



The Drink Tank Issue 179

I've discovered Yelp!. It's a website that features user-generated reviews of just about everything. In other words, it's just about the perfect website for me. I go places, I remember things and I like to write fast. It's exactly what I do. The reviews tend to be shortish, maybe 200 words, but they're fun. I get bored. I think everyone knows that. I did a review of a bar as a weird Hunter S. Thompson thing. I wrote a few that were like simple articles that went really surreal. I just like doing them.

The wild part is I love the reviews that people write, yet I seldom enjoy places I've discovered while trolling the reviews. It is incredibly odd that the places that I already like and I read a review, it's usually right about the level I'd put it at. I've gone to several places that I hadn't heard about and Yelp! said they were good and they turned out to be crap. I was questioning the value of the site, and then I'd go and see that they'd rated my three favourite places as nearly perfect. So very odd.

And speaking of new cyber-locations, I got another point from NPR that really helps. Have you ever been in a restaurant and someone says something that you KNOW is wrong, but no one has a laptop or an internet enabled phone? I've been there, like the famous 'Who did that song Magic?' discussion that Jason, Linda and I had at Silicon last year. There is a service called ChaCha that allows you to send a text message (to 242242) with a question. A real person will answer your question. Yesterday, I asked the ultimate question: Who Shot JR? The answer that came through first was "That phrase was made popular from the 1980s tv show Dallas." I was bitter at that point and

texted back "But who actually shot JR?" And a minute later they sent the response: No one's really sure, but the leading candidate is Kristin.'

I'm not sure that's right. I was fairly certain that it was certainly Kristin, but perhaps it was a part of the RetCon done with the Bobby turning up in the shower season. But I'm fairly certain that it was said that Kristin was the shooter.

I called with another important question, Who Killed Laura Palmer?. They did come back with the right answer, which was a good thing since I'd have been very unhappy if they hadn't gotten it right (by the way it was BOB in the form of Mr. Leland Palmer). It took them almost an hour.



This issue is being done while I'm watching WrestleMania 21 and sitting on the World's Most Uncomfortable Couch in the section of my tiny apartment I consider the Living Room. It's being done now because I don't actually have to watch Evelyn for once on a Saturday, so I'm sitting and typing, which is a nice change.

This issue will feature James Bacon, who was robbed of a space on the Hugos ballot this year, with a long piece. There's some Dann Lopez for y'all and I'll be talking about some of the stuff that I always like to talk about.

Oh yeah, and that scarf is represented in several photos. We are less than 1 year 'til the auction!

This issue features a Ditmar cover, which is called Angel's Gate. I love Ditmar and you should look into more of his stuff!

Expo Words and Pictures by James Bacon

I feel that it's important as a conrunner, that I get out and promote my convention. It's no good hoping people will pop by a con website, it's not like people who are regulars can be relied upon to turn up every year, people drop out, so replacing those who have lost interest or cannot make it is an important part of convention promotion.

Sure sometimes we need to fix something that perhaps has caused a person to walk away in disappointment but mostly it's life that at differing times we have different hobbies and pursuits and float into and drop out of circles of one sort or another.

People also have life outside of conventions and its important I think that an effort is made to attract people who would enjoy the convention.

So, along with a load of others I am running a couple of conventions. LX2009 next years Eastercon and Zombiecon an altogether different event coming up in September. Stef and myself have hijacked the Novacon hotel for the later.

I want to reach out a little, obviously both conventions are very different, but believe it or not there is quite the cross over. There always has been between what is known as Fun Conventions and the Big ones at Easter. I also feel that there are thousands of readers of SF books who just are not aware of Eastercon and also that people may be going to events that

are very different than these SF conventions, but would make that cross over, due to an interest in the subject. I do feel that there are not as many young fans as I would like, there are some, but the demographics are not great, so without misselling what Eastercon is, I want to be noticed by younger people, so I must go where they are.

This weekend I find myself off work, I have an assignment to do for college, but apart from that I am free. I realised during the week that Expo was on. Now this is an 'event'. We have a lot of these type of things over here in the UK, and for many years I was involved in helping one due to fan friends, but they are not really the type of thing I would naturally go to, not enough books to be honest, a bit too commercial and all profit orientated, definitely customers not members and to be honest they cover a broad spectrum of media and genres.

This year though, with two cons on the boil and some interesting looking comic people in attendance at the EXPO, I decided I would go along and do the flyer thing.

Expo is in the Excel Centre in London's docklands. It's



a vast conference centre, quite impressive, and it has a Docklands Light Railway (DLR) station just outside. It was a short commute, from East Croydon and I was joined part of the way by the wife. The doors of the EXPO opened at about 9am, so I reckoned a leisurely half past twelve would see the rush gone.

