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UNDER THE OZONE HOLE

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About the Cover

Yep, it's the 40th Anniversary of some tv show.

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.

Will someone just hurry up and give Bush a blowjob so he can be impeached?

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 Live
- ___ You are the closed circle.

Canadian SF Links

- SF Canada: www.sfcanada.ca
- British Columbia Science Fiction Association (BCFSA): www.bcsfa.bcgreen.com
- Ottawa Science Fiction Society: www.osfs.ncf.ca
- The Voyageur: www.voyageur.idic.ca/
- On Spec magazine: www.onspec.ca
- Neo-Opis magazine: www.neo-opsis.ca
- Prix Aurora 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/merrill/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/
- Andrew Murdoch's Fandom.ca: www.fandom.ca
- Under The Ozone Hole Archives: www.undertheozonehole.blogspot.com

Ad-Astra:

- www.ad-astra.org
- Con-version www.con-version.org
- V-Con: www.v-con.ca

"It's sobering to consider that when Mozart was my age he'd been dead for 15 years...."
 -- Tom Lehrer

The Editor's Opinion... and Other Delusions

by John W. Herbert

According to a recent CNN story, "President Bush in recent days has recast the global war on terror into a 'war against Islamic fascism.' Fascism, in fact, seems to be the new buzz word for Republicans in an election season dominated by an unpopular war in Iraq."

Rumsfeld is also using the word, describing the rise of "a new type of fascism" and compared critics of the Bush administration's war strategy to those who were Nazi appeasers in the 1930s.

Merriam-Webster Online describes fascism as:

1 : a political philosophy, movement, or regime (as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition

2 : a tendency toward or actual exercise of strong autocratic or dictatorial control

Sound like anyone we know?

Perhaps Rummy and Bush mean "fundamentalism," described by Merriam-Webster as:

1 : a movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching
2 : the beliefs of this movement
c : adherence to such beliefs

2 : a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles, ie Islamic fundamentalism

I can understand how Bush makes that mistake. He's Bush. D'uh. But how can such a learned man as Rummy make that mistake? Then again, he might be confused. After all, he's a fascist surrounded by fundamentalist fascists.

So let's recap:

Osama bin Laden: fundamentalist



Saddam Hussien (r): fascist.
Donald Rumsfeld (l): fascist.



If anyone in the West needed a concrete example of "why they hate us," one really needs to look no further than the acts of terrorism carried out by the Israeli government in Lebanon.

First, let's be clear. Israel has the right to defend itself. But what Israel is trying to do is affect a political change by using violent action against an unarmed civilian population. And that's terrorism.

Pure and simple.

And here's the rub for Arabs. When an Arab country, Iraq, invaded Kuwait, the whole world was up in an uproar! The UN passed resolutions denouncing the invasion, and the West led an attack to repel the invasion based on those UN resolutions. One of the justifications for the 2003 Iraq invasion was again Iraq's apparent flouting of UN resolutions. (It turns out that they weren't. But I digress.)

Yet when Israel invades an Arab country, the West seems strangely silent on the matter, except for the US, which has pointedly *not* called for an immediate cease-fire, only for a cease-fire once Israel has secured its position. (Of course, it's not like Bush *can* complain... he's doing the same thing in Iraq. But I digress again.) Further, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appeared to actually condone the attacks with her preposterous and naïve comment that the invasion was the "birth pangs of a new Middle East." Israel has occupied foreign territory for 40 years in contravention of numerous UN resolutions, and has invaded Lebanon – again – but the West does nothing but sit back and fret. And there's not much of that going on, either.

The ultimate irony is that Israel will never achieve its security goal with this action. This is just what Osama bin Laden and his Islamists want. They want to see Israeli and American soldiers stomping over the region like bulls in a china shop. Right now, Israel is doing more recruiting for Al Qaeda than bin Laden could ever hope to do.

For every Hezbollah terrorist taken out in this offensive, dozens of civilian families have suffered casualties and perhaps gained a new appreciation for the Islamist cause. Some may even become jihadists. Burying family members has been known to radicalize people.

After a break of almost a decade, I attended *V-Con 29* and *V-Con 30*. After such a long break, it was interesting to see what sort of fans were attending conventions these days.

First, there were a lot of familiar faces, but they were older, greyer and fatter (myself included). Fandom does seem to be aging. Perhaps this is strictly a *V-Con* phenomenon, but I suspect not.

Second, and what made the first point all the more obvious, is that there were hardly any teenagers or young adults there. As the poet asked, "Where have all the young men (and women) gone?"

Are the "next generation" of fans hunkered down in front of computers and Playstations, exploring virtual worlds in a totally different way from "classic" fans?

Perhaps I'm totally wrong about this - maybe I just don't know where young people hang out at cons. But if I'm right, this will spell serious trouble for conventions like *V-Con*. If young people have stopped coming out, then conventions have nowhere to grow their attendance from. Clearly, conventions need to be getting the youngsters out in order to remain economically viable.

Speaking of last year's *V-Con*, one of the few complaints I heard about the hotel was the lack of garbage cans or waste baskets in the public areas like the lobby or hallways. Seems that there just wasn't any place to empty your pockets of the accumulated debris of a busy convention day. All day I heard the comment that where no garbage cans in the hotel.

It makes perfect sense in hindsight, of course. Garbage cans would be an excellent place for bomb-planting terrorists to do their work.

Welcome to the world of post-9/11 paranoia.

One of the best things you can do for your career is to die young. I was thinking about this when considering the recent *Serenity* movie. It was based on the short-lived television series *Firefly*. If the *Serenity* movie was never made, *Firefly's* place in the sf-tv pantheon would be assured as a much loved and revered albeit cult show. But if the *Serenity* movie was made and it sucked, *Firefly's* reputation would be tarnished and reconsidered. Perhaps fans were making too much of this show, perhaps it was deservedly cancelled quickly with good reason.

There's a reason why Jimi Hendrix is revered among guitar players and music aficionados, apart from his staggering talent. He didn't live long enough to make any late 70s disco albums, to have some hack producer try to resurrect his career in the 1980s, to be fat and old and bald and playing Vegas in the 1990s, to record that truly awful duet with Sting and Dolly Parton, or to tour as part of Michael Jackson's band on his comeback tour in 2008. He didn't live long enough to ruin his reputation.

And that's the risk you take making something like the *Serenity* movie. *Firefly* didn't last long enough to ruin its reputation, but a crappy follow-up movie might.

Fortunately, the movie doesn't suck. In fact, it's pretty darn good. Alas, not good enough for a sequel it seems.

On a personal note, I should bring all you cat-lovers out there up to date on the condition of Linus, my cat of 16 years, whose picture has graced the pages of this zine before.

In late September of last year, Linus was diagnosed with a hyperthyroid condition. This was after a weekend when he wasn't feeling very well and had an "accident." By the time I was able to get him to the vet, his symptoms had cleared up but a full round of tests was recommended. (And getting the urine sample is a story unto itself!) The blood test revealed his thyroid condition. His thyroid gland has developed a tumour (usually benign) that either slows down or, as with Linus, speeds up his thyroid, which affects his overall metabolism.

Also discovered was a lump on one of his rear toes, and it was drained. The vet was concerned that this might indicate lung cancer, as

a sign of lung cancer in cats is tumours metastasizing in their toes. However, an x-ray soon revealed that Linus's lungs were empty, along with my wallet.

The vet also re-examined Linus's lump during a further visit for blood tests. She began by draining the toe at the start of the exam before commencing with the other tests. When she returned to examine the toe again, it had already filled up again. The vet decided that a biopsy was in order. Fortunately, Visa had just increased my credit limit.

Under a local, the vet made an incision and poked around, and instead of just getting a piece of something, she managed to pull the entire tumour, about the size of your thumbnail, out of his toe.

Linus ended up having a major tumour removal under a local. And he had more stitches in his toe than I've had my entire life. He spent a couple of days feeling very sorry for himself, but soon bounced back..

The tumour was tested and found to be benign. Linus's prognosis is quite good. His thyroid condition is under control, and he is excellent candidate for the radioactive iodine thyroid treatment. In fact, further testing revealed that both his thyroid and blood pressure meds were working well, too well, and his meds have been cut back. But he will be on meds the rest of life, unless we go for the radioactive iodine treatment.

This involves a one-time injection of radioactive iodine into the cat.

It kills the thyroid tumour and the cat is cured; unfortunately the cat is deemed to be radioactive and must be quarantined until his radiation levels are declared safe, usually after a week.

Generally, there are no lasting side-effects from this radiation treatment, although some sort-term problems can occur. On the left is an artist's conception of the type of thing that can typically be expected.



I heard a car ad on the radio this morning. It was a plug for a local Cadillac dealership hawking its after-purchase service programs, and it started with line, "Now that you've invested in a Cadillac...."

Merriam-Webster Online describes "investment" as "the outlay of money usually for income or profit." The only way you're going to make money off a car (apart from being a taxi driver) is if you've bought a vehicle of intrinsic historical value: John Lennon's Rolls Royce, the 1960s' Batmobile, or Bonnie and Clyde's death car.

But a car, an ordinary car used for ordinary everyday to-and-froing, is not an investment. It will not accrue value. It will lose value the minute you drive it off the lot.

It is what it is, a tool, nothing more. Mind you it can be a very useful tool, but it is nothing more than a large hammer with four wheels, bucket seats and air bags.

It is not an investment.

And people that buy a tool with the thought that this is some sort of investment for the future are victims of marketing, and are themselves tools.

While talking about this summer's war in Lebanon, William Kristol said, "Better to say that what's under attack is liberal democratic civilization, whose leading representative right now happens to be the United States."

I don't get it. How do you quantify the statement that the US is the leading representative of democracy? They're sure doing a good job — Be Nice To America or They'll Bring Democracy to Your Country!

What about that other chestnut that America is the "freest nation on earth." Again, how is this determined? Does *Time* publish some sort of "freedom index"? Is it determined by a straw poll of Fox News correspondents? Don Rumsfeld's tea leaves? Or by reading the pattern of buckshot left in Dick Cheney's hunting victims, er, partners?

It is a strikingly American perception that somehow the USA is rightfully the leader of the democratic world. Only in the US is the President often referred to as "The Leader of the Free World," and it is done as if it was the obvious natural order of things.

I don't recall when this was decided. Did I miss a meeting? Was I on vacation that week? If we're in the free world, and the free world has a leader, shouldn't there be a vote or something like that on who leads us?

I know I didn't vote for him.

(Kristol also says that all the problems in the world are the fault of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, sorting of glossing over that the reason for the Islamists' popularity was the American-backed coup of the democratically-elected Iranian government of the early 1950s and the installation and American support of the Shah's 25 years of brutal dictatorial repression. When Bush rambles on about how a democratic Arab nation will change the Middle East, remember that there was one 50 years ago until the West overthrew it. But I digress.)

Now have proof that television and radio can affect your dreams. I offer it freely for your amusement.

A couple of nights ago, I spent the evening watch some *Red Dwarf* episodes. Then I went to bed listening to the radio, a local sports show dissecting the latest Vancouver Canucks game.

I had a dream. I was watching the Canucks play on tv. They were short-handed (and playing without helmets for some reason), but Canuck captain Markus Naslund fired a wrist shot while cruising through the slot and scored. We cut back to the Canuck player in the penalty box to see his reaction. It's Second Technician Dave Lister of the mining ship *Red Dwarf*. He's holding a hockey stick, dressed in his usual slobby clothes (not a Canucks uniform), and stares straight into the camera and says, "What are you fookin' lookin' at, Smeghead?"

Chew on that, Mr. Freud!

I find that I don't read much sf anymore. I still read a lot, voraciously, but now I tend to stay in the non-fiction department. I just finished reading some Noam Chomsky, and now I've halfway through Chuck Klosterman's *Sex, Drugs and Cocoa Puffs* (which I recommend highly).

I still love sf. I see all the big sf movies in the theatre, and buy the DVDs. I don't watch much weekly sf tv; I prefer to buy the full-season DVD box sets and watch at my convenience. I'm currently enjoying *Angel*, a series that I did not see a single episode of on free tv.

But reading sf? I dunno what's happened, but that's just dropped off my radar. Some of it still grabs my interest, like Dan Simmons, an author that I will splurge on and buy in hardcover, no less. And I still keep picking up the odd sf paperback, but I rarely get around to reading them.

And I don't listen to much new music anymore. I'll get new releases by bands that I like from back in the day, U2 or The Who or Pearl Jam for instance, but I just can't get into any new acts. I have the new cd by Coldplay, the biggest group on the planet, sitting on my desk at home, slowly gathering dust. I should listen to it sometime before it fades into format obsolescence. (And how in God's name does Hillary Duff rate a greatest hits cd after putting out, what, two albums? And how in Satan's name does Hillary Duff rate a career? But I digress.)

Now back to the original question of why I have stopped reading sf. Is it a time issue? I can afford to spend two hours and watch an sf flick in a theatre and get a complete story from beginning to end (except for *The Phantom Menace*, which was a complete mess from beginning to end. Whoops, digressing again!) But a novel takes much more time to read, of course. Maybe I'm just becoming a lazy reader. But no, that can't be it; as I said, I just finished reading some Chomsky!

Maybe I'm just not finding anything relevant to me in most books on the shelves these days, although that seems hard to understand. I don't see how I could not be interested in Terry R.R. Jordan's *The Wheel of the Sword of the Saga of the Story That Never Ends: Volume Seventeen: Part Four: More of the Same But With a Shiny Embossed Cover*.

Speaking of the paranormal, I have had the occasional psychic vision. I don't know what to make of these visions. Are they real visions from another dimension, or just a random thought that coincidentally happens to come true?

A co-worker of mine clearly receives visions from another reality, as evidenced by this recent conversation we had:

"I know people, it's just this thing I can do. I can look at a person and I can instantly see all sorts of things about them. For instance, I used to live in Toronto, and I could tell just by looking whether a person is gay or not."

"What? Are you saying I'm gay? When did that happen?"

"Obviously not yet, but it's just a matter of time. But my point is that I have this psychic thing where I can 'read' what people are like. You, I can tell, you are very successful in your relationships and are good with kids."

"I'm divorced with no kids."

"See what I mean? You're also very intelligent and a deep thinker."

"Well, I'm a geek. That's pretty close."

"Oh, you Cancers and your sense of humour."

"I'm an Aries."

I hope she uses her power only for good.

But I have experienced some sort of psychic future vision. In Grade 8, I used to take a bus to school. I had to transfer on Douglas Street, and every day across the street from me a man would stand waiting for his bus. He had some sort of braces on his legs and his knees were locked, unbending, and he hunched over to use his canes. This was the era that the Victoria transit system was dominated by the GM "Fishbowl" bus, all of which had stairs, which made this man's plight all the more awkward.

One day, just as his bus was pulling up, a vision popped into my head of this man sprawled out on his back in front of the bus, his legs up in the air like a "v". And sure enough, the bus pulled up, stopped, and the man had some sort of trouble getting on the bus, and ended up flat on his back in front of the stopped bus, with his legs uncannily resembling the 21st letter of the alphabet.

Nothing was injured but pride, but did I have an actual vision? It's not hard to imagine that someone with difficulty walking might fall down. Did I coincidentally imagine him falling on the same day he actually fell, or was the spirit world sending me this message for purposes unknown?

Another time, a couple of years earlier, I was playing Kick the Can with other neighbourhood kids. (For the uninitiated, Kick the Can is a variation of Hide and Seek. The person who is It must find the players who are hidden and beat them back to the can to count them as caught and "out." However, an uncaught player can free caught players by kicking the can.) This is a great game to play because it involves a lot of running around and fence climbing and shouting and kicking and screaming and loud arguing, a sure way for children to ingratiate themselves to the adults in the neighbourhood.

I was hiding in a back yard and another boy

was also in the same yard about 20 feet away. The kid who was It came into the yard and looked around. He didn't find either of us, and left to search the front of the house. Just as he disappeared around the side of the house, the other hiding kid and I (who had not spoken for fear of being caught) started singing the Howdy Doodly theme song as loud as we could.

What's particular strange is that I had no memory of ever seeing the *Howdy Doodly Show*.

I have no recollection of ever hearing the theme song prior to that moment. Yet, here I was singing the words of a song I had never heard before. Okay, yes, you're right, the Howdy Doodly theme is not particularly lyrically challenging. But how would I have known that if I'd never heard it before? I will admit that maybe I heard it somewhere before and for some reason it stayed in my subconscious until it bubbled to the surface on that warm summer

night. But what about the other kid? Why did he start singing the same song at exactly the same time? Unmistakably, there was something mental going on here.

