

SWIRE

30



#11

Winter 2012

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Swill @ 30 is published quarterly (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) along with an annual every February – in other words, five times per year.

Swill @ 30

Issue #11 Winter 2012

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Editorial: Past Imperfect

Neil Jamieson-Williams

It's a funny thing, memory -- it is neither as clear nor as correct as we often think it is. And then, sometimes it is. While there are still some anomalies¹ regarding my recall of Maplecon, the droogs at Maplecon, and the first issue of Swill, more evidence has emerged since the last issue. Thanks to Lester Rainsford² whom I ran into at SFCOntario 2. Lester still had the "Swill archive" that I left with him when I went out to BC back in May of 1981. This was not a complete Swill archive, I did have a Swill archive that included copies of all issues of the original Swill, the mimeo stencils of issues #3 through #6, copies of Daughter of Swill, Mother of Scum, and an assorted selection of issues of BeSwill. Unfortunately, due to a basement flood (actually more of a localised, persistent basement leak) the archive, along with my wife's collection of cooking magazines, all had to be tossed out as they had been reduced to one single black mould mass. The "Swill archive" in Lester's possession included copies of issues #1³ and #2 of Swill, the mimeo stencils for those two issues, and other assorted stuff.⁴

Nevertheless, it is now beyond doubt that the Maplecon Slandersheet was printed and distributed at Maplecon III in 1980. This fits my earlier recollection of events; more or less, for the most part, more. However, timelines are not my greatest interest this time around. My focus is on content. It has been close to seventeen years since I last looked at issues #1 and #2 of Swill. And in this case, my memory has been imperfect: I remembered Swill as being far worse than it actually was.

First of all, the typeface was not as bad as I recalled it to be. Lester's electric typewriter was clean in its typeface with no visibly dirty keys. In contrast, my old manual typewriter had several dirty keys but was nowhere near as bad as the pudmonkey font. (And just to cut off any discussion/whining -- Graeme, Lloyd, and Tara -- regardless of this revelation; the pudmonkey font stays.) The mimeographed copies from the archive are a little smudgy; which is why they were preserved -- the cleaner copies were distributed.

As for the content, I may have to eat my own words. In issue #8 I said, "At its core, the spirit of Swill was a shock and awe boot to the head at science fiction fandom. Vicious, angry, intentionally offensive, silly, irreverent, and obnoxious; brimming with the malicious delight of a shock-jock gadfly screaming with feigned anger -- all sound and fury... but was it anything more

¹ Such as, did I attend more than one Maplecon?

² Lester has returned as of this issue as the columnist for Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings.

³ These copies would be of the second print run of issue #1 the first run was by photocopy.

⁴ Such as, the second issue of Reticulum and the two issues of Sirius.

than prose version of smashing windows and tossing a few Molotov cocktails?" Uhm...not really. Even by 1981 standards the original Swill is tame. There is no shock and awe, no Molotov cocktails, nor even any broken windows -- it's more of flaming shit bag. Issues #1 & #2 definitely were intentionally offensive, silly, and obnoxious but no actual boot to the head to fandom. That said, the ultra-serious members of fandom, those who viewed fandom as an ideal community and FLAWOL as a sacred act, may have perceived Swill in 1981 somewhat the way I described it in issue #8.

I also say in issue #8, "The spirit of Swill was critical and blunt and intentionally malicious and its target was SF and SF fandom. The odd thing is that some -- not much, but some -- of that criticism was and remains valid...however, those nuggets that were and are still valid are not unique insights of Swill. They are not necessarily well thought out arguments -- kind of like a vulgar and poorly written Rick Mercer rant." Well some of that is true and some of that is not. Most of the content in issues #1 & #2 do read like a vulgar Mercer rant and the arguments contained are not usually well constructed; however, when we offering a critique, we were actually saying something. And some of our comments were indeed, unique for the time period. Other times, we were really just being humorous, though some fans would not appreciate the joke, e.g. The Average S.F. Fan (aka the fat fan article) and the "Guest Editorial" -- both in issue #2.

