

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE



Darn those Zine Editors... they *always* get the Chicks!

NO. 17 OCTOBER 2005

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Edited by John W. Herbert

spuzzum42@hotmail.com

undertheozonehole.blogspot.com

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Contributors

John W. Herbert, Karl Johanson, Paula Johanson, and Monica Spencer.

Photo Credits

Photos on page 2, 3, 16 and 17 by John W. Herbert.

Photos on Page 6 and 7 courtesy of Monica Spencer.

Photo on Page 15 by John W. Herbert and Photoshopped by Karl Johanson.

All other photos stolen off the Internet.

About the Cover

Originally an old *Lois Lane* comic book cover, John W. Herbert has hopefully Photoshopped it just enough to avoid any lawsuits. It's satire, dammit, I swear!

Availbe for The Usual.

Available as a pdf if you prefer. Just email me and let me know.

Also, all back issues are available as pdf files as well. Just email me, and I'll email them to you.

We Also Heard From

Bob Johnson

Zines Recieved

Opuntia

edited by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7

UTOH is a WMD-free zone.

Why You Got This Zine

- You Contributed
- You didn't Contrib. Thanks for nothing.
- You sent money.
- You didn't send money. Ditto.
- Trees Don't Deserve To Llive
- You are the closed circle.

Canadian SF Links

- SF Canada: www.sfcanada.ca
- British Columbia Science Fiction Association (BCFSA): www.bcsfa.bcgreen.com
- On Spec magazine: www.onspec.ca
- Neo-Opis magazine: www.neo-opis.ca
- Prix Aurura Awards: www.sentex.net/~dmullin/aurora/
- Sunburst Award: www.sunburstaward.org
- The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy: www.tpl.toronto.on.ca/merril/home.htm
- Garth Spencer's The Royal Swiss Navy: www.vcn.bc.ca/sig/rsn/
- Rober Runté's NCF Guide to Fandom: www.uleth.ca/edu/~runte/personal/sf/sfindex.htm
- R. Graeme Cameron's Canadian Fancyclopedia: <http://members.shaw.ca/rgraeme/home.html>
- Made in Canada Newsletter: www.geocities.com/canadian_sf/

What Others Have Said About

UTOH:

- "Have you no standards at all?"
-- Robert Runté
- "I read it. I laughed. I fell asleep."
-- Cath Jackel
- "We keep ours in the bathroom."
-- Dale L. Sproule and Sally McBride
- "... sad ... past [its] prime ..."
-- Nicholas Watchman,
Sempervivum #1.1
- "You are NOT going to like what I will be saying about it."
-- John Mansfield



And thus we begin the part of the zine which is generally the first thing the reader reads and the last thing the editor writes, The Editorial. Here is where yours truly the editor, usually in a last minute and desperately frenzied rush to fill up a page, vainly attempts to create a humorous piece of writing.

It might begin with a personal story or an amusing anecdote. Like the time my sister swallowed a bugle, or when I had the rash that the doctor couldn't identify. Or maybe I'll write about that strange dream I had last night involving my cat and an ant-eater. And I'm not making that up – no more late night cold pizza for me!

Next, I might comment on some pop culture items or perhaps mention a book I've recently read, or make a derisive comment about a movie star who's made a bad movie recently. Just what the #\$\$%& was Halle Berry thinking, anyway?

Or maybe I should nonchalantly drop in a line or two in reference to a hot fad. Like the time I was holding a pair of kings and I picked up a king in the flop and another in the river! Sweet!

Or I might make some sort of reference to modern slang to demonstrate how cool I am and that I really am a mac daddy wit' da bling bling, yo. And you should the hizzle at my shizzle.

Then will come some witty but insightful political commentary. I could make mention how George W. Bush has lied to the world about _____ of _____, how he has _____ his own _____, and that he started a war based on _____ and he is a _____ that should be _____, _____ and _____, preferably at _____.

But I suppose I'll have to be careful what I say – I wouldn't want Homeland Security to start censoring my mail.

Next, I might reply to readers' letters of comments and engage in a meaningful dialogue of issues and topics that are of the utmost importance to the readers of **Under the Ozone Hole** as witnessed by the volume of mail I received. Except that no one sent me any.

To mix it up a little, next I'll talk about something totally fannish, like the last convention I was at, last year's **V-Con** in Vancouver. And I'll write about how nice the hotel room was, how good the restaurant was, and how I spent most of the time at the convention shopping at Metrotown, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and Ikea.

Obstensibly, this is a science fiction zine, so perhaps some sort of discussion of science fiction would be in order. Perhaps I'll



talk about how sci-fi has gone downhill since the original *Star Trek* was cancelled in 1969. But this comment might betray a bias towards media-based science fiction, so I'll balance it with a further comment that literary science fiction has also gone downhill since James Blish died in 1975 and there were no more novelizations of the original *Star Trek* series.

I might stick in some current sf news, perhaps something like this year's

Sunburst Award (www.sunburstaward.org) short list:

The Last Light of the Sun by Guy Gavriel Kay;

The Memory Artists by Jeffrey Moore;

Airborn by Kenneth Oppel;

Air by Geoff Ryman.

The Lopogryph by Thomas Wharton.

Next I might mention the **2005 Prix Aurora Award** winners:

Best Long-Form Work in English - *Wolf Pack*, Edo van Belkom;
Best Long-Form Work in French - *Les Mémoires de l'Arc*, Michèle Laframboise;

Best Short-Form Work in English - "*When the Morning Stars Sang Together*", Isaac Szpindel;

Best Short-Form Work in French - "*Ceux qui ne comptent pas*", Michèle Laframboise;

Best Work in English (Other) - *Relativity: Essays and Stories*, Robert J. Sawyer;

Best Work in French (Other) - no award;

Artistic Achievement - Martin Springett;

Fan Achievement (Publication) - *Opuntia*, Dale Speirs, ed.;

Fan Achievement (Organizational) - Brian Upward (I.D.I.C.);

Fan Achievement (Other) - Karen Linsley, filksinging.

I might even mention that the Prix Aurora Award website can be found at www.sentex.net/~dmullin/aurora.

By this point, I'll be desperate for ideas to fill up the page so I may even resort to putting in one of the first pictures I took with my digital camera. I'll think about adding a lame caption like "Darth Fiddler" but decide against it. Even I have my limits.

Eventually, I'll have to mention something about what's in this issue. Since the exact contents won't be decided until the very last minute, I'll probably wait until then to describe the contents. But by then it may be too late. I'll have to get the zine off to the printers.

With my luck, I will have run out of time.

Your Tax Dollars at Work

by John W. Herbert

Normally, the doors in the government office building that I work in look like the doors in any other office building. One door, one doorknob. It's a simple but efficient system that has worked well through the ages and easy adaptable to both coming and going. This system really needs no upgrading (not until the technology behind those wooshing *Star Trek* doors is cheaply available).

Clearly, the inventors of the door had not counted on the facilities management personnel of the British Columbia government.

One morning in June we discovered that our normal doorknobs had been doubled up. A second doorknob had been added just below the first knob. Holes had been drilled through the steel doors and a second door knob installed on every door on the stairwell. To enter the stairwell, now one had to turn *both* handles. To enter the building from the stairwell, one had to turn both handles *and* wave your entry card in front of the sensor. No announcement was given as to why an extra doorknob on every floor was deemed necessary; they simply appeared over night.

This change was made on our designated emergency stairwell. In the event of a fire or some such calamity, this is the escape route that most of the 140 or so people in our four-story building will use. Also, all the washrooms in the building are on the landings in this stairwell, so it receives a lot of use, presumably at least once a work day by each employee. It is a secure stairwell; you to have one of those new-fangled electronic keys the size of a credit card to access the building from the stairwell. However, you need nothing to enter the stairwell from the building. All you used to have to do is turn the handle and open the door so that you would not be fumbling for a key card while the building is burning or collapsing around you in an earthquake.

Events later in the day were to put the issue of the suddenly appearing extra doorknobs on the back burner as Legionella was discovered in our air conditioning system, forcing the evacuation and temporary abandonment of our building for three weeks (and that's another article for another issue).

When the Legionella threat was over and we returned, we re-discovered the double-knobber doorways. We further discovered that the security passes were not working – you could not re-enter the building from the stairwell no matter how many doorknobs you turned. Since the washrooms are accessible only from this stairwell, any

employee who used a washroom was effectively locked out of the building. They could only return by going out through the basement and walking around the building and re-entering through the front door.

The work-around to this was simple – a carefully placed phone book would prevent the door from closing and access to and from the stairwell would be maintained. However, the security of the building was compromised and anyone who gained access to the basement car park (not a terribly hard thing to do if you really wanted to) would have access

to every floor in the building. And the stairwell was now useless as a fireblock in case of a fire.

Fortunately, this state only lasted for a day, and the security system was fixed and functioning properly.

A couple of days later, the original doorknobs were removed were replaced by a steel plate, and below these we were left with our new, lower doorknobs and that seemed to be the end of the matter.

Or would have been, except that when the original doorknobs were removed, they tinkered with the security system. Running a few minutes late one day, I discovered that the security system now locked the stairwell doors after hours. In other words, if you were in the building after hours (as many people who work late are), you could not enter the stairwell. The doors were now electronically locked and nothing was going to get them open. The stairwell is the emergency exit, but now, stuck in the building after hours, I was confronted by a door handle that won't open anything, and a useless security pass because the only sensor is on the other side of the door. The only exit was through the building's front entrance. Anyone prevented from reaching the front door by a fire or other disaster would have been a goner.

I reported this malfunction the next day and the security system

was reprogrammed to work correctly.

Now, the latest chapter. Quietly and overnight, the doorknobs have been moved from their new lower position back to their original higher position. Two months after this mysterious game of musical doorknobs began, we are left with our doorknobs right back where they started and ugly metal plates where the doors were cut to install the other doorknobs.

To date, no explanation has ever been provided to the employees for this apparently complete waste of somebody's time and taxpayers' money. There is probably a moral here. Maybe something like this: "There's already too many knobs in government."



Winter Rules

by Paula Johanson

Attention, family. There are a few Rules for Winter Life on the Farm which need to be enforced. These rules are in addition to the Big All-Time Most Important Rule which we each already broke once and will never break again.

Number One: If you go outdoors in winter without wearing a coat and toque, you had better tattoo on your forehead "I ignore my mother's advice."

Number Two: If you go outdoors at -10 or lower without wearing snowpants, scarf and mittens as well, winter will bite you for certain and mother just might.

Number Three: Dry out your snowboots whenever you take them off or you will be wearing boot-shaped icicles next time. Fun for tap-dancing, but not very warm.

Number Four: If mom and dad aren't home when you get off the school bus, stay indoors. We'll be home soon, driving carefully on slippery roads. Yes, you may watch TV and eat all the snack food you can find. Yes, you may gloat about getting home first.