How wrong I was.

I was impressed by the variety of costumes I saw as I walked from the DLR station, through the doors into Excel. I bought a coke and wandered to the ticket hall, and I could see why it was a hall. There was a tremendous queue. It snaked up and down seven times. I was astonished. Now at 11am, the price dropped a bit, so it's like there are two opening times, but even so at this stage an hour and half after the second opening time, the queue was mental. I did some quick counting, with about 200 people in each line, that's about 1400 people ahead of me, and then by the time I was done, there were 3 lines behind, another 600 people.

So I queued, and you know, I am an affable type, so I chatted with those around me. Directly behind me were a cheerful bunch. They were



in a variety of costumes, but Laura caught the eye. She was about 5'10" and wearing a type of school uniform or perhaps Office Lady uniform, which she had worked on herself. She was with a group of five. We were not queuing long, when she produced a big piece of paper, with FREE HUGS on it. This she held up, and people in other queues ran across to get their free Hug.

Given the weird reaction online to the "grope my bosom" thing, this was interesting.

Soon her friends had similar signs, made from paper. Why I asked her? And she responded that it was a fun thing to do, that she was going to keep count and that she would do it until she got bored with it. It was interesting, she was a beautiful girl, and she wasn't just holding the sign, but also gently encouraging as people caught sight of her sign. All types would run across, very young girls, maybe 5 or 6, girls a bit older, teens and twenties. It was funny that lads were the most cautious about this, and they would shove one another forward in shyness, and once one from a group gave a hug, they all did. Laura loved it.

So we went on, and she was building up her hugs, and keeping count and then others also had signs,

with free hugs, and death note books. This has a significance I was confidently informed by Laura.

So I was queuing for about an hour. I think Laura got over a hundred hugs. She also had quite a few repeated hugs, but she didn't count those, as we saw the same people as we snaked up and down.

It was amazing, as a girl would run over, they would say 'thanks' just before they

hugged, as they hugged, and Laura would also say 'thanks'. I was just very impressed; there was something just very cool and schoolish about it. Laura did ask me for a Hug, and I also hugged her mates, although I gave the lads bear hugs, and afterwards I asked her what age she was. I was expecting 17-19 and was surprised by a just fifteen. She has having a nice fun time. I decided I had my hugs for the day.

I don't really need a hug from a fifteen year old, to be honest and for the moms of fifteen year olds who had signs, well I am married. Moms who want Hugs.

As I stood in the queue, I also decided that I should do some research. I am writing about gender issues in SF fandom for Journey Planet, and I know Mike Glycer has made mention of gender stuff on his File 770 blog. I started to count. I was counting girls and boys. It was incredible that the ratio I was getting was about 60% girls. I was impressed. I mentioned what I was doing to some girls in front of me, and they said that many more girls would have paid to be here earlier, she also pointed out that many lads were being brought by girls. I noted what she meant, there were quite a few normal dressed blokes with manga costumed girls, and she also pointed out how many of the blokes we saw in the lines, were just coming along for the laugh, not hardcore fans (core manga fandom, one wonders) who would be more into the computer games and such. She wanted to be here earlier, but couldn't and was worried that certain plush toy merchandise might be sold out.

I was also really impressed that I was at an event where the true diversity of this capi-



through and through, and very proud of it. No assumptions, just questions, smiles, understanding and a mutual interest. My Irishness always works well, and I had much laugh as I chatted to two black girls from south London, they were just into manga and why not I wondered and why not, but they were unsure of my accent, and were surprised when I said I was Irish, so I laid on the accent thick, and they got it better, and did something similar, slipping into an accent I

wasn't so sure about, a bit Jamaican I wondered, we all laughed, they two were laying it on thick, perhaps irreverently so. Of course I would ask a girl where her accent was from, interest that always got pleasant responses, especially from a girl from Austin Texas, I mentioned I want to go to Nacogdoches East Texas and she was just ecstatic that I knew of such a place, she had a lovely accent and when I asked explained that she was of mixed race, her dad a Texan her mom a Japanese lady, who moved with him to the states, she was very proud. I was going to delve more, but you know, I cannot show too much interest, I am married now.

tal city was reflected. It's my home now and I love it a lot and it was noticeable that here was a crowd as diverse as the city. London is a real cultural and racial melting pot. Has been for a long time really.