I had been told that the Maplecon Slandersheet is blatantly homophobic by those who recall it. I'm not certain about that claim. There are two lines in the Slandersheet that can be viewed as homophobic; though I would question the interpretation that these two lines are "blatantly homophobic" by 2012 standards, let alone those of 1981. It was very much the intention of the Slandersheet to be offensive, with a particular focus of comic book fans, comic book collectors, and used book/comic book dealers -- though it can also be viewed as being offensive to capitalists, sloths, swine, toads, and gays. I am willing to admit that the Slandersheet does contain two lines that can be interpreted as being mildly homophobic by today's standards for which I offer a mild apology; though I refuse to hang my head in shame or do any further penance for what I co-wrote 31 years ago.

It is good to read the original Swill once more -- based on issues #1 & #2; I have to say I am proud to have been the editor and a writer for this fanzine.

Thrashing Trufan: Themes Past and Present

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Having now had a chance to reread, several times, issues #1 & #2 of Swill – as well as re-reading Swill Online (#7) – it is clear that there are some reoccurring and persistent themes that Swill has focused on, both in the past and at present. The title this new column casts light on one of those themes; the issue of the trufan – and yes, in the opinion of Swill they deserve to be thrashed (actually thrashing may be too good for them).

The entire concept of the trufan is absolute shit to begin with. The term, by the act of existing, implies that some fans are “better” than others and that there are fans who are not “real fans” – aka, the fakefan. And who are those who determine who are the trufen and who are the fakefen? Usually some, self-appointed, self-designated, elite group -- who are all bona fide, in their own opinion, trufen -- that then designates, as an authority, who are the non-trufen “real fans” and which untouchable sudras are the “fakefans”. This form of categorisation is always highly subjective and often accompanied by loud axe-grinding in the background. While this type of behaviour is not unique to SF fandom (I have seen similar behaviour occur among Modern Pagans, punk rockers, and software developers), it has the least amount of validity when applied to SF fans. My position, which is the Swill position, is that any person who regularly enjoys reading/viewing SF genre content and whom identifies themselves as being a SF fan, is a SF fan. This ideal-type fan could be entirely devoted to original series Star Trek (never watching any of the later series) or they could be a fanzine writer or they could have interests in a wide variety of written and media SF content as well as the fan subculture itself, e.g. fanzines, con-running. There are different segments of the SF fan subculture and different levels of involvement and different criteria as to what are the most important aspects of being a SF fan -- which in turn produce different definitions of what is a SF fan, which result in the movers-and-shakers within each of the myriad segments self-defining themselves a “trufans”. Therefore, a trufan is a social construct created by an elite group that defines that particular elite and is used to engage in impression management that generates ephemeral status that is accorded to that elite group and

its membership;⁵ trufen have been the perfect target for Swill assault in the past and will continue to be in the future.

Another major theme is this: if there really is such a creature as a trufan (of SF) that species exists outside of the SF fandom population. What I mean is that those persons who regularly and actively support the genre financially, through purchase of genre content that are not part of the SF fandom population -- who don't identify themselves as SF fans -- are, if the term can be applied to anybody, the real trufen. That the genre consumers, who would appear to most fans as nothing more than "mundanes", are the majority and a majority that either has a low opinion of SF fandom or is indifferent to SF fandom's existence. I have called these people "readers" in the past but have switched to the more inclusive term of genre consumers. These people are neither "mundanes" nor "fakefans" in the context to the genre itself; on the contrary, they are very important to the genre and perhaps more important than the SF fan population itself. Within the context of the SF fandom subculture, though; they range between being nonentities to "antifans"⁶. Regardless, genre consumers are important and Swill will continue to offer support for the genre consumer.