Number Five: There are alarm clocks in every bedroom. Crying or yelling at me when I knock on your door will not make the morning

sunshiny and bright. Be warned! Grumpy risers will be met with a rousing chorus of "Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows."

Number Six: Sweaters and slippers are cheaper than turning up the heat. Plus, they are more ecologically conscious. I can show you a dandy monk's robe, if you like.

Number Seven: When the cat isn't sure it wants to go outside, do not stand in the open doorway trying to convince it to make up its feline mind. Pitch it outside or bring it indoors.

Number Eight: If we pitch the cat outside at -30 when the snow has drifted over her hidey-hole under the house, we will have a cat-sicle in about an hour.

Number Nine: Loud music is welcome at intervals during the day, particularly anything with the lyrics "Fun, fun, fun in the sun, sun, sun." Singing along is encouraged, dancing is optional.

Number Ten: Grumpy parents are role models for Courtesy and Positive Attitudes. So Thank You to everyone who makes me tea and does other thoughtful things. You make home a nice place to live!

And the Big All-Time Most Important Rule which we each already broke once and will never break again: Don't Lick Cold Metal!

Announcing

The UNDER THE OZONE HOLE Writing Contest!

Yes that's right. **Under The Ozone Hole** is having a writing contest. A contest where you can write something and maybe have it published in *Under The Ozone Hole*.

I know what you're saying: "How can I write something and then enter it in the **Under The Ozone Hole** Writing contest?" An excellent question.

First, write something. (Better hurry, though. Computer simulations of this contest indicate that a very large number of people might actually write something for it. There is something like 6.3 billion people on this world and if every one of them submits only one story each that means we'll have.....um, er nearly 6.3 billion submissions. (Assuming the average submission is 10 pages of 8 1/2" x 11" paper, the paper lined up end to end would extend around the Earth more than 420 times. Awe striking when you think about it.)

Second, send your submission to **Under The Ozone Hole**, along with a reading fee of \$500. Make all cheques payable to Karl Johanson (even though he's not one of the **UTOH** editors anymore, he promises to share the money with John Herbert, or at least buy him some fish and chips). Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you think your cheque might bounce

so we can write you and tell you to send another one.

First prize: \$25!!!

Second prize: An autographed picture of John's cat (the black and white one, not the brown one).

Third prize: Karl's "Mott The Hoople" album someone gave him when he was 13 and he never listened to it. (the one with "All the Young Dudes" on it, not the other one.)

Fourth prize: Dinner with Karl and John (time, location and restaurant to be determined by your income.)

Fifth prize: Publication of your story in **Under The Ozone Hole**.

Sur prize: Not telling...

Enter prize: You can borrow a copy of one of the episodes of *Star Trek: Enterprise*, if Karl taped any, and if he remembered to label it and knows where it is.

Com prize: The broken betamax recorder down in Karl's basement that he was going to get around to doing something with but it's been several years now and it's still just sitting there. And a hunk of cheese.

Booby prize: inflatable Pamela Anderson doll.

Disclaimer:

Stories from people who don't like us will be read and fairly considered before being rejected.

All persons submitting stories to this contest (hereinafter referred to as "the party of the first part") give the first North American cereal rights to **Under The Ozone Hole** and the republic for which it stands (hereinafter referred to as "the defendants"), notwithstanding any and all neat toys, games, puzzles mini comics or plastic space ships like the type John and Karl are suckers enough to buy cereals they hadn't eaten for years for, that the producers of any cereals based on the party of the first part's submitted story should decide to include as a cheap way to get children to talk their parents into buying them overly processed, nutrient depleted grains mixed with highly processed sugars and brightly coloured food dyes and numerous synthetic flavouring all under the banner of "food" which is questionable at best and isn't made up for by the nifty thing which is at the bottom of the box so the kid stuffs their hand all the way to the bottom and touches all the cereal so no one else wants to eat it. Any and all reproductions of the party of the first part's submitted work, with respect to the aforementioned plaintiff should be sequestered into a fair hearing involving a jury of it's peers and subject to precedent law except in Quebec and France and I don't know where else that uses that other system that I can't remember the name of. Should both parties agree to forgo any and all rights to liability on the part of those purchasing this, or any cheap co-marketing stunts based on this, then all involved parties agree by default to divide liability among uninvolved persons, close up shop and run for it.

All entries into this competition become the property of Haliburton/General Motors/Pepsico/Bell. They pretty much own everything already anyhow.

Only one entry per sentient life form.

Offer Not Valid in this or any other dimensional plane.

Valentine's Day Ice Water Entrapment Rescue

by Lt. Monica Spencer, Beasley Fire Rescue

Fire, ambulance and police responders from the scenic mountain town of Nelson, BC and the surrounding area participated in the successful rescue of a woman from her vehicle after prolonged immersion in icy water in the early hours of Valentine's Day morning. The happy ending is credited to a combination of individual initiative, interdepartmental cooperation and one woman's amazing will to live.

On February 14, 2005, forty-nine year old Betty Kennedy, an x-ray technician at Nelson's Kootenay Lake Hospital, received a page at about 1:30 a.m. to come in to the emergency department. Her boyfriend, Dan Popoff, offered to drive her but she told him she'd be fine and urged him to go back to sleep.

It was only a 15 or 20 minute drive to the hospital, and it was a beautiful starry night. Dressed in a big London Fog coat and driving her new Honda CRV with heated seats, Betty was soon toasty warm. Less than ten minutes after leaving the house, rounding a tight corner onto a straight stretch, the vehicle fishtailed on black ice and left the road. Tumbling end over end down a boulder-strewn 30 foot bank, it punched through three inches of ice to land upside down in the Kootenay River in a small protected bay. Because of the isolated location and the time of day (1:40 in the morning), the accident went unnoticed by anyone.

While Betty hung upside down from her seatbelt, the vehicle rapidly began to fill with icy water through the broken hatchback window. In absolute blackness, she freed herself and swam up to the airspace above her to take a breath. With the top of her head pressed against the floor of the vehicle, the water came up to her chin. She had the presence of mind to try opening the doors, but they wouldn't unlock. She tried to kick out the windows, but lacked the leverage or the strength to break them.

At that point Betty realized she was probably going to die. Trapped, she didn't know how deep the water was or whether the vehicle was going to sink deeper. But then she found herself filled with resolve – her husband had died in a car accident two years earlier and she was not about to leave her four children without a parent. She found herself thanking God for all her blessings, for her wonderful friends and family, and for Dan. Ducking back under the water, she searched by feel until she found the cell phone in her purse, but the water had shorted it out and it was useless.

By 02:00, emergency room nurses Ruth Sutherland and Deb Pattyn began to get concerned when Betty hadn't shown up in her usual timely

manner. They paged her again, and tried calling her cell phone. There was no response.

Betty was desperately cold and starting to lose control of her muscles, but she held onto the thought that the hospital would call Dan when she didn't arrive, and he would come find her. She prepared herself to hang on for as long as it took.

By 02:15, Sutherland and Pattyn were worried enough to call Dan Popoff's house. Having fallen asleep immediately after Betty left, Dan had lost track of how long she'd been gone and thought that she had only recently left the house. Betty had now been in the water for thirty-five minutes.

In the pitch dark, Betty waited with chunks of ice floating around

her, and something else bumped up against her face in the pitch dark as well. For Valentine's Day she had bought her children and Dan's some little heart shaped plastic containers of Ferrero Rochet chocolates, and she found those containers miraculously floating in the car. Betty loved chocolate but had been denying herself in an effort to lose a little weight. Well, if she was going to die, she figured she might as well die with chocolate! Her fingers were too numb and frozen to open the containers so she bit



them open one at a time and ate as many as she could, although some fell into the water and were lost. She was very cold, and she kept praying for Dan to find her.

Dan was too worried to sleep. At 02:30 he called the hospital emergency department to see if Betty was there yet, and when they said no he told them to call his cell if she turned up; he was going to go out looking for her.

He retraced Betty's route slowly, looking for signs that she might have had an accident. As a hunter, he was attuned to looking for clues and tracks in the thin hard snow along the sides of the road. After rounding a corner onto the straight stretch before the highway, he had a distinct feeling that Betty might somehow have come to grief there. He went back and forth along that section of road several times and was about to head on down to the highway when he thought he saw faint marks on the pavement. He backed up to view that section of road again in his headlights, but could see nothing.

For a moment Dan was tempted to carry on toward the highway, but he had a feeling of urgency that he couldn't shake. He felt somehow

guided. Climbing out of his car, he looked over the bank. The night was very dark but he thought he saw a faint gleam in the water, so he ran back for a flashlight. The beam of light revealed his worst fears – the undercarriage and wheels of Betty’s car were visible above the ice of the river.

Dan had lost his wife to cancer two years earlier and this was a nightmare he could scarcely bear. He cried out to Betty... and she answered him.

Betty had been enduring the freezing darkness for a little over an hour when she heard Dan’s voice shouting, “Betty, are you there?” Somehow, against all odds, he had found her. She screamed back, asking, “Dan, is it really you?” and he said, “Yes! Hang on, I’m getting help!”

At about 02:45, Ruth Sutherland called the Nelson Ambulance station to see if there had been a car accident Betty might have been involved in. While she was on the phone with them, Deb Pattyn answered the other line. It was Dan, saying he’d found Betty’s car in the river and couldn’t get to her.

Dr. Trevor Janz was on duty in the emergency department that night. He heard the news with a horrible sinking feeling, as he knew Betty’s chances for survival were not good. He looked at the nurses and said, “It’s over, she’s dead, she’s drowned.” They began preparations for a resuscitation effort for what was likely to be the cold water drowning of their friend, knowing that treatment for a hypothermia arrest would involve grueling hours of CPR while trying to warm the body, and would most likely not be successful.

Although Dan’s instinct was to plunge in after Betty, he had been a volunteer firefighter with the nearby Blewett Fire Department and he knew that aside from the fact that he wasn’t equipped for the conditions, if the car were precariously balanced any action on his part could cause it to slip into deeper water, with tragic consequences. So he stood on the rocks of the shore, calling to Betty, telling her he loved her and encouraging her to hang on.

Nelson City Police Constable Paul Jacobsen received a 911 call from the hospital at about 02:45, but the location of the accident was outside his jurisdiction. He passed the call off to BC Ambulance dispatch in Kamloops and RCMP dispatch in Kelowna.

BC Ambulance paramedics Deb Morris and Heidi Henke were dispatched to the accident scene at 02:48. Having already heard from the hospital that Betty was missing, they were ready to go.