On the way in, I thought I might keep a count of all the different ethnicities I saw, just to see if there were more than I would expect. I gave that up after about two minutes. It was just like normal London. Blacks, Whites, Asians, Europeans, Africans, Persians, all hues of skin, including my own pale blue Irish skin, I expect that many were British, but have various cultural backgrounds. I noted and spoke to some ladies from Japan and also a bunch of Korean teenagers and a group of Chinese twenties, who were studying and working. I only knew this, because I asked where they were from, when I explained that I was from Ireland most people were very open, Ireland is a different country after all. It was refreshingly pleasant.

One has to be careful though, no judgments can be made, many people who 'look' like they may be from elsewhere are British

through and through, and very proud of it. No assumptions, just questions, smiles, understanding and a mutual interest. My Irishness always works well, and I had much laugh as I chatted to two black girls from south London, they were just into manga and why not I wondered and why not, but they were unsure of my accent, and were surprised when I said I was Irish, so I laid on the accent thick, and they got it better, and did something similar, slipping into an accent I wasn't so sure about, a bit Jamaican I wondered, we all laughed, they two were laying it on thick, perhaps irreverently so. Of course I would ask a girl where her accent was from, interest that always got pleasant responses, especially from a girl from Austin Texas, I mentioned I want to go to Nacogdoches East Texas and she was just ecstatic that I knew of such a place, she had a lovely accent and when I asked explained that she was of mixed race, her dad a Texan her mom a Japanese lady, who moved with him to the states, she was very proud. I was going to delve more, but you know, I cannot show too much interest, I am married now.

I was impressed. Now manga is only one part of the expo, or so I was told. This is true; movie comics, games, and TV are also featured. Now the main hall was heaving. I was stunned at how many people were there. I asked straight away about putting out flyers, and got a big negatory. Nowhere to do that and not allowed to just pass them out. Fair enough I thought, although I was annoyed as I had even emailed earlier in the week and asked, but got

no response.

To one side of the big hall, and was in the 'game village'. This was an area with computer games, karaoke studios in a bus, dance mats and computer games on stage with huge screens. There was every type of console, but a number of new and previewing games were inundated. I watched on as so many others did. I could see that this area was of great interest to lads, loads of fellas playing particular shoot em up and fighting games, while the dance and active games were more the thing for girls, now this bastardly generalisation didn't stretch to games which were obviously of a manga fantasy type of bent. This had everyone. Then it became more sedate, with card games, they had sixty or so tables, but only a dozen were being used, but there were competitions ongoing. As I swung round, I was very impressed by the line of dudes playing guitar hero. Serious stuff. Interesting also that the rock music seemed so popular with so many people and OK, there were some serious girl strummers on the go.





Board games, games with figures, free cards, free Iron Man figures, it all went on. I walked on and then there were a number of huge displays promoting movies, with footage of trailers and free posters and stuff, nothing really caught my eye. There is a new Ghost Buster game coming out, so they had a Mr Stay Puff in the hall and ECTO 1 and signing away was Ernie Hudson, who played Winston Zeddemore in the movies. At this stage I was around about half the room. I was taking my time, also stopping to photograph the odd costume and taking a few moments where a chat was possible.

The venue was atrociously laid out. In a number of aisles, it was like a crush and others was all space. No idea where that went wrong. But it was uncomfortable for me a couple of times, and I have no idea how others felt. I went into the manga area, now this had a cosplay helpdesk, where cosplayers could change and fix fabric failures and generally be looked after. Next to this was an interactive area where loads of kids were drawing manga pictures, and attaching them to a big wall. Lettreset were on hand to sell the budding manga artist everything they needed. There were also model shops, and loads of homemade manga for sale known as Do-jinshi. I bought some really nice manga from a girl called Tammy, who just was so pleasant and outgoing. I had barely glanced at her comic and she was talking to me. So I bought it and got her to sign it and took her photo and was impressed. Tokyopop had a huge stand here and were selling dozens of titles.

From there it was into a fashion area, well some sort of Japanese's fashion importers, and they had rails of clothes, sweets, hats,

things, clips, bracelets and the special headbands to stop brains from exploding. Er I should say Naruto headbands as worn by ninja. From there the area opened up a bit and it was mostly Manga dealers, selling posters, sweets, toys, models, stuffed toys, you name it, they had it. It's amazing how much money these guys must make on the most rudimentary things and I also yearn to go to Japan, it must be so full of the most amazing things.

There were quite a few comics dealers, three dealers who were selling books, one of whom had quite an impressive amount of pulp and older SF titles, where I spent some time browsing and buying, and arranging to display some LX flyers. Win.

I then found Zombie Ate My Children, this is a small press comic with big player quality and production values, and I spoke to the lads there, who were only too happy to put out Zombiecon flyers and postcards. More win.

