozen and could not control its direction as it slid across the skating rink, particularly late in rehearsals when he had consumed a quantity of schnapps to keep his blood circulating. The solution was to change the performance venue to a curling rink. Erb, who spoke little English and rarely ventured below 50th Street, unfortunately decided to engage

the tiny East Broadway Curling Club's facilities for the dress rehearsal and first week of performances. It could be said that the show closed on its opening night, though no more than twelve puzzled, cramped patrons could have been wedged into the club's splintery bleachers.

In contrast, the all singing, all roller-skating production of *Ralph 124C41+* (*Ralph of Tomorrow*) ran off-Broadway for almost two weeks in the summer of 1938 before poor sales and high electrical costs forced it to close. Former *Smart Set* contributor Waldo Phillis, the one critic to review both productions, compared *Ralph of Tomorrow* favorably to *Starlight Express*, the 50-year-removed heir to the Gernsback musical's radio-powered roller skates. But audiences of the time were apparently bored to tears and *Ralph of Tomorrow* was far less successful than Andrew Lloyd Webber's effort. A climactic scene in which 37 Western Union messenger boys wheeled around the stage singing, "Radio is the wave of the future and will lift mankind to the stars, but man's own nature will follow him always!" was apparently typical of *Ralph of Tomorrow*.

All these monster spin-offs, good and bad, suffered from the same ultimate weakness: They were unconnected to the integrated production and promotion machine that mated *Dracula* with *Frankenstein* and *Abbott and Costello*. Cinema monsters and their series, and their musical and comic sequels, helped erode the novelty and wonder of the weird and supernatural until they literally became



BLACK ZOMBIE CAT REVIEW



toothless cartoons, like *The Groovie Ghoulies*. Small wonder that some tried to breathe life into the horrors of Hollywood by staging them in new and ingenious ways.

These days, monsters issue from the studios primed for sequels, television series, action figures, comic books and novelizations (even if they came from comic books or novels in the first place), PEZ™ dispensers, video games, Las Vegas casinos, and fast-food promotions. The cost of a jaw-dropping action sequence can be partly justified against the future revenue it will generate in the form of a theme park ride. The directorial and marketing teams are integrated with the engineers building the ride, and every monster is the product of a broad committee, not a single story teller with a flashlight held under his or her face.

In his popular web-essay *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* sometime con-going fringe-fan Eric Raymond presents the notion that there are two modes of operation for an enterprise: First, a hierarchical organization, like a church raising money for and building a cathedral; and second, a loosely collaborative grouping in which independent workers gain an advantage by associating with others of their kind, that is, a bazaar. Raymond consistently extols the virtues of the bazaar in his efforts to champion contemporary open-source computing. In more familiar terms, he would say there are two modes for an enterprise: the genzine and the apa mailing.

Clearly each mode has advantages and disadvantages: the apa mailing spreads the cost of production around among more participants, but

costs more in total. The genzine will often have more uniform typefaces and paper quality, and is generally better stapled. In the monster culture, as well as fandom, both modes of publication can thrive; or at least the creators of monster-themed ice-shows and aquamelodramas must have believed that was the case. But the major studios have also shown that a sufficiently successful genzine can make the apa-mailing's open sources redundant or moot; everyone is reading the focal point fanzine or watching the recycled major studio monsters and buying their attached merchandise. We can't help but return to the things we find familiar, no matter how weird or horrifying they may be. ♡

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Once More with Ftheeling: *The Call of Cthulhu* (2005)

Randy Byers

It takes some serious gonads to tread in the footsteps of the legendary Hollywood director, James Whale, but that's precisely what the HP Lovecraft Historical Society has done with this direct-to-video adaptation of Lovecraft's 1926 short story, "The Call of Cthulhu." Whale's 1934 adaptation for Universal is proclaimed by fanboys far and wide as a classic of weird cinema, with a cast chock full of Elder Gods (Karloff, Rathbone, Atwill, and no less than Ms. Eldritch himself, Ernest Thesiger); the eccentric and indeed Cyclopean sets by William Cameron Menzies; the dark, fluid, Expressionist cinematography of Arthur Edeson; and of course the astonishing stop-motion animation by the great Willis O'Brien, which had such a huge impact on Ray Harryhausen's concept of the Medusa in *Clash of the Titans* forty years later.

Those are some awfully big shoes to fill, and it is to the credit of the HPLHS, with their miniscule budget, that for the most part they don't even try. Instead they've made a very smart move and reconceived the whole thing as though it were a silent movie made at the time the story came out

originally and set in that same period. Fortunately they didn't use the scenario for a silent version that the bizarre racist William Dudley Pelley wrote in 1928 for Universal. They return the story to its roots, which allows them, amongst other things, to jettison the banal love interest that Whale was stuck with by Hollywood convention, and which later served as the basis of the completely ridiculous and deeply misconceived operetta version of the story, starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. In fact, this version is very true to Lovecraft's story, and as a noncommercial enterprise, there was no pressure to bloat it out to two hours with extraneous material. The 47 minute length is perfect to cover all the story that's needed.

The opening logo is a beautiful homage to Universal and RKO in the '30s, with a cloud-shrouded globe and a circling blimp bearing the HPLHS imprint, and below a declaration that the film was shot in glorious Mythoscope. I was grinning ear-to-ear before the movie had even started. The first time I watched it, however, I came away with the feeling the the no-budget production values had let the project down. The music was great and the acting was amazingly good, but that was about it. The sets were distractingly cheap-looking, and while the lighting did a good job of capturing the flavor of the late-silent era, overall it really didn't look much like a silent film. For one thing it was shot on a digital video camera, and probably not a very good one (although I'm just guessing about this). The image was not very detailed, and instead of gleaming like silver nitrate, it looked blown out. (Perhaps just as well, since the lack of detail probably helped hide the duct tape holding the sets together.) While they cleverly stuck in pieces of hair and print damage effects here and there to make