Nelson Fire Rescue firefighter Bob Patton was on watch that night when a call came in at 02:50 from BC Ambulance dispatch with a report of a vehicle off the road and upside down in the river. Captain Bob Slade, the other member on duty, responded to the scene in Engine 2 at 02:55. While en route he was advised that the occupant was alive and talking,

and at that point he advised Patton to contact volunteer Chief Al Craft of neighbouring Beasley Fire Rescue and have a couple of their swiftwater rescue personnel attend with their rescue boat.

RCMP Constable Steve Grouhel was also called at 02:50 with a report of a vehicle in the river, but he was a half hour away, even with lights and sirens. Constable Jacobsen had been monitoring the development of the situation. Aware that time was absolutely of the essence, he made the decision to leave his jurisdictional boundaries and respond directly to the scene of the accident.

Beasley Fire Chief Al Craft received a call from Bob Patton at 03:00, requesting a mutual aid response with Beasley’s rescue boat and cold water gear. Craft called his deputy chief, Fred Doerfler, telling him to suit up and meet him on scene, then went straight to the fire hall to jump into his drysuit and get the boat and swiftwater rescue equipment.

Paramedics Deb Morris and Heidi Henke were the first emergency responders to reach the scene, at 03:01. Betty had now been in the water for 80 minutes. Despite a natural desire to jump into the water and get her out, they knew the situation was unsafe and that they needed more help. Morris called Nelson Fire to make sure the swiftwater rescue

technicians were on their way. Then she called the hospital and told them Betty was still alive but that it would be awhile before they got her out. Henke concentrated on keeping Betty’s attention, calling to her and keeping her talking.

Arriving on scene at 03:05, Captain Slade was amazed to find Betty still conscious. He radioed Firefighter Patton and told him to call someone in to cover him and to bring the ladder truck code three. He also called in Assistant Chief Simon Grypma, who lived nearby. Slade

didn’t know how long Betty had been immersed but it had been long enough that she wasn’t responding properly. He knew he was not equipped to enter the water, and he didn’t want to disturb the balance of the vehicle. With properly equipped rescue techs en route, he knew he had to stand by. He set up the lighting plant to provide some scene lighting.

Trapped in her car, muscles rigid with cold, Betty was getting drowsy. But when she saw the light she knew she was going to be okay. She had been in the water for ninety minutes.

When Constable Jacobsen arrived at the scene, he was stunned by what he saw. It was bitter cold, and the open water around the vehicle was refreezing. The situation felt absolutely hopeless. He wanted to drop his gunbelt and plunge in, but Betty was still conscious and talking. He knew the icy water would suck the heat from him many times faster than the air, and that as soon as his muscles seized up he would be useless, resulting in one more patient and one less rescuer. He asked his dispatch to call a tow truck to help stabilize the vehicle.



Kevin Drake of Western Auto Wrecking lived nearby and was on scene with a tow truck within minutes. He backed his truck into position and got a cable down the bank.

Constable Grouhel arrived on scene at about 03:20. He could see Dan standing at the shoreline, yelling encouragement to Betty, but he couldn't hear her replies over the noise of the generator. He too was concerned about the stability of the vehicle, as it appeared that the only thing holding it above the water was the ice around it.

Nelson Fire Rescue Assistant Chief Simon Grypma arrived on scene shortly after Constable Grouhel, and after being briefed by Captain Slade he assumed command of the rescue operation. They discussed the possibility of going in after Betty but decided against it because of the risk to her as well as to the rescuers, deciding that the best course of action would be to wait another few minutes for the Beasley members to arrive with the proper gear to enter the water safely. They realized that they had a very technical situation on their hands, especially in light of the fact that all the windows of the vehicle were under water, which meant that if they were to try to get Betty out in the position it was in, they would have to bring her underwater to get her out.

By this time, Betty was beginning to sound frantic and disoriented, and Dan was worried that she wouldn't last much longer. Everyone knew they would have to work as a team, and work fast.

The paramedics had assessed Betty's condition as best they could under the circumstances. They were only partially relieved when she told them she wasn't injured, as she was literally freezing to death and was numb. They knew she'd been wearing her seatbelt and had been moving around after the accident, which was good news. Because time was of the essence and access to the vehicle highly problematic, spinal immobilization would have to take second place to speedy extrication.

Firefighter Bob Patton arrived with the ladder truck at 03:23, and Grypma staged him to set the ladder up. They considered running a rope from the ladder to stabilize the vehicle but it wouldn't drop low enough for that. It did, however, make a fantastic platform for overhead scene lighting.

Beasley Fire rescue techs Craft and Doerfler arrived moments after the ladder truck, and Grypma and Slade briefed them while helping them don their gloves and PFDs. Grypma felt that Betty had maybe eight inches of airspace and seemed to be fading, and they had to be prepared for the worst case scenario. He wanted them to see if the rear hatch would open, as the vehicle was a little higher in the water at that end.

Patton handed them a window punch, and they descended the bank with the help of a rope tied off to the aerial truck. They had to break through the ice to get to the vehicle, but fortunately the river bottom was flat in that spot and the water was only about four feet deep. They called out to Betty to tell her they were coming, and she answered. Once they got to the vehicle, they tried to open the rear hatch, but without success. They were unable to access her through the rear window due to obstructions. They popped a couple of windows underwater but couldn't reach her, and they were unable to open the doors. As they worked, Craft and Doerfler continued to talk to Betty. Sometimes she answered them, and sometimes she didn't. It renewed the rescuers' sense of urgency and fear that time was running out.

Craft felt they could use the wrecker to roll the vehicle to one side in order to expose the side window and gain access, so they hooked the tow cable onto the far end of the vehicle. Drake started pulling it toward shore while Grypma oversaw the careful orchestration between the crew in the water, the crew on the shore, and the tow truck operator.

Constable Grouhel held his breath, hoping that the vehicle wouldn't dislodge and slip into deeper water. Drake continued to pull, rolling the vehicle up and onto its side until the rear driver's side window cleared the water. Doerfler shone his flashlight in, and there was Betty lying with her legs between the front bucket seats and her head in the foot well of the back seat.

Craft reached in through the window and grabbed Betty under her arms. Doerfler managed to grab her belt, and together they carefully floated her on her back out the window and over to the shore where Grypma, Slade and Patton had put Nelson Fire's basket stretcher into the water. They were able to float her (along with a lot of broken ice) right onto the stretcher, and they lost no time bringing the stretcher up the bank to the waiting ambulance, with Jacobsen, Grouhel and Drake helping with a relay pull on the rope from above.

Betty's eyes were as big as saucers. "Is this really happening?" she asked. "Is this really real?" She was still clutching the lid of a Ferrero Rochet chocolate container to her chest. She had been in the water for two hours.

The paramedics immediately went to work, cutting off Betty's wet clothes and wrapping her in blankets. Betty's skin was so icy cold that when Henke touched it she halfway expected to stick to her, like frost. As the ambulance pulled away, there was a lot of high-fiving and hugging among the rescuers on scene, but their jubilation was tempered by the knowledge that Betty was not yet out of the woods.

An adult's normal core temperature is 37 °C, and hypothermia begins at about 35 °C. Most people lose consciousness somewhere between 32 and 30 °C, cardiac arrhythmias often occur at 28 °C, and temperatures lower than 27 °C are almost always fatal. Severely hypothermic patients are fragile and often die after being rescued, because after removal from the water the cold blood in the extremities circulates back to the core and causes a further drop in body temperature. There was more work to be done, and it was now in the hands of the medical professionals.

Arriving at the hospital at 04:03, Betty was taken straight to the trauma room for treatment. She was profoundly cold; in fact she was now too cold to shiver. She was confused and barely able to respond, and her core temperature was initially measured at just 27 °C. The ER team started her on warm IV fluids and used a warming blanket called a Behr Hugger to blow warm air around her. They carefully warmed up bags of saline in the microwave to use as hot packs because anything too warm would burn her extremely cold skin. Dan stayed at Betty's side, beside himself with worry.

As she grew warmer, Betty began to apologize for all the trouble, saying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." Overcome with emotion, Dr. Janz and fellow x-ray tech Marg Dietrich bent down to hug her. Janz put his face against her cheek and said, "Oh, Betty, we're so happy you're still alive!" Eventually she drifted off to sleep.

Betty's extraordinary survival is due to a number of factors, not the least of which was her refusal to give up. Fortunately, she was very warm when she hit the water and was wearing a big coat that helped to conserve some body heat. She was not in moving water, and she remained relatively motionless (attempting to swim in near-freezing water causes a greatly accelerated rate of heat loss). And the chocolate, with its sugar, caffeine and calories, gave her some energy.

"There's no way I could have withstood what she went through," says Constable Jacobsen. "She had a will like nobody I've ever seen, that's for sure."

Captain Slade is similarly impressed with Betty's survival. "After all the unpleasant things we see, it's really wonderful to have an outcome like this, to have someone survive who would otherwise have died." But he is quick to give credit where credit is due: "She survived as long as she did," he says, "because she had fortitude."

Chief Al Craft agrees. "We attend so many horrific scenes, and see so many fatalities. Over the years we've pulled a lot of bodies out of vehicles and rivers, and to have one end so well has been indescribable."

Assistant Chief Simon Grypma is pleased with the overall effort: "Often during emergency response operations, decisions are made without recognizing that for every action there is an opposite and sometimes deadly reaction. In this case each responding agency identified

the potential danger to the victim and saw that a premature rescue attempt could have resulted in the loss of the life-saving pocket of air in the vehicle. Everyone recognized the need for a joint rescue operation combining the different resources provided by multiple agencies, and the success of the operation is a reflection of individual training, knowledge, and willingness to work together as a rescue team.”

Betty Kennedy and Dan Popoff have since gotten engaged. They plan to get married next year ... on Valentine's Day.

Nelson Fire Rescue operates from BC's oldest fire station under the direction of Fire Chief Randy Brieter and Assistant Chief Simon Grypma, with four captains, six full-time firefighters and twenty-one auxiliary firefighters to protect the 10,000 residents of Nelson and the surrounding response area of 4,000 residents. The station appeared in the movie "Roxanne." Apparatus includes two pumpers, one 85 ft platform, one tender and two service units. The department provides all typical fire services including high angle rescue, auto extrication and confined space rescue.

Beasley Fire Rescue operates from one station under the direction of Fire Chief Al Craft and Deputy Chief Fred Doerfler, with four captains, four lieutenants and fifteen firefighters. All members are volunteer. The service area includes 1,100 residents and a

difficult stretch of highway. Apparatus includes a 700 gal. pumper, a 1,500 gal. tender, a 1,300 gal. tender, a rescue truck, a mobile incident command / first aid trailer, a zodiac rescue boat and a river rescue cataraft. Areas of specialization include rope rescue, confined space rescue and swiftwater rescue. Their website is www.beasleyfire.com.

Both departments respond to mutual aid requests from neighbouring departments.

The BC Ambulance Service's Nelson station is comprised of six full time paramedics and twenty-one primary care paramedics under the direction of Unit Chief David Martin. They have four ambulances and serve a response area of 25,000 people.