The third time I had a psychic flash, there was no question that this was a legitimate vision from the future. It was when George W. Bush was elected president. I thought to myself, *Fuck me, this is going to be a bad nightmare.*

2006 Prix Aurora Awards

Winners denoted by a *

Best Long-Form Work in English

Meilleur livre en anglais

* - *Cagebird*, Karin Lowachee (Warner Aspect, Apr/2005)

Migration (Species Imperative 2), Julie E. Czerneda (DAW Books, May/2005)

Mindscan, Robert J. Sawyer (Tor, Apr/2005)

Silences of Home, Caitlin Sweet (Penguin, Feb/2005)

Lone Wolf, Edo van Belkom (Tundra Books, Oct/2005)

Spin, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor, Apr/2005)

Meilleur livre en français

Best Long-Form Work in French

* - *Alégracia et le Serpent d'Argent*, Dominic Bellavance (Les Six Brumes)

Aurélien et l'île de Zachary, Véronique Drouin (Les éditions de la courte échelle)

Le Dragon de l'Alliance, Michèle Laframboise (Médiapaul)

Les Archipels du temps (La Suite du temps - 2), Daniel Sernine (Alire)

Reine de Mémoire 1. La Maison d'Oubli, Élisabeth Vonarburg (Alire, Mar/2005)

Reine de Mémoire 2. Le Dragon de Feu, Élisabeth Vonarburg (Alire, Oct/2005)

Meilleure nouvelle en français

Best Short-Form Work in French

* - «*Montréal: trois uchronies*», Alain Ducharme (Solaris 155)

«*La Danse de la mer*», Mathieu Fortin (Le Bilboquet août)

«*Au jardin comme à la guerre*», Éric Gauthier (Solaris 155)

«*Équilibre*», Patrick Senécal (Solaris 156)

Best Short-Form Work in English

Meilleure nouvelle en anglais

* - «*Transubstantiation*», Derwin Mak (*Northwest Passages: A Cascadian Anthology*, Windstorm Creative)

«*She's Such a Nasty Morsel*», Julie E. Czerneda (*Women of War*, DAW)

«*Identity Theft*», Robert J. Sawyer (*Down These Dark Spaceways*, Science Fiction

Book Club)

«*Alexander's Road*», Karl Schroeder (*The Engine of Recall*, Robert J. Sawyer Books)

«*Going Harvey in the Big House*», Douglas Smith (Cicada, Jan/Feb 2005)

«*Like Monsters of the Deep*», Hayden

«*Mayfly*», Peter Watts and Derryl Murphy (*Tesseract Nine*, Edge)

Best Work in English (Other)

Meilleur ouvrage en anglais (Autre)

* - *Tesseract Nine: New Canadian Speculative Fiction*, Nalo Hopkinson and Geoff Ryman, editors (Edge Publishing, July/2005)

Birth, Michael Lennick and Robert J. Sawyer (writers); Joe Mahoney (producer) (CBC Radio One, July 8, 2005) [radio drama]

Fantastic Companions, Julie E. Czerneda, editor (Fitzhenry & Whiteside) [anthology] *Neo-opsis Science Fiction Magazine*, Karl Johanson, editor (www.neo-opsis.ca) [sf magazine]

On Spec, Diane Walton, managing editor (The Copper Pig Writers Society) (www.onspec.ca) [sf magazine]

Six Impossible Things, Nalo Hopkinson (host & curator); Joe Mahoney (series coordinating producer) (CBC Radio One, May 16-27, 2005) [radio anthology]

Meilleur ouvrage en français (Autre)

Best Work in French (Other)

* - *Solaris*, réd. Joël Champetier (www.revue-solaris.com)

L'Année de la Science-Fiction et du Fantastique Québécois 2000, dir. Claude Janelle (Alire)

Jean Pettigrew, critiques (Solaris 153-156)

«*Les enfants de Jules Verne au Canada: la génération étouffée*», Jean-Louis Trudel (Solaris 156)

Artistic Achievement

Accomplissement artistique

* - *Lar deSouza* [www.lartist.com]

Elaine Chen [www.elainechen.com] (*Wasps at the Speed of Sound*, *Mockingbird*)

Stephanie Ann Johanson [www.neo-opsis.ca/art] (Cover for Neo-opsis 6,

illustrations Neo-opsis 5, 6 & 7)

Jean-Pierre Normand

[www.jeanpierrenormand.com] (Asimov's Apr-May/05, Analog Sept/05, Asimov's Dec/05, Solaris 154)

Martin Springett

[www.martinspringett.com]

Ronn Sutton (www.ronnsutton.com)

(Elvira, Mistress Of The Dark; "5 Alarm Charlie" in Even More Fund Comics)

Fan Achievement (Publication)

Accomplissement fanique (Publication)

- *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette*, Garth Spencer, ed. (www.eFanzines.com/RSNG)

Brins d'Éternité, réd. Mathieu Fortin (www.alegracia.com/brins/faq/faq.php)

In Places Between: The Top Five Stories of The Robyn Herrington Memorial Short Story Contest 2005, IFWA

(www.writtenword.org/in_places_between)

MensuHell, réd. direction: Francis

Hervieux (www.geocities.com/mensuhell)

Nocturne, éditeurs: Jonathan Reynolds,

Guillaume Houle et Fred Proulx

(www.6brumes.com/fanzinenocturne)

Fan Achievement (Organizational)

Accomplissement fanique (Organisation)

* - *Barbara Schofield* (TT Masquerade)

Debbie Hodgins (Avenging Dragon

Squadron, KAG)

Randy McCharles (Westercon 58 "Due

North")

Roy Miles (I.D.I.C.)

Joan Sherman (I.D.I.C.)

Fan Achievement (Other)

Accomplissement fanique (autre)

*-*Urban Tapestry*, filksinging

[www.urbantapestry.org]

Don Bassie (Made in Canada website/site

web) [www.geocities.com/canadian_sf]

Judith Hayman (filksinging)

[www.hotelhayman.ca]

Martin Springett (filksinging)

[www.martinspringett.com]

Larry Stewart, entertainer/personnalité:

amuseur

the TRIALS and TRIBULATIONS of FANZINE PUBLISHING



A transcription of a panel from V-Con 30.
Your panelists (l. - r.):

Andrew C. Murdoch: nomintaed for an Aurora Award for his zine ZX, also editor of *Covert Communications from Zeta Corbi*;

John W. Herbert: winner of four Aurora Awards (with co-editor Karl Johanson) for editing *Under the Ozone Hole*;

Steve Forty: Long-time editor of *BCSFAzine* and twice nominated for an Aurora Award.

Garth Spencer: Winner of a Casper award for editing *The Maple Leaf Rag*, current editor of *BCSFAzine* and this year's winner of the Best Fanzine Aurora for *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette*.

S40: We have quite a crowd.

The Audience: I feel awful. Come on, there's got to be more people than this!

JWH: And when you leave to go to the *Harry Potter* panel...

S40: Well, it's 10:00 AM. Most fanzine-type fans are not really 10:00 AM fans.

ACM: This is true.

S40: Including me, I almost got lost.

GS: I have opinions about some of the scheduling. I thought it was just my imagination but at this convention, they did it again. They put a "How to Survive Your First Convention" panel on Friday at 5:00 PM before most everyone, especially neos, have arrived.

S40: In my opinion something like that is fine on Friday, but you should repeat it sometime on Saturday.

ACM: I have to accept some of the blame for the scheduling, because when I was asked to be on the panel, I said if it was sometime in the morning because I work that afternoon.

S40: You! It was originally 1:00! I was so happy!

ACM: Sorry!

JWH: Damn you to hell.

S40: Anyway, do we want to start now? I'm

supposedly moderator, I think.

ACM (to new audience member who just arrived): You are staying here, right? You're not going to the *Harry Potter* panel?

JWH: You can be up here if you want.

ACM: Feel free to move forward!

S40: I'm a former editor of *BCSFAzine* and these are some issues that I edited. Gestetner ink does hold up. This is many years old.

JWH: That's sweet.

GS: Nobody denies that.

S40: That's a three-colour Gestetner cover... how many people did those? I had the infamous *BCSFAzine* Gestetners and actually they were mine, mostly. And the electric stencil cutters.

Okay, we're going to start. This is the Trials and Tribulations of Fanzine Publishing. This is Andrew Murdoch, John Herbert and Garth Spencer. And I'm Steve Forty. We've all put out fanzines and so on. And I'll give everyone a minute or two

to introduce themselves.

ACM: I'm Andrew Murdoch. I publish *Covert Communications from Zeta Corbi*. Although not recently since I've had a child. I first got into fanzine publishing on my own because of this schmuck and his partner in crime *{{Editor's Note: Andrew is referring to Karl Johanson, now editor of Neo-opsis magazine.}}* who published *Under the Ozone Hole*, and I said to myself, "Hey, that's kind of cool!" My first fanzine was nominated for an Aurora Award and lost to John and his partner in crime. A proud tradition which I have upheld.

JWH: I'm John Herbert. I've published fanzines, did some Star Trek club zines and some other zines, and then me and my partner in crime Karl Johanson published *Under the Ozone Hole* in the 1990s and we were nominated for five Auroras in row, and won four, beating Andrew once. I haven't done much lately, except that this year, I restarted *Under the Ozone Hole*.

GS: I'm Garth Spencer. I used to be famous for a newszine that tried to cover Canadian fandom for Canadian fans. Maple Leaf Rag, as it was then called, followed a number of such attempts and was succeeded by a few aborted attempts that petered out. Now I've been editing *BCSFazine* in a format not unlike Steve's. I produce this on a monthly basis. I try to provide a variety of things outside of just stuff to do with the club – regional news, national news, fan news, writers' market news – anything that might interest or amuse people or might even be useful. And late at night when the darkness falls and the moon rises, I try to get out the latest issue of my personal zine, which is now titled *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette*. It has in the past had other silly titles, like *The World According to Garth* or *Sercon Popcult Literit Fanmag*. This is what happens when you have too much time on your hands. As we'll get into later, it's been harder and harder to get these out with the increase in copying costs mailing costs. Interestingly, this happened about the same time as the Internet became available.

S40: My name is Steve Forty. I did *BCSFazine* for a number of years. It was nominated for a couple of Auroras – actually, the first time when I edited it, and the second time it was half

with me and half with R. Graeme Cameron editing. *{{Editor's Note: Graeme Cameron was to be a panelist on the panel but was unable to attend due to a bizarre gardening accident.}}* We lost. It's very hard to do a fanzine like

articles that are that much more interesting to put in your fanzine.

JWH: Exactly. When we were doing *Under the Ozone Hole* in the 90s, we had a few pages of



BCSFazine every month and compete with someone who does one or two a year. And we tended to lose to those! I'm also an Elron award winner. We put out, with Jim Welch and Mark Olberg, *Not the BCSFazine 100*, and *Still Not the BCSFazine 100*. And it's not named after L. Ron Hubbard, and it has nothing to do with –

GS: It's a *V-Con* institution, award for worst contribution –

S40: Disservice, the word is. Disservice to science fiction. I guess now we should get into the trials and tribulations of publishing. Now the Internet is one form of it –

GS: Is it a trial and tribulation, or is it a solution?

S40: I think you'll find there are two forms of fanzine fans. The biggest thing is the fanzine fans of old want the hard copy. They want something like that, and just printing it off in your printer is just not the same thing.

ACM: I think with regards to that, The Internet has taken over a niche that fanzines used to fill in that they used to serve as public forums through the letter columns and that sort of thing. So the Internet being so much more immediate, there's no more community within a fanzine to the extent that that was the grapevine through which news passed. Now, the main trial is to come up with an article or solicit

news, and Garth's *Maple Leaf Rag* was a news fanzine, but with the Internet, the function of being a news source has really gone from fanzines. Obviously, a club zine would have club news in it, but in terms of more generalized science fiction news or national fan news, that's probably best served by the Internet these days.

S40: I used to have a couple of columns. One was called About the Authors by The Authors. I'd phone an author and ask him to do something on another author. And I actually had things lifted from *BCSFazine* by things like *SF Chronicle* because I would phone all the local authors and put the news in there.

The Audience: One thing the Internet doesn't have a corner on, if you want to phone another author, or review a movie –

S40: But even the old hardcopy fanzine you have today, you use the Internet to get the articles, so there's really not that much difference. And if you have a fabulous set-up with a fabulous computer, you can have a fancy wonderful multi-colour cover which you really can't do very easily on the printed copy unless you have lots of bucks.

GS: I think that the Internet has not entirely replaced the functions that used to be performed by fanzines in the mimeograph era, and the

reason is that for some reasons a lot of the participatory functions and fandom-oriented functions that you see in a lot of one-man entirely voluntary publications simply haven't been picked up. Maybe I'm not subscribing to the right newsgroups or listservs, but when I look for web pages, I find things ones that expressly professional, like *SF Canada*, for SF writers in Canada, or *Made in Canada*, whose web master is focused on films and media and writers and anything except fandom. It does make a concession by listing conventions and that's it. The concept that there is news by, for and about science fiction fans, or there's a community out there that might have an interest in connecting, that seems to have gone by the board. Or it's served in different ways and I'm not seeing where it's being served.

S40: I'd kind of like to get off that, we're going beyond the topic. The topic is more the trial and tribulations of publishing, which would be getting your articles, troubles you've had actually producing the thing.

GS: We have a different take on this, Steve and I. We've had a different take on what needs and interests people have, just in BCSFA, and how to meet them. I've been flailing around trying to find the things that people would be interested in participating in, or the things they'd be interested in seeing. And I still don't know after five or six years. Steve has been very good during his term had soliciting participation.

S40: I found that if you get a little bit of cider, if you knew what you were doing at conventions, I never had any trouble getting artwork.

ACM: I had to solicit by buying a beer for fanzine artists at *Torcon*.

S40: You get to know these people. Part of the thing for me was that I was always lucky that way. If you look through old *BCSFAzines*, this was in the days before we had much in the way of computers – when I first started doing it, I finally got my Atari Amiga 2 halfway through my editorship of about 35 issues. My biggest problem is that I am a terrible typist. The last thing I need to do is to take someone's stuff and re-type, because there'd be ten times as many typos. So I'd just take it, photo-reduce it at your local Kinko's or whatever, and all the pages inside the zine – you could tell I was younger then, because I was able to read them without glasses – and I'd photo-reduce it, so you have an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet folded over, so you'd have lots of pages and lots of information. But it was very hard for me to re-type it, so rather than do that you'd find all different typefaces, all different styles because I just trusted my people that contributed. And I was very lucky that way, with people like Al Betz,

who won an Aurora for his Ask Mr. Science column. And I'd get a letter from Harry Warner, Jr., and every fanzine editor knows you got to have a Harry Warner, Jr. letter in the olden days. And I got them, and I thought I could re-type them, or I could put in and you could see all the letters wandering and so on.. He had certain keys where the words would go like [a curvy line]. It was part of the charm, so instead of re-typing all this stuff, I would just run it as is. There was a lot of stuff in there with very few illustrations in the middle. It was just article after article.

ACM: Especially for *CCFZC*, I've been using my computer solely so layout contributions have not been too much of a problem. I've been quite blessed with quite a bit or artwork from Brad Foster and I forget who it was sent me a huge amount of fillos by a fan artist who passed away recently. Rostler, William Rotsler. So artwork I haven't had a problem with fortunately, it's been articles and getting actually writing done. I've been told I can write, but it takes me a long time to do it between writer's block and I 17 month-old running around the house.

{{Editor's Note: At this point, a person entered asking where Boardroom A was. There followed a long discussion concerning the location of Boardroom A. With a 3-to-1 vote (Andrew dissenting), it was eventually decided that Boardroom A must be next to Boardroom B.}}

ACM: So I've been very lucky in the artwork department, but most of the verbiage I've had to create myself. That's pretty tough when you're trying to fill an entire zine which is why mine comes out so infrequently.

JWH: That's the tough part, filling up the pages with words. Fortunately I have a government job so I have plenty of time to type. It also depends on what kind of zine you're doing. With a perzine, your own personal zine, you realize that the ultimate responsibility to fill those pages lies with you. If you're doing a club zine, you're somewhat at the whim of what the club decides to put in, and if they put out a lot of effort and get you a lot of stuff, then that's terrific. It cuts down your work immensely. But sometimes you have to harass people to contribute things.

ACM: I remember you were a master at harassing us.

JWH: A master harasser.

S40: I was lucky when I was doing *BCSFAzine* because we had FRED, which is the weekly drinking thing. And I did cover that was infamous, we didn't know if it would go across

the border. You see a naked Leela on top the Time Lord lying on the floor and his scarf wrapped around the TARDIS. And it says, "Again, Doctor! Again!"