One of the old themes of the original Swill was a negative bias toward comic book and media SF fans. In the case of media SF fans the argument was that these fans had little knowledge of the written genre which preceded the growth of media SF and believed that all the major SF tropes had emerged with media SF -- in particular, with Star Trek. The secondary argument was that most of the media SF in the early 1980's was best described as space opera⁷ and often very bad space opera.⁸ While there was some good media SF, most of it was not. From the standpoint of 2012, most of the media SF today is superior overall to that of 1982, but there remain stinkers, e.g. Terra Nova (2011). Any attack on media SF today will be tempered by two governors; one, the increased quality of most media SF, and second, the editor/writer has had experience writing/producing media SF. Nevertheless, media SF will receive praise when it is deserved and a thorough torching when it offers the viewer complete shite. The negative bias of the original Swill remains for the majority of comic books that again borrow tropes from literary SF

⁵ Translation: trufan is a term created in the course of social interaction by a group of individuals who see themselves as an elite and use the trufan term to identify their group. This is then used to create the impression among outsiders that that the group and its membership hold the status of being trufen; the status is ephemeral as it only has potential value within the SF fandom subculture and is meaningless and/or a mark of reduced status within the larger culture, e.g. Sci-Fi geek.

⁶ More on this in *Flogging a Dead Trekkie...*

⁷ I confess, I do like space opera. I like old space opera like that of A. Bertram Chandler, James H. Schmitz, and others. I also like the "new" space opera of Vernor Vinge, F. Peter Hamilton, Alistair Reynolds, and others.

⁸ For example, in print Perry Rhodan, in media the original *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Buck Rogers* in the 25th Century...

and claim them as original and for the deplorable low quality of what passes as science within comic book science fiction. Bias regarding graphic novels is also negative, but approaching neutral, with each graphic novel being judged on a case to case basis. And overall, manga and anime both suffer from the same ills as Western comic books; though when doing fantasy they can do a good job, but most of their SF is really science fantasy.

The final theme that I will discuss is that of critiquing the genre -- usually the publishers (and also the production companies) of SF content. This will not change in the current Swill and will be more hard ass and systematic than in the original Swill. There are already several targets in sight that will be fired upon in future issues.

So, although the present incarnation of Swill will be used as an outlet for organising my research project of SF fandom and as a forum through which to dialogue with that segment of fandom known as fanzine fandom; it is going to get a lot less academic in the future issues. Swill is getting its edge back.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings!

...a modest column by Lester Rainsford

I am informed that deadlines loom and a column is due. So here is the column.

Deadlines?? I understand that Valdimir Illych succeeded due to organization and no doubt deadlines, but they seem kinda antithetical to anarchy. Where "I understand" means "I think I heard somewhere, and can't be arsed to look it up on wikipedia".

The problem with pissing on a pile of old Amazings, or old Swills, besides needing more beer (that's a problem?) is that you can't tell the difference between high acid paper anyway. Which is to say, what was radical and daring may only seem so at the time, and not so much afterwards. Plus, one person's shit disturber is another person's asshole, and when it's a value judgment of the judgment impaired, well.

So we can look back to First Swill (times). Harloan Ellison, Shit Disturber or Asshole? Well I think people have figured this out by now. I am sad to hear that Joanna Russ died. I am sure some people thought she was an asshole but they're probably assholes so who cares. The current provocateurs du jour seem to be Baen barflies, and there seems no doubt even today where they come down on the divide there. So who are the real shit disturbers today? Damned if I know, at the recent con we discussed new wave and cyberpunk which everyone agrees are dead as doornails and long gone. But today cucks so that (and not in a good way) we go back and rehash stuff that happened in our youth if we are old. and if we are young, then apparently we dress up in this 'steampunk' thing. Oddly, steampunk devotees apparently haven't really looked at the past because boy things were dirty in teh age of coal, but their costumes are all immaculate white shirt and pressed vests. I guess seteampunkers aren't planning to be members of the 'black gang'. This was the bunch who actually kept your triple expansion reciprocating engine dreadnought steaming at a crazyass 17 knots. There's a reason that the real Dreadnought went to turbine and Chruchill pushed through oil-fired boilers for the Grand Fleet and it wasn't because Britain had lots of oil and no coal.