The Phone

by Paula Johanson

Name something you'll bet there's one of in almost every home in Canada. You'll be wrong. No, it's not the door! Everybody's got at least one of those. It's not the television, either. There's an average of two of those in most Canadian households -- at least for those people who want TVs around.

No, what I mean is the telephone. Not every home has one. Ten percent of Canadians have no phone at all. I find life without a phone hard to imagine. That's even after our first summer on the farm, half a mile from the nearest phone. There was a certain freedom from tyranny in knowing the phone was not going to ring. There was also a certain feeling that our children were sure to fall out of poplar trees and break their necks. I didn't ever want to run half a mile to my in-law's place to call an ambulance. So we had a phone put in.

Easier said than done.

We made the call and were told the phone company's truck would come to the farm next Wednesday. We gave the legal land description of the little white house: a mile north of the highway, south-east corner of the south-east quarter Section 56. Houses out here don't have numbers by the front doors. Houses out here don't even have *stairs* by the front door. Some of our neighbours don't even *have* front doors at all, just a place where a front door will be put some day. Our little white house is the only house out here where the front door gets used. It's the only door we have. But then we're odd. Our neighbours are sure we're odd because we use our front door and didn't use to have a phone.

And we didn't get one next Wednesday, either. Oh, we saw the phone company truck drive by several times without stopping. So the next day

I hiked to my in-law's place and called the phone company. They said their driver couldn't find the house.

This was hard to believe. There are only three houses on our stretch of road, of which only one is both little and white. I promised to stand in our driveway with a large sign and they promised to come next Tuesday. They didn't show up. Instead, the truck stopped at our neighbour's house.

No one was home. So they broke into his house and forcibly installed a telephone.

Our neighbour didn't like this at all. He was just getting used to having a TV set in his tiny grey house, behind the back door. His house had only one door, like ours, but his was *definitely* a back door. Now he had a phone he didn't want. He didn't like anyone breaking in, either. The phone company apologised, and promised to install our phone next Thursday.

Thursday we flagged down the phone company truck as it passed. It didn't take long to have the phone installed. Before he left, the phone man carefully wrote the wrong phone number on our phone. He also left behind his screwdriver.

So next time we needed phone work done, my husband bought a book and all the wires and tools. He already had the screwdriver, eh? Then he installed our own new phone, right by the door. Our *front* door. Our only door.

R E V I E W S

Alien vs. Predator

After years of development and rejected scripts, the long awaited merging of two of 20th Century Fox's biggest sf franchises finally arrives, with *Alien vs. Predator*.

Something has awakened in a temple deep beneath the Antarctic ice. A millionaire businessman has assembled a team of international experts to dig through the ice and to claim and explore the structure. Unbeknownst to the explorers, the temple was built by the race of intergalactic hunters known as the Predators. They've been using the temple for eons as a rite of passage ceremony for young Predators – they have captured an Alien queen that they are using as breeding stock for use in the ceremony. Kill an Alien, be a man. Well, a manly Predator, anyway.

Unfortunately for our gang of human explorers, as they enter the temple (whose interior walls rearrange themselves every ten minutes to confuse the prey) they are about to become dinner.

This is by no means the worst *Alien* movie I've seen, nor is it the best. But it is a thoroughly satisfactory B-move monster flick. The action is fast and quick (and so is the movie, clocking in at a brisk 100 minutes), and there is a certain fascination to seeing these two movie monster kings duke it out. The characters are competently acted yet cookie-cutter, the script is interesting without being very engaging, the special effects and make-up are adequate and expensive but not cheesy. The temple's moving walls are an obvious gimmick to crank up the tension. And while it does work to some extent, the clockwork precision of the walls moving every ten minutes seems to be replaced by the walls moving only when it serves the script. But having Lance Hendrickson in the film is also a nice shout out to the previous *Alien* movies and helps keep at least some semblance of continuity to the other films.

The DVD has a dearth of special features. It has one marked Super-Bowl Promo. Silly me thought it was a special Super-Bowl trailer for the film. But no, it was just an advertisement for the Super-Bowl. A short prologue has been re-inserted into the film that certainly doesn't hinder the film, but doesn't particularly help it and just as easily could have been one of the few deleted scenes in the special features. In fact, three extended scenes and two commentary tracks are the only extra features on this bare-bone discs. I suspect an Unrated cut will be released sometime soon. (In fact, here's a double-dip alert: a two-disc, full-blown, special edition

version has already been released in Europe. A North American 2-disc version will be released this fall.)

The film implies that the Predators are a far-flung culture... they could even have created the Aliens for their initiation ceremony. As such, you could view *AvP* as a cautionary tale of technology out of control as the Aliens threaten to overrun the temple and the world. But that would be a real stretch beyond the reach of this film. This film doesn't enhance either franchise to any great degree. It's fair to say that in terms of development, the Predators come off a little better than the Aliens, but that's not saying much. Perhaps the best that could be said is that neither franchise suffers at the hand of this film. So grab the popcorn, and enjoy the ride. There's worse movies that you could be watching.

-- John W. Herbert

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Comic Book: The Movie

Mark Hamill plays Don Swan, a middle-aged comic book historian hired by a movie producer to film a DVD extra for a new film based on Swan's favorite comic, *Commander Courage*. But Swan thinks that the Hollywood update of his hero from a WWII patriot to an early 21st century anti-terrorism vigilante isn't right and he decides to do something about it. So as cameras follow Swan and his Hollywood handler around the San Diego Comicon, Swan is secretly plotting ways to disrupt the project.

The film stars Hamill and a host of his buddies from voiceover work, many of whom leapt at the chance to be seen in front of the camera (and many of whom are also comic geeks). In fact, all the parts are played by actors that are more famous for their voices than their faces. Billy West plays Leo, the grandson of the creator of *Commander Courage* who a con-virgin attending his first con with no idea what he is in for. Jess Harnell plays the rocker/cameraman Ricky, who dutifully follows Hamill's character everywhere with digital camera in hand. And Jim Cummings (the voice of Winnie the Pooh) plays a party animal who slowly drinks himself into a mind-altered stupor with absinthe. Oh, bother!

Cameos abound with Donna D'Errico, Kevin Smith, Stan Lee, Hugh Hefner, Bruce Campbell, Ray Harrhausen, Matt Groening and Bill Mumy appearing, just to name only a few on the dozens of familiar faces crammed into this film. (In one scene, Hamill's character asks a trio of gentlemen if he can share their table

in a snack bar. One tells him, "No, move along, son." Look closely – it's David 'Darth Vader' Prowse.) Even Sid Caesar and Jonathan Winters share a scene on camera for the first time in 41 years. And dozens of comic professionals appear, too.

Clearly a labour of love by self-professed comic geek Hamill, *Comic Book: The Movie* is a "mockumentary" in the improvised style of *This is Spinal Tap*, *Best in Show* and *Hard Core Logo*. Using digital cameras and filmed mostly at the San Diego Comicon, it has the perfect look of a faux low-budget DVD extra. (And if you've ever wanted to see what a con with 65,000 attendees looks like, here's your chance.) Hamill and crew clearly had a blast improvising with whomever they came across at the Con, be they star, fan or mundane. To be fair, the actors here just don't quite have the chops that the actors in Chris Guest's series of mockumentaries do, and the film could have used a tighter edit. And frankly, the ending seemed to go flat. But it was a heck of a lot fun getting there. This is the best fan-oriented film since *Free Enterprise*.

And the DVD is loaded with tons of great extras, including a panel at Comicon featuring all the voiceover artists strutting their stuff. (Or stuttering their stuff in Billy West's case – his rendition of Porky Pig singing "My Generation" is as funny as it sounds.)

Comic Book: The Movie – not a hoax, but definitely a fun, imaginary tale,' Nuff said.

-- John W. Herbert

(originally published in *Neo-Opis* #3)

Constantine

Heaven and hell, it seems, exist here on earth but each in a different dimensional plane. Demons and angels often cross over to our plane to try and influence us mere mortals. They appear not to overtly direct events, but to gently nudge us and take advantage of our natural tendencies towards good and evil. It's a little bet between the Lord and the Devil – who can influence the most souls.

Some humans can see these supernatural beings and when they take too much advantage of our weak souls, someone has to send them back to Hell. Keanu Reeves stars as a bitter and hardened John Constantine who specializes in demon dispatching, but the trouble for Constantine is that he is dying, and he knows that he's due for a one-way ticket to Hell, a Hell full of the demons he has sent previously sent there. And they're waiting for him.

Keanu is great as Constantine. He's one of those "niche" actors – not a great actor, but find him a good role in his range and he's terrific. He can obviously handle the action stuff, and he's very funny with his terrific deadpan delivery, which makes for some divine comedy. And there was a danger for him in this role, as there are some similarities to *The Matrix* (the idea that our world is not what it seems, and the fact that Constantine shares some wardrobe secrets with Thomas "Neo" Anderson), but Reeves pulls it off. His Constantine is weary, bitter and downtrodden.

The rest of the cast doesn't slouch, either. Rachel Weisz is fine as Angela, whose sister's suicide is a portent of encroaching evil. And Peter Stomare is just totally off the wall as, well, let's just say as someone you better hope you never meet.

The special effects are solid but the film does not rely on endless digital creatures to tell its story. It's not a monster movie in that sense, but it is spooky and creepy, and downright strange at some points. And it's funny, too, thanks to Reeves' deadpan, but thankfully he never devolves into the one-note catchphrase "witticisms" of other action movie heroes.

First time director Francis Lawrence does a decent job here, mixing in the humour with the strangeness and a touch of *film noire*, but never overpowering the actors with effects or a drowning goth-rock score as might have been a temptation. The movie starts a little shakily; there are some moments that are a little confusing and hard to fathom at first, but everything soon fits into place and rides smoothly. But the script isn't spoon feed to the audience, either. You need to pay attention.

I can't say how it compares to the original comic series as I've never read it, and I know some fans were put off by Constantine's transformation from British to American for the movie. However, if fans are willing to overlook that transgression, *Constantine* is a solid film and well worth a look.

-- John W. Herbert

(originally published in *Neo-Opsis* #3)

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is a wholly remarkable movie. It has already supplanted *Revenge of the Sith* as the science fiction movie to see this year, for though it has many omissions and contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate, it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important respects.

First, it has a slightly cheaper budget, and secondly it has the words Don't Panic inscribed in large friendly letters on its ad campaign.

Twenty-five years in the making (and four years too late for its late and much lamented author), the movie version of *The Hitchhiker's*

Guide is a wonderfully fun return to Douglas Adams's droll and goofy universe where the hero is not interested in bringing down evil galactic empires or going boldly where ever increasing numbers have gone before. Rather, he just wants a good cup of tea.