On I went, replica weapons, huge wooden and foam swords and more realistic



items, collectables, and oh My God, the Sheffield Space Centre...

Another major bookshop down from Yorkshire, although they were focusing on selling comics and tie ins, they also had some good SF on their massive stand. I was impressed. I would challenge any reader to say there was no point in my attendance. Commerce is an indicator and I had my proof, there might just be some people who would want to talk and listen about SF and Books at a con.

Then onto the signing area, which was cramped. This was next to the talks hall, which was rammed. I noted that the various TV and Movie personalities selling their autographs were not as popular as one might think and moved on.

Then it was the comic artists alley. Now I should mention that there was a map and there were designated areas, but to be honest when you were down in the thick of it, it surely didn't feel like it was organised. I got a sketch from Lee Townsend a 2000 AD artist and also from Al Ewing, who is a 2000 AD writer. I had seen some of the others at Bristol, so said hello and moved on, and then one of the reasons I reckoned was worthwhile coming along. Steve Niles author of many works including 30 days of Night was signing. He had no queue. I went up, he was even selling comics, I bought a load, got them signed. His fiancé also an industry artist was with him and I was complimentary and he was just so bloody cool it wasn't funny. I was well impressed with this dude. We chatted about future projects, the various comic to movie adaptations that we approve of, as usual Sin City is recognised as a key movie adapta-



tion and he gave me some free stuff and I just thought that here was a really nice, straight forward genuine bloke. Who happened to create one of the coolest vampire stories of the century.

I continued onward. By this stage, the amount of girls with FREE HUGS signs was getting pretty serious. There were a lot, so I photographed some of them. They were more than happy to have a picture taken, although I did chat to a few who didn't want to smile for the camera, they jokingly said that they wanted to look unhappy. It was odd but who am I to argue. Others were stunned that I could be bothered to ask them, it was nice to be able to pay them the gratitude of taking a photo. I showed each person my display screen, one wondered why I didn't photo her legs, I just laughed and said she looked great, and she was chuffed with that.

If you are in costume, it seems that you want your picture taken. Other girls then look on with daggers, wondering why they haven't been asked. I would say my percentage reckoning of gender mix was about right inside, and interestingly I think that certain areas and interests were also gender specific in regard to the customers that I observed in various vicinities. I watched a dude with a £2000 camera do some shots. Like mine a digital SLR, but his was on the pro level. We chatted, he was on a gig, but had purposely refused a press pass because he would get too much hassle.

So the Hug thing, well by the time I was leaving lads who were well obviously just in for the laugh, had also made signs, and it was starting to get a bit odd, but not crass. One girl



had a huge sign she held up in the middle of the hall and just stood there looking forlorn, smiling when she got a hug and returning to a downcast look afterward.

I was done. I had seen enough, I chatted with loads of people and made my way out, I grabbed a cola, and outside it was like the yard at school break. The concreted steps and open areas were full of people chatting, playing games, relaxing, resting, crying, fixing and generally chilling out.

There was a masquerade planned, and a party that night and lots of competitions and various other things. I did buy some manga,

books, comics and an interesting looking DVD called Afro Samurai, starring Samurel LI. Jackson. More on this one later, Chris, they were issuing free stickers.

Is it SF? Of course there is but not as we know it. But manga is a media. It's Japanese comics essentially. Anime is also a media, it is the animated form of Manga. The genres that appear in manga form are as varied as the books that you would find in a Waterstones, there is horror, fantasy, general fiction, teen fiction, science fiction, war, western, history, sports. All subjects and areas are covered. In Japan I understand business and educational works appear as manga. Some TV programmes and Manga are very popular. The cross over with Computer games is evident, with quite a few people dressed up as computer game characters again from a number of genres. I was also impressed

with the manga which is about coping with a disabled child. It was more a self help book than anything else.

There is a Lego manga in the form of their own Exo Force, which puts characters into large exo skeleton machines, although there was a franchise tie in with Avatar, a Nickelodeon anime series and just out to coincide with the movie is Speed Racer Lego. No shortage.

The thing is that now there are manga books on the market. These are works of pure literature, all words, no pictures and are selling well. So manga is media and a genre.

I was a bit disappointed that eighties manga was not well represented, with no Lisa Hayes from Robotech or Princess from Battle of the Planets putting in appearances.

So, it was OK, I went with a purpose, succeeded and enjoyed myself, but to be honest, I think San Diego Comic Con or maybe even the famous Comiket convention in Tokyo are where I might really see the media and genre at its best. London is not in the lead on this front for sure, but it's definitely attracting a true representation of London. I wish SF cons could do the same.