GS: Let's do the time warp again!

S40: *Fosfax* wrote to me and asked if they could trade with me. I'd never heard of them before, but they're quite a famous fanzine with all these famous authors, and they wrote to me to ask me if they could get this issue. Someone had seen it.

GS: Then Timothy Lane took over as editor.

S40: I took the time that if someone commented on something in the zine, I made sure that the person who wrote it saw it. I brought the fanzine to them, I opened the page and I said, "Look at this." That's how I got people like Sidney Trim and so to keep contributing, you keep working the people. It sounds cruel, but it works. You take the time and effort, and you get a lot more out of it. I never had trouble getting articles, except one or two in the early days. As far as a clubzine, it sort of was and sort of wasn't because it was what I could find. The club really didn't contribute except for upcoming events, which was one of my columns anyway.

GS: I found over and over again that a minority of people will continually get into something participatory for publication on paper. And a majority of people will accept it. Whether they appreciate or whether they have a problem with it, only a minority will tell you. And that's just the deal. Since the mimeograph era, I've found that costs have risen. It's been a lot easier to do things purely on the Internet. I'm aware of at least one web site, *efanzines.com*, which is where fanzines are archived in electronic format. I could have produced a long list of what are current zines that I don't have in paper format. Fanzines are always changing; they change address or title. They'll always sound goofy. I have in the past produced fanzines with titles like *Scuttlebutt*, *The Maple Leaf Rag*, *The Perfect Paper*, *The Filthy Rag*, *Black Marxist Lesbian Quarterly*, *Sercon Popcult Litcrit Fanmag*, *The World According to Garth*, and most recently *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette*. That's typical. When I first got into fandom, I heard of a club called *The Elves*, *Gnomes* and *Little Mens* *Science Fiction Chowder* and *Marching Society*. It's hard to catalogue things like that. At the Worldcon in Glasgow, some people got together and whipped up a one-shot – a fanzine that's only going to exist for one issue – on the spur of the moment, very quickly and spontaneously, and it was called *The Pork Authority*. And I realized that different people have different funny bones, different live nerves. It's really hard to predict where you're going to hit them,

what's going to arouse their enthusiasm. And I think that no matter what media you've got, what the price structures are, that's the major quandary.

S40: I think all of us here have been involved in paper fanzines. Part of the Trials and Tribulations of fanzine editing is actually printing it. Now something like *{{holds up an old BCSFAZine}}* would take about four hours to actually print, because I had the gestenter, the electro-stencil cutter, time seven sheets which would be 14 electro-stencils, plus if you did the colour cover, you had extra ones. And you had ink everywhere. And you'd have a group upstairs. Because it was a clubzine I got get a group of people to do collation and have a big party. And we had a treasurer for a while who wouldn't give the address labels. So later at FRED, we'd put the stamps on and the labels, because you can't put the stamps on without the labels.

Audience: How big a run did you do?

S40: Between 100 and 200. This was when we used to have 100 members, a little over 100 members, and the you'd have trades. It added up to a fair bit of time. It was a lot of work to do that, but it was a work of joy for me for the longest time, then it go to be onerous in the end when you've got 28 pages every month. 'Cause that what that is, 28 pages. But I enjoyed it and I'm proud of it.

ACM: For my current zine, I use computer layout which makes life tremendously easy. You can have a fairly polished looking page. That helps quite a bit. In the early days, I did my zine on an Apple Iic because that was the only computer I had at the time. I used software that could not make a margin along the side so I stapled my zine at the top. Which I got plenty of comments on, having an 8 1/2 by 11 fanzine stapled at the top.

JWH: It was unique.

ACM: It was. If nothing else, I got known for that. How it was stapled! No one remembers anything I wrote, but it was staple really cool!

JWH: Never read it, but I liked the staples!

ACM: So these days layout is not so much of a problem for me personally. The main problem is afterwards and that's the expense of printing it. Photocopying has gotten ridiculously expensive lately. And postage has gone up in Canada every year for the past three.

S40: Can I recommend going to some place like Staples Superstore for printing?

ACM: That's where I do go, but even there the

prices have gone up a cent a page in the last year. Layout has gotten easier but everyone has their own fleet of gestentners in the basement anymore. Reproduction is getting costly.

{{Editor's Note: Transcribing this a year later, the Editor can only shake his head in wonder at how he let that straight line get away unscathed.}}

S40: I did have them but they all went to *CascadiaCon*. They were given to Seattle people. They came up in a big van, and these people in white coats came and instead of kidnapping me, they took all the gestentners and electro-stencil cutters.

ACM: What happened to them?

S40: They wanted to show all the new fans how the old fans used to print. So I started to get them running and a whole pile of people took pictures of me and a gestentner at *CascadiaCon*.

JWH: The first zine I was involved was a one-shot we did called *The Electric Gang Bang Pork Chop*. So there must be something about pork and spontaneous one-shots. *{{Editor's Note: The Editor would like to point out that no pork products were harmed in the creation of The Electric Gang Bang Pork Chop.}}*

GS: There was a creative character in Edmonton who came up with something with no pork in it called *You Can't Get to Heaven on Roller Skates Infrequently*.

JWH: We should just do a panel on zine names.

GS: Yeah!

S40: There you go!

GS: The problem I have is: a) finding out where all the members are because I've had this continual struggle over the last year just establishing who is a current BCSFA member, who's expired, who's moved and where did they move to, and it took an extremely long time simply to meet up same time same place with the treasurer and the vice-president—

S40: They have electricity today!

GS: The other problem I have is getting people to understand what I was saying quite clearly in plain English on paper where the words stayed still and you could re-read them. It's amazing how English is broken down semantically so that you can read the same sentence four ways depending on the state of mind someone is in at that time of the month *{{Editor's Note: I'm sure Garth is referring to "rent day."}}*, or what country they're in, or what language or speech community they originally come from. It's very amazing. Within

one club.

S40: When I had to do it, originally most people would rejoin at a certain time, so I'd get 13 sheets and type all the names on all the labels, and I'd run 13 sheets, of labels. But then they decided that they don't all want to renew in May and that made it a lot harder. Most people did renew in May for the longest time at V-Con.

JWH: I was going to say that when I started I did some gestentner work, too. Bernie Klassen had one so we were doing a lot of work with that, but I came in just as that was fading out and computers were coming in. The latest issue was done using Pagemaker 7.

S40: You cheated!

JWH: It's the only way to go! The only way to go! Printing costs are horrible, but what I do is use Pagemaker which very easily exports to pdf and email a lot of copies out to people.

GS: I have a problem. When I was first editing *BCSFAZine* and using pdf, when I exported to pdf strange things would happen to illustrations, especially on the cover. First, for several issues one half on one side of the cover illustration, just the illustration, would disappear. Just blank white space. And then it was 3/4 of the cover illustration would disappear and you would get to see one quarter of it in the upper left hand quadrant. That was when I gave up on Pagemaker. I still to this day do not know what the glitch was. Now over the past year or so, I've been struggling with machines, different programs, different conversion strategies. I finally gave up. I've been doing this in Word.

S40: You notice what you guys are missing? What's different about *BCSFAZine* that's different from all the rest? No colour. You guys are in black and white. I used to like the fact that you could get blues and reds and browns. Yeah, you can get it on the email version—

ACM: My last issue did have a colour cover—

S40: It's very rare. It's sad to see that sometimes— well, you can't afford to print it in colour. I was going to keep one gestentner with colour ink in case I ever print something I can throw a little colour on it just for fun, but it was too easy to put them on the fun and see them go.

JWH: We did a couple of colour covers for *Ozone Hole* in the '90s and —

S40: Oh, I remember that!

JWH: —they looked great but the cost was, oh god, it instantly doubled the cost.

GS: One of the things that we represent, some of us with graying hair, is that we've seen several changes in media and that means we've learnt crafts several times over. I've used spirit duplicators, ditto machines. I've seen hectograph. You've used mimeograph.

S40: Yeah. I've also used inkjet printers and all that. Did you ever do anything like I did? I had collectors that liked *BCSFAZine* and wanted "The" *BCSFAZine* so every now and then just to get even with them, I'd throw in different sheets of coloured paper. You'd have a random colour so you couldn't get all the *BCSFAZines* identical, I even did one with two different covers once.

ACM: I remember an *Under the Ozone Hole* that had every issue customized—

JWH: No, it only had eight different covers.

GS: That's been done several times. In the earliest years—

ACM: I remember the personalized letter columns—

JWH: Go away!

S40: The worst thing I ever did was –and next time I will think very carefully if I ever get involved with that— we did a hoax ad for *BCSFAZine*. I got together around *V-Con 8* with a lady from Edmonton and a person from Calgary and we came with addresses that were not viable. In Calgary it was like "Something SW" and there was no such place. In Edmonton, it was a burnt-down sports arena, and in Vancouver it was the Hotel Devonshire's parking lot. After they had ripped the hotel down. And so I came up with a title called *Jape's Books*, a new chain of bookstore. And I announced this new chain of bookstores and it came out in these other fanzines, and I, not carefully thinking this out, I ran this ad for *Jape's* and a number of people went down to this fancy, early opening of *Jape's Books* and I forgot that the BCSFA meeting was at my house the next day. Ooooo, they were not happy. They fell for it hook, line and sinker. But I thought they would pick up on the word "Jape."

GS: You never know what joke people will notice. Or get. Or where the comprehension fails. That's the problem with any hoax, any satire, and it's not specific to fanzines.

S40: How many people went to that? Ken, do you remember?

Ken Wong (who had wandered into the

wrong room): No, not me!

S40: You were one of the ones complaining and so was David George and a number of other people. You went by at another time and noticed where it was. Every now and then people will do a hoax like the Not the *BCSFAZine 100* and Still Not the *BCSFAZine 100*. Gerald Boyko was supposed to do the 100th issue of *BCSFAZine*. By the time issue 104 came out, we did Not the *BCSFAZine 100* and sent it out to all the BCSFA members, and just after we did Still Not the *BCSFAZine 100*, just after *BCSFAZine 108* came out, then the real *BCSFAZine 100* came out.

ACM: Better late than never.

S40: How about you guys and deadlines?

ACM: Well, I'm pretty much wide-open. Always have been. I knew pretty much right from the outset that setting a regular schedule would almost would either kill me or result in a terrible zine since I was providing most of the writing. Since it's inception there have been gaps of months and in the most recent case, two years between issues simply out of necessity. It's pretty much a hobby. Some people have been wonderful at keeping deadlines,

S40: *BCSFAZine's* been excellent.

ACM: *BCSFAZine's* been excellent, but it's a clubzine though, so that helps.

S40: No, not really. I was still up at 2:00 in the morning wondering "where the hell's that article" and I had to print that morning because that was the final deadline.

ACM: My zine is officially listed with the National Library of Canada as being "irregular."

JWH: Well, I try to keep a roughly quarterly schedule with *Ozone Hole* and I've done pretty well except for that nine year gap. But going back to deadlines and clubs, that was the one thing that was a problem when I was doing the club zine. When I'm doing *Ozone Hole*, it's just me. I all can do is get mad at myself and I'm not going to do that. With a club zine, it's good in one sense because you've got a lot of people contributing things, but it's bad in another sense because that deadline's coming and your on the phone and pulling your hair and screaming at people "You promised me an article! I need it! I have three blank pages waiting for it!"

S40: I must admit that I was lucky there. I always had too much stuff.

GS: I very hard-nosed about deadlines. I can afford to be because a) I produce *BCSFAZine* on somebody else's dime, and thereby hangs a few

tales I won't tell, and b) I get somebody else to take the actual production of the physical zine. Having a computer to work with solves a lot of my problems enormously. I find it really easy to use boilerplate. I also get other people to do significant chunks of the zine. Sometimes it's embarrassingly obvious how I slap the thing together.

S40: Here's another thought. Have any of you gotten anyone really mad at you, almost enemies? I was asking for artwork. And this one person submitted a whole pile of artwork. I said that I disliked dragons intensely and that I would very rarely run them. She sent me pages of dragons. And I ran one of hers, and then I think I ran a second one. But they were all very similar and I didn't want to run a bunch of them. And she got really really mad at me!

GS: You could have done a one-shot called *What a Drag*.

S40: You'd get artwork that really wasn't what you wanted and they would get really mad if you didn't run it.

ACM: Not so much from what I didn't run, but I'm very surprised that John didn't deck me in Winnipeg. I ran an editorial in defense of one friend at the expense of another, and I realize now that I realize now in older wiser times that that was pretty much a mistake. At the time I thought I was doing the right thing and I got the nastiest letter from him as the result.

JWH: But you've learned well, Grasshopper.

ACM: So that's the only instance in my case where I've really ticked someone off.

JWH: Yeah, I've ticked a few people off.

S40: I don't want names!

JWH: I'm not giving any! When you're doing a clubzine like Garth is doing now, especially when it's on someone else's dime, there is that struggle between what you want to do as the editor and what the club wants done and perhaps what certain people in the club want done, and that gets into the whole club politics thing spilling over into the zine. That's why I just gave up on clubzines. I like making a zine and I'm just going to do my own zine.

S40: You mean the club actually interfered? My club never said anything to me.

JWH: Well, it was a rare thing, it didn't happen all the time. But it happened enough times—

ACM: It got political—

S40: I just realized that the artist that I had

trouble with was a club officer—

JWH: Exactly.

GS: Have you noticed that the level of interference with people's behavior or their rational thinking from not looking at their assumptions? If people want to do their own thing their own way and they enjoy their own hobby activity, that's one thing. But everyone wants somebody *else* to something their own way, that's when you get politics.

S40: Yeah.

ACM: Yeah.

JWH: Yep.

GS: And it took me a long time to realize how much of this bullshit is going on. The other thing that I'm facing most of the time now is people not communicating in terms that I can recognize. I don't know and I've never known what people would want to enjoy in a clubzine. So I've pretty much been left to my own devices doing my own thing at other people's expense. I'm saying that now "on record."

S40: Another thing to consider. Have you put things in that you thought were totally in bad taste? I already mentioned the Doctor Who cover that I didn't think would cross the border. The other thing was when they had a meeting at my place and David Stewart didn't lock the bathroom door and someone burst in the door and took a picture of him sitting on the toilet. I ran that as a cover on *BCSFZine*.

ACM: (*almost dies laughing*)

JWH: I would've run that!

S40: But I'm trying to get you guys to say did you ever put out something that you thought was well, maybe that wasn't such a smart idea? Come on, you must have!

JWH: Only you, Steve.

GS: I can be fairly snide in my editorial columns sometimes. I think that I am self-critical and people can see it but in the editorial and letter columns I can have a very sardonic and somewhat stuffy tone that I think is going to grate with some people. Maybe I'm putting people off and not realizing it.

S40: Maybe what you need is more of a light-hearted tone.

GS: I am being light-hearted. People just don't quite get my rather Victorian default mode.

S40: What I would try and do is get a couple of people like "Ask Mr. Science." I'm not particularly funny, but these people are, so I tries to get them to do the funny bits. And that's another trial and tribulation – what do you want to put into a fanzine?

ACM: When I started my second fanzine, I thought of something that Dale Speirs said which is "have a focus for your zine." And looking back, my first zine didn't really have much of one except that I was a fan. So I decided that I wanted to write about science fiction and fandom. So that gives you something you can go for, something you can strive for, and at the same time if you've got thoughts percolating in your head that have nothing to do with science fiction and fandom, there's been a long tradition of that in science fiction fanzines – you're always going to be wrestling with yourself, does this fit in? What are people going to think about this? I ran an article in my zine following September 11 and it had not terribly much to do with science fiction or fandom except that it referenced myself and my life it's been the single most commented-on article that I've ever written. So it's where do you draw the line? How much do you put in what form?

JWH: That's a good approach, to have a focus for your zine. I should try that sometime. I don't want to limit myself to what I put in the zine. So I don't have a focused approach to what the zine is going to be about. I try to make sure that everything is well-written and of quality. Let's put it that way. So I prefer more the quality of a piece as opposed to the specifics of the subject matter. So it goes all over the place. In the latest one I've got an article about kayaking I wrote, and an article about *The Who*, and someone submitted an article about the woman up in the Interior who on Valentine's Day her car went in the river and she saved herself by eating chocolates until the rescue crew came. She was strapped in her car under water.

GS: The key to underwater survival: bring chocolates.

S40: For me focus – what I tried to do was, being a clubzine, was to think about what fans wanted. Well, they like to eat, so there was a fan food column I'd try to get. They liked humour so I tried to get Mr. Science. I tired to get someone to do movie reviews, I tried to get someone to do book reviews. And then I had an artist do the front cover and the back cover.