I really hope that in twenty or thirty years people at cons won't be discussing the rise and fall of steampunk although from a brief trip througth the bookstore prior to Christmas it seems that a number of authors are making a good living putting out steam-fired swill. I shudder to think of what a boiler leak would be like in a coal fired swill-ship but I expect those steampunk goggles to actually come in handy although a good rubber gas mask may be a more appropriate costume

accessory. As for using Swill to power your swillship, i have some news for you, it WAS low-acid paper. So beware.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Odds and Sods...

Neil Jamieson-Williams

This time around I will just tidy a few things up and all that...

First up, All About Swill revised:

Swill #1 (February, 1981) Cover Art: Neil Jamieson-Williams this was a badly drawn self-caricature of Neil holding a bottle of beer in his left hand and a cigarette, while giving “the finger” with his right (the “stubby” beer bottle is not well drawn and the perspective is off so it actually looks like a pill bottle). Title composed of punk-style newspaper headline cut-out letters. Editorial by Neil; article by Neil called MediaFen Suck; Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings by Lester Rainsford; Fun and Games (Thrash the Trekkie) written by Rainsford using the name Scrotum the Unbathed and reviewed by Neil and Steve Vano; a reprint of the Maplecon Slandersheet; some fake LOCs; and the back cover – same as the front cover.

Swill #2 (March, 1981) Cover Art: Neil Jamieson-Williams and Lester Rainsford – depicts three piles of shit, the one in the foreground labelled “Fandom” with lots of flies circling around it (preferred by more flies than other forms of shit). Editorial by Jamieson-Williams and Rainsford using the name Reverend B. Jeramiha Jones on smut in SF and SF fandom; an article by Jamieson-Williams on Fen Art; Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings attacks cigarette smoking and the discipline of Chemistry; article inspired by Hoyt and written by Rainsford and Jamieson-Williams and attributed to J. S. Goobly titled The Average SF Fan (the infamous fat fan article); article by Jamieson-Williams titled They Space Tribbles, Don’t They advocating the death of OSFiC; the very first Stephano (Steve Vano) My Fame strip; Lester Rainsford’s The American Weigh: Or, A Gram of Brains is Worth a Pound of Shit which attacks Libertarian Party SF, Libertarian Party SF Fandom, and some of the determinist claims made by the political philosophy of

the Libertarian Party; actual real LOCs – only one is semi-fake which is a Swill writer to writer response; back cover that proclaims that Physics Rules OK.

Second up, SFCentario 2 Con Report:

This was a smallish convention, with a focus on literary science fiction. The convention programming was above average and there was enough to do most of the time. The dealers room was not the best as it was in two parts and "off the beaten track"; there was nothing but dealers on this part of the convention floor. It would have been better if one of the dealers rooms had been used for panels to draw people over to this section of the convention floor -- I understand that this was how it was done for SFCentario 1 and had been changed for accessibility issues. The AE - The Canadian Science Fiction Review anniversary party on Friday was great but the Saturday night dance was a bust as there was no liquor licence for the event (there had been for the AE party) and almost everybody ended up going downstairs to the hotel bar. Overall, a nice little con that I do recommend for the literary fans -- I will be attending SFCentario 3.

And finally, AntiFan:

In my naive youth I had always thought that this was an established trope in SF fandom in an old Spy vs Spy manner. The figure of AntiFan was dressed in black with a cloak and 17th century hat -- like Spy vs Spy or Guy Fawkes -- and had a wide variety of various explosive devices. I remember these cartoons from fanzines in the early 1980's and, as the editor of Swill, I embraced the AntiFan concept. It was a surprise that I recently discovered that the character of AntiFan was not something that went back to the 1960's or earlier but a creation of the Australia in 83 WorldCon bid. Supporters of the ConStellation bid (Baltimore) were agents of AntiFan while those who supported the AusiCon bid were trufen -- the trufen lost this one. Nevertheless, I hope to dig up some of those AntiFan cartoons and repurpose them for Swill, or something along that line...