Well, I can dream.





Last issue, James Bacon talked about Toy Soldiers. Here's Taral Wayne picking up that thread.

Plastic & Paper by Taral Wayne

While I never became caught up in computer simulated WWII games, as a kid I was what you might almost call obsessed with war toys. I never quite grew out of it either.

How delightful to see those Matchbox toy soldiers again, in Drink Tank 178! Kudos to James Baker. **(Well, it's Bacon, but I'm betting that former Secretary of Defence Mr. Baker loves them too.**

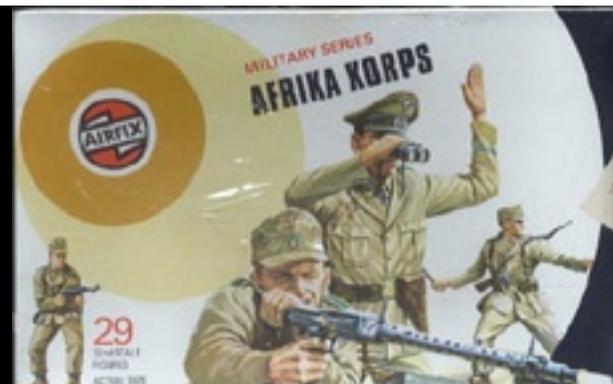
I had an enormous number of them of course. Germans, British, American Marines, Russians... I have no way of reconstructing just how many nations I was able to involve in my imaginary blood baths. Plenty.



I recall when my parents took me bowling, *they* bowled and *I* fought the Ardennes Offensive over again on the floor, in 1/72 scale. *Sports* are for sissies.

At first glance I mistook the Matchbox soldiers in Drink Tank for another series. I eventually lost the 1/72 soldiers, but later in life I discovered others made by Airfix. They were 1/35 scale, and the larger size – about two and a half inches compared to barely ½ -- meant far sharper detail. You could plainly see buttons, strap buckles, and leaves stuck into the net camouflage on helmets. The Airfix series, like the Matchbox one, also had an large number of different soldiers.

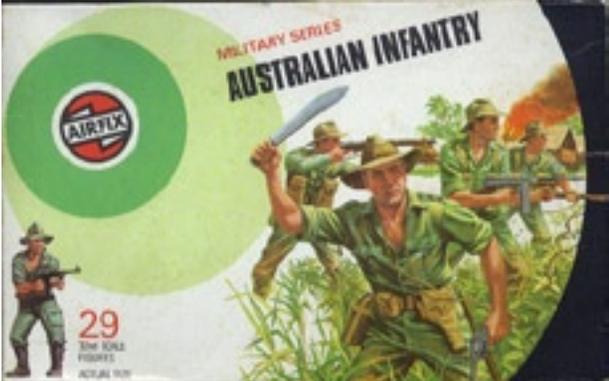
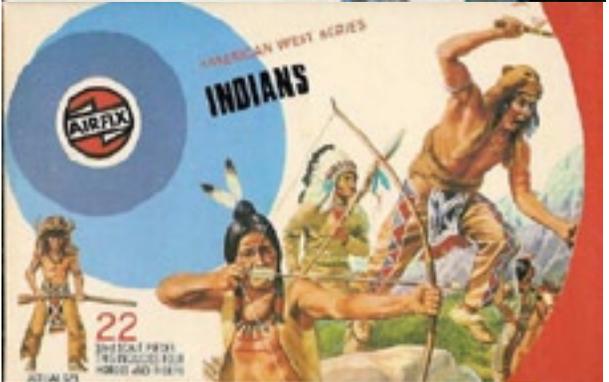
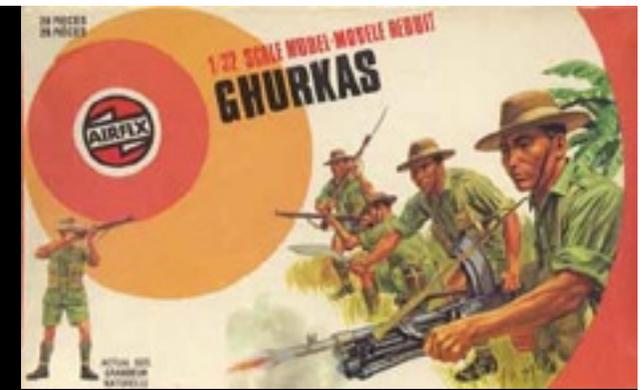
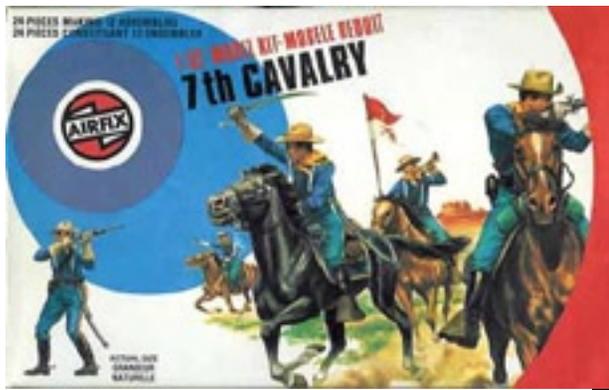
I never had all of them. While initially fairly cheap – about \$3.50 a box, with usually 28 to 30 pieces – later the cost went as ballistic as a Howitzer shell. I think they ended up around \$8.95, which in the middle 1980's was more than a little pricey for 30 plastic soldiers. The later series didn't have the clarity of detail of the