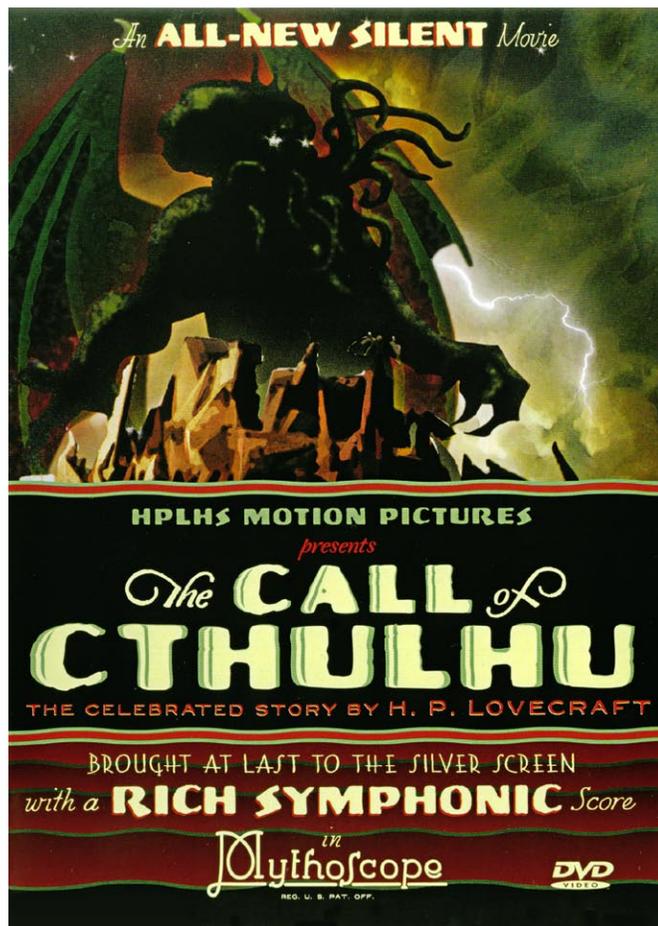


it look like a transfer of an old film, it still looked like video rather than film. The “Esquimaux” priest was clearly not an Eskimo. You could see through people’s legs in process shots. The boat model looked like a boat model, and in general the miniatures didn’t have the stylized, detailed look of the best miniatures, which are an artform of their own. The stop-motion Cthulhu wasn’t exactly up to Willis O’Brien levels and generally looked too small.

Despite my overall disappointment, however, I enjoyed a couple of sequences, including an imaginative dream sequence with Dali-esque sets and a stirring confrontation with a Cthulhu cult in the bayous of Louisiana. I gave the HPLHS a lot of credit for ambition and chutzpah. Maybe if they’d had a bigger budget...

Then I watched it again, and it was like watching a different movie. The sets still looked cheap, the Esquimeaux still didn’t look like an Eskimo, and the digital video still didn’t look like film, but I saw that they had done a much better job than I had given them credit for the first time through. Not only is the lighting quite good, but so are the camera angles and the editing. While some of the editing and camera set-ups use post-silent technique (such as shot/reverse shot for conversations), this is clearly made by people who like and understand silent movies and who have done a good job of incorporating silent film techniques into a more modern scheme. The score is really outstanding, and so is the acting (which also combines silent and modern techniques). And despite the cheapness of the sets and of some of the models and special effects, the look of movie is really pretty sophisticated, especially outside of the boring rooms where some of the conversations take place. (It’s even more impressive when you see how they did it in the making-of documentary included on the DVD.)

Like Lovecraft’s original, the film story is basically epistolary in nature, with one character telling another character the narrative, which he learned by reading documents written by eyewitnesses to, or reporters of, various aspects of the troubling history. These documents are dramatized and provide the bulk of the movie, within a framework of the narrator revealing his own reaction to his developing understanding of what is going on in the world, far from normal human perception but nearer than you might wish. There’s a growing feeling of dread and panic and several minds are lost along the way. It captures very well the Lovecraftian sense that there are some things we cannot bear to know but that our intellectual curiosity will drive us to try to



know anyway. When Cthulhu is finally revealed, he is not himself very scary (unlike O’Brien’s titanic, squirming monstrosity), but we’ve been creeped out well enough before we get there.

The extras on the DVD are quite good and quite fannish. Amongst other things, it has subtitles in 20-odd different languages, including Euskera, which were provided by fans around the world. So I definitely recommend this to aficionados of HP Lovecraft and anyone interested in shoestring filmmaking techniques or just oddball movie experiences. I’m not sure that I can recommend it to a general audience, because you do have to make allowances for the cheap production. Plus, silent films are an alien artform to most people.

I definitely don’t expect this to supplant Whale’s version in the canon of great horror films, but it stakes out its own ground and lays claim to our attention on its own terms. It certainly is a slam-dunk on the conceptual scale. If they sell enough DVDs, maybe the HPLHS will make more Lovecraft movies. At least it gives us something to fantasize — or fantasiasize — about until we get our undoubtedly mind-rending first glimpse of *Cthulhu: The Movie*, which is another independent production, this one filmed around Seattle and Astoria by local film-makers. See www.cthulhuthemovie.com for the trailer — if you dare. 🐙

The Rainy Town Tickler

Pornography in Review

*New ways, new ways
I dream of wires*

—Gary Numan

Science fiction has for the last thirty years been a popular source of ideas for that parallel world Hollywood known as adult film, as it offers so many inventive ways of enabling (or excusing) unusual sexual behavior. (Anne Francis wasn't the only reason that *Planet was Forbidden*.) Here for your delectation (or horror) are offered some more-successful examples of this seminal cross-genre work:

Sex World 1977

Director: Anthony Spinelli

Cast: Leslie Bovee, John Leslie, Kay Parker,
Jack Wrangler

Polymorphous perversion meets future shock anxiety in this fantasy inspired by Michael Crichton's 1973 film *Westworld*. (Also inspired by Crichton: 1995's all-male *Jurassic Pork*.) In a sexual amusement park equal parts *Fantasy Island* and the underground research center from *The Andromeda Strain*, various characters explore and indulge their sexual fantasies, then suffer. Because sexual repression allows porn-makers to set a higher price point, adult movies often take a surprisingly judgmental attitude toward the excesses they portray. Shot on film, and featuring a cast that sports acres of sideburns and pubic hair, a vision of the future that preserves a perfect snapshot of the past.

Café Flesh 1982

Directors: Rinse Dream & Herbert W. Day

Cast: Michaëlle Bauer, Marie Sharp,
Paul McGiboney, Andy Nichols

Still unique 25 years after it was made, *Café Flesh* is a blend of sex, avant-garde theater and post-apocalyptic science fiction. It was also an unusual convergence of the porn and mainstream film cultures. Richard Thompson collaborator Mitchell Froom composed the film's new wave score, and co-director

“Herbert W. Day” was a pseudonym for writer/director Jerry Stahl.