GS: Advertising. I'd forgotten that we had advertising. Was that paid advertising?

S40: We got 10% discounts.

GS: When I inherited *BCSFZine*, I inherited a bunch of regular ads, I started adding advertisements for writer's workshops or for my *Royal Swiss Navy* or *The Western Fandom Illuminati*. I try to be as general and unfocused in the zine as possible. I try to include things like market news or recently published works by Canadian writers or the evil influence of Danish cultural imperialism on Canadian fandom. I think that I'm going to get some letters of comment eventually.

S40: What about letters of comment?

ACM: Letters of comment are essential.

S40: No, I mean do you get lots?

ACM: I got quite a few from The Usual Bunch of People. By that I mean Lloyd Penney, and Harry Warner Jr., and a lot of people that I traded fanzines with down in the States.

GS: I always though that Lloyd was the Canadian love child of Harry Warner and –

S40: We've got about five minutes left, so we should start wrapping this up, unless someone wants to ask a question. Does anyone want to ask a question?

The Audience:

S40: I guess we should wrap up. Thanks for coming!

Geoff Ryman Wins 2005 Sunburst Award

This year's Sunburst Award winner is Geoff Ryman's *Air*, published by St. Martin's. The prize is \$1000 in cash and a medallion incorporating a 'Sunburst' logo. The ceremony was held October 5, 2005, in Toronto, Ontario. Jurors were Nancy Baker, Deirdre Baker, Nicholas Ruddick, Rodger Turner, and Aritha van Herk. The Sunburst Award is presented annually for a science fiction novel or book-length collection by a Canadian writer. The Sunburst Award website is: www.sunburstaward.org

Letters of Comment

(John's comments are in italics.)

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Great to hear from you again, and sorry it's taken me a while to acknowledge the return of *Under The Ozone Hole*. I got your message on one of my Hotmail addresses, and saw it mid-month, even though you sent it mid-September. Then comes an e-mail to my current Allstream address, and now I'm two issues behind. Time to catch up, so here's comments on issues 16 and 17.

16... Which one of you two is still making signs? Neither? Wish I knew how to find a job with the government; I've been applying for the past ten years, even with some tips from insiders, and I've never had so much as an interview. Six years is a long time, but hey, I was losing my hair back then, and I'm sure as hell not getting it back now.

((Neither Karl nor myself is making signs. I just fell into this government job. I had just been laid-off from Disney, and was doing some temp work. A friend of mine was having lunch with another friend who works in government who was complaining that a person they were about to hire for an auxillary position backed out at the last minute. Then they suddenly both went, hey, what's John doing? So the second friend scrambled back to her office and that her assistant (who going to do the actual hiring) to email me and ask me to apply. Needless to say, when I get home and saw the email which began with "You don't know me, but I have a great opportunity for you," I thought, humph, more spam, and deleted it. But it worked out in the end!))

I still have all the crap you guys put together for the Mylescon bid... I even have the buttons. That was a lot of fun, and I'll bet there's still folks in Boston who remember with a smile. Is Lyles still in the seminary, or is he a priest somewhere by now? I did a quick Google... besides the references to the bid, I see a Myles Bos as a Senior Materials Scientist with Ballard Power Systems. I also see something about a Myles Bos being on the Governing Council of Discovery Christian High School in Vancouver. That's probably him now. Even now, the Lord can't help you, Myles...

I was responsible for the departure of Gunderson? I didn't know I was responsible for anything! Do I get the credit or the blame? And

you guys never cashed my cheque!

((You never sent it!))

I remember trying to find out more about the next *Tesseracts*... I had a couple of short stories on the go, and I wanted to find out when the deadline was. Do you think anyone would tell me? Nope, not a one, not until the publication date of the book was announced. This happened for several years until I decided just to write for fanzines, and not get bogged down with pro deadlines that may never take place. When's the next *Tesseracts* due, anyway?

((The latest, Tesseracts Nine, is out. Check out the website: <http://www.edgewebsite.com/books/tess9/t9-catalog.html>))

Is the Internet boring? Well, waiting for something intelligent to show up on the monitor sure is. The crap-to-intelligence ratio is approaching infinity. For a group that proclaims to embrace the future in our reading materials, we are surprisingly slow to take up that new tech, but we also remember our roots, and we'd rather have paper fanzines. Can't always get what we want, but for some, a web zine or a .pdfed zine just won't do. I'd rather have paper, but as you've said, fans are often broke, so I'll take a .pdfed zine over no zine at all.

My letter needs an update. I didn't watch *Enterprise*, either. My hair isn't getting any thicker. We did an Aurora each in 1997, and nothing since. Ad Astra in 2006 will be the 25th Ad Astra, and we will be celebrating... yes, I'm still on the committee, and have been for 22 of those 25 Ad Astras. It's gone back to that Don Valley hotel. We got our Worldcon, and after a very successful bid, the con itself was bland and dull and ordinary. We worked hard on it, and were forced off the committee by an outsider who got in control of the convention and ran it into the group, and I don't mean the chairman. We wound up only attending Torcon 3, but helped out the LA bid for 2006, which they won.

17... And now for some fresh stuff... this stuff is fresh, isn't it? The brown stuff around the edges is just decoration, right? (Already this is starting to sound like an episode of *Fairly Oddparents*.) Talking about science fiction? What would you want to do that for? It would start a dangerous precedent.

((It is a science fiction zine. Presumably. I should mention something sf-ish occasionally, if only to keep up appearances.))

One door, one doorknob. That's the contents of every MP's office in every parliament building in the country. Fortunately,

the door comes with a handle. (I'll wait...) When I lived in Victoria, I could walk the hallways of the Parliament Buildings with impunity. A few years ago, tourists were arrested at Queen's Park in Toronto for trying to open the front doors. The age of paranoia is upon us.

Local organizations are promoting getting rid of your landline phone in an effort to free up some telephone numbers for the burgeoning number of cellphones. Yes, I have one, too... it's used as an emergency phone and I carry it with me. It's also gotten me some work, so it's already worth it. It's also connected to my landline, so if I'm not at home to pick up the phone, the call does directly to my cellphone. Very handy.

((Yes, I recently relented and got a cell phone again. It's mainly for emergency use, what with biking and kayaking and all that. Plus it's good for ordering pizza on the way home so the pizza arrives home at the same time I do.))

I saw the original *Star Wars* at the Totem Theatre on Douglas St. literally days after moving to Victoria, and it blew me away. Great adventure, and good fun. Episodes 1 and 2 were far from the best, and Episode 3 was definitely the best of that trilogy. I think people liked it because of the effects, the story of Anakin becoming Vader, and the scenes that connect Episode 3 with Episode 4. Recently, the CBC showed Episode 6. A British actor named Sebastian Shaw played the Anakin that Luke Skywalker finds in the Vader suit, but in this redone ending to Episode 6, Hayden Christiansen appears as the ghostly Anakin instead of Shaw. Yet, it's Alec Guinness that appears as Obi-Wan Kenobi, and not Ewan McGregor. Geez, George, get consistent, whydoncha?

I saw *Star Wars* at the Totem Theatre, too, on opening night in late June. It took almost a month for it to open here. Same thing with *Empire*.

((And if you like carefully, you'll see that one change that Licas has made with the new DVD version of Jedi is that he has digitally removed Shaw's eyebrows from the Vader-mask revealed scene. Anakin gets his burned off in Episode 3.

Oh, the minute a fan must keep track of.))

Well, this zine is back. And, it is good. Why didn't Karl come back? Too busy with *NeoOpsis*, or just he just finally know better? As you can see, nothing much changes with me. You've been six years away, and I am still writing for fanzines. Some habits die hard. Take care, and I'll follow my habit, and will wait

impatiently for the next *UTOH*. And more cheese. Thanks for that, by the way.

Bob Johnson

Address Withheld by Large Bolts
thebobmeister@hotmail.com

It is with extreme trepidation that I send this e-moc to your prestigious, nay scintillating publication. It goes without saying that this is likely the 5th time such a thing has happened, but who's counting. My self and others, who will remain nameless, except for Cory Newlander, think and ask that you reconsider, but it's your call. You're the editor, even if the ballots electing you to that position haven't been made available to scrutinizers.

That being said, the commentary on page 12 said it all, or at minimum it addressed the topic. Which is more than can be said for most in similar circumstance. The recent episodes of

Dr. Who, notwithstanding (I love that word).

The primary focus of what's going on now, is shrouded in a hood of elasticity, the likes of which haven't been seen since the golden age of Gestetner, which is on the way back, mark my words (except for 'scintillating', I'm having seconds thoughts about that one). To use an analogy, think of ice-skating.

I can't bring myself to comment further on your zine, other than to mention this.

((*Thank you for your rambling denouement of consensous reality. Your discourse reminds me of the current troubles in our medical system; specifically, in relation to prescribed psychiatric medications and what occurs when they are abused (or in your case, unused).*)

Needless to say, your recent missive was a delightful romp through the mind of the average Stephen Harper fan, unencumbered as it was

with any grasp (light or otherwise) of the brass pole of sanity (except for your comments in regards to that Karl Johanson character, which were surprisingly perceptive).

Thanks for writing. Glad to see you finally learned out to use a computer. I was worried that you might run out of crayons.))

Zines Recieved

Opuntia

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

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette

edited by Garth Spencer, P.O. Box 15335, V.M.P.O., Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5B1

BCSFAZINE

edited by Garth Spencer, P.O. Box 15335, V.M.P.O., Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5B1

Jesse

by Louise Peters

On a earned day off — one of those perks those of us who work in government or at the university get — my partner, John and I, together with Bernie and Paula drove up to Sombrio Beach. Now the plan was to picnic but Bernie brought along the kayak as he was going to ride some waves. That's a whole other story!

We got to Sombrio, hiked around the two trails and then settled down by the ocean for a picnic. While Bernie went off to ride the waves, and John went to keep an eye on him, Paula and I started up the kelly kettle to make tea.

And that too is another story for another time.

In the course of our picnic I told the tale of how a few years back I had visited Sombrio because I'd heard about the squatters living on the beach, and how the beach was to become part of the Juan De Fuca trail and the squatters would be kicked out. I wanted to see it all for myself rather than just reading about it. What I found was a well kept farm with geese and chickens; young people living on the beach and picking up the garbage and to be honest a nice little community. Its all gone now, but there is still evidence of the farm in the cleared spot in the midst of the forest. And it is there that one finds the totem pole which to me looks like Bart Simpson and the tree with the mosaic, metal plack and the angel dedicated to Jesse.

One wonders who was Jesse? How old was he? Did he live at the farm? Did he live on the beach? Or was he one of the many surfers who loved this beach and came to catch a wave?

I often wonder the who, what and why when I see road side memorials; and yet road side

memorials tell the tale of the tragic accident that took a young life or lives. In Jesse's case there is a mystery....this isn't a road side memorial, it is a memorial at the base of a tree. As one stands contemplating the little trinkets placed there

one can hear the crashing of the waves. It is a peaceful spot.

Wherever Jesse is now I hope he has found peace too and he has caught a wave....



REVIEWS

The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.

In the fall of 1993, a new show premiered on Friday nights on Fox. It followed two partners who brought in the bad guys, while encountering strange paranormal events and a government conspiracy to cover them up. It debuted to good ratings and great reviews. And it had a horse who thought he was a human. No, we aren't talking about the *X-Files*. We're talking about that *other* show, a comedy/western/sf hybrid that was broadcast an hour before Scully and Mulder: *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*

The set-up was a classic western motif: in 1893, bad guy John Bly breaks out of custody with his gang, killing Marshall Brisco County, Sr. Bounty hunter Brisco Jr. is hired by rail barons to hunt down Bly and his gang, but because of the high price on Bly's head, Brisco is in competition with other bounty hunters, including the notorious Lord Bowler. But Bly has bigger fish to fry, and here's where the show becomes more than just a western. Bly's after a mysterious golden orb that has strange mystical powers.

Sent on missions by his boss Socrates Poole, Brisco encounters more than his share of outrageous characters along the trail: noted gunslinger Utah Johnny Montana (who used to be called Utah Johnny Cougar Montana but stopped using Cougar as it sounded too pretentious); the hapless bad guy Pete who dies more times than *South Park's* Kenny and has an unhealthy attachment to his pistol ("You're touching my piece! Nobody touches Pete's Piece!"); Sheriff Aron Viva (an ancestor of Elvis's); and Professor Wickwire, who invents, among other things, a rocket car, a diving suit and an airship (apparently financed by a German investor named Von Zeppelin). Brisco also has more than a few encounters with a saloon siren, the delectable Dixie Cousins.

The superb cast is anchored by B-movie hero Bruce Campbell as Brisco. He brings just the right amount of sincerity, strength and good humour to the role. No one will ever accuse him of being a great actor, but Campbell is perfect for this role. It's hard to imagine anyone else in the part. Julius Carry brought his very large presence to the character of Lord Bowler, a fellow bounty hunter who eventually teams up with Brisco. And the legendary John Astin brought his quirky charms to Professor Wickwire. Plus, special mention must be made of Billy Drago, who played Brisco's nemesis John Bly like he was from another planet (there's a hint for you).

It's not hard to see why Brisco's rating

floundered as the season went on and was eventually canceled after only one season; it's a very offbeat show, with wacky humour strewn among the pop-cult references. It's a western poking fun at western conventions. And it's also a sci-fi show, with the mysterious orb and its fantastic power the driving force behind many episodes. It's no wonder viewers didn't know what to make of it, but I enjoyed it a lot. I was surprised that the orb storyline was wrapped up about three-quarters of the way through the season, but I suspect had *Brisco* returned for a second season that the orb and John Bly would have returned. It was the orb plot that made the show something unique and after that was seemingly dealt with, the show settled back into being just a western, albeit a light and occasionally silly one. And although *Brisco* was criticized for being an overly violent show back in the day, Brisco never actually shot anyone.

The DVD box set has the complete series, plus a commentary track featuring Bruce Campbell and series co-creator Carlton Cuse on the pilot episode. They paint a fun picture, describing a hard but enjoyable shoot, and they also reveal all (such as it is) about the orb. There's also a short "making of" documentary, and a brief bit with Bruce Campbell reading from his book *If Chins Could Kill*. The highlight of the special features is a 45-minute round table discussion with the writers and co-creator Cuse. (A few of the writers now work on *Lost*, and viewers of that show might want to pay particular attention when the discussion turns to "orb mythology.")

So spend a few bucks and harken back to the thrilling days of yesteryear....

-- John W. Herbert

Alien Apocalypse

In the not too distant future, insectoid aliens have landed on earth and have destroyed much of humanity. The few humans who survived are forced to work in slave lumber camps. It seems that the aliens like to eat wood, preferably when it's chopped down and cut into 2x4s. And when they're not biting people's heads off.

In Oregon, the last human spaceship finally returns to earth after 80 years in space (relativistically speaking). Two of its crewmembers are played by B-movie king Bruce Campbell and Renee (*Xena*) O'Conner. Together, they must convince their fellow humans to throw off the yoke of slavery, to gather together and fight as one for freedom, to

blah blah blah yadda yadda yadda. You get the idea.

This is cheese with a capital mozzarella. Shot on a low-budget in Bulgaria, this film has the prerequisites to qualify as a B-movie: cheap sets, cheap costumes, badly dubbed foreign actors, and cheap fx. On the other hand, Campbell and cast are almost able to carry it off. It works as a film. Not as a great film, but then it's not supposed to be.

The aliens are a good combination of puppets and CGI, the Bulgarian locations are gorgeous. The script is not-overly serious, but never falls into total camp either, trying to keep a nice balance.

This is certainly worth a look if you want a fun, no thinking required flick to rent. And it's got giant insect aliens biting people's heads off! How could you go wrong renting this?

-- John W. Herbert

Beauty Tips From Moose Jaw

by Will Ferguson

Will Ferguson is a very funny guy.

Wait, scratch that. I assume he's a funny guy — I really don't know Will Ferguson from Adam.

Okay, scratch that, too. I know Adam and he is a funny guy. And so is Will Ferguson (I assume).

But they aren't the same guy.

Or are they?

Now that I think about it, I've never seen them both in the same place. In fact, I've never seen Will Ferguson anywhere. Could it be that they really are the same guy? Have I inadvertently stumbled on the biggest conspiracy since Stephen Harper's brain was stolen by aliens?

Sorry. Let me start again.

Will Ferguson *may* be a very funny guy. But without question, he is a very funny writer. It's not by accident that he's won the Leacock Medal for Humour. (Then again, it might well have been an accident. But no one's admitting anything.)