Scribbling on the Bog Walk

Letters of Comment

Neil Jamieson-Williams

As I write this, there is only two LOCs this time around. As always, my comments are in red.

From: "Taral Wayne" <Taral@teksavvy.com>

Subject: Re: Swill @ 30 Issue #10 Autumn 2011

Date: Tue, November 1, 2011 2:55 pm

To: swill@uldunemedia.ca

I'll have to see if I can define "traditional fan" for you later. It has nothing to do with whether or not a fan goes to conventions, by the way. I didn't involve the issue of cons because they weren't relevant in that sense. Fans have been going to cons since 1936... I've gone to a few, myself.

Hi Taral,

I think that you provided me with the definition at SFContzine 2 – your definition of traditional fan appears to be very similar to the concept of a core fan; a person who is a genre consumer, self identifies themselves as a fan, participates in fan activity, and is integrated into a local geographic fan community that operates as a primary social network. Am I correct?

And yes, in our society, any group like this is under threat – not because of the rise of media SF fandom, but due to techno-culture changes within the society as a whole.

1706 -24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
M9C 2B2

November 22, 2011

Dear Neil:

It's taken me a couple of days to get myself together after the SFCOntario 2 weekend, but if nothing else, everything else is sorted out, or put away, or in the laundry, etc., so I can finally catch up with a sudden mountain of fanzines to deal with and comment on. With that in mind, here are comments on Swill @ 30, issue 10.

(I should ask what was the response at the convention to your questionnaire, and what they thought of the fanzine. A lot of the people there know that I am connected with fanzines, but few of them are interested in them themselves. Glad you got yourself the first two Swills, even if they are photocopies.)

Hi Eloyd,

Well the mix-up with printing meant that I had no surveys with me at the convention. As it is, the survey will be redesigned anyway and will go live sometime in March.

The copies of Swill #1 and #2 that I got from Lester Rainsford were not photocopies but actual mimeographed copies, albeit a little smudgy.

I am certain I saw the droogs at some local convention in Toronto... whether it was Adam and Kevin and you, or others, I am not sure. It must have been you, now that I think of it, because I do remember poor Fritz being abused. I have to wonder who the overweight Trekkies were, and it may be likely that given my own interests of that distant time, I might have known them.

Why is everybody so concerned with "poor Fritz"? Fritz was a pile of clothing (usually stuffed with hotel linens) and a Styrofoam wig head; a collection inanimate objects. But yes, we did abuse Fritz horrorshow. I have no idea as to the identity of the overweight Trekkies, only that they were there.

Conventions do have a structure of some kind, and that structure may depend

on the subject matter of the convention. One friend who goes to mostly media SF conventions found that the literary SFConario she attended was quite odd, and very different. For myself, I found it a bit of a throwback to the way literary conventions were run in the 80s and 90s, and it was strangely familiar, and quite enjoyable. Polaris is a different convention from what it was in the 80s and 90s, too. As we age, our expectations of such a convention change, so if you didn't like it before, give it five years or so, and the changes may be to your liking. These days, because I've worked in the evening for some years, I haven't watched any evening SF television, not much has attracted me at all, and I have seen few SF movies, so the demand to meet actors doesn't really turn me on. Polaris has turned into a steampunk costuming occasion, and for the last few years, an opportunity to be a dealer and sell some goods to the membership. (Any parties at the convention were staged by the convention itself; there seems to be a vague hostility towards any parties staged by attendees, promoting their own group, project, event or convention.)

I liked SFConario, but then I am a literary fan first and a media fan second. I can see how it would seem strange to a media fan though. It is kind of like an old fashioned relaxicon with more programming. As I never attended any of the Toronto Treks I cannot compare between Polaris now and then; though I would hazard a speculation that it was more Trek-based in the past and now caters to a variety of SF & F media. Steampunk costuming is a current fad, in five years it will be replaced by something else. Yes, I noticed that there was strict room party control at Polaris – though, I had been told that this was being done to keep the hotel happy...