Following World War III, the great majority of survivors are rendered incapable of sexual pleasure. Those who still can get it on are compelled to perform in sexual cabarets attended by joyless “Sex Negative” citizens. *Café Flesh* was made during the first appearance of what came to be known as AIDS, but even so, it seems remarkably prescient in its portrait of people who have lost their sex drive. In 1982, the idea that billions would be made by prescribing erectile dysfunction drugs in the subsequent two decades would have seemed as ludicrous as that of government-sponsored live sex shows, given what we know Reagan thought of the NEA....

Night Trips 1988

Director: Andrew Blake

Cast: Tori Wells, Randy Spears, Cheri Taylor,
Victoria Paris

In the late 1980s, Cyberpunk ruled the Earth. This was perhaps even more true in adult movies than it was in the pages of *Analog Science Fiction*. Mysterious characters with dark glasses and gel-heavy hair coupled in reflective puddles by the light of Japanese neon signs, then downloaded themselves onto 3.5" floppy disks and did the whole thing again in virtual reality.

Night Trips is set in a starkly-furnished psychological research facility. Tori Wells stars as a woman afflicted with vivid sexual daydreams, seeking treatment from researchers Randy Spears and Cheri Taylor. They attach electrodes to her breasts and forehead, which allow them to observe her imagined couplings. The two do nothing to address her daydreams, but find them sufficiently arousing that they end up doing it on the floor of the monitor

HOKUM

1

booth. This is far closer to typical research methods than most people know, or want to.

Edward Penishands 1990

Director: Paul Norman

Cast: Sikki Nixx, Jeanna Fine, Alexandra Quinn

The *wham-bam-thank you ma'am* production style of adult films means that the porno version of a popular film often can be available before the film that inspired it has left theaters. The androgynous automaton of Tim Burton's modern fantasy was a natural subject for Paul Norman, the Stanley Kubrick of prosthetic hermaphrodite movies. Sikki Nixx does a nice job of reproducing Johnny Depp's hollow-cheeked serenity, but of course instead of a nimble set of shears, his arms end in a pair of out-sized and perpetually erect penises. Rescued from an empty, junk-strewn house by traveling dildo vendor Jeanna Fine, her daughter, Alexandra Quinn, falls in love with him. Followed in quick succession by two sequels. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, Johnny Depp referred to it as "hilarious," and recommends it highly.

Total Reball 1990

Director: William Black

Cast: Ashlyn Gere, Peter North, Rocco Siffredi, Madison Stone

While *The Terminator* series has inspired more than a dozen porn parodies over the years, this is the only one to clearly imitate another Schwarzenegger vehicle, *Total Recall*. There's a rather bleak plot involving the implantation of false memories of a fulfilling sex life, but Phil Dick might find

it a more faithful adaptation of "We Can Remember it for You Wholesale" than the relentlessly violent *Total Recall*. The only thing really missing: that Martian girl with three breasts.

Space Nuts 2003

Director: Jonathan Morgan

Cast: Stormy, Evan Stone, Randy Spears, Devinn Lane

By the turn of the 21st Century, space opera had become familiar enough to be just another historical period, like Westerns and Regency romance. Whatever world was represented by pointed rubber ears, nylon miniskirts and hair-dos resembling French pastry, it didn't look like the present or the future. Fortunately, camp and porno are a perfect fit, and Jonathon Morgan's *Space Nuts* is both funny and sexy.

There have been several other porn films to imitate *Star Trek*, but *Space Nuts* has by far the best sense of humor, and it won several *Adult Video News* awards in 2004. It's an example of how less ambitious, if not minimalist, productions have come to dominate porn. Lavish adult fantasy epics like Philip Christian's *Immortal Desire* (1993) are frequently long on spectacle and short on chemistry, and seem increasingly difficult to justify in a world where porn can be shot with a cell phone. Still, as long as the sex film community shares a connecting door with Hollywood, we'll see more adult movies that infuse hardcore smut and techno-fantasy. Well, some of us.

— Wil Tenino 🍷

Famous Starship Captains

- 1 Juzo Okita, *Space Battleship Yamato*
- 2 Commander John J. Adams, *Star Cruiser C-57D*
- 3 Commander William Adama, *Battlestar Galactica*
- 4 Captain Turanga Leela, *Planet Express Ship*
- 5 Admiral Ackbar of the *Mon Calamari*
- 6 Captain Christopher Pike, *USS Enterprise*
- 7 Captain Koloth, Klingon-at-large
- 8 Professor John Robinson, *Jupiter II*
- 9 (tie) Kang and Kodos, Rigellian Invasion Authority



are so adapted to their environment of acacia leaves. You're getting me so hot right now. Ungh.



YE Ironn

Mike Glicksohn
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Canada

Mike Glicksohn

Chunga #12 arrived today and of course I skimmed through it (once I'd recovered from laughing over the back cover which happened to be the first thing I saw when I removed the issue from its envelope.) I envisioned the editorial conference that might have preceded the creation of the issue...

"You know Glicksohn has put his return to letterhacking on hold until his health situation is clarified but I bet we can put some things into this issue that will guarantee a response from him."

Well, you were right!

Those heavily into semantics might argue that "American" means anyone living in North or South America but the reality is that popular usage of the term is intended to refer to people from the USA. Canadians and Mexicans are North Americans, of course, and people who live in and are citizens of The Great White North are called Canadians. I expect an apology or I'll cancel my subscription! Oh...I don't have a subscription? Oh well, forget the apology then. American, sheesh!

When I was a pre-teen growing up in England there were two time slots each week that were sacrosanct. The first was a BBC radio show called "Journey Into Space" which introduced me to science fiction and convinced me that radio was the medium best suited to the genre. (I haven't completely abandoned that belief half a century later.) The second was "The Goon Show."

I'm stunned to discover that (a) an American — i.e. from the USA — fanzine would publish a pastiche of that amazingly creative show and (b) that an American fan would be able to create such an accurate rendition of the show's style complete with many of its best-known catchphrases. That Steve Stiles fellow is more than just a pretty cartoonist! But I do have to wonder how many of the *Chunga* readers will have the slightest idea of what it's all about, Stevie...

As a post-teen growing up in Canada I developed an interest in comics, both the current Mar-

vels of the early 60s (of which I still have a couple of thousand in a closet somewhere) and the earlier classics from before I was born. (I especially liked Windsor Mackay and went so far as to name a pet rabbit after him.) Krazy Kat was a delightful find but once again I'm surprised to find this brilliantly executed pastiche in a modern fanzine just because I wouldn't have expected enough "younger" fans (age is in the eye of the typist after all) to appreciate it. I'm delighted that you did and thoroughly enjoyed being taken back forty to fifty years!