For those of you who have spent the last quarter century living under a ravenous blugblatterbeast, harried everyman Arthur Dent (played by Martin Freeman) escapes from earth just before its destruction when it turns out that his friend, the unusually named Ford Prefect (Mos Def), is not an act out of work actor from Guilford at all, but is in fact an alien doing research for an encyclopedia called *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. They are eventually rescued by Zaphod Beelbebrox (Sam Rockwell), the President of the Galaxy who has kidnapped himself and stolen a prototype spaceship, and his companion Trillian (Zooey Deschanel), a woman from earth that Arthur once met at a fancy dress party and promptly blew it with. Together with Marvin, the ship's paranoid android (played by Warwick Davis, and wonderfully voiced by Alan Rickman), they blunder into a series of adventures while they attempt to discover the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything. Or rather the ultimate question, since the answer only makes sense if you know the question.

Sam Rockwell is terrific as President Beeblebrox. Part Freddie Mercury and part George Bush, Rockwell continues to add to his growing resumé of excellently portrayed offbeat characters. (I must say that I didn't much care for the effect used for Zaphod's second head; however this is a minor complaint and it's certainly better and less distracting than the second head Mark Wing-Davey had to struggle with in the old BBC tv series of *Hitchhiker's*. And while we're on the topic of the original BBC series, look for a brief cameo from Simon Jones, the original Arthur Dent, and an appearance from the original Marvin the paranoid android. Douglas Adams's head pops up a couple of times, too.)

The rest of the cast is uniformly excellent as well. Martin Freeman brings a confused yet compassionate feel to the embittered Arthur Dent, a man who has lost literally everything, yet still manages to find hope in his loss. Mos Def is sufficiently out of the ordinary as the alien Ford Prefect, but unfortunately his character all but disappears by the movie's end. And kudos to the always-interesting Bill Nighy who brightens things up as Slartibartfast, the planetary engineer who built all those fiddly bits in Norway.

John Malkovitch plays a new character, spiritual leader Humma Kavula, and is generally wasted in the role and has little screen time. But Humma's is the only plot thread that is ultimately left dangling – for a sequel, perhaps?

And the Malkovitch character does lead into a new subplot that takes our heroes into some unexpected places, including a funny new piece of classic Adams business on the Vogon home world involving original thoughts and a shovel in the face.

If there's any quibble, it's that there simply isn't enough of the *Guide* itself. Stephen Fry is a perfect choice for the voice of the *Guide*, and more *Guide* vignettes, with their wonderful animation, would have been welcome. (Stay for the credits as there is a bit more of the *Guide* there.)

The filmmakers are highly respectful of Adam's work. Let's face it – this could have been turned into a bowdlerized, Americanized, garglebalsted travesty that would have been the celluloid equivalent of Vogon poetry. But it is not. While many have criticized some of the changes and omissions from previous versions, it maintains the dry Adams wit and droll British humour, while also sneaking in a few tributes to other SF film icons. (*The Guide* is introduced in the movie in a visual nod to the monolith in orbit around Jupiter in 2001.)

Inevitably, one must ask how does it compare with previous incarnations. Adams never intended any particular version of *Hitchhiker's* to be definitive; each version, be it radio, book, record (remember those, kiddies?), stage show, or television, would be what it was. So perhaps there's little point in comparing this to other versions. Indeed, one of my favourite bits of business, the conversation between Arthur, Ford and the construction foreman intent on knocking down Arthur's house, is sadly truncated, and my favourite bit of dialogue in the whole darn five-part trilogy has been excised. And there are other missing bits that surely should have been included, including the revelation that earth only rated a one-word entry in the *Guide*: "Harmless" (although that bit does appear as a deleted scene on the DVD. And here's a double-dip alert: a 2-disc DVD has been released in Europe, while only a single disc version is available in North America... so far.)

But the question of which version you liked best is akin to asking yourself which is your favourite James Bond. Your favourite Bond is the one that you discovered first. And if this film draws more people to read the works of Douglas Adams, that can't be bad.

-- John W. Herbert

Incident at Loch Ness

When famed film director Werner Herzog (*Fitzcarraldo*) decides to make a documentary on the enigma that is the Loch Ness monster, the film crew that has been trailing Herzog for a documentary about his own life tag along to capture the master at work on a project. We see Herzog team-up with producer Zak Penn (*X-Men 2*, *Last Action Hero*), and we follow the crew to Scotland, where Herzog and Penn prep

the production. We soon learn that they have differing views on the project. Herzog sees this as a quiet personal film, a psychological study of why people need to believe in a mythological monster, while Penn, author of many Hollywood blockbusters, wants a monster movie and insists on a little more razzmatazz, going so far as to hire a crazy crypto zoologist and a former *Playboy* model as the sonar operator. As the conflict between Herzog and Penn builds to a crisis and the crew begins filming, intrigue and disaster wait on the surface, and something mysterious lurks in the deep gloomy waters of the dark Scottish lake.

To say much more would ruin the story. Suffice it to say it is similar to *Lost in La Mancha*, the documentary of Terry Gilliam's effort to film a version of *Don Quixote* that goes disastrously wrong and is never completed, and the only footage that survives to any degree is the on-set documentary footage. Similarly here, Herzog's film is overtaken by deadly disaster and abandoned, and the only record that survives is the footage that was shot by the documentary crew following Herzog.

Herzog has an amazing on-camera presence (we're talking serious gravitas here), and his disappointment and fatigue as his project collapses around him is palpable, and as the battle of vision with Penn grows, his frustration boils over. Herzog is clearly the star of this film, and brings to it a weight and a seriousness that serve the film well. It would be much less of a movie without him. Penn, who is no Klaus Kinski, has to be given credit for allowing himself to be portrayed on film as a class-A Hollywood schmuck. Penn's enthusiasm for the project overwhelms his sensibility, and as his dealings with Herzog become more strained, he becomes all the more desperate.

Shot digitally, the film looks great for a budget of less than \$1,000,000. (And it would take a lot of work to make any film shot on the scenic Scottish Lochs look bad.) The film itself is uneven; clearly the best part is the middle act as Herzog's film dissolves before his eyes. There are no really big surprises in the film, save perhaps one, but there are plenty of laughs in Penn's increasingly pathetic attempts to spice up Herzog's film.

The DVD has a bunch of deleted scenes, most of which were cut for good reason. But a few are interesting. There's also the obligatory commentary track:

Penn: Werner, I just want to say I'm glad, given all the legal problems, that you could come do this. It means a lot to me—

Herzog: Yes, okay, it's one of those rituals of DVDs. Let's just get it over with. It's okay. I try to be a good sport.

The DVD is also loaded with Easter Eggs, at least 13 by my reckoning, including two other commentary tracks, and a documentary.

Incident at Loch Ness could be viewed as a metaphor for the modern movie industry: a talented director, working with a talented group of artists, has his work destroyed by the mindless interference of a moronic Hollywood powerbroker.

Golly, one might even think the whole thing is a satire.

-- John W. Herbert

The Lone Gunmen – The Complete Series

Freshly out on DVD is *The Lone Gunmen*, a short-lived spin-off that aired 13 episodes in early 2001, taking a trio of characters from the popular *X-Files* tv series.

The title characters are three conspiracy nut/hackers/journalists who publish a small press newspaper, *The Lone Gunman*: John Fitzgerald Byers (played by Bruce Harwood), Melvin Frohike (Tom Braidwood), and Richard Langly (Dean Haglund). Joining them in the series is their new intern, a painfully earnest but not too bright young football coach with the improbable name of James "Jimmy" Bond. They are also sometimes both aided and thwarted by a mysterious female operative by the even more improbable name of Yves Adele Harlow (an anagram of Lee Harvey Oswald).

While the *X-Files* explored conspiracies of science fictional or supernatural origin, *The Lone Gunmen* are concerned with more earthly conspiracies: has the automobile industry covered up the existence of a water powered car; is the latest computer chip also spying on its users; and the holy grail of conspiracies, who killed JFK.

The Lone Gunmen's only real claim to television history might be the plot of the pilot episode, which aired in March of 2001, in which a rogue group of American government officials, trying to increase flat weapons sales, um, hijack a fully loaded passenger jet intending to crash it into the World Trade Center, and it will be blamed on the "dozen tin pot dictators all over the world clamouring to take responsibility and just begging to be smart-bombed," and lots of money will be made by American arms dealers. So the next time you here a politician say no one could have predicted the method of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, they obviously weren't watching *The Lone Gunmen*.

In fact, not many people were watching *The Lone Gunmen*, and it easy to see why in some ways as early on some jokes were repeated *ad naseum*. Early episodes contained unfunny body function humour that went on too long, such as Langly puking and Frohike farting. Many episodes contain the same basic formula: a stranger approaches the Gunmen with a mystery that needs solving, but only after things go wrong do the Gunmen discover through some simple checking that it was the stranger that has been setting them up all the time. It also

seems that the Fox network failed to get behind the show, and as the *X-Files* was nearing the end of its run, the network wanted to put the show, and any spin-offs, behind it.

But for the most part, *The Lone Gunmen* is entirely enjoyable. While most episodes strove to walk the fine line between being a comedy and a drama (and didn't always succeed), there are a number of episodes that caught the balance just right. And a few that were downright suspenseful and thrilling. And when they stayed away from the bathroom humour, they did have a few genuinely funny running gags, particularly the one depicting Frohike as the ladies' man of the bunch.

The cast is uniformly excellent, particularly the three leads. And kudos to Stephen Seddon, charged with the thankless task of playing the sometimes near-moronic Jimmy Bond. Seddon throws himself into playing Bond, and captures the romantic soul and dignity beneath Bond's lack of intellect. And more kudos to Mitch Pileggi for his hilarious guest shot as FBI Assistant Director Walter Skinner (Scully and Mulder's boss)

There are some bonus features, including four episode commentaries by the cast and crew, and a nice little documentary. The best feature, however, is the inclusion of the *X-Files* episode "Jump the Shark," which resolves the cliff-hanger ending of the final *Lone Gunmen* episode, and reveals the ultimate fate of our conspiracy-minded trio.

Reasonably-priced and more than reasonable entertainment, *The Lone Gunmen* is a conspiracy worth pursuing.

-- John W. Herbert

Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow

Filmmaker Kerry Conran's first film, *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*, takes you back to those thrilling days of yesteryear, an alternate 1940 where famous scientists are being kidnapped while giant robot marauders are tearing apart New York and other world cities. Could these occurrences be linked? Following the story is star reporter Polly Perkins, played by Gwynneth Paltrow.

She finds herself caught when an army of giant robots tear apart New York. Thankfully, Polly and the city are saved by the timely arrival of Sky Captain (Jude Law), adventurer and leader of an "air squadron" for hire. Soon Polly and Sky Captain, who used to be lovers, are on the trail of a mysterious scientists named Totenkopf, who is sending out armies of robots and flying machines around the world to gather resources to further his diabolical aims.