Which brings me in a surprisingly roundabout way to his recent book *Beauty Tips From Moose Jaw*, a time-jumbled travelogue across Canada. He starts at a poetry slam here in Victoria, and meanders from West to East, ending in L'Anse Aux Meadows, the home of the first Norse settlement in North America. On the way, he retraces his youth in the high North, looks for polar bears near Churchill, tries to find the meaning of Canada with his brother, tries to find the meaning of Quebec with another brother,

and even attempts to find the meanings in that strange variation of English that is spoken in Newfoundland.

Ferguson is always funny. (Anyone who rates a book about Canadian Prime Ministers called Bastards and Boneheads gets an 'A' in my book.) And this book is warm and witty embrace of Canadiana, a wonderfully written journey exploring the backwaters and backstreets.

A great read.

-- John W. Herbert

BloodRayne

It's not often that a film will come along that is so bad not even I will like it. *BloodRayne* is one such film.

The plot is derivative, as is most of this movie. Kristianna Loken stars as Rayne, a Dampir, part human-part vampire. She is being pursued by a vampire overlord (played by Ben Kingsley, who must be paying off a lost bet by being in this), and some human vampire hunters led by Michael Madsen. Along the way, she learns secrets about her past, gains special powers, confronts her father blah blah blah yadda yadda yadda.

This film looks like it had a budget equivalent my allowance when I was eleven. The vampire make-up looks like *Buffy* leftovers. This film is filled with bloody violence that is about as realistic and comical as the Black Knight scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Oh, wait – *BloodRayne* isn't a comedy!

Madsen is horribly miscast in this, but so is everyone else, too. Loken has some screen presence, but nothing can save her in this mess, and no-one else brings anything to their parts. Except for Meatloaf, who, in his only brief scene, deliriously chews on the scenery and swallows it whole. (He clearly is the only person who realizes what a piece of fromage he's in – he's billed in this film as "Meatloaf Aday.")

Avoid this film at all costs. Please.

-- John W. Herbert

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe

During World War II, four British children are sent out to the country to spend the war under care of a reclusive relative. The children discover a gateway through a wardrobe into another world called Narnia. There, in a world of centaurs, griffens, and talking animals, the children appear to be the fulfillment of a prophecy that four humans will one day lead an army with the help of Aslan, a lion, to defeat the self-appointed queen of Narnia, a witch.

Based on the classic book by C.S. Lewis, Narnia is not a bad movie, but as I was watching it I kept thinking to myself Lord of the Rings did this better. Indeed, The Lord of the Rings has set a very high standard when it comes to fantasy films, and perhaps

comparing anything to the wondrous magic of LotR is unfair.

There's nothing inherently bad in Narnia. The production is uniformly excellent, and the special effects are marvelous. The intergration of CGI characters into live-action elements is perfectly done.

But for me the film never grabbed me.

There's also been some talk about the "Christian" aspects of Narnia. Aslan's death and resurrection parallel Christ's, and I believe that C.S. Lewis was deliberately evoking Christianity in his story. That said, I didn't find that this aspect overwhelmed the story. Clearly, it's there if you want to read that into it, but death and resurrection are so much a part of fantasy and science fiction films (Gandalf and Obi-Wan Kenobi for starters), never mind other myths and religions, that it does not overpower the movie.

Look, this isn't a bad movie. Pay your money, you'll like it. Will you care about it the next day? That's another question.

-- John W. Herbert

Demon Night

by J. Michael Straczynski

Recently re-issued by iBooks, the first novel by *Babylon 5* creator J. Michael Straczynski, originally published in 1988, might be described as "Stephen King Lite." And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

The story takes place firmly in King country, a small town in Maine called Dredmouth Point where an ancient evil has been waiting, gathering its strength, while prodigal son Eric Matthews, whose family was killed in the town when he was a child, has returned to unlock the secret of his family's death, and the strange and mysterious black outs he suffers.

Straczynski tells his story in solid, non-flashy prose. He gets straight into the story and drives it ahead quickly. Whereas King might have used 200 pages of back story and small town life to slowly develop the mood, Straczynski sets the creepy mood from the outset as Matthews slowly discovers what killed his family, what is slowly destroying the town, and his destiny.

No one will mistake *Demon Night* as a great work of art, but as a solid and capable first novel, it is another example of the excellent story-telling we've come to expect for the ubiquitous "jms."

-- John W. Herbert

Ilium

by Dan Simmons

Suffice it to say, Dan Simmons does not write small science fiction books. His *Hyperion*

Cantos surely rank as one of the best examples of galaxy building (as well as galaxy destruction and reconstruction) in the genre. Now he begins a new series as big and complex as his earlier masterwork.

As in *Hyperion*, in his new novel *Ilium* Simmons once again draws inspiration from classical literature, this time drawing on the works of Homer instead of Keats. *Ilium* opens with four storylines; the battle of Troy is being observed by human historians, plucked out of time by the Greek gods who have given them amazing technology to observe the battle undetected (Zeus, it seems, has read Homer, and wants to make sure the battle goes by the book); then there's the all the political intrigue going on at the god's home on Olympus (it seems not all of them are happy with Zeus's rule); on Earth in the future, a small group of the last humans, living in luxury in a technological utopia after the departure, find someone who knows the secrets of the world they live in; and in the outer reaches of the solar system, machine intelligences are detecting strange quantum energy readings on the supposedly dead planets of Earth and Mars, and send an expedition to investigate, and if necessary eliminate the source of these strange readings.

Ilium is a joy. Simmons confidently weaves together his seemingly disparate storylines in unexpected ways, yet never losing focus or getting sidetracked. The story moves briskly, from the exciting action in the ancient city of Troy to comical byplay between Orphu and Mahnmur, two machine intelligences whose expedition to the inner planets is disrupted by a golden god in a flying chariot, as they discuss the relative merits of Shakespeare and Proust. Simmons is a writer of exceptional talent, and *Ilium* is an exceptional work. Be warned that this is only the first half of the story; the story will be concluded in the forthcoming *Olympos*.

-- John W. Herbert

Imperial Ambitions-Conversations on the Post 9-11 World by Noam Chomsky

So I lay in bed this morning finishing the latest Noam Chomsky book: *Imperial Ambitions-Conversations on the Post 9-11 World*. This is another in the series of books based around Chomsky's conversations with David Barsamian, where the conversation is transcribed, edited by Chomsky, footnotes are added, and the whole is then published. I've read a number of books by NC over the last couple of years (what, a dozen or more?) and this one has to be the most angry one I've read. Which, considering that NC persistently takes the most neutral-sounding tones when saying the most outrageous things about the American Empire, is really saying something.

"The United States is basically what's called a "failed state." It has formal democratic institutions, but they barely function." (page

198). This is just one of the casual comments that NC tosses off that really is the result of an amazing rejection of the cultural conditioning and propaganda that an Amerikan citizen is subjected to. It is clear that Amerika is a failed democracy when you are not an Amerikan citizen—in fact, NC suggests that it might be nice if Amerika could achieve the democratic advancement of Brazil, or maybe Haiti, as both countries have managed to elect leaders who are clearly not members of the ruling elite (Aristide in Haiti, and Lula in Brazil). That outside/foreign observers were in place to monitor the last presidential elections speaks volumes for the sad state of Amerikan democracy.

That Amerikan democracy has failed so badly, even with the unprecedented commitment to free speech and right of assembly that Amerikans have, is astonishing. Chomsky attributes much of this failure to the development of propaganda under such people as Walter Lippmann (credited with the phrase “manufacturing consent”) and Edward Bernays (who said that “the more intelligent members of the community can direct the population through “the engineering of consent,” which he considered “the very essence of the democratic process”).

“It’s interesting to look back at the 1920s, when the public relations industry really began. This was the period of Taylorism in industry, when workers were being trained to become robots and every single motion was controlled and regulated. Taylorism created highly efficient industry, with human beings being turned into automata. The Bolsheviks were very impressed with Taylorism, too, and tried to duplicate it, as did others throughout the world. But the thought-control experts soon realized that you could not only what was called “on-job control” but also “off-job control.” It’s a fine phrase. Off-job control means turning people into robots in every part of their lives by inducing a “philosophy of futility,” focusing people on “the superficial things of life, like fashionable consumption.” Let the people who are supposed to run the show do so without any interference from the mass of the population, who have no business in the public arena. And from that idea grew enormous industries, ranging from advertising to universities, all very consciously committed to the belief that you must control attitudes and opinions, because the people are otherwise just too dangerous.

Actually, there are good constitutional sources for this view of the public. The founding of the country [Amerika] was based on the Madisonian principle that the people are just too dangerous: power has to be in the hands of what Madison called “the wealth of the nation,” people who respect property and its rights and are willing to “protect the minority of the opulent against the majority,” which has to be fragmented somehow.” (pp. 21-22)

All of which lends support to my feeling

that democracy is not only in deep trouble, but is an ongoing and unfinished revolution in world affairs. Thus my support for the right of Quebecois to decide on separation. Not that I support Quebec separatism (in fact I figure that the leaders of the BQ and PQ are evil and cynical opportunists using the above techniques for their own ends at the expense of the citizenry of Quebec). But I do support the right of people to decide on how they shall be ruled. Hell, Rome reserved the right to elect a tyrant for a set term of office (even though it usually went very badly when they did...).

This is one of the greatest crimes of the Bush II administration; not their disdain for democracy—that has been bog standard for Amerika for at least the last century. It’s that they’ve gone completely rogue, destroying the international structures that were actually working to reduce conflict worldwide, that were actually increasing self-determination in wildly diverse populations about the globe. Chile is slowly managing to bring sociopathic monster Augusto Pinochet to trial—hopefully before he dies and the point becomes moot. Hugo Chávez respects the reactionary courts in his country and does not prosecute the military officers who participated in the Amerikan-backed coup against his democratically elected government. Even South Africa, where the ANC managed to most amazing transition of power with a minimum of violence and recrimination.

One can’t even imagine such a shift of power in Amerika. Or respect for the law like in Chile and Venezuela. Amerika, and this is mentioned in *Imperial Ambitions*, is a nation that is extremely susceptible to fear. And pretty much every time it’s a fear of a group or population upon whose neck the Amerikan boot is pretty firmly placed. The destroyed, militarily insignificant Iraq, Panama, Nicaragua, Grenada. Each of these in turn has been seen (and sold) as a terrific threat to Amerika, a dagger pointed at its heart. And it has never been true, but the Amerikan public buys it—or at least enough to allow the jackboots of the Amerikan military to be planted on foreign soil.

So what to do, what to do. The answers are fairly simple—and fairly complex. But it all boils down to organize. Locally into small affinity groups, unions, discussion circles. Nationally into demanding our political parties begin respecting the democratic will of the people (a tricky balancing act, admittedly. Too nationalistic and the air raid sirens will be going off in Canada next). And internationally to continue organizing structures of law that will hold all imperial ambitions in check. So, you know, not really anything much has to be done....

-- E.B. Klassen

It’s the Crude, Dude

by Linda McQuaig

Linda McQuaig’s new book *It’s the Crude, Dude* highlights America preoccupation (no pun intended) with securing Middle East oil. It’s a well-written, shameful indictment of post-war American foreign policy.

But the real question is will anyone who reads it change their mind?

I call it the “Michael Moore syndrome.” I’ve read all of Moore’s books, and own all his movies (yes, even *The Big One*. And you’ve got to be a fan in order to sit through that one! But I digress.) So to me, Michael Moore is preaching to the choir. But what worries me is that Moore, and McQuaig with her book, is preaching *only* to the choir.

As much as I love them, did any right-winger come out of *Bowling for Columbine* or *Fahrenheit 9/11* with their mind changed? I doubt it.

Mind you, it’s not like I’m going to read Ann Coulter and suddenly say, “My god, the leftist dogma dribble that I’ve been following my whole life is so utterly, utterly wrong!”

-- John W. Herbert

King Kong (1933)

It’s been years since I’ve seen the original *King Kong*, I gotta tell ya, this film rocks!

The new special edition DVD features the fully restored 1933 cut (not the 1938 “censored cut” which most casual viewers would be familiar with), and it looks gorgeous. It probably hasn’t looked or sounded this good since its original release.

And yes, the acting is a bit over the top, the dialogue a bit corny, and the special effects don’t hold a candle to what can be done today, but 70 years later, it still holds together remarkably well. The plot, as if you didn’t know, concerns a film-maker who’s heard rumors that some thing exists on a south sea island. He takes his camera crew and a young ingénue (Canada’s own Fay Wray) to the island and discovers the thing is Kong, a giant ape. He plans to use Wray’s character as bait to lure Kong into capture, and then showcase the ape in a traveling show and make millions. The plan goes wrong as Kong falls in love with the bait, and trying to find her, escapes in New York, causing mayhem and death.

The film is full of classic cinema images and moments. And being the 1933 version, many scenes of violence have been restored. Kong was vicious and brutal.

The special effects, for their time, are staggering. This was the *Star Wars* of 1933. No one had ever seen anything like this. The film-makers who trace their inspiration back to Willis O’Brien’s 18-inch tall Kong miniature are too numerous to mention, but some that are featured on the supplements are Peter Jackson, Ken Ralston, Bob Burns, Rick Baker, Ben Burtt, and Ray Harryhausen. And speaking of supple-

ments, there's an hour-long biography of Merian C. Cooper, who produced Kong, and a nearly three-hour documentary on the film itself. Considering that almost no behind the scenes material exists from the actual production itself and that hardly anyone involved is still alive, the documentary does a fine job showing how the film was made.

If you haven't seen *Kong* in a while, and remember it as being hokey, well, yes, you're right. But *Kong* still has the power to overcome all the pitfalls that a 70 year-old movie has for a 21st century audience. Yes, it's cheesy, over-acted, hammy dialogue, with cheap sets, and crude special effects. It still works, and works brilliantly. Check it out. You owe it to yourself. And Kong.

-- John W. Herebert

King Kong (2005)

It's a familiar story: boy meets girl, boys casts girl in movie, girl meets other boy, girl and other boy fall in love, girl meets giant ape on Skull Island, ape falls for girl, boy captures ape, ape becomes a star on Broadway, ape destroys Broadway.

Peter Jackson's loving remake of 1933's *King Kong* is not a perfect film, but it comes very close. And slightly over three hours, it runs a little long. 20 minutes could have very easily come out of the Skull Island sequence. But that's a minor quibble, and if I'm going to be forced to sit through an extra 20 minutes of a giant gorilla battling giant T-Rexes, that's a sacrifice I'm willing to make.

The film starts in New York as out of work actress Ann Darrow (Naomi Watts) has a chance encounter with shady film-maker Carl Denham (Jack Black). Carl convinces Ann to join his crew and himself on a sea voyage to make a film on location on a south seas island. Denham also practically kidnaps his writer, Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody). What Denham hasn't revealed is that the island is uncharted, and an ancient heretofore unknown society on the island worships a large and dangerous being named Kong.

Jackson's remake follows the original's plot nearly note for note, but he manages to provide a few narrative deviations along the way. It's full of nods to the original, from Denham discovering that an actress named Fay is unavailable for his picture because she's shooting one for Merian Cooper at RKO (that would Fay Wray making the original *Kong*), to Peter Jackson's cameo as one of the pilots that kills Kong (original *Kong* directors Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack also did the same).

The film looks gorgeous. Just gorgeous. From a beautifully recreated depression-era New York to the lush jungles of Skull Island, the sets and production design are sumptuous and amazing.

The cast is mostly top notch, although occasional I thought that Jack Black seemed a

little out of his depth, particularly his reading on the film's famous final line. But again, another minor quibble. Black holds his own for the most part.

And Kong himself is a wonder. With Andy Serkis (Gollum of *Lords of the Ring* fame) doing the motion capture work, there seems to be no limit to the range of emotion that can play across the big ape's face. And of course, it's Kong that propels this picture, from the battles with dinosaurs to his emotional attachment to Ann, his sorrow at losing her and being captured, and his all too brief joy at finding her again. If the audience cannot feel for Kong, this film is lost, but by the end we are firmly in Kong's camp, and our heart's break during the final battle atop the Empire State Building.

Grab your popcorn and a large pop, plan your bathroom breaks accordingly, and see this movie on a big screen. A larger than life movie legend deserves to be seen on a large screen.