Wow, a blast from the past from Graham Charnock, an old fannish associate from my days of interaction with British fandom in the 70s. Nice to see he can still spin words together well. Sad to see I can't understand what the hell they mean. Oh well, too much alcohol over the brain I guess.

Richard Brandt! What is this? A time capsule from the distant past? There aren't many people I'd accept the sobriquet "eldritch phantom" from but Richard is on that list. Still, it seems to me "eldritch" belongs to *Chunga* for its way of resurrecting long-gone fans. Next issue I wouldn't be surprised to see a loc from H. P. Lovecraft!

To Claire I will say, never give up doing your best. I didn't win four Hugos before I won for my fanzine (not that I was publishing in order to win one) so one never knows when the currents of fandom will be in your favour.

You guys give good zine. I hope to be a part of it for some issues to come. For the record, I had a biopsy on my bladder yesterday and pissed blood all night but now I feel okay so my second coming as a letterhack may yet occur. Time will tell.

Steve Stiles sez: You can tell Mike that I first became acquainted with the Goons in 1973, when I was sharing an apartment with the late Barry Smotroff. Barry had over 70 reels of Goon Shows, and it became a tradition for us to listen to that show 2–3 times a week before turning in for the night. When I moved to Baltimore in 1975, I found that three different radio stations were airing Goon Shows each week.

e Pigge

Peter Sullivan

Excellent TAFF pieces by Steve Stiles. Erm, if this really is the last installment of Steve's TAFF report, is it worth getting it all bundled together and sent off to SCIFI, in order to claim the \$100 bounty for a completed trip report? (I appreciate that we'll probably have to forget about the \$500 for reports published "within 5 years.") Or does the bounty only apply to TAFF trips taken *after* it was announced?

I note that Chris Garcia, who is planning to run for the next West-to-East TAFF race, has pledged that, if elected, he will have his trip report out within 30 days of returning to base. This sounds like bravado, but if anyone can do it, Chris can — this is the guy who completed his entry for the National Novel Writing Month Competition (minimum word count: 30,000) inside three days.

In terms of FAAn awards recounts, as well as "the many faces of Gray Charnock" recount that Ulrika refers to, I also managed to come both 4th and 6th in the Best New Fan category, based on the original results. After convincing Murray Moore that I *wasn't* a character in a daytime soap opera, and hence *didn't* have an evil twin brother (although come to think of it, the goatee might actually suit me), these votes were combined to put me into 2nd place.

Randy sez: As I expect you know by now, Steve's complete TAFF report has indeed been released and is available from the current TAFF administrators, Suzle and Bug (see taff.org.uk for contact info). I believe that Suzle is pursuing both the SCIFI and FANAC bounties as well.

Jan Stinson

"Nessie, Come Home!": I wonder why Andy Hooper didn't mention Architeuthis among his list of real "monsters" recently confirmed. The giant squid was captured on film for the first time by Tsunemi Kubodera of the National Science Museum in Tokyo and Kyoichi Mori of the Ogasawara Whale Watching Association near Japan's Ogasawara Islands in September 2004. They reported

their observations in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. *National Geographic's* online presence has an article about it (google giant squid photos and it'll come up).

Also, the Michigan "puma" is actually called the Michigan cougar, as is the feline in Florida is called a Florida cougar. The Florida cougar is confirmed. Reports of cougars in lower Michigan have been made with increasing frequency this year at savethecougar.org (most by hunters). In the last 45 days in my county, two were recently sighted within a half mile of my house; one might have been a female with cubs to feed, as the animal was seen near a community dumpster. State DNR officials have, without documentary evidence such as film or a carcass, advised the public to be even more careful while hiking in wooded areas. Given that for the last 5-7 years, there have been several complaints about the abundant white-tailed deer population in my county (eating shrubbery and grazing on the golf courses), I'm not surprised that there are more sightings. Predators go where the prey is, when it's a matter of survival.

With coyotes back in all the continental U.S. states and several urban coyote populations extant

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AND FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T AFFORD THE PLATINUM, GOLD OR SILVER METAL LOVER, WE HAVE AN ASSORTMENT OF INSENTIENT APPLIANCES!

ANY PROGRAMMABLE TRADE-INS?





Ian Sorensen
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Lloyd Penney
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**The works of
Gerry Anderson**

- 1 *Supercar*
- 2 *Stingray*
- 3 *Terrahawks*
- 4 *Thunderbirds*
- 5 *Fireball XL5*
- 6 *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*
- 7 *UFO*
- 8 *Space: 1999*
- 9 *Star Cops*
- 10 *Doppelgänger (aka Journey to the Far Side of the Sun)*

(*National Wildlife* magazine had a recent article on this, showing apparently lost and confused [no sarcasm intended] coyotes on a subway car, in an elevator [that one was reportedly chased into a building by crows], and a cemetery), after humans tried for decades to eliminate them, I'm not surprised that new animals are "discovered" quite often, and that species known to humans are coming back in ways many of us may never have expected. Wolves have also reportedly returned to lower Michigan, which pleases me no end; I hope to hear them howling some day from my side porch. But with my luck, it'll probably be coyotes.

Do I get a cookie for reading the whole ish?

Andy sez: Cougars probably do account for 99.9% of all Anomalous Big Cat sightings in North America, but the problem of their appearance in Michigan is essentially the same as that of black leopards in Britain, only the leopards are even farther from their accustomed home.. Few suggest that ABC sightings represent an unknown species altogether, which makes the issue as being oerhaps one step removed from classic cryptozoology.

As for the giant squid, since we've known them from fragments for centuries, I guess I regarded their eventual observation in the wild was inevitable. It's a very cool thing, nonetheless.

Ian Sorensen

Talk of the Loch Ness Monster always makes me think of an episode of Gerry Anderson's submarine animation series *Stingray*. The eponymous sub is transported overland to the loch to settle a bet between Commander Shore of the unfortunately named W.A.S.P. (World Aquanaut Security Patrol) and a rival admiral. One says the monster exists, the other disagrees.

The crew of *Stingray*, Captain Troy Tempest, his assistant Phones and the mute mermaid Marina are installed in the creepy castle run by the even more creepy brothers ("Och aye, the monster's real, we've seen it many a time.") Then they begin to patrol the Loch. After some time Phones detects something on the sonar. "I've got something Troy! It's big, and it's moving this way!"

Now, this is where we see the difference between kids' shows of the sixties and today. Troy Tempest, ever the man (puppet) of action instantly assesses the situation and issues his command: "Arm Sting missiles!"

"It's getting real close Troy!"

"Fire Sting missiles!"