They later team up with Frankie Cook (Angleina Jolie) who briefly was the "other woman" that broke up Joe and Polly, who

comes to their aid in a way that brings new meaning to the term “flying fortress.”

From New York to Tibet to a mysterious uncharted island, *Sky Captain* is a joyously fun ride. Like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Sky Captain* harkens back to the 1940s action serials and adventures. But while *Raiders* was clearly a modern film recapturing that spirit, *Sky Captain* goes a step further to also capture the 30s and 40s in look, feel, tone texture and design. It is shot to look like a 1930s film, complete with heavy film grain and soft focus. In fact in the first 10 minutes of the film, Conran sets the mood by hitting every 1930s movie visual cliché he can think of. And while ultimately *Sky Captain* pales in comparison to *Raiders* (as almost any film would), *Sky Captain* does hold its own with “future nostalgic” design, great adventure set pieces, and witty banter.

Technically, this film is the ultimate expression of the George Lucas-style of filmmaking – film your actors in front of a green screen and fill in the rest later. While Lucas’s excursions into this digital realm have had mixed results as entertainment, there’s little question that his films succeed as eye candy and that *Sky Captain* represents the next leap in this regard. The actors were filmed entirely in front of a green screen – no sets were ever built, and all the sets and backgrounds were created digitally. And while occasionally the actors do seem removed from their surroundings, for the most part the effect is seamless. And awesome.

Some things don’t add up – the bad guy has mastered anti-gravity but needs to steal electric generators. And it’s an odd alternate timeline. The WWII that we know does not seem to be underway, yet WW I clearly happened is referred as WW I, implying that WWII happened somewhere at sometime. And there is no mention of Hitler, yet it is German scientists that are being kidnapped, all during the apparent time of Hitler’s rise to power.

But King Kong was found in this timeline (the *Venture* is seen, along with ape cage), but the *Titanic* disaster clearly didn’t occur – we see the ship intact and in one piece, admittedly under water, but clearly not in the Atlantic. Perhaps this is our divergence point.

And what kind of world would we have if the *Titanic* hadn’t foundered on her maiden voyage? It might very well be the world of *Sky Captain* — technology and hubris run amuck. Indeed, the *Titanic* was a technological marvel. Some at the time suggested it represented the final triumph of man over nature. Is it too much to suggest that technological advancement could have continued unabated until the point that we see in the movie? Could the next step after “unsinkable” ships have been airplanes that swim and airports that fly? Could an unbridled technological advancement have been made and ushered in a golden age? But all the while underneath was the Achilles’ heel of human ego and hubris waiting for the fall? It is technology

gone amuck, the machines and artifices of a long-dead scientist, that is the ultimate villain of *Sky Captain* after all. But I digress.

The DVD of *Sky Captain* contains a good assortment of features, including informative documentaries and Conran’s original *Sky Captain* demo reel.

Sky Captain is a whole ton of fun and well worth the investment of two hours of your life.

-- John W. Herbert

Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith

For the first time since 1977, my jaw hit the floor while watching the opening scene of a *Star Wars* movie.

The Force is strong in this one.

With the galactic-wide Republic collapsing under the weight of civil war, separatists have kidnapped Chancellor Palpatine in an attempt to end the Clone Wars, which have been raging for years. Jedi Knights Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker launch a desperate attempt to rescue him, unaware that the Chancellor has all this time been playing both the separatists and the Republic against each other in his quest for power. And Anakin’s ill-fated and secret love for Senator Padmé Amidala, who is now pregnant, plays into Palpatine’s plan, and sends Anakin over to the dark side.

And it is with Obi-Wan’s and Anakin’s rescue attempt that the film begins, a rip-roaring first act of amazing special effects and action. Even R2-D2 gets to play action hero as he kicks serious droid ass.

The film rarely slows down from there, mainly because writer-director George Lucas has left himself a lot of plot ground to cover. It zips along, tightly edited, grinding down, much like Anakin is ground down, into relentless darkness. As Palpatine unveils his plan and subverts Anakin’s will, Lucas turns the screws even tighter until Anakin’s mortal failings destroy him, body and soul. Literally.

Perhaps the most remarkable about *Revenge of the Sith* is that even though we already know how it’s going to end even before we enter the theatre, we keep our interest in this film. But only just – at a runtime of two hours and twenty minutes, it almost reaches the point of wearing out its welcome.

The special effects are simply stunning. Say what you will about the two lackluster predecessors to *Sith*, they were excellent eye candy. And this film is no exception. In fact, this is the best looking of all six films. It’s gorgeously photographed.

Lucas has also learned his lesson about special effects. While the film is just drenched in computer-generated wonders, he keeps the attention on the flesh and blood characters, and doesn’t end the film with a battle between cartoon aliens and cartoon robots, as in the much-lamented *The Phantom Menace*. In fact,

the cartoon characters have been kept to a minimum. Jar Jar Binks is seen briefly but not heard, and the new big bad of the film, the CGI-created General Grievous, is dispatched halfway through the proceedings, leaving Yoda as the only cartoon character of note in the film.

It’s this tight focus on the human characters that make this film work as well as it does. This is the darkest of the six films, and delivers the most human conflict, and gives the actors a chance to shine. Ewan MacGregor is terrific as Obi-Wan as he channels the spirit of Alec Guinness. Hayden Christensen holds his own as Anakin. Less wooden than he was in *Attack of the Clones*, he’s still pretty much a one- or two-note actor in *Sith*, but fortunately he’s hitting the right ones. Natalie Portman has less to do as Padmé in this film, and doesn’t get much screen time to work. And finally Ian McDiarmid (as Palpatine) receives the chance to chew the scenery as if it were candy as Lucas’s normally awkwardly written dialogue oozes smoothly off his tongue. Christopher Lee and Samuel L. Jackson are pretty much wasted in small roles.

Again as in *Menace* and *Clones*, there is some stilted dialogue and awkward scenes, particularly in the film’s big pay off scene, the ultimate revealing of the helmeted Darth Vader, which while breathtaking (you could have heard a pin drop in the theatre when I saw it), ends with Vader’s gawky and embarrassing cry of “Nooooo!” in a moment of superfluous cheesiness. Also clunky are many scenes involving Padmé and Anakin. But here Lucas has enough sense to cut to the chase and keep those scenes short and lean. There’s one marvelous and beautifully shot sequence involving the two of them as they reflect on the dark turns their journey is taking that has no dialogue, only ominously swelling music, courtesy of composer John Williams.

Lucas even manages to tie up some loose ends: why doesn’t C-3PO remember that his creator’s name is Skywalker, and the mystery of Anakin’s virgin birth. He takes a crack at explaining how Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan and Yoda are able to transcend death, but this is a continuity point that Lucas seems to have fouled up. (Apparently Qui-Gon discovered the technique of maintaining his consciousness after death and will teach it to Yoda and Obi-Wan during their years of exile. This explains why Yoda’s and Obi-Wan’s bodies disincorporate when they die and why Luke can see them in their “ghostly form” in later films. It doesn’t explain why Qui-Gon’s body *doesn’t* disincorporate when he dies, nor why he is not present in his ghostly form (although his ghostly voice makes a cameo in *Attack of the Clones*). Further, in no way does this explain how Anakin/Darth ends up in ghostly day-glow robes at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. Surely Yoda and/or Obi-Wan didn’t teach the evil Darth Vader this technique, and there’s no indication that they taught it to Luke

and that Luke then taught it to a dying Anakin. That's a big gaffe.)

Thankfully absent is much of the kid friendly humour and fart jokes that Lucas inserted in both *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*. To have marketed the first two as children's films knowing the carnage to come in *Revenge of the Sith* is disingenuous to say the least. Kids may love Jar Jar, as Lucas once said, but they may have trouble watching characters get decapitated, and Anakin butcher children and get his remaining limbs hacked off as happens in this film.

So where does *Revenge of the Sith* fit on a scale with the other *Star Wars* movies? *Sith* is solidly in third place, behind the original *Star Wars* and the best of the bunch, *The Empire Strikes Back*. It makes you want to watch them all in one sitting, and certainly improves the original trilogy, making Vader's redemption all the more poignant, and all the references to Luke's father and the attempts to conceal his father's past all the more ominous and understandable. It does not redeem *Menace* and *Clones*, who really suffer by comparison to *Sith*, for it's clear that Lucas could have made them both much better movies. But I guess that's what happens when the writer/director gets preoccupied by merchandising opportunities like the Darth Vader Lawn Sprinkler, available at starwars.com.

Still, let's take this movie for what it is: a fine piece of popcorn-munching space-opera. It could have been a train wreck, considering how underwhelming the previous two films were and how Lucas had to dovetail this one between *Clones* and the original *Star Wars*. The fact that Lucas had so much of this film's plot already predetermined probably helped him stay focused on the story and not get distracted with bantha-dropping jokes.

It's not perfect, but it's not bad either.

-- John W. Herbert

The Village

If one were to view write-director M. Night Shyamalan's new film *The Village* expecting the fright-filled monster-fest implied by the trailers, take heed and reconsider before viewing. And if you are expecting this review to be free of spoilers, take heed and reconsider before reading. There is much that will be revealed.

And indeed, revelations are at the heart of *The Village*, the first being that the trailer implies that the film will be a scary monster movie. Which is not to say that they're aren't a couple of good frights – there are, and one sequence involving an act of violence that is as effective and shocking as any put to film in recent memory – but *The Village* is nothing but a wandering meander through the minds of

scared and frightened people, a slow psychological study, rather than a monster-filled fright flick. (In fact, one guy stood up and yelled, "Rip off!" at the end of the film – and no, it wasn't me.)

The residents of a late 19th century village live in a lush, idyllic, fertile valley, but in the forest that surrounds the town, lives a monstrous evil with no name. The villagers and the monsters have struck a bargain; none from the village shall enter the forest and the monsters will leave the villagers alone. It's an uneasy peace; the villagers maintain border patrols, watch towers and emergency plans in case the monsters break the truce. Due to an accidental transgression by, well, the village idiot (played by Adrien Brody), the monsters' ire has been awakened, and another villager (Joaquin Phoenix) has decided that he should risk all to travel through the forbidden forest to the next town to see if there are medicines that can help Brody's character. But the village elders (William Hurt and Sigourney Weaver among others) do not want him to travel into the forest because the elders have a secret; there are no monsters, and it is the elders, using the story of the monsters, who wish to keep the villagers contained in the valley for reasons that can only be revealed during the dénouement.