-- John W. Herbert

The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-First Century by James Howard Kunstler

The Long Emergency is James Kunstler's hard-eyed view of the advent of the post-oil world—the world whose resource wars have finally come out in the open with the invasion of Iraq. Kunstler spends a lot of time on the history of oil in Amerika, and particularly the calculations of the Hubbard Peak. M. King Hubbert was the Amerikan geologist who devised the math used to calculate the life of oil fields. He later extended this to calculate the points of peak discovery and peak production in the US and later, the world. And, in case you hadn't guessed, global oil production is due to peak right about...now. Actually, the best guess is between 2000 and 2008, so we're likely past peak right now.

Kunstler then goes on to consider how much of modern global industrial society is fossil fuel based—and the answer, of course, is all of it. As peak production occurs quite late in the life of an oil field (followed by a precipitous decline in recovery), his thesis is that this is it, this is the nuclear weapon at the heart of the modern world that's going to blow it all apart—and probably before the end of the century. Likely before the halfway point, in fact.

Even without factoring in global warming and emergent diseases, Kunstler figures we're done. Once you add those two in to the mix, well, let's just say that a massive die-back seems to be in the cards. And that 90 to 95 percent mortality rate may not be out of line.

The biggest problem is that all our possible replacements for oil are ultimately fossil fuel based; the alloys needed to build decent wind generators, for example, need a fossil fuel based economy to create them. And needs one to place the generators and use them. Ditto for solar cells,

and pretty much everything else.

Kunstler sees the demise of the cities as being already underway—except in Europe, which has been unable to pursue suburbanization the way Amerika has. And Kunstler hates suburbia—having written two books already about it: *The Geography of Nowhere* and *Home from Nowhere*—he sees it as the worst idea to have ever come out of Amerika. And without cheap gas, suburbia is untenable.

Kunstler, being Amerikan, does occasionally collapse in to an unconscious Amerikan-centric and jingoistic world view. Understandable, but frustrating nonetheless. He wants to keep Amerika and Americans alive as much as possible—even though he doesn't see just how that can possibly happen—and so he shies away from stating the clear conclusion of his book; that (as in Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up*) the destruction of Amerika may not be the worst thing for the planet. The hellish thing is that so much of the rest of the planet is going to go with it.

-- E.B. Klassen

Lost - Season One

Imagine being marooned on a desert island in a plane crash with forty-plus other people. The plane was off-course, no one knows where you are. You're running out of food, water, supplies. Things look grim. Slowly you discover that some of the people on the island with you are not what they appear to be. Even worse, the same is true of the island. You are well and truly *Lost*.

Season One of *Lost*, now out on DVD, sets up what may be the beginning of a long-running tv show (or maybe not—more on that later). As our castaways try to survive, they learn that some sort of unseen monster prowls the island, and that others are on the island.

The show is basically a gimmick show, with two great gimmicks. The first gimmick is the dramatic structure of the show which is a terrific idea. While we follow the adventures of our stranded castaways, we also relive moments of their lives in flashbacks. Why were each of these people of that particular flight? The flashbacks are a great way of filling in the backstory of the characters. We, as the audience, learn so much about these characters, way more in fact than the rest of the islanders do, and we understand a character's motivation for doing something, even when their comrades do not. A brilliant conceit and it makes for riveting television.

Number two, the island itself holds many secrets and mysteries. What about the hatch? What's with the polar bears? Who are the others? What's up with the invisible monster? Is the kid psychic or telekinetic? And this is the gimmick which may be the show's downfall.

A show relying on a mystery or a gimmick to survive may collapse under the weight of its own backstory (witness *The X-Files*). If you're

not playing fair with your audience and revealing some of the mystery of the island, your audience will leave you, um, deserted.

This season's *Lost* ratings are suffering. Could it be that the gimmick has worn off already? Only time will tell.

-- John W. Herbert

Man With the Screaming Brain

B-movie king Bruce Campbell stars in (and co-wrote and directed) *Man With the Screaming Brain*. Campbell plays an American businessman who, along with his wife, is in Bulgaria for a business meeting. He's the typical "ugly American," loud, impatient and dimpolite. His marriage is on the rocks, and he doesn't help matters by flirting with a mysterious gypsy woman. His wife helps even less by giving their cab driver an extra big tip. It turns out that the cab driver was engaged to the gypsy, resulting in all manner of murder and mayhem. Fortunately, the bodies end up in the hands of a mad Bulgarian scientist (Stacey Keech(?)) who (with his Russian assistant played by Ted Raimi) has a knack for transplanting brains and resurrecting bodies.

Essentially, this is pretty silly stuff. It gives Bruce Campbell a chance to do his best Steve Martin impression, and his character ends up sharing his brain with his wife's lover, the cab driver. Shot on location in Bulgaria, the film has pretty good production values for a film of with a limited budget.

There's a good number of extras for a low budget movie. There's some behind the scenes docs, but the best one is a short feature where Campbell and his writing partner chart the 20+ years it took to get this film made. This was worth the price of the DVD all by itself.

Nothing in the film is overly impressive, yet nothing is really embarrassing either. Well, maybe Ted Raimi's version of Russian rapping. Thankfully, it's short. Otherwise, it's a solid and enjoyable, fun B-movie.

-- John W. Herbert

Petrodollar Warfare: Oil, Iraq, and the Future of the Dollar

by William R. Clark

What drove Amerika into Iraq? William R. Clark, in his book *Petrodollar Warfare: Oil, Iraq, and the future of the Dollar* suggests (and makes a pretty solid case, too) that Amerikan criminality is based on the fear of losing its pre-eminent status as the world's last remaining superpower. The problem is that the foundation of Amerika's status is merely some awfully thin ice—ice made thinner by the fascists currently in office.

This is about more than oil—although oil is essential to Amerikan hegemony. Oil is bought and paid for in Amerikan dollars, and those Amerikan dollars are the world's currency of last resort. If everything falls apart, the \$US is

supposed to remain standing, and the Federal Reserve said back in the early eighties that if all else fails, they will just keep printing dollars until everything is paid off—all Amerikan international debt, all debt denominated in Amerikan dollars.

Because right now Amerika is living in a massive debt bubble—China alone holds over \$1.7 trillion in Federal debt instruments and could crash the whole system simply by converting the lot over to euros. The dollar has declined over the last four years—seen here in Canada as the rise in the Canadian dollar against the Amerikan, and the euro has strengthened. But worldwide we have far too much productive capability, and not enough ability to consume, and this overhang is starting to scare the crap out of the holders of real money.

The current system is (almost) holding together. Oil sales denominated in Amerikan dollars and held by Amerikan financial institutions have managed to support Amerikan consumption. But then Saddam Hussein gets snarly; under the oil for food program, he requests that payment no longer be made in the dollar of the Great Satan, but be denominated in euros. Turns out to be a great financial idea made for political reasons. By denominating in the euro, Iraq sees a couple of hundred million dollars extra—free money just for using the euro. And don't think this isn't noticed by the rest of the region; the Saudi's know all about this, but have made their own separate peace with the Great Satan, and are funnelling their excess dollars back into the Amerikan economy (70% of Saudi Arabia's petrodollar wealth is invested in the US). But for this and other crimes (like having Amerikan oil inconveniently under their country and making deals to sell it to Russia and European countries rather than the Amerikan ones), the Iranians pay a heavy price; they suffer the extension of Amerikan hegemony.

But Iran notices; they announce a new oil bourse (a stock exchange for securities trading) in 2002 to be up and running by 2005 that will offer an oil marker denominated in euros—just like the \$US-denominated marker of West Texas crude. Funny how they are now in the crosshairs, isn't it?

William Clark doesn't claim that what currency petrodollars are denominated in is the sole reason behind the illegal invasion of Iraq; but he does make a strong case that this was a significant reason behind it. Some writers, most recently Gwynne Dyer, don't buy it. A recent Dyer article basically says that this Amerikan administration is simply too stupid to pay attention to esoteric financial concerns, and makes a strong case for this view. But this administration's partners, this cabal of the super-rich, this loose affiliation of millionaires and billionaires that rely on the dominance of the Amerikan dollar, they notice. And they have both a confluence of desire and the world's largest and best equipped

mercenary force at their disposal. And what the hell, they've been using it for just this kind of bullshit since forever, so what's one more country destroyed to serve their interests? The rest, we say, is history.

-- E.B.Klassen

The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat

by Bob Woodward

The story is one we kind of know; the corruption of the Nixon White House, the burglary of the Watergate Hotel, the middle of the night meetings in the parking garage (and the iconic image of Hal Holbrook saying "follow the money" -- it must be iconic: after all, it was used on the *X-Files* and parodied on *The Simpsons*.), and the eventual collapse of the Nixon administration and the first appointment of an unelected person to the presidency (Gerald Ford—appointed to the Vice-Presidency and, upon Nixon's resignation, ascended to the Presidency). But the story has become simplified over the years. At the time it was practically indecipherable due to its complexity. What did Agnew's personal acceptance of a bribe have to do with the burglary at the Watergate? Who was Segretti and what connections were there to the break-in at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office? And who really shot Kennedy?

The deep-seated culture of corruption in the Republican Party, and the inter-generational nature of the culture—from Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld in the Nixon administration, and from Johnson to Nixon to Ford, Reagan, Bush and the Shrub, the main players have often remained the same while the ancillary figures have been numerous. The sheer number of players and the overwhelming number of activities they've undertaken (from Howard Hunt fabricating documents implicating Kennedy in the 1963 assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem to the falsifying of intelligence reports and planting of false stories in the press during the run-up to the second invasion of Iraq) have left even the most dedicated of observers battered and overwhelmed. And with the dedication of the Amerikan ruling class to cover stories, deniability, false news and flat-out Goebelian "Big Lies" since the run up to WW I (Yes, WW I. Walter Lippmann pioneered the idea of "manufacturing consent" and Woodrow Wilson used the ideas to convert the American public from essentially pacifist to rabidly pro-war in less than a year during the run-up to American involvement.), truth has become a forgotten concept for at least the last seventy years.

This book doesn't get us that much closer to the essential nature of the Amerikan ruling class. Part memoir, part newspaper obituary biography, part meditation on the value of protecting sources, Bob Woodward fills in only the barest outlines of just who Mark Felt/Deep

Throat was and what he meant. Woodward particularly explores his own conflicts on the outing of Felt as Deep Throat: his refusal to name Deep Throat for thirty years has meant a great deal to him professionally. Woodward recounts many times where his protection of Felt has meant that members of subsequent administrations were willing to talk to him because they were confident that he would never out them. But for the most part the book seems to be Woodward wandering through his life, re-examining an early triumph from the vantage point of middle age, and wondering what it all means.

This is not to say that there aren't some interesting passages in the book. Woodward is too much the professional newspaperman to write crap. *The Secret Man* is very readable, revisits a very important period in American history, re-awakens us too much of the systemic corruption of the American political system, and fills in some of the background on just who the real person behind Deep Throat was. Not worth buying, but definitely worth borrowing (and my copy is now up for grabs....).

-- E.B.Klassen

Titanic (1943)

Titanic! The story of a ship and an iceberg and the ruinous gluttony of the British Empire!

Titanic! The story of the heroic German first officer who saved the day!

Titanic! The story of the obviously Jewish ship owner, who bet his fortune on the speed of his ship and almost paid with his life!

Titanic! In the original German with subtitles!

No, this isn't James Cameron's epic 1996 *Titanic*, it's a 1943 German propaganda film of the same name.

Unlike Cameron's film which puts fictional characters into the story while remaining true to historical facts, this version uses the basic story of iceberg meets ship to hang a propaganda-filled, greed-driven plot on.

Bruce Ismay and the other owners of *Titanic* and the White Star Line have hatched a plot where they will buy millions of shares of White Star stock before and during the voyage. Ismay will force Captain Smith to speed up and make the crossing in record time, and they'll make a killing when the stock value goes up. An interesting idea to be sure, but it's not the least bit factual. (And it doesn't help that Ismay is portrayed as Jewish when he wasn't.)

Newly arrived on *Titanic* is First Officer Peterson, newly transferred from Germany, and lucky for the passengers he did, because he seems to be the only competent officer on the ship. The heroic Peterson manages to dress down the Captain, reconcile with an old flame, launch lifeboats single-handedly, survive the sinking, rescue a child from the water and denounce the British Empire at a Parliamentary inquiry into the sinking. Not bad for an 85 minute

film. At least he isn't blonde.

Despite the questionable taste of the propaganda aspects of the film and its wild historical inaccuracies, *Titanic* does manage to hold its own as a film. Its lavish sets and costumes (many inaccurate, but nonetheless spectacular) can only make one wonder how a country paying for a war against the rest of the world could afford a production like this.

The sinking sequences are well done and exciting, and the special effects are fine for its time. (In fact some shots were nicked and used in 1959's *A Night To Remember*.)

An interesting oddity, the 1943 version of *Titanic* is worth a look. And *Titanic* buffs should note the DVD contains an excellent collection of actual 1912 *Titanic* newsreel coverage.

-- John W. Herbert

Titanic (1996) Special Edition DVD

Believe it or not, boys and girls, but there was a time when James Cameron's film *Titanic* looked to be a disaster in the making. Horribly over budget at north of \$200,000,000, and its release delayed six months, *Titanic* was looking to be a celluloid disaster destined to sink on its maiden weekend.

But the film opened to four-star reviews and boffo box office. The something amazing happened.

All major films' box office drops off the second weekend. But *Titanic* was different. Its second weekend was bigger than its first. That never happens. And its third and fourth weekend grosses were still larger than the first. *Titanic* was on its way to being the highest grossing film of all time with a total worldwide gross of over \$1.8 billion dollars. No other film even comes close. (Second place is *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* at \$1.1 billion, the only other films in the billion dollar club, although the first *Harry Potter* film is just a few million short of joining the club. But I digress.) It received a record 14 Oscar nominations and won a record 11.

I saw it opening night. And I was in the front row bawling like everyone else.

Titanic is the work of a master film-maker at the top of his game.

The new special edition DVD contains a gorgeous new transfer spread over two discs, plus three commentaries: one from Cameron, one from various cast and crew, and one from a pair of *Titanic* historians. All three are worth your attention and are informative. In addition, there are 50 or so mini-docs on the two discs available by either a seamless branching option while watching the movie, or by a "play-all" feature. There's also the original ending (available with a Cameron commentary) that, although fine by itself, is clearly inferior to the ending as it was finally cut. A third disc contains nearly an hour of deleted and extended scenes, all with optional Cameron commentary. There are

other featurettes on this disc, including a gag reel of sorts, a look at Cameron's real dive on *Titanic*, and a time-lapse feature on building the set. In all, this is a treasure trove of material, which almost makes up for the lack of a definitive "making-of" documentary as was promised when the set was originally announced as a four-disc set.

Why does the the ill-fated story of *Titanic* still touch us? At its heart, it is the story of human frailty and hubris. The lessons learned from *Titanic* were lost by the time of *Challenger*, and those lessons learned were forgotten again with *Columbia*. It is a story of class rule by human ego and unquestioned ideology and assumptions, as if even daring to question these assumptions is evil and unpatriotic.

And clearly, these are lessons that need to be learned again.

-- John W. Herbert

The Who: Tommy and Quadrophenia Live

This new 3-DVD set consists of two shows by The Who.

Disc One is a performance of *Tommy* from a charity show in LA, one of two complete *Tommy* performances from the 1989 tour. The Who were in what I call their "Las Vegas" phase: a 15-piece band, including a horn section. Special guests for this show included Patti LaBelle, Phil Collins, Steve Winwood, Billy Idol and Elton John. This certainly isn't the "classic" Who of yore. Townshend plays acoustic guitar throughout and the horns certainly add a new twist to the music. But there's no question whatever their configuration that this is a group of excellent musicians clearly enjoying themselves. The musical highlight is John Entwistle's bass solo during *Sparks*.

Disc Two is a performance of *Quadrophenia* from a 1996 tour. Again another large band, this time augmented by a visual presentation and guests P.J. Proby as The Godfather and Billy Idol as Ace the Face. Again Townshend sticks mostly to the acoustic guitar and the band is in fine form. This time the musical highlight is John Entwistle's bass solo on *5:15*. (Okay, yes, you caught me. I'm a bass player.)

The third disc consists of the LA show's second set and encore, an extended encore from the *Quadrophenia* show, and three songs from Giants Stadium from 1989. No big musical surprises here, except the *Quadrophenia* encore opens with an acoustic version of *Won't Get Fooled Again*, and features a slightly reworked version of *Who Are You*.

Both the *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia* shows have a "visual commentary" track by Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend, both of which are excellent. Controlled by the "angle" button, you can turn the commentary on and Pete or Roger appear on the screen, commenting on the concert, the music, the story, or whatever strikes their fancy. A must-watch for Who fans.