And that's it. Two missiles shoot off, there's big

explosion and the presumed Loch Ness Monster is blown to smithereens. No thoughts of photographing it, capturing it or even running away. Just blow it up. It's just not the eco friendly approach we'd expect these days (unless you are an endangered animal living on an oil field).

Happily, the monster turns out to be a mechanical one used by the creepy brothers at the castle to generate more tourism, so it all ends happily. Except we never find out who won the bet.

I was pleased to see that Andy was aware of Marag in Loch Morar, always a favourite of mine since I broke up with my girlfriend called Morag when I was 17.

One last thought, in this time of water shortage in the south of England: there's more fresh water in Loch Ness than in all the lakes and rivers of England combined. Expect an English invasion looking for WMD (water of mass deception) any time soon.

Andy sez: I had a lot of fun hearing you say the words "Troy Tempest" in my head while reading your letter. Loch Morar, with an easier connection to the sea than Loch Ness, has a much wider range of pelagic creatures that could be visitors to its waters.

Lloyd Penney

Time to attack the zinish beast from Puget, namely *Chunga*, issue 12 this time. I will make the damndest attempt to produce a printable letter; the WAHF column is cold and dusty, and needs a coat of paint.

This year's TAFF winner has come and gone. Bridget Bradshaw arrived in Toronto from Boston on July 14, we attended a party held partially in her honour, and partially to celebrate (a little early) the anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing (today!) at the home of Colin Hinz and Catherine Crockett, and finally, she joined us at our regular Third Monday pubnight on the 17th before heading to the US again to stay in Virginia with the Gillilands. Bug is lovely to talk to, and with some luck, we will figure prominently and positively in her TAFF report.

Randy's Corflu 23 report...nope, Mike Glicksohn is a Canadian; lives in Toronto. By the way, Mr. G. has been declared cancer-free by his doctor, halleluiah. And no, I wasn't always at the con hotel at Corflu, because I didn't have a room. (We are saving mightily for the LA Worldcon because we suspect it will be our last one, and we have been working with some of the committee, and we want to wind up the project with them, too.) So, after a certain time when it looked like the con suite was empty, and the membership had left to go to restaurants unknown, I hit the nearby subway and went home

to sleep in my own bed. A comfortable suite at Corflu, a good main room, wish there'd been zines to trade back and forth. As for Austin, well, I expect I will be in Texas in May of next year, but it will be for the 2007 International Space Development Conference in Dallas.

To wind up my Corflu take...I enjoyed having Randy for company, and we spoke frequently, but I never knew if I was entertaining him or boring him to death. I hope more former than latter, but I am always uncertain. Be gentle...

If you are after moolah, plunder, cabbage and booty, you'd best find yourself thugs, mugs, yeggs and picaroons to help you. Somehow, if I didn't know better, I might think to find all of those above items in a supermarket... It has been quite some time since I've seen the Krazy Kat TAFF cartoons, and it is a pleasure to see them again. I know Steve Stiles meant to draw them a la Geo. Herriman, but the PAF! looked vaguely like something R. Crumb would draw, so it all looked a little surreal.

Me running for TAFF? Oooo, Ulrika...that rumour is unsubstantiated, and also unsubstantial. I doubt I shall ever run for a fan fund again, CUFF was quite enuff. Who'd vote for me? As I have been told in the past, I am an unsuitable candidate, so I am not a candidate at all.

I am telling all zines I respond to...I am conducting an experiment. Right after I send this loc to you, I will be archiving it on my LiveJournal. I know what I said about LJs, but I can now use one to my own ends. I am storing my locs on it, and started this exercise on July 1. Have a look at lloydpenney.livejournal.com to see how far I've gone since.

I have done what I can here; I yearn for the warmth, companionship and column inches of the loccol. Fare thee well, y'all, and I can but wonder what would go into the 13th issue? Oooo, scary, kids...

Randy sez: Lloyd, I really enjoyed meeting you at Torflu and then again at the LA Worldcon, although if we keep "running into each other" like this, people might start to talk. As for TAFF, you'd be as suitable a candidate as anyone else, whatever whoever may have told you in the past, but I understand the reluctance to stand up to the judgment of fandom's vote.

Murray Moore

Chunga does not look like other fanzines. I would have put the Stiles art on the front cover and the juarez art on the back cover. But then *Chunga* 12 would have looked like other fanzines.

I lack the art critic vocabulary to describe carl's

cover, which probably is just as well, because my impulse is to make fun of it. The D. West head is the cover's obvious fannish reference. Perhaps the D. West head represents British fandom floating above the British Isles. The sea life is what it looks to be, sea life. Dunno about the cat, unless carl could not find an illustration of a catfish. See. I'm crap at interpreting and explaining the meaning of non-representational art.

And what's with Gumby doing a handstand on page 1?

Steve, I entered 1 for you in my Hugo ballot. Mark Plummer told me to vote for you. A better endorsement certainly than the best I can offer: "Vote for Steve: He's Getting Old."

In *Chunga* 12 I learned that Mike Glicksohn is an "actual American" and that Graham Charnock is Philip K. Cartiledge is Frank Looney. After reading Graham's "American Sarco" I decided that Graham is at least one of lazy and rich. Hello! Graham!: you could sell "American Sarco" for Big Bucks. Ever heard of a magazine named *The New Yorker*?

Chunga, the fanzine on a financial diet, is terrific because you don't publish everything that you wish to publish. Or maybe *Chunga* would be as terrific if it was twice as thick. But you don't starve your letter writers: one-third of this is 22 LoCs. I have edited my LoC for you so you do not have to cut it. The pressure I feel to meet the *Chunga* standard of writing; congratulations on winning the Best Fanzine FAAn Award, of course.

A tip for those of you who do not want to be stuck with a fannish job: do it well enough but don't do it so well that you will be expected to continue doing it. Randy, Andy, and carl, you are examples of how not to be faneds. I expect you to



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produce many more issues of *Chunga*.

Andy sez: You say such nice things, Murray, but you don't follow your own advice. Your work on the FAAn awards has been sufficiently energetic that I think you're stuck with the job for a while.

Mark Manning

Steve Stiles's two pastiches: Indeed, his Krazy Kat pastiche was pretty close to letter perfect. You're lucky to have gotten permission to run it. If I still edited a genzine, I'd be jealous as hell, stone Krazy Kat fan as I am. The Goons are, in the circles I've ever inhabited at least, a lot more obscure. No telling who'll be able to wrap their minds around this one. It does read like actual Goon Show material, but I'd guess that more folks have heard of the Goons than have laughed at their actual shows. The LoCcol of *Chunga* #13 will doubtless tell the tale of the tape.