Shyamalan has made a career of moody films with twist endings, although some of the twists here come long before the end of the film. And there is no doubt that this is another moody but exquisite-looking film. It is also as slow as molasses, and in no hurry to get where it's going, which is not necessarily a bad thing. What is a bad thing is that Shyamalan is an obviously talented director who is defining his career as a maker of gimmick films, a filmmaker who denies his audience crucial information, so that he can pull out a "Gotcha!" *Twilight Zone*-type ending. Which is fine once, maybe even twice. But when all his films use this technique, the audience is going to stop immersing themselves in the film as an experience, and watch the film as a jigsaw puzzle. And Shyamalan's filmatic contrived conceits do not stand up to much scrutiny. He has not one but two twists that he whips out here, and neither are close to being as effective as the whopper of a twist he surprised us with in his first film *The Sixth Sense*. As George W. Bush once put it, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me – you can't get fooled again."

What lifts *The Village* (barely) into the realm of tolerably mediocrity are the performances of the stellar cast. Hurt and Weaver acquit themselves well as the conflicted elders, torn between keeping their conspiracy or revealing the truth, and Phoenix is great as the quiet but stalwart villager who is willing to face his fears in order to help his friend. The revelation here is Bryce Dallas Howard, who turns in an

amazing performance as Ivy, a blind woman who discovers the truth behind the Village.

Perhaps most interesting is the perhaps unintentional contemporary subtext winding its way through the film. The leaders of the village, eager to keep the population under control, maintain a conspiracy of lies and use the fear and terror of an unseen enemy to maintain control and promote a false worldview to the villagers. Eventually, the lies collapse and the truth comes out. The leaders, dear reader, are in our monsters.

-- John W. Herbert

(originally published in *Neo-Opsis #4*)

Chariots for Apollo

by Charles R. Pellegrino and Joshua Stoff
Avon Books; June 1999; ISBN 0-380-80261-9; 320 pp.; \$19.50

Way back in **UTOH Eight** to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the first moon landing, we published a primer of *Apollo*-related books. Here, in the year of the 36th anniversary, is another to add to the list.

This book, a revised version of a book first published in 1985, tells the story of the men and women of Grumman Aerospace who built the lunar modules (or LMs), the strange-looking, spider-like spacecraft that actually landed men on the moon. It's a wonderful source of space-race anecdotes. Did you know that the LM that took Armstrong and Aldrin to the moon almost exploded several minutes after it landed? (Armstrong and Aldrin didn't until they read this book.) How did Armstrong find out that he muffed his famous line? What happened during the *Apollo 1* fire? How big was the towing bill that Grumman presented to Rockwell (the builder of the faulty service module) following the *Apollo 13* accident?

All these questions and more are answered. And did you ever wonder what ever became of the 15 LMs built for the NASA moon missions? Of the six which actually landed on the moon, all six LM descent stages remain where they landed, and five of the ascent stages were deliberately crashed onto the moon to test seismic equipment left behind by the astronauts. The only exception is the *Apollo 11* ascent stage which remains in lunar orbit till this day. Of the other nine, one was used for the *Apollo 4* unmanned test flight, one was tested in earth orbit during *Apollo 9*, one went to the moon but didn't land with the *Apollo 10* mission, one saved the lives of the *Apollo 13* astronauts, four were not used and are now in museums, and the last one built was sold for scrap. Which leaves one more, which Grumman build especially for the Japanese. For that story, read the book

Part entertaining history, part lament for a future lost, *Chariots for Apollo* is well worth reading.

— John W. Herbert

Diplomatic Act

by Peter Jurasik and William H. Keith, Jr.
Baen Books; August 1999; ISBN0-671-57823-5; 364 pp.; \$9.99

This is the third book in Bean Book's "Starline" series, novels co-written by science fiction writers and actors from science fiction tv series. The actor in question in this case is Babylon 5's Peter Jurasik (who played Londo Mollari), and Jurasik and Keith have created a light but amusing read. An alien race has been monitoring Earth tv shows and are most impressed by a sci-fi show called "Star Peace" and the show's alien ambassador, Harmon. They believe that Harmon may be the only hope to save the galaxy from armageddon. So the aliens kidnap him. The only catch is that the aliens believe the show is real, not fiction, and don't understand that they haven't kidnapped Harmon, but only the actor who plays him. Not an original concept, to be sure, but well played out, steeped in sf lore and snide Hollywood satire. Jurasik's Hollywood experience serves this book well, and the characters are entertaining and engaging. A lot of fun.

— John W. Herbert

Distraction

by Bruce Sterling
Bantam Books; October 1999; ISBN0-553-57639-9; 532 pp.; \$9.99

This is Bruce Sterling's best novel ever, and that's saying something. November 2044 and spin doctor Oscar Valparaiso is fighting for his candidate's political life. But between the Air Force shaking down citizens, nano-tech buildings whose bricks offer cheerful assembly instructions, and political intrigue that is not of this world, Sterling gives us an America that is spiritually, morally and financially bankrupt. And terribly funny. Sterling's caustic wit provides many laugh-out-loud moments as he satirizes the media-soaked culture we inhabit today. Brilliant. As I said, Sterling's best, and easily the best novel I've read in years.

— John W. Herbert

In The Beginning...Was the Command Line

by Neal Stephenson
Avon; November 1999; ISBN0-380-81593-1; 151 pp.; \$14.00

In the beginning, Neal Stephenson's essay on computers, GUIs, Windows, Apple, Linux and the mindset of people who would spend money on a crappy OS while other companies can't give away their free OSs, began as a freely available essay available on Avon Book's website to plug Stephenson's last novel. When the website kept crashing because so many people were hitting it, Avon figured that there might be some money to make here. And thus, they begat this book.

And Stephenson pulls few punches describing his hatred of Microsoft, his disappointment in Apple and why he thinks both companies are doomed. He cheerfully rights them off (brilliantly comparing Windows and Disney World in the process) as he describes where he think the future of the OS lies. So check this book out — it's where we're going.

— John W. Herbert

GEEK OF THE WEEK

Name: *Reed T. Paulson*

Age: *22 (in Vulcan years)*

Blue pill or red pill? *Blue pill*

Pet Peeve: *Still can't get over the fact that they cancelled Star Trek: The Animated Series (the glommer was so cool!)*

Career: *Works part-time as a soccer goal post on Saltspring Island*

Fannish Claim to Fame: *Creator of Odo/Neelix fiction*

Favorite Book: *Star by Pamela Anderson*

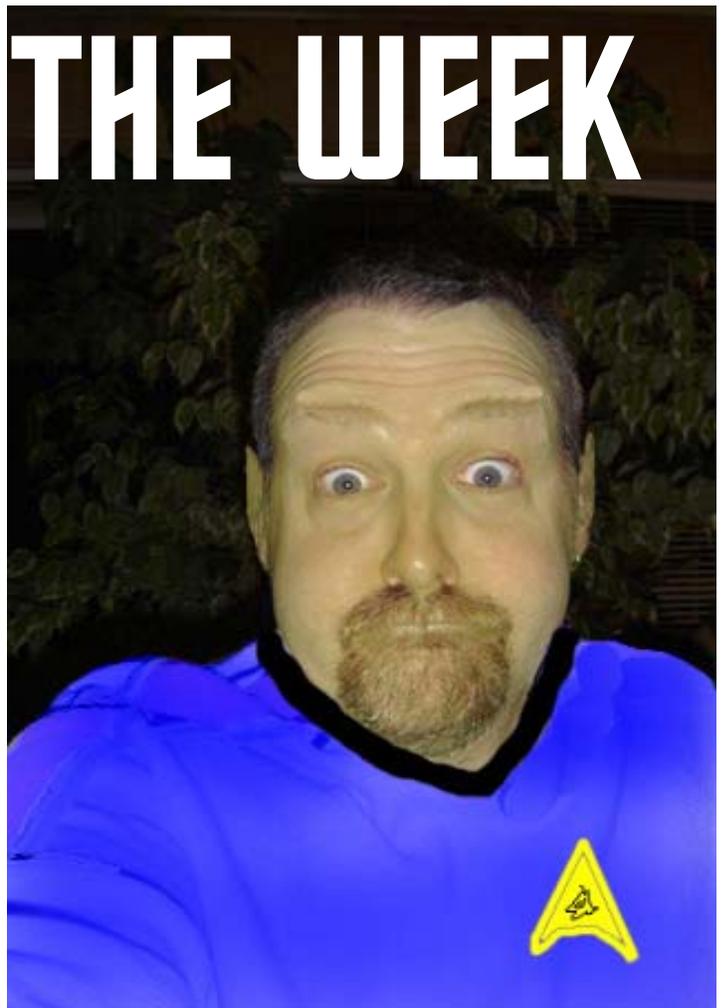
Favorite TV Show: *Baywatch (but only the Pamela Anderson years)*

Favorite movie: *Barb Wire*

Best Pick-Up Line: *You're almost as hot as T'Pol!*

Worst Pick-Up Line: *You're almost as hot as T'Pol!*

Secret No One Knows: *Still lives in his parents' basement (didn't have the heart to move upstairs after they died)*



Learning How Not to Drown

by John W. Herbert

Elk Lake, just north of Victoria, at most times, is a glass-like flat calm, a giant azure puddle surrounded by green old-growth trees. But in late afternoon, the sun can disappear as the clouds roll in, and the wind can whip the calm surface into a frothy chop. And it was in these conditions that a friend who wished to remain anonymous (for reasons that will become clear) and I found ourselves as we arrived for our first kayak lesson.

We have some previous experience kayaking. We had bought some small roto-molded kayaks earlier in the summer and we, along with our significant others, had made splashing about a regular event. We'd gone to many of the local lakes, and had gone out on the ocean a few times, always being careful not to go on stormy days, and trying not to overestimate our abilities. Kayaking on a lake is like playing in a bathtub, but on the ocean, it's a whole different feeling. The ocean is constantly moving and shifting underneath you, wakes bounce you, and currents pull at you.

The sights you can see! Eagles, otters, seals, sea lions, fish, crabs, sea stars... even an old paddle wheeler! (or a new faux paddle wheeler, since the wheel, although it spun, didn't seem to actually touch the water).

It's fun, but dangerous even you don't know what you're doing and that described my friend who will remain unnamed (his initials are Bernie Klassen) and myself, so we decided we'd better take some lessons and learn what we've been doing wrong all this time.

We arrived at Elk Lake and immediately noticed how rough the water was. (Indeed, the wind was to plague us for the entire session, as it kept blowing us ashore). A local kayak store was offering lessons, and they supplied the instructor, boats and accessories. We had our own wetsuits on; we figured we were going to get wet. But life jackets were another matter, as the tour company didn't bring enough large ones, and after much swapping around, I ended up with an ill-fitting medium jacket that I only did up when we did our wet exits.

There were only three of us in our course: my anonymous friend (Bernie), an 85 year-old woman named Marion, and myself. We selected our boats: I ended up with a 12 ½ foot Necky, and my nameless friend (that's Bernie in case you forgot) took a 14 ½ foot Carolina. Our instructor Brian was outfitted in top gear. In fact, he was trying his brand

new \$1,000 dry suit for the first time. Bernie and I had seen it in a store only a few days earlier. It was still covered with our drool stains.