earlier ones, either. There were blurry faces, crude molding seams, and “flash” that comes of plastic oozing through ill-fitting joins in the mold. The quality might have been just as good *once*. But molds age and may be used long past the point where they ought to be retired. (Much like the members of congress.)

If I had any complaint about the Airfix soldiers it was that they were 1/32. Airfix's slot cars were 1/32 and that *may* have been why that *particular* scale. But traditionally military models are 1/35, so the Airfix soldiers were just noticeably too big to match model tanks, canon, or vehicles. Even those kits made by Airfix

There was also the issue of painting. James Bacon may have enjoyed painting his tiny 1/72 soldiers, but I'd had experience with soft plastic figures before the Matchbox ones. The plastic bends easily, and unless carefully handled the paint will flake off. For best results, hard plastic is the only way to go. While Airfix and



Matchbox's large soft plastic figures are long gone, there is today a thriving industry in hard plastic military figures in correct 1/32 scale, that can be assembled in various poses, with detail only hard styrene can capture.

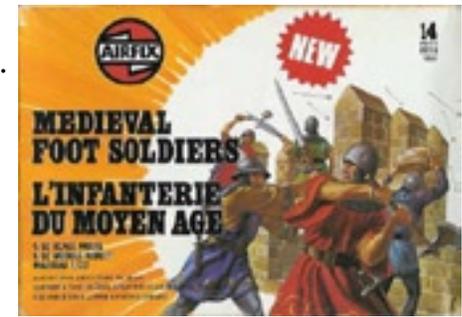
Incidentally, 1/72 figures thrive as well, though still in soft plastic for reasons that defy elementary logic.

In any case, I passed up a number of the old Airfix sets, among them regular German infantry, American Infantry, and some sort of Special Services that would have been really cool if the pieces didn't look like cheap knock-offs. The sets I did buy and in fact still have, are:

- German Mountain Troops*
- German Paratroops*
- Afrika Korps*
- Modern German Infantry*
- British 8th. Army*
- British Infantry Support Group*
- British Commandos*
- British Paratroops*
- British Modern Infantry*
- Ghurkas*

- Australian Infantry*
- Russian Infantry*
- 7th. Cavalry*
- Indians*
- Medieval Foot Soldiers*