"God Cuts the Thread" would have been a feather in the cap of any editor, whether a faned or a filthy pro running some local publication like *The Weekly* or something. Offhand, I'd say it was to Randy's credit that he freaked when he found that he'd been tasting the tonsils of a 13-year old. I'm reminded of the time I was jury foreman for the trial of a Seattle city cop (surely you've heard this tale before) who'd supposedly been helping a 13-year old runaway to escape the mean streets, but instead was taking her to Aurora Ave motels for blow jobs. That guy snuck around to avoid detection for something he knew damn well would earn him jail time, but which he found challenging to get away with. This was *not*, you'll appreciate, to his credit.



The chair looks like it tried to commit suicide by jumping off the table with the hose

OK, that's about all for now. I've been incommunicado all year, earning a University of Washington certificate in Museum Studies. First thing I did, once I had the certificate in hand, was cream the C: drive of the PC. So instead of writing you a long LoC, I've got to go re-install XP, then re-install all my software, then find the registration keys for all the shareware I've bought over the years.

Lilian Edwards

[The following was posted to Randy's LiveJournal.]

Mental LoC (ie one unlikely to be ever written) composed in garden so far revolves around

a) poor Claire who has to work with someone in her office who sounds like me. It must be terrible, and

b) (cf Alexis G loc) they have Titanic conventions in Southampton?? What!! Is this destined to be my new fandom? Do they have old time fans who are all dying of diseases brought on by decades of depravity too? (And segue: I'll have to send you my CoA when I go to Soton. But I am not really sure anymore how one distributes physical CoAs. And is there a point anyway? I don't have a mailing list anymore, just a bunch of email addresses. Does anyone? If I was sending out a hard copy zine again I'd either give it out at a con like I always do and/or I'd borrow your mailing list again :-)) (or maybe *Plokta's* actually — do you still have all those dead/AWOL '80s Gannet fans on your list that Victor insisted on keeping?) Eventually it will be One True Mailing List, I predict, with Claire as the Bearer of the Ring, sorry, database. Hell, why not stick it on a wiki so everyone can just add their own CoAs as and when? That may be the most brilliant idea I ever had — well apart from the spambots of course..

and finally

(c) So who *IS* Dr Chunga? can't help feeling it's you, Randy, but is that just cos I know you best? Andy certainly seems more the mad overlord type and carl probably has better access to mind control lasers. In fact, you're kind of a nice guy really — why do I automatically think of you as a crazed mental dominatrix?

This is really a much easier way to write a loc — why don't all fnzs put little *Comment here, our new issue's out!* entries on LJ??

Andy sez: Dr. Chunga is a comical commercial character, like Captain Crunch or The Michelin Man. Created to promote Chunga Brand aromatic salts in 1949, the good doctor has endorsed everything from eyewash to earwig repellent. In 1999, Bremen-Bayern AG, the contemporary owners of the Chunga trademark,

celebrated Dr. Chunga's 50th anniversary by releasing the 5000th product to bear his likeness, Chunga Brand Botox Swabs.

Steve Jeffery

Surely it's Little Jim who always gets to say, "He's faaallen in the water!"

"And now Moriarty, time for your 'Oww'..."

"Owwwww."

"Splendid. Have a *Chunga*."

Coming next, Julian and Sandy in 'How bona to vada your dolly old TAFF.'

Although I'm only vaguely acquainted with the original, Steve Stiles' 'TEFF Tearaw Tales' is astonishing. A big thank you for reprinting that.

Alexis Gilliland

Thank you for *Chunga* #12 which arrived recently. I might have responded sooner but there was stuff going on. Stuff? I hear you ask. What sort of stuff? The short version is that on the evening of June 29th, Dolly's piano (which we bought in 1960) was moved out of the basement en route to the Minneapolis condo of my nephew David, the musician, and to fill the vacated space (a six foot baby grand takes a lot of space) we bought some bookcases. The chipboard with veneer kind which you assemble yourself, and which I have just finished assembling. Eventually we will move all sorts of books, currently sitting on the floor in chaotic heaps, into their new library-type shelving with space for a few more years of bibliocumulation.

I really liked Steve Stiles's "TEFF Tearaw Tales #3" a brilliant Krazy Kat parody done in 1969. Compared to the original — tastefully collected in comic book form — it may look a little cluttered, a little sketchy, but given Steve's absolutely spot-on drawing of Lil Abner when he was getting paid for it, I don't doubt that the clutter and sketchiness was due to his haste in tossing off a bit of TAFF ephemera rather than any lack of talent.

Graham Charnock's piece is noir without being fannish. Interesting, with the unsettling and possibly inconsistent character development, and a murder (*Today I have to... hack the head off one of my business associates*) which is tastefully omitted, but alluded to. On the other hand, it is a little short on the warm and fuzzy.

Mike "Sparks" Rennie says: "I WANT TO WRITE FANZINES!..." A statement which shows either careless writing or an unfamiliarity with the subject. One publishes fanzines, which, besides collecting the material and editing it, used to involve a lot of eotechnic drudgery but now is merely formatting the thing on computer prior to taking it to

Kinko's. Or one writes for them, as I am here doing for *Chunga*. To pickle oneself in the brine of fanzines is to risk becoming beslimed in some karmic backwater, far from drugs'n sex and rock'n roll. (At the end Harry Warner Jr., the hermit of Hagerstown, had maybe 100,000 fanzines neatly boxed and catalogued.)

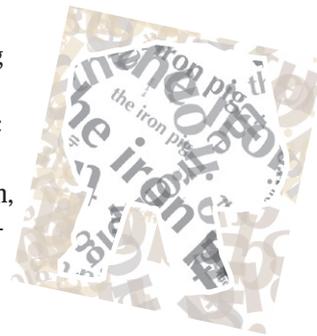
Chris Garcia

Ah, July third, 2006. We were required to go into work on the Monday before the holiday, but only about ten people showed up, so it was a slack day. Luckily, the mail did arrive with *Chunga* included, so I got an early read on while pretending to catalog 19th Century slide rules.

Randy talked about a subject that is rather close to my circle of friends from Santa Clara High. The Huff murders very much affected a friend of mine from SC. My buddy Rye knew the shooter to a slight degree, as well as a couple of the victims. He's been in the Seattle scene since he arrived there a few years ago. When I was in high school, I used to go to raves in SF, though we called them beach parties at the time, even when held in warehouses. There were always young folks around and often there'd be hook-ups that would give proper meaning to 'fifteen'll get ya twenty'. Sadly, that was not the worst of it. There was, and I understand still is, a phenomena that is very common at Anime cons. When I was attending them in the early 1990s, there'd be a large number of girls who would go with the express intent of seducing older men. One of my very good friends would get a ride from me to the cons and declare "here's hoping I don't break up any marriages." She was about sixteen at the time.