Once we were outfitted and in the water, Brian demonstrated a few strokes for us. Marion was off like a rocket and poor Brian had to keep catching her and bringing her back close to shore.

The boat I was in was longer but narrower than my own boat and took a little getting used to. For a while it felt like I was always going to go over, but I eventually got used to the boat and the feeling passed.

Bernie had been in a Carolina previously and quickly adapted. Soon he was trying more sophisticated stroking techniques such as bracing and edging. Marion was doing well, too, but struggling against the choppy waves.

After covering the material in the lesson, which was the basic kayak strokes, Brian decided to give Bernie and I some bonus lessons and

have us practice some wet exits. Marion declined to participate in this portion – she wasn't dressed to be dunked.

Brian beached of his boat and walked out to Bernie and I in the lake. And we got dunked.

Basically, a wet exit is getting out of your kayak when you capsize. When you tip, the key is not to panic and remember, that it's okay, you're just in water. Keep your head, don't panic. Getting out of the kayak is really fairly simple. You grab the handle on the front of your skirt (your skirt is the neoprene cover that seals you into the cockpit and makes it watertight). You pull the handle and the skirt comes off easily. Air rushes out of the cockpit and pushes you out, and your personal floatation device brings you up to the surface.

It really is pretty easy, once you get over the fear of being stuck in the tight-fitting cockpit of a kayak that's turned upside down and there's water going up your nose. After a couple of tries, though, it becomes doable. Bernie took his glasses off and prepared for his own dunking.

Next, Brian decided to offer more bonus instruction and show us how to do a two-person rescue. Let's say you're paddling with a buddy (as you should be at all times) and buddy ends up in the drink. How do you get him out of the cold water and into his boat? (And in the ocean, you've got to be quick. The cold water will quickly rob you of your body



heat. And if you don't have proper gear on, like a wet suit or dry suit, you're in real trouble if you stay in the water for long.)

In our first practice scenario, I played the rescuer while Mr. Anonymous (that's Bernie) was the hapless victim. So Bernie dunked himself.

One thing to remember when getting dunked is to try to keep track of your paddle. It's all fine and dandy to get yourself back in your boat, but if you lose your paddle, you're not going anywhere. We have paddle leashes on our personal boats for just such an emergency, but we were out of luck with these boats, so it was important to keep a hand on our paddles.

Bernie (our victim) capsized, exited his boat, and surfaced still clutching his oar.

So far so good. Next the hero (that would be me) maneuvered his kayak across the bow of the victim's boat, in effect crossing the "T" while Bernie hung on at the stern of his boat. At this point, we righted his boat. Now both boats were upright, with his perpendicular to mine at about my cockpit. Before we get Bernie into his boat, we needed to get the water out, so we lifted/pulled/pushed Bernie's boat onto mine. (This is why



the first thing we did was right Bernie's boat. With the kayak upright, it's much easier to raise his boat onto mine because of the shape of the hull.)

With his kayak sitting on mine, we tipped his over, drained it of water, then righted it again, and lowered it back into the water. Next we maneuvered the kayaks until they were beside each other, but bow to stern. I leaned over and grabbed hold of his boat around the cockpit, and Bernie climbed onto his stomach on the back of his boat. He swiveled so his feet were in the cockpit, and he scooped down the deck of his kayak on his stomach into the cockpit, turning around so that ended up facing the correct way.

It's not easy. You're fighting the wave action, and the boats are slippery. As the rescuer you have to grip tight all the way through the process. Your weight is shifting constantly as the victim struggles to get in and the waves lap at both kayaks.

But, like a wet exit, it's doable. And if you're going to be on the water you need to be able to do this. You never know when it may come in handy.

We traded places and I dunked myself, and now with Bernie being the rescuer, I was able to return whole but wet into my boat. Brian our instructor congratulated us and said he was walking back to shore and that we should go for a little paddle to warm up after our dunkings, then return to shore ourselves. Our lesson was done.

Bernie put his glasses back on and he and I headed out for our quick paddle. The water was still choppy, and now it was about 6:30 in the

evening and the light was going. We shouldn't stay out on the lake much longer.

Then behind me, I heard Bernie shout, "Oh shit, oh shit!" Then there was a splash.

Bernie was under water.

I turned around and saw an overturned kayak and no Bernie. He broke the surface, shouting something. I called, "Are you alright?" He seemed to be fine, but he was still shouting something that I couldn't make out.

Then I realized, "Oh yeah, I have to rescue him!"

I turned my kayak around and quickly paddled over. When I arrived, crossing the "T", he was laughing. "I can't believe it! Forty hours in the

boat this summer and I tip while I'm having my first lesson!"

We struggled to lift Bernie's kayak onto mine. I realized later that we had forgotten to right his boat before trying to raise it. Still, we got it up and emptied of water. Then we flipped it over and I moved my kayak beside his.

Bernie was still laughing. Something was putting him in a great mood, apart from the obvious irony of capsizing two minutes after

learning how to rescue from such a predicament.

Finally, after a few moments of struggling, he was back in his kayak and he was still laughing.

"My glasses," he said. "I was underwater and I saw my glasses floating away from me. I reached out and was just able to grab them. That's what I was shouting about when I surfaced. I couldn't believe I still had my glasses!"

That's what I heard when he went over! A couple of cries of "Oh shit," a splash followed by a couple of blub blubs, then Bernie breaking the surface with his glasses in his fist, shouting, "Woo hoo!"

We couldn't stop laughing. Adrenaline and near-death experiences can do that to you. We calmed down and slowly paddled back to the beach. Brian shrugged his shoulders, and said, "I guess you passed!"

WARNING:
THIS SPACE HAS BEEN INTENTIONALLY LEFT EMPTY

Our Gods Are Not Exempt

by John W. Herbert

Our gods aren't supposed to die. But fate/God/kismet/whatever has that annoying habit of reminding us that our time is finite, and the price we pay for our scant few years of precious life is the knowledge that in the end we all owe fate/God/kismet/whatever a death.

Whether high-born or low-life, there is a cost for our brief journey in this reality that, in the end, is equal for everyone. In a sense, we are only renting a pocket of space-time for only a short moment.

Even our gods are not exempt.

I am a bass player. John Entwistle was my god.

With The Who, as Pete Townshend, Keith Moon and Roger Daltrey slashed, smashed and strutted, Entwistle stood immobile, save for invisible fingers that powered and drove The Who's massive sound.

The Who was not the usual band with the usual line-up of a guitar and a bass/drum rhythm section. They were a band with three lead instrumentalists in constant competition, always flashing their chops, always veering off into the unknown. And beneath it all, Entwistle somehow kept it in control, yet let it soar.

He was thunder to Townshend's lightning.

His songs were tiny, humorous nuggets almost lost against Townshend's epic canvases. Yet Entwistle's writing could cut to the chase and make the

same thematic statements in 3:30 that took Townshend four album sides.

Entwistle's song often delved into the humorous and macabre, as well as into fantasy and even science fiction. His most famous Who song, "*Boris the Spider*," is about a person terrorized by a spider, while "*Whiskey Man*" is about an alcoholic's invisible friend. Two of his songs from The Who's 1978 album *Who Are You* ("*905*" and "*Had Enough*") were from a science fiction rock-opera that Entwistle never completed.



I saw The Who live only once, in Vancouver in 1989, during what I call The Who's "Las Vegas" period as a 17-piece band (as opposed to their original four-piece version, and the current six-piece version that was to starting a four-month tour the day after Entwistle's death).

The rumble that poured from Entwistle's stack of Trace Elliot amps and A.S.S. speakers felt like it was slowly cracking my ribs. He abandoned his usual trade-marked bass runs in "My Generation" and he served up brand new riffs with techniques and skills that to this day I still can't figure out.

He stood rock still the whole night, of course, and thunder slipped off his fingers and the long steel strings of his bass as if from a shy Norse god.

My bass, as always, is nearby. Tomorrow, I'll plug it in and try to conjure some thunder of my own. But my bass is silent tonight, as is my god's.



John Alec Entwistle October 9, 1944 — June 27, 2002

The Great Gonzo

by John W. Herbert

I've reached the age where pretty soon now, it will be common for my friends and acquaintances to start dropping off. Fortunately, this hasn't begun yet, but what a sad and awful time it will be.

Almost as bad is the passing of people who were influences or heroes to me. My own personal gods. In the words of another late and lamented god, another one bites the dust.

Dr. Hunter S. Thompson took his own life on February 20, 2005. He was 67.

His journalism career began when he started moonlighting, writing the sports section for a local civilian newspaper while he was in the Air Force. (Ironically, his last book was a collection of essays from his ESPN column, *Hey Rube*.)

In the late 1960s, he embraced the counter-culture movement and was the on leading edge of the new "gonzo" journalism, epitomized by his book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. In this new journalism, the authors and their opinions become part of the narrative written in an over-the-top style, and Thompson was a master of its form. Other works include *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*, *The Great Shark Hunt*, *Generation of Swine*, and *Better Than Sex*. He published one novel, *The Rum Diaries*, and was the inspiration for the character of Uncle Duke in the *Doonesbury* comic strip.

David Gerrold once noted the

distinction between himself and Harlan Ellison. He described himself as a storyteller, and Ellison as a writer. Gerrold was adept at putting words in a pleasing order, while Ellison had mastered a craft.

Hunter was a *writer*.

Eloquent, angry, fierce, funny, and totally off the wall gonzo.

Thompson spoke his mind with razor-sharp wit and venom. He spoke to the absurdity of life with absurdities of his own. No one could match Thompson in his bitter recitations of the decline of the American Empire. (Seek out his obituary of his nemesis Richard Nixon as a stellar example.)

His most famous work, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, published in 1971 and subtitled *A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, was a requiem for the 1960s:

"There was no point in fighting — on our side or theirs," he wrote. "We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave. So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark — the place where the wave finally broke and rolled back."

Another wave is broken and the ocean claims its own.



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"Johanson's sense of humour, evident in both of his columns, is also conspicuously present in his pick for the issue's first story, "On The Road With Fiamong's Rule" by Sherry D. Ramsey. If I had to put a label to that sense of humour, I'd call it mainstream geek: two parts Jerry Lewis, one part Richard Feynman, a pinch of Firesign Theater and a twist of aggressive oddity."

-Jeremy Lyon (Reviewer Tangent Online)

"I recently received the copy you sent of Neo-opsis and I was quite pleased. The stories were strikingly good, lots better than I'd expected for the first issue of a semi-pro zine".

-Rich Horton (Reviewer for Locus Magazine)

4219 Carey Rd.
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V8Z 4G5



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