Yep. That's right. Medieval foot soldiers. Not a bad



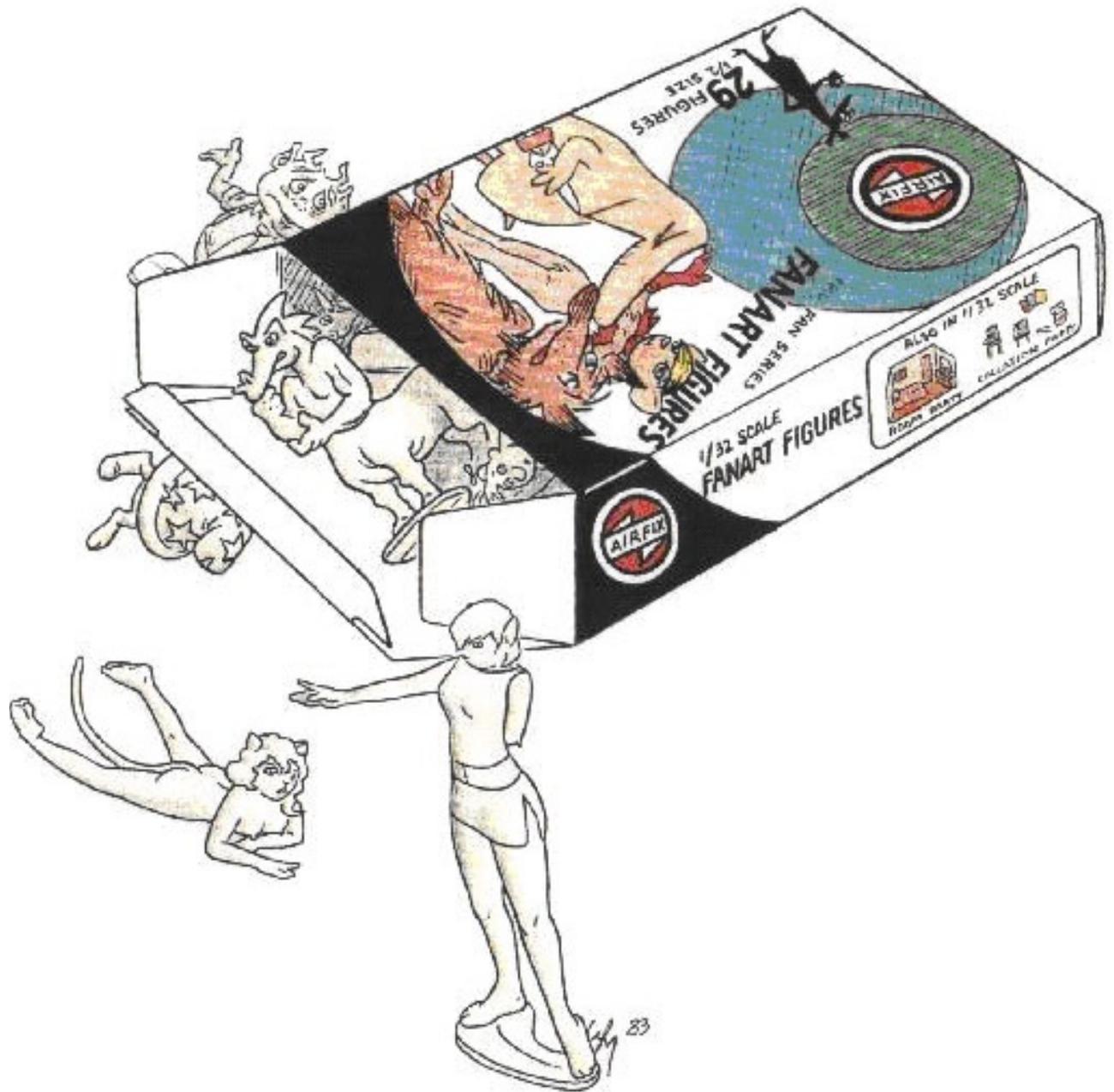
selection either, though the arms and armour were an unsatisfying mixture from the 11th. to 15th. centuries. The Indians were fairly generic, drawn from familiar Plains cultures. Among the sets in my collection, the Ghurkas, Aussies, and modern infantries seemed exceptionally well formed.

But alack-a-day. They're all stored in a box over some book cases where I keep my fanzine collection now. I don't look into it all that often. It was the mention of the other, Matchbox series that brought them to



mind again, and out into the open air. I suppose now there's not much to be done but close the box again, and put it away for another number of years...

It must have been the early 80's when I collected the Airfix soldiers, because I drew a picture in '83 that used the box design. I had made up a set of "fanart figures" in 1/32 scale, meticulously copying the style of a number of then prominent fan artists for the pieces. I forget who published it – Mike Glycer perhaps. It was coloured at a later time, but of course in those days fanzines were mimeographed in one colour ink on another colour paper as a rule. If the publisher went to the effort he (or she) might run the pages through again, as many times as they wanted, for more colours of ink. Few would go to the trouble. But nothing was in full colour like today. One could easily become spoiled by the Digital Age if it weren't for the fact I still like paper better. Just as I think I still like plastic soldiers better than video simulations.



Letter Graded

Mail

sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my loyal readers

***I got a little catch-up to play.
Here's Eric Mayer on 176 and
178!***

Chris,

You have got your work cut out for you at the Worldcon. Hope it goes well. Couldn't think of anyone better to run the fanzine lounge. Not that I've ever been in a fanzine lounge but just the idea....

It was ultra-fun! I was amazed at how well it all worked out!

I hope you report on that fans of the future panel. One thing I wonder is whether fans of the future will have any interest in doing zines? I know John Coxon has a zine (which I ought to loc more often) but the other names you mention are unknown to me. I like zines, even if I now prefer electronic zines for a lot of reasons. But I can step back far enough to see that, just maybe, it's just because zines are what I first got hooked on. I'm not sure an electronic zine makes that much sense, when you have blogs. (Except for people like me who just like fanzines) I think a lot of younger people who do

"zines" as opposed to fanzines produce them on paper, that being a different medium than Internet stuff.