I myself have always been fascinated with cryptozoology. My Pops was a big ghost fan and dabbled in research into Bigfoot. I've never seen Tahoe Tessie (NorCal's lake monster) but I have met folks who have seen champ. The most famous Champ photo looks like a whale's fin breaking the water, but again, no one has ever reported that there was a spout seen around the time. My money on Nessie is a Ribbonfish of some sort, or a very large variant on the Paddlefish. In addition to Lake Monsters, I'm a huge follower of Mokele-Mbembe, the supposedly surviving brachiopod (I think that's the formal name) that lives near Lake Tele.

Jack Calvert mentioned Oakland's Museum of California. It's a wonderful museum full of wonderful stuff. They even have one of my video game pieces in their collection. Jack, if you've ever got a chance, drop me a line and I'll give you the full works tour of the Computer History Museum. It's



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the number one museum located in a former World Marketing Headquarters.

Andy sez: I appreciate you joining in the general exchange of hoaxes and Fortean mysteries. Sexually predatory young women seeking to seduce older fannish males? Indeed, the *chupacabras* is passé by comparison.

I've been through the Roy Mackal wringer with Mokele-Mbembe lore – and I'm still open to the idea that something big and unusual may roam around the Likoula basin. But I doubt it's a species of sauropod. No one ever seems to have suggested the dinosaur hypothesis until after Conan Doyle published *The Lost World*, too suspicious a coincidence to ignore.

Graham Charnock

Another sizzling issue replete with sex, death, psychosis and scandal, well at least as regards my own contribution. (Lovely artwork by Dan Steffan by the way, thanks for laying that on as the last wish of an Old Man with terminal acne rosacea, doctors tell me I may have only twenty years left to live). Is that D. West on the cover, or Ken Bulmer? I suspect it is not either. Actually started reading this one, well the *Tanglewood* page. Now normally in the past mention of TAFF in any fanzine has been guaranteed to make my eyeballs glaze over (or that may have simply been the vodka). All too serious and organized, I used to think, as I free-floated through fandom in the seventies in a whiter shade of pale string vest,



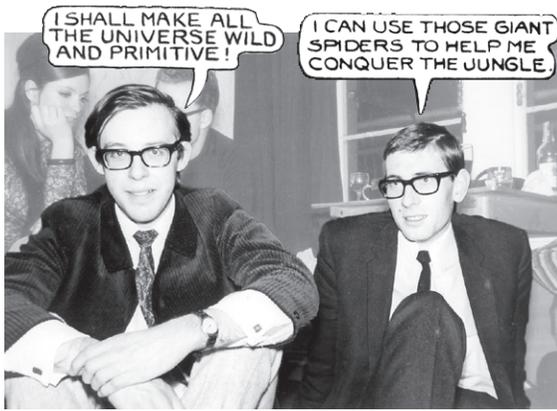
and mostly, it seemed to me by sercon people who didn't have much else in their lives to look forward to, certainly not a weekend in Skegness, or a holiday caravan in Haverfordwest, but now I begin to see the point, not in Taff itself, because I will never win it, far less stand for it, but at least in using it as a focal point to emphasize the comingling and cross-communication between US and UK fans. In truth I couldn't be arsed about US fans until I met certain representatives of their arcane Seattle culture at Hinckley in 2003, and even later when I joined up to A Certain Group, when I realized that Ted White was a very urbane, intelligent and witty person (no, don't laugh) called Ted White and not just a person called Ted White I had never met and didn't care about (although there is that strange photograph of Ted and Roy Kettle and David Wingrove, taken at Seacon, that neither Pat and I can remember taking, although apparently we did) and realized all those years of scornful dismissal when I was in the wilderness had been years of, well, scornful dismissal, and wasted ones at that.

I think Arthur does exhibitionism quite well as long as he limits itself to parading artwork round to punters at auction, but that is because it is probably the only scenario in which I have seen him exhibiting himself, at least lately. Certainly more bearable than large women bursting out of leather or lycra fantasy costumes. I know which I prefer. Yes, Arthur. But does Arthur really think he is fitting in by behaving outrageously in a little microcosm of society numbed already by excessive behavioural outrage. I don't know, except I never believed I'd use the words Arthur Crutten-den and outrage in the same sentence.

Mike Rennie at least muscles up to the stand to make his pitch in that he can't be bothered to produce a real fanzine because The Almighty God Blog is enough. No wonder he didn't win. Strange how blogging has to be strained through the colander, or universal sieve, that is *Chunga* to make it intelligible or even remotely worthwhile to me. But that's my problem. Give me six people gathered around a restaurant table than forty people spawning their gabblings to forty thousand.

As for Ulrika's piece, I thank her if only for pointing out the consanguinity of Looney, Charnock and Cartledge. I honestly don't care where I come in polls (as long as I am mentioned) and am proud, no humble, to take third place behind Arnie Katz any day, except I was probably tenth.

And you have letters, from such a host of perceptive and literary exemplars, including me. I like Mark Plummer's perceptions of seeing



◀ Graham Charnock and Christopher Priest, in simpler times

clones of fans. I see two or three **Randy Byers** every day as I walk the streets of **Harringey**, and one of them even visits **Sainsburys** every **Saturday** and even winks at me, but that is possibly because I wink at him first, under the misapprehension that he is really **Randy Byers**. But I never see any **Mark Plummers**. Strange eh?

To sum up, all in all a **very lack lustre issue** lads, not up to your usual standards, which are pretty atrocious, and only **28 pages plus covers**; you could and should do better, possibly by publishing more **articles** by my mate **Bruce Townley**. Seriously you should all be thinking of giving this up and getting a **real job**. Or **jobs**, if you think you can do more than one.

Eric Lindsay

Here is my regular change of email address for the year.

TAFF still seems a great idea, as long as you can find candidates (a continuing problem with GUFF). I know I would like to return to Britain. However despite all the years of interacting by mail with UK fans, I didn't really feel I got to know very many of them until Jean and I visited Britain on our GUFF trip. I am sure this is my fault, for being too slow at responding.

Corflu also attracts me, but I just don't want to go through the hassle of travel and security theatre these days. I tend to doubt I will visit the USA again. Well, maybe when the administration changes.