The viewer is alerted to the start of these

segments by a pinball flashing superimposed on the screen in the case of *Tommy*, or a mod target symbol in the case of *Quadrophenia*. The downside is that the commentary segments start and stop all the time during the performances, and the viewer is constantly distracted by large flashing round objects in the middle of the screen distracting from the concert. Why didn't the DVD producers put a less distracting and smaller symbol in the corner of the screen that doesn't interfere with the enjoyment of the concert to signal the beginning of a commentary segment? Beats me, I guess that's why they make the big bucks. Note to Rhino Records: Never do that again.

-- John W. Herebert

Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century
Mark Leonard

Mark Leonard has written a decent little primer on the foundation and structure of the European Union, from the Amerikan efforts post—WW2 up to the present day. Next to the occasional Dick and Mary Francis mystery, this is certainly the lightest book I've read this year. Leonard writes as a man in love with an idea—in this case the idea of a better way of living with one's neighbours than the doctrine of perpetual warfare.

Among the European facts that confounds popular belief is the *acquis communautaire*, the 'acquired fortune' or 'accepted fact' that regulates every facet of domestic policy in the EU—from human rights to consumer protection. This is 80,000 pages of regulation, regulations that are the bane of global capitalism. *Laissez-faire* capitalism is predicated on the destruction of the nation-state and the removal of barriers and restrictions on the movement and use of capital. Those who own the world's economies have no interest in restrictions being placed on them. But it is these regulations and restrictions that actually allow international capital to flourish. When the Soviet Union was assaulted by the free-market neo-liberals after the collapse of the Stalinist state, everything should have been coming up roses for the Russian economy. After all, they did everything they were supposed to; privatized all state-owned assets, removed restrictions on wealth accumulation, let loose the dogs of market warfare. And yet the economy and the country fell into anarchy and gangsterism—not, as at least one person has suggested, because having been warned that capitalists are gangsters, Russians became gangsters when they became capitalists, but rather because there was no longer any legal structure under which a market economy could flourish. When a contract is worth less than the paper it is printed on, and can be negated by nothing more than a match, a market economy is reduced to its essence—a place where the strong-armed succeed and the rest are fleeced. Healthy markets require a strong legal system and extensive regulation in order to

flourish, as it levels the playing field and reins in the psychopathic.

Europe has, according to Leonard's book, recognized that a strong economy demands a strong state, and that the state needs to be involved in the market both as a regulator and as a player. But, Leonard argues, Europe took the unusual step of leading a race upwards. The consultations that lead to the creation of the *acquis communautaire* set high standards for members of the EU—but at the same time established that there would be direct and measurable economic advantages for anyone who chose to play in the same stadium; access to production capacity and markets inside a tariff-free zone.

But the central intellectual force behind the creation of the EU, Jean Monnet, started by constructing the stadium: first by starting negotiations to unite French and German steel and coal producers. He felt that by forging links between major producers, Europe could sidestep the potential for a return to armed conflict. After all, all wars are resource wars, but if the major producers were already on the same team, wars would become an "own goal", a goal that harms oneself instead of the other.

Once the stadium was built, it turned out that a lot of other teams wanted in to play. But in order to gain access to the stadium, the European Common Market, teams had to agree to play by the same set of rules; the *acquis communautaire*. And because the rules were quite stringent—neo-liberal markets inside the EU, coupled with progressive social policies—countries looking to get in have to bring themselves up to the minimum standards (as opposed to developed countries destroying their social and business environments to compete with more backward, anti-progressive countries).

Turkey is probably on of the biggest success stories of the European Union. At first, EU membership seemed completely out of the question. To quote Leonard:

"Turkey first applied to join the European Union in 1963, and for four decades it has had the prospect of membership dangled in front of it but then removed because of the failings of the Turkish government. Turkish human rights abuses, restrictions on press freedom, the persecution of minorities, and the backwardness of the Turkish economy have all provided European governments with reasons to withdraw the nectar of membership. However, in Turkey today the prospect of joining the European club has become a unifying national dream—uniting secularists and Islamists with Anatolians, Kurds, and Armenians—behind a project that promises all a better future.

"Over the last few years, the Turkish Parliament has passed six packages of constitutional amendments designed to bring Turkey in line with European standards. When the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, talks to his colleagues in Brussels, he boasts of abolishing

the death penalty, the army-dominated security courts, and curbs on free speech. He can talk of how he has brought military budgets under civilian control for the first time ever, and of his 'zero tolerance for torture' in Turkish prisons. He has secured the release of Kurdish activists from prison, and allowed Turkish State Television, TRT, to begin broadcasting programmes in Kurdish and other minority languages such as Bosnian and Arabic. He has abandoned thirty years of intransigence on the Cyprus question, and erased centuries of mutual suspicion between Greece and Turkey with skilful diplomacy—so much so that Turkey's fiercest rival in the past has been transformed into one of the leading supporters of Turkish membership in the EU. This revolution has come about for one reason alone: the Turkish desire to join the European Union." (page 50)

This soft-power approach does have its limits; Leonard suggests that the EU faced its greatest test in Srebrenica, where the Bosnian Serbs re-introduced genocide to Europe as they rounded up around seven thousand Muslims and butchered them. Since then, Europe has begun building a European army, in order to be able to add the threat of force to the continuum of responses they employ to achieve their goals. But the lessons of centuries of conflict are not lost on Europe; the Rapid Reaction force is intended to stay small, only able to respond to situations, not to conquer nations. The final word should go to Leonard:

"If ever there was a cause to listen to Monnet's injunction to 'enlarge the context by changing the basic facts' it is in Europe's new neighbourhood...For example, in Iran, American strategies of isolation and coercion are actually encouraging the suppression of democracy and the development of nuclear weapons. The lesson the Iranians drew from the Iraq war is that the only way to be safe from American invasion is to have a nuclear deterrent—and the challenge is to develop it quickly while American troops are still bogged down in Iraq. Equally, as Iran has already become a 'pariah state', it has nothing to lose by suppressing democracy. This is why a European policy, which starts with a recognition of Iran's motivations and tries to change the calculus of risk for the government, could be more effective. By taking their security concerns seriously, and offering major economic benefits, it is trying to regain leverage over the Iranian regime that the American strategy of isolation has lost. But without American involvement the EU cannot succeed as it cannot offer the Iranians the security guarantees they need." (pp. 108-109)

ELECTION WATCH 2006

by John W. Herbert

November 28, 2005: It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like an Election

You'll pardon me if I start talking politics now, but the federal government has fallen today and an election will be called tomorrow. So there won't be just one turkey at your house over Christmas, whole flocks of turkeys will be knocking on your door and begging for your votes.

For once, I have to agree with Ralph Klein. I don't see any outcome other than a Liberal minority. I think the Bloc will do very well in Québec, and that will pretty much put the kibosh on the chances of any party forming a majority.

And Klein's point that Conservative leader Stephen Harper is seen by voters as too right wing to form a government is dead on. Ontario will never vote for a Western right-wing rump party, and that's exactly what the Tories became when they joined forces with Reform, or the Alliance or whatever the hell they were calling themselves.

And if Harper can't win running in a second election against Paul Martin's Liberal Bozo Brigade, that will spell the end of Harper's leadership. The long knives will be out. And a minority won't do: Harper has to win a majority or he's badly burnt toast. A Tory minority will not last long as Harper has no other party willing to team up with him. The Bloc might, and Harper might be dumb enough and power-hungry enough to accept a Tory-Bloc alliance, but that will backfire as much as Mulroney's courting of Québec sovereignists did in the 1980s. Remember how well that turned out? No, if Harper's Tories don't get a majority, he'll become this year's Stockwell Day, an embarrassing reminder of how this country's right-wing consistently shoots itself in the foot.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

December 1, 2005: Harper and the GST

Conservative leader Stephen Harper has announced the first big promise of the campaign, an immediate rollback of the GST to 6%, fol-

lowed by a further 1% decrease sometime within the next 5 years.

At least Harper hasn't said what many from the right will tell you, that tax cuts such as these will pay for themselves. (BC Premier and noted convicted drunk driver Gordon Campbell said that very thing when, as his first action upon being sworn-in, was to enact a massive tax cut for high-income earners. This was followed by the largest deficit in provincial history and massive service cutbacks. But I digress. And if tax cuts really pay for themselves, Mr. Campbell, why not cut all taxes? It's a win-win! I don't pay any tax and the province somehow magically raises revenue to pay for services! But I digress again.) But making your first big pledge a cut in the hated

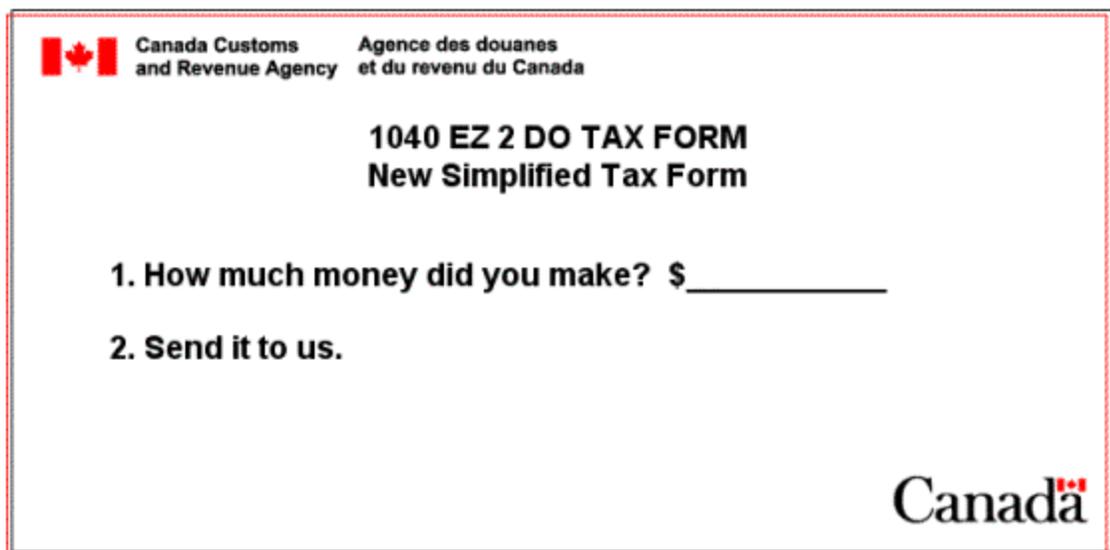
daily policy announcements, and that has the Liberals on the defensive. But he loses points for those awful TV ads.

The NDP isn't saying much, but they have the best ads.

The Bloc has been running their usual quiet and competent campaign, but they clearly need some help with their goaltender rankings. Have they even feared of Curtis Joseph — hello?

The Liberals are losing the initiative to the constant Tory policy announcements, going into a reactive instead a proactive mode. But I suspect none of this really matters. The Liberals are smart enough to know when the campaigning really begins.

We're in a period I'm dubbing "the phony



GST seems like nothing more than a popularity grab.

And that could backfire. Let's remember which party brought in the GST in the first place. Why, golly, it was those darn Conservatives!

Not that the Liberals are all solid ground here suddenly defending the GST. After all, they were elected in 1993 by saying they were going to repeal the GST outright. Last time I checked, I was still paying it.

December 14, 2005: The Phony Election

I'd love to comment more about the election campaign so far, but there really isn't much to say. All the major parties are trying to bribe us again with our own money.

Yes, Harper is scoring some points with his

campaign." The parties, and the voters, are in cruise mode, not getting into the real grim and gritty electioneering until after New Years. The real campaign will start on January 2. Three weeks of hardcore vote buying. Be prepared for the mud to fly.

December 16, 2005: War of the Words

Paul Martin is scoring points in the time-honored tradition of bashing US Presidents during an election campaign.

Even Stephen Harper had to admit that the US Ambassador's intervention was ill-advised.

But are Martin's tough words mere electioneering? Remember that he couldn't wait to have his picture taken with Bush. And Harper would have had us fighting in Iraq if he had been

PM.

It's all games and posturing.

Speaking of which, how ironic it is that the US seems to have no aversion to telling other countries how to behave, up to and including invasion to make their point, yet get very agitated should anyone dare to criticize them.

December 17, 2005: Debate #1

Caught a bit of last night's debate.

Gilles Duceppe, as usual, was the most polished and made the most sense.

And if he didn't have this totally bizarre fixation for breaking up a perfectly good country, he'd probably make a great Prime Minister

December 19, 2005: A Modest Tax Proposal

There's been a lot of talk in this campaign about cutting the GST and/or cutting Income Tax. Which is fairer? Which helps out low and middle income Canadians the most?

Let me offer my own modest tax proposal — let's scrap income tax and raise the GST.

Now before anyone calls the looney tuner on me, consider these numbers:

Canadian Government Fiscal 2004 Revenue
 GST \$28,200,000,000
 Income Tax \$84,800,000,000
 Corporate Tax \$27,400,000,000

Note that the GST revenue is almost exactly one third the amount of income tax revenue. So scrapping income tax and raising the GST from 7% to 28% would be revenue neutral.

Yes, 28% is a whopping tax to spend on purchases, but on the other hand there would no income tax deductions off my paycheque. For me personally, that's a savings of around \$350 a month. Suddenly, my idea doesn't seem so wacky now, does it?

The GST is strictly a voluntary tax. It automatically taxes an individual based on the taxpayer's ability to pay. For instance:
 - a rich person might spend \$4000 on a wide-screen HD TV. That's \$1120 in tax.
 - a middle-class person might spend \$1500 on an LCD TV. \$420 in tax.
 - a lower-income person

might spend \$500 on the last of the tube TVs. \$140 in tax.

Clearly, there are some problems with my idea. Low-income Canadians who pay little or no income tax are not going to benefit from this scheme, so some sort of equalizing payment would have to be developed.

And rich people, some of whom will do anything to avoid paying taxes, will undoubtedly try to import goods from other countries to avoid the new GST.

But in fact, higher income earners should love the new GST. The higher the income bracket, the bigger the income tax savings.

And imagine the other savings. Imagine a vastly downsized CCRA, not spending money to track, compile and check tax returns.

No more income tax audits, and no more income tax forms. No more loopholes for smart accountants to exploit.

I think there's something here. Paul, Stephen, Jack... any comments?

January 09, 2006: Playing Your Cards Right (or Left)

Somehow I've gotten myself on the NDP's emailing list. While normally I instantly delete any political email I get, I opened this latest one

and lo and behold found this little gem below just in time for tonight's debate.

(I should note for the record that no political party has tried to contact me personally, apart from a pre-recorded phone call from Dr. Keith Martin, my Liberal MP. And with the NSA probably listening in, I hung up in a hurry.)

January 12, 2006: Candidate Dump

The Tories became the first party to dump a candidate after it was revealed that a BC candidate was facing smuggling charges after allegedly smuggling a car and 112 bottles of booze across the border in 2004. Derek Zeisman will have to sit as independent should he be elected. This could be a sign of things to come as Harper and the Tories edge towards a majority in the polls. The last Tory government under Brian Mulroney was rife with corruption and resignations.

On the other hand, this is the first real glitch in the well-run Tory campaign. The Liberals are panicking; anytime a Prime Minister announces a major campaign plank like eliminating the constitutional Notwithstanding clause (and does it so suddenly that it doesn't even make it into the party's election platform), you know that he thinks he's spending his last days at 24 Sussex. Clearly, Martin is trying to insinuate that Harper

has a secret agenda against same-sex marriage, abortion, gay rights and other progressive issues. It wouldn't surprise me at all if Harper did, but Harper, from his perspective, has had the good sense to keep his mouth shut and the good luck that his candidates have done the same thing.