"Young" fans keep getting older. I got into fandom when I was twenty-two. I was kind of a young fan. There were a lot of folks around my age at the time, but even then (1972) there didn't seem to be hordes of teenaged fans. Mike Gorra whose zines I wrote and drew for was still in high school. But in earlier decades, from the history I've read, it was more usual for people to fall into fandom in their teens -- often their early teens. Presumably, in a few years we'll be recruiting at retirement homes. A young fan will be one who hasn't retired yet. (Or maybe that's the case already!)

I hope it never comes to that. The panel was actually an interesting cross-section, with a couple of con-runner-types, the Zine guy and a really smart SerCon fellow who really knows his Heinlein. I did not holde that against him. There are young fans doing zines, John and Persephone Hazard are two in their "Wow, they're young"s, and Flick ain't 30 yet. There will be others, as there always are. The number might not be as large as they were in the past, but youth will be served.

I wish I saw more young fans in zines. Older people benefit more from contact with young people than vice versa, in my opinion.



You may be right about that...

By the way, I read about Ann Green on Steve's LJ. Just shocking and horrible. It's impossible to even think of anything to say.

Not a very good note to close on, but there you go....

Probably the roughest moment for me during the Hugos ceremony was when they did the Those Who Passed tribute and Ann's name came on the screen. It was not easy to keep it together at that moment.

And now, on issue 178

Chris,



Fascinating stuff from James Bacon. I didn't get a PC until rather late and by then my game playing days were mostly behind me. I went through a period when I was into historical/military board games and the appeal was largely to see whether history could be changed.

Yeah, James has saved my readers many times from an over-dose of my writing!

There was, for example, a game about the possible German invasion

of Britain during WW II -- Operation Sea Lion. (Seelowe I think it was called) The game designers seemed to take the position that the course of history pretty much depended on if the weather stayed good enough to allow the Germans to get troops and supplies over the Channel and effectively use their air power. If the ever changeable weather stalled the invasion it was pretty much doomed. Never mind generals, what was needed was weathermen. I never really played the game out to conclusion.

For one thing I was living in the countryside, playing solitaire by necessity, and although there were solitaire rules they didn't work very well. But it was amusing to play through the initial invasion, see whether any storms blew up and whether the Germans managed to get the requisite foothold on the beaches.

Now that's the kind of game I'd love to play! The Alt History potential is huge!

Back in those days, long before home computers, there were two major problems with such games, for me. I had no one to play against (and even if I had I was more interested in playing with history than in any competition) and it could get very tedious setting endless little cardboard squares in the right positions to begin the games. Not to

mention saving the positions. I had a big sheet of glass which I'd set down over the board between sessions. Today, of course, computers provide a better opponent than simple rules could and also take care of all the housekeeping. I would've been in heaven.

I've always had trouble finding people to play Risk, for example. I've always wanted to play a complete game of Riskopoloy, but it's never happened.

I haven't had time/patience to do much computer gaming. Years ago I did have what was even then a very dated version of The Perfect General which was simplistic enough for me to monkey with a little. Unfortunately it doesn't run on my current machine and I also lost my favorite bunch of scenarios -- invasions of Pacific Islands. Guess I just like to hit the beach. All these games James mentions sound fascinating. Ah well...someday...someday....

I must find myself a good simulation. I used to love one called Rail Baron which was a lot of fun.

Oh yeah, I agree with that technicolor fandom thing. But I'm too old to be a mammal. Guess I'm a dinosaur.

It's good to know there are a few young fans. But I have to confess, what interests me about fandom are fanzines. Producing little magazines.

Communicating through the written word. There's a bit of creativity there, a bit of "art", along with the communication. Blogging is similar but not quite the same. Communicating through art but without pretensions? I'm not sure how to describe what it is that I find attractive. Are young fans interested in fanzines? I wish some would take an interest. And I don't mean zines just like old fashioned 1950s faanish fanzines -- just zines with a vague fan slant. Maybe if some older fans weren't so vocal about what fans and fanzines had to be like there would be more fanzines and more younger fans.

We're workin' on gettin' the youngsters out and contributing. I think SF/SF has done a decent job

of it and I think that the editorial group of SF/SF has one in their fifties, one 40s, one in their 30s and one in their 20s. That's a nice spread, no?

Great description of your Hugo presentation. But if you haven't done so and I missed it, you must give us an article about singing at Candlestick. Enquiring minds want to know!

Best,
Eric
Someday, Eric. Someday.



Tales of the DORK KNIGHT