I also wonder whether that report of a Japanese company actually managing to produce Slow Glass (well, there was a lot of electronics in it, and the thickness was measured in nanometers) was a fan-nish hoax. Between that and Sony doing ebooks in eInk (with Digital Restrictions Management, and probably a built in rootkit), I feel I am living in a hoax world.

Jack and Pauline Palmer, and Tilda. I haven't heard those names in ages. Great people. I visited them a couple of times in Bellingham, far more years ago than I want to remember. I have to say that some psycho killing youngsters is a heap dif-

ferent to relatively innocent kisses. God has nothing to do with cutting the thread. Psychos with guns are the problem. How much damage would these folks do if their anger were confined to what they could manage with fists?

However you are doing far better than me about producing a fanzine. I no longer do paper fanzines in any form, so you may want to drop me off your mailing lists. Photocopying in this town costs more than printing. Computer printers are now so cheap the only reasonable economic way to treat them is to throw them out when the toner is empty, and I can't bring myself to do this. So I don't print anything now. I guess I will eventually drop out of the three apas I am still in. I am even looking somewhat nostalgically back at mimeo machines (although in fact my Rex Rotary M4 was a pain in the arse, and the offset printer even worse).

Postage costs always seems a problem, whereas computer access to web space gets cheaper and cheaper. I note Google give you free space. Not that it does much good when I don't get around to taking advantage of their free space.

You can find odd notes from me at www.ericlindsay.com/blog/ from time to time. I generally manage to put up a bunch of notes each month, even if they are neither timely, nor well organised.

Randy sez: I certainly agree that there was no bearded old guy in the sky who literally cut the threads of life in the shooting I wrote about, but I do think that god can be an effective metaphor for that which we do not control and cannot change. To say that the problem is psychos with guns, while important for future prevention, is to miss what it was I was trying to wrestle with, which is mortality. Preventing future psychos from killing with guns will not bring back those dead, and it's that finality—those cut threads—that I was trying to describe with my title.

Steve Bieler

The party was in 1986. If we were celebrating Tilda's birthday, it would've been in April or May; graduation, June. I remember those kids and they were all babelicious and in a hurry to grow up and sample grown-up pleasures. You're still a rat bastard, though.

Idaho fandom is as dead as the Norwegian Blue. We've moved to Portland, OR. Just like that, the renaissance in Boise is over. ♡



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7676 SE 21st Ave
Portland, OR 97202

We also heard from...

Henry L. Welch

Harry Bell

Wil Tenino

H.P. Lovecraft
I hesitate to criticize adversely such an excellent magazine as this, but since my censure falls upon so small a part of it, I think I may express myself openly without giving offense.

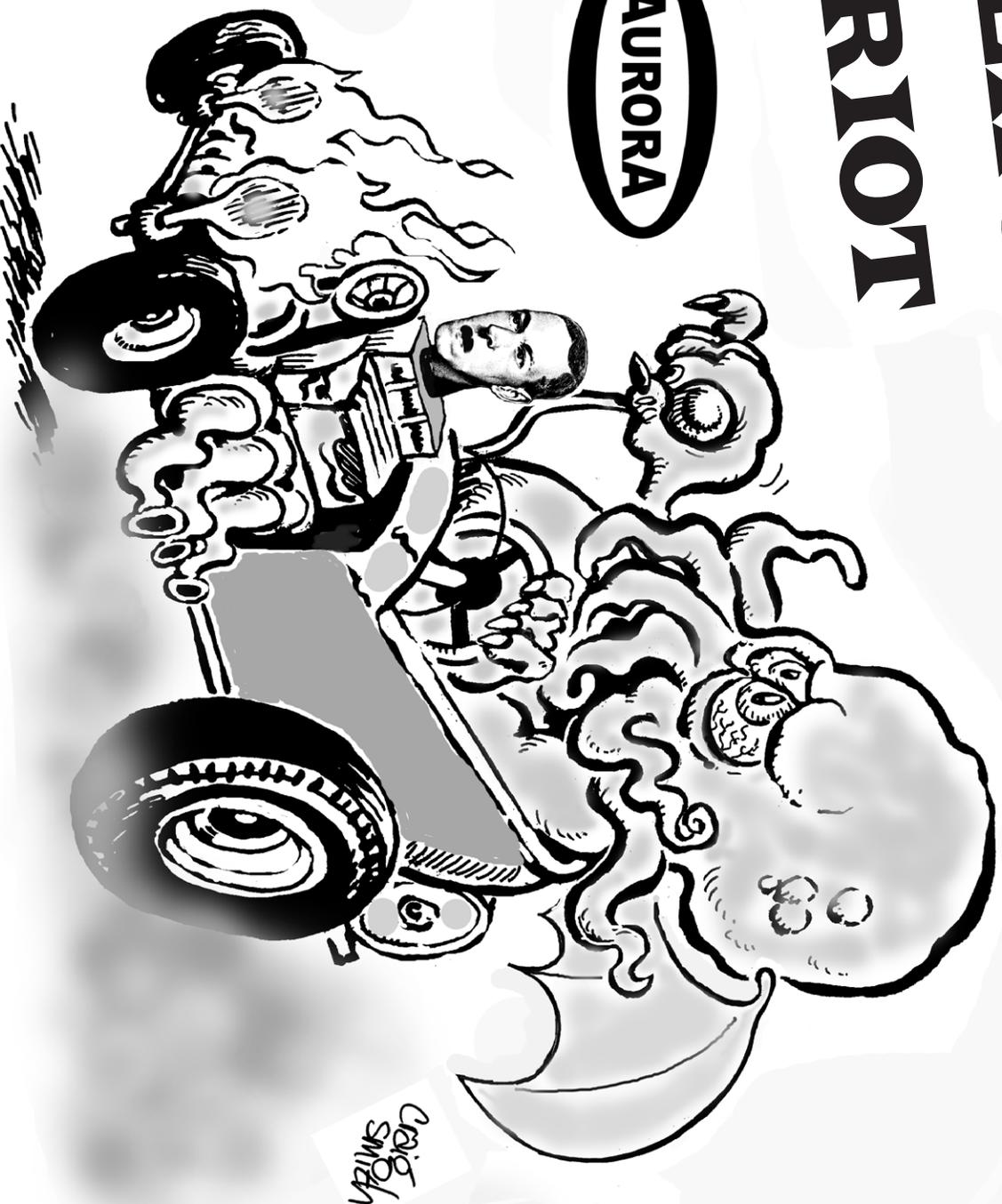
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