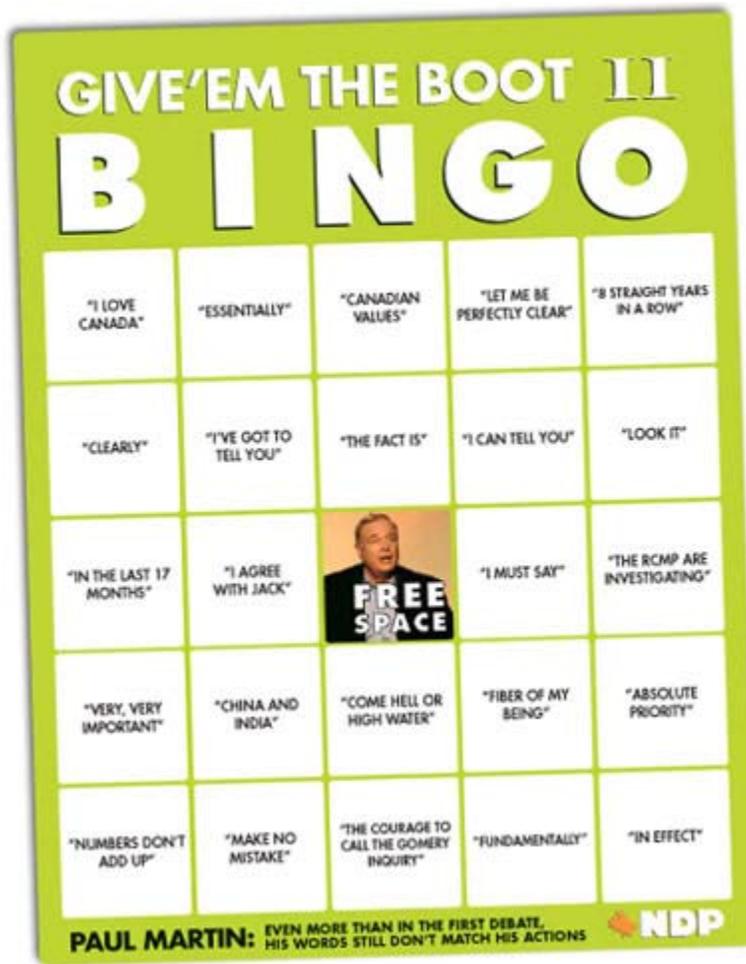
And in a bit of surprise, Mario Dumont (head of the provincial Action démocratique du Québec party) advised voters not to vote for the federal Bloc Québécois. Dumont will not recommend a federal party to vote for, but did say he will vote Conservative. The real surprise will be when Harper gives Dumont a cabinet post. Golly, yes, what a surprise that will be.

I'm sure Jack Layton said or did something this week, too. But no one's listening.

January 17, 2006: Highly Illogical

Not that I have any burning desire to continue to poke fun at Stephen Harper, but what the heck.

A canada.com story points out that apparently



Harper is a huge Trekkie (scroll down to the second half of the article).

"Like, huge," says a source. "And it has to be the classic series, from the 1960s - none of that *Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine* crap." Okay, I'll give Harper a point for being a fan of "real" *Trek*.

How true this really is I don't know, but it readily sets up the tried and true "let's compare the candidates to *Star Trek* characters" joke.

Paul Martin is Scotty. Clearly, he's always whining about needing more power, but he's also trying his damndest to keep his *wee bairns* flying. Unfortunately for him, it seems that the good ship *Liberalprise* is on it's last legs, no thanks to the evil Klingon, Commander K'Gomery.

Jack Layton is McCoy. He has a cure for everything that ails you, and most of them are just good old fashioned horse sense. He's always muttering that the rest of the crew don't follow his advice. He is always speaking the truth from the heart, and as always, no one listens.

Gilles Duceppe is Captain Kirk. Which makes sense in a way as Duceppe wants to fly his ship his way, damn Starfleet and its blasted regulations. He's not going to listen to some blasted bureaucrats from across the galaxy tell him what to do. He's going to take his ship and fly on a separate course.

Finally, Harper is unemotional, his smile is forced, and he speaks in a monotone. His logic often fails him at critical plot points. Obviously, he is Spock. He even has the same haircut.

Election Watch '06: John's Guide To Electoral Reform

After watching all the Tweedledums and Tweedledumbers lo these last few weeks, I've concluded that Canada clearly needs some electoral reforms. To wit, I humbly offer these suggestions:

1. Whoever Wants to Be Prime Minister Should Be Automatically Barred From Seeking the Office

Clearly, the power associated with the office of a national leader attracts the wrong kind of people. One has to only look at our southerly neighbor to see the ultimate example.

Anyone who actually desires the office of Prime Minister is clearly not the sort of person we want running the country. As the famous philosopher Herman once noted: "The people capable of running the country are too smart to get into politics."

(And this goes along with the mood of most voters in the country. Very few actually want any of the current party leaders to be Prime Minister; either they feel they are left with little choice and must choose the lesser of four evils, or they are not voting for one party as they are voting against another one. I think we have to go back to the heady days of Trudeaumania to find

the last time the Canadian populace was genuinely moved to vote for someone.)

2. MPs Should Be Chosen at Random from the General Population

To carry things one step further, anyone wants to be an MP should be barred from office. But then how would we choose our MPs? Via lottery. One citizen would be chosen at random from each riding.

This has the immediate benefit of a House of Commons that more closely represents and reflects the views of the national population.

Forexample: if 85% of Canadians are against the war in Iraq, it should work out that roughly 85% of our randomly-chosen MPs would be against the war.

If 52% of our population is female, then 52% of our MPs would be female.

If 4% of Canadians are lawyers, then the new House would only have 4% lawyers (as opposed to the 80% it seems we have now).

Parliament would resemble more of a municipal council or Territorial legislature, where various groups may form alliances for specific issues and votes, and a different set of alliances for a different set of issues. All votes would be free votes; there would no parties so no reason to vote along party lines.

Much like how the position of Speaker of the House is voted on by MPs, they would now also select MPs for Cabinet positions, including Prime Minister. (A single mother with two kids would be an excellent choice for finance minister. She would know how to balance the budget, as opposed to a millionaire business man who's so removed from real life that he's never in his life had to account for every cent. But I digress.)

January 23, 2006: Rep by Pop vs First Past the Post

If Canada had a 100% Rep by Pop electoral system, tonight's election results would have looked something like this:

- Conservative: 124 seats (actual results) vs 111 seats (rep by pop)
- Liberals: 103 seats (actual results) vs 92 seats (rep by pop)
- Bloc Québécois: 51 seats (actual results) vs 32 seats (rep by pop)
- NDP: 29 seats (actual results) vs 59 seats (rep by pop)
- Green: 0 seats (actual results) vs 14 seats (rep by pop)

January 24, 2006: Swing to the Right

Stephen Harper should enjoy his moment in the sun. For a guy who's the next Prime Minister, his government is not in a good spot.

His minority is more tenuous than the previous Liberal government. Consider that

Harper's Conservatives won fewer seats than Martin's Liberals won in the previous election. Clearly, Harper was hoping for a majority and major breakthroughs in Ontario and Quebec. Heck, he did worse than even I thought he would. While there was some progress for them in Quebec, the Liberals held a lot of their ground in Ontario, winning the popular vote there and denying Harper his majority.

In fact the Conservatives won no seats in the country's three biggest urban centers, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. There's a decidedly urban/rural split to the Conservative vote. Could this be the start of a deep American-style polarization?

The Liberals showed surprising strength considering they ran a bad campaign and were plagued by scandals. While they suffered in Quebec, they fared better than expected. And thanks to Martin's resignation, the Liberals will have a new leader facing Harper, possibly making Harper look like yesterday's news.

The Bloc suffered the most. Expecting to do well, they lost seats and votes. Worse for them, the Tories established themselves as a federalist alternative in Quebec, and with the defeat of the Liberals, the Bloc's biggest campaign issues, the Liberal party scandals in Quebec, are now off the table.

Even the NDP had some bad news to go with their good showing. Despite gaining a number of seats, they fell two seats short of holding the balance of power.

Where can Harper hope to gain support in the inevitable 2007 election? He won the West; the only place he can gain support is in Ontario and Quebec, and when he starts sucking up to Central Canada, he'll lose the West. It's a time-honoured Tory tradition. As Hugh Segal noted on the CBC last night, "When the Liberals are in power, the West votes Conservative. When the Conservatives are in power, the West forms a new party." Both the Reform and the Bloc Québécois were born out of the self-destruction of the last Conservative government. (And let's also remember that the last Conservative government, possibly the most corrupt government in Canadian history, ran, like Harper, on being fiscally responsible and promptly had a decade's worth of the largest deficits in this country has ever seen. But I digress.)

Stephen Harper could be the 21st century version of Joe Clark, a brief Tory minority while the Liberals re-invent themselves. In order to win central Canada, he will have to stick to Ontario-friendly progressive issues (whatever few the Tories have) and abandon (or postpone) the more contentious right wing nut case items of his agenda. Even if Harper wins a majority next time, his days are numbered. He will continue to pander to central Canada as he must to maintain power, the West will feel alienated and the Conservative coalition will implode like it always does, setting the stage for another genera-

tion of Liberal rule. For good or ill, it is the natural order of things.

And Harper isn't helping himself by saying things like he "will start rebuilding this country." Memo to the PM: the country isn't broken.

If Harper thinks he has a mandate for massive social change, he is woefully mistaken. He barely has a mandate to change the stationary.

Obviously, Canadians were weary of giving Harper a full mandate. They remember that if Harper had been PM three years ago, we'd be trapped in a dumb and awful war.

Canadians wanted to spank the Liberals. And they did. They also did not want to give Harper and his neo-con cronies free reign to run the country. And they didn't.

There's not a lot of good news to go around after last night's election. Perhaps the worst news of all is that Stockwell Day might actually be prime material for a cabinet post.

February 06, 2006: Denouement: Meet The New Boss, Same as The Old Boss

With his first act as Prime Minister, Stephen Harper demonstrated that he can play the political game as well as anyone, and his high-minded campaign of integrity, honest government and accountably were as worthless as Chretien's promise to remove the GST.

In other words, he said anything to be

elected, and now that's he won, the real Harper agenda will now be revealed.

First, MP David Emerson, re-elected a scant two weeks ago as a Liberal, crossed the floor to join the Conservative cabinet as the Minister of International Trade, with responsibilities for the Vancouver Olympics. Emerson, who had vowed on election night to become the new prime minister's "worst nightmare", does not understand what the fuss is about. His Conservative opponent finished a distant third in his riding; clearly his constituents what wanted a Liberal representing them.

And after all the Tory's boo-hooing when Belinda Stronach crossed the floor, and the cries of anger and outrage when the Liberals were apparently caught trolling for other Tory MPs in the last house, one would have thought Harper would heeded the calls from his party and enacted legislation requiring members that cross the floor to win their seats back in a by-election, rather than trolling for Liberals who value bigger pay cheques over serving their constituents. And he want after a Liberal! You remember them, those corrupt and decadent crooks that Harper just spent the last eight weeks telling us we couldn't trust.

Harper also appointed Michael Fortier to the position of Minister of Public Works and government Services. Fortier was the Conservative campaign co-chair in 2004 and 2006, and co-

chair of Harper's leadership campaign in 2006. He lost a bid for the Conservative leadership in the 1990s, and lost a bid to win a seat in the 2000 federal election. While the PM has the right to name anyone he wants to cabinet, traditionally it has been a sitting MP, and if the person chosen is not an MP (as in Fortier's case), the new cabinet member usually runs in a by-election at the earliest opportunity. This will not happen this time; Fortier is being appointed to the Senate, where he will sit until the next election, when he will run.

In other words, Harper's first political appointee is a Conservative party hack who will sit in the Senate and Cabinet. Patronage lives! Worse, Fortier won't have to take questions in The House because he's not a member — so much for accountability!

And finally, Stockwell Day was given the Public Safety portfolio. While giving Day any form of responsibility is a disaster waiting to happen, surely Day would have preferred some sort of Recreation portfolio. He's clearly a man who loves water sports.

Sometimes The Candy Machine Wins

by John W. Herbert

I had yet another run-in with the dreaded lunch room candy machine. Occasionally, I have been known to deposit money in this machine and in return have been rewarded with sweet, sweet candy.

Yesterday at lunch, I decided to need a Twix bar. It cost \$1.00.

I deposited my coinage, four quarters. But the fourth quarter was returned; our candy machine is known for its random rejection of coins of recent vintage. I was 75 cents in, but I still needed another 25 cents to complete the purchase and receive my sweet, sweet candy.

All was not lost, as I also had a toonie, more than enough for my chocolate-craving induced purchase. (For our non-Canadian viewers, a toonie is a \$2 coin). However, before depositing the toonie, I felt I had better retrieve my three quarters. I pressed the coin return button and the machine promptly spat out three dimes. 30 cents.

"What the [expletive deleted]?" I shouted. Somehow my three quarters had been transmogrified into 30 cents. The machine just ate 40 of my cents!

"[Expletive describing a physical act deleted] machine!"

But still the Twix bar called. Yes, I was out 40 cents, but I still had the toonie, so I still could buy my bar and satisfy my caramel and chocolate covered cookie lust.

Against my better judgment, I dropped my toonie in the slot. I pressed the button. The Twix bar fell from the rack into the retrieval slot at the bottom of the machine. And my change... my change... *where's my \$1.00 change???*

"[Expletive describing a bodily function deleted]! Where's my [expletive describing the physical act of love deleted] change??!"

The machine kept my change. Why? I don't know. It certainly wasn't out of change because a moment ago *it had just eaten three of my*

quarters!!!

"[Expletive describing anatomical parts deleted]!"

I had paid \$2.40 for a Twix bar! This wasn't the first time the candy machine had eaten my money and short-changed me. I vowed to never ever buy another piece of sweet, sweet candy from this mechanical hell spawn again.

Never!

"Never again! I'd sooner starve! Or crash from a sugar low than to risk my precious money on your unpredictable mechanical folly! Curse you, you mechanical [expletive describing the physical act of a love with a small domestic farm animal deleted]!"

Today, I dutifully deposited \$1.00 and quietly ate my blessed Twix bar.

I am so weak.

In t h e D r i n k

by J o h n W. H e r b e r t

A recent Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny. Not particularly warm, the temperature managed to crawl just a few degrees above zero. Still this was a far cry from the below zero temps and even nastier wind chills we had suffered from for much of the previous week. So it was a good time for a kayak trip at Cadboro Bay! (Note that I am wearing a red sweater... there will be a quiz later.)

Here's our gear lined up and ready to go. Paula had borrowed Alison's kayak. (Alison was kayaking in New Zealand for three weeks.) Normally, Bernie and Paula switch off with their kayak, but with Alison's kayak all of us could get in the water at the same time. Dennis was in

his inflatable.

We paddled out of the bay and turned north along the coastline. That's Mt. Baker, an active volcano, ahead of us.

Three of us decided to cross over to Discovery Island. The womenfolk declined.

I had never been there myself, but both

went through, there was no problem. The current was strong but not rough. I paddled against it, until it spun me around and sent me back from where I came.

No problem.

But my paddle was in the water and the current caught it, and dragged it under my boat.



Bernie and Dennis had..

Discovery Island itself was beautiful. A series of small archipelagoes, it makes for a perfect place to explore inlets and rocky shores.

We found a little channel with a bit of a current in it. We decided to try our hand at running it. It wasn't a strong current, but this was our first try at something like this.

The first time I

And over I went. Potential energy and gravity worked their magic. I was upside down in the water.

Problem.

As you can see, I survived. I made my wet exit, and grabbed onto the back of my kayak. Bernie was nearby and beside me almost in-



stantly. As we organized ourselves to begin the process of getting me back in my boat, my feet suddenly touched ground, and I decided to walk my boat ashore at a small beach.

Out of the water but totally drenched, I took off my sweater. I was wearing my Farmer John wetsuit and that kept most of me warm, but my arms under my sweater were freezing. It was fortunate that I was wearing my wetsuit — “goner” might be too drastic a term, but I would have been in a lot worse condition. Fortunately, Bernie had overdressed and had taken off his fleece jacket, and he lent it to me. (Quiz time - Question 1: What colour sweater was John wearing at the start of the paddle? Here’s a hint: It’s not the same colour as in the picture below.)

It was, in retrospect, a good thing. We were reminded that we are dealing with nature, and nature abhors cockiness. We had an emergency,



what I had started with. The women-folk cast us some wary glances. But we survived and adjourned for some warm drinks at a nearby coffee shop. Dennis took this picture to annoy his friends back in Toronto. Blizzard, anyone?

And remember kids, don’t try this at home!



and we all survived. There was no panic or hysteria. We kept our heads and did what we had to do. My kayak flipped and everything stayed attached and dry, including my digital camera.

Much to Bernie’s chagrin, my glasses stayed on my head.

We re-assessed the safety equipment that we had with us. A dry bag with a towel and/or some dry clothes suddenly seemed like a much smarter idea than it did a few minutes earlier.

Bernie found the incident much too amusing (as you can see on the right.) However, as we left he decided to shoot the rapids again! (Okay it was only one rapid. “Whitewater” it was not.) He got caught, too, and damn near flipped. He filled up his kayak with water and he had to beach to drain it.

Bernie didn’t have his skirt on. Bad Bernie.

(He didn’t have any pants on either, but that’s a whole other story.)

And so we headed back. We vowed never to publicly speak of the incident. (“What happens on Brokeback Island, stays on Brokeback Island,” I said.)

However, it was impossible to keep secret, not when I arrived back wearing different clothes



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