I found out a while ago where the term 'cosplay' comes from. It's a relatively new term to me, but was invented by a Japanese journalist who covered the 1984 Worldcon in Anaheim, California. He saw people in costume perhaps acting out a generic scene from the TV show or movie the costumes came from, and he nicknamed it cosplay, or costuming play, from perhaps the acting style of play or perhaps play as in having fun, not really sure.

It is interesting isn't it? Back in the old days a good group costume usually involved some form of acting out in character. This has really taken off in the anime community.

I have been both a lit fan and a mediafan... these days, mostly lit. Because my own involvement in fandom goes back to the late 70s, I would have to describe myself as a traditional fan and an active fan.

We will discuss this next issue as I will be revising the categories...

Gotta agree with Uncle Swill... fanzines may be an old way of communicating, but it's the participation that people like about it. Some do say that the letters of comment are optional, but the decision to not have a letter column gets them in trouble with others. Myself, I think a letter column is preferable, but I am biased. I have received zines with no letter column, and I have responded to them anyway. It's the communication that's important, not the byline.

Yes, I like having a letter column too. And, as the original Swill had one, I have to keep with tradition. By the way, I have commented to Askance on your review of Swill @ 30...

My loc...yes, we did connect up at SFContario 2...I hope I actually had something of substance to say. Yvonne and I had been in the Vaughan St. store a long time ago, but recently, we did have a look in the new store on Bathurst St., and it is, unfortunately, a shadow of what it once was. Believe me, I don't like the idea of calling others fakefans, for that's more tearing down the efforts of others.

And for building up the ephemeral status of fanzish elites...

Indeed, I work at the Globe in the evenings, not as a reporter, but as a data entry clerk. We do intend to attend Ad Astra 2012 and Polaris 26 in the new year, and perhaps we can talk more, and see what else there is to discuss through questionnaires, or just a general discussion.

Take care, and see you with the next issue. Might not be until 2012, so the best of Christmases and New Years...might be a little early.

Hope that you both had a happy holiday season and all the best for 2012. See you at Ad Astra...

Yours, Lloyd Pennéy.

Endnote: Narrowing the Lens

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Research Notes:

At this point in the research project I appear to have come to the same realisation that previous researchers also must have reached; fandom is way to big to easily study. That said, I will not follow the solution taken by others who have gone before -- to limit my study to one group within fandom, and only one group. However, I am going to narrow my focus and place primary emphasis on two particular groups within the SF fan subculture; conrunners and fanzine fandom. At the same time I will continue to research the whole SF fan culture. It also means that there will be two research projects operating simultaneously. The larger one will focus on conrunners (and event organisers) and the segments of the SF fan subculture that their conventions/events are aimed at and the smaller study will be on fanzine fandom. The rationale behind this is that by organising my research project this way I am more likely to receive funding from SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council).

Part of the change in regulations that have been made to SSHRC is a new emphasis on applied research, or that there is an applied component to the research. I have decided, based on my earlier special events research, that by placing emphasis on SF fan conrunners I can also collect data on convention/event organiser relations with the venue operators, attendee relations with the venue operators, that would provide an applied component to the study; i.e. data that would be useful to the hospitality industry. It is also a useful structure for the research in that, one speculates (though one could be in error) that the conrunners for successful conventions probably know a fair bit about the type of fan who is drawn to their particular convention -- in other words, that they know their audience. This would make them strong candidates for key informants in the research project. Therefore, the major research project would be structured thus:

- Interviews with conrunners, either face-to-face or electronically
- Participant observation (if permitted) at concom meetings prior to and after each convention studied
- Participant observation at each convention

- Online survey of conrunners
- Online surveys of fans
- Interviews -- electronically -- with fans

Plus; interviews with venue operators and online surveys of venue operators

The ~~Pith Helmet and Propeller Beanie Tour~~ tentatively will be:

2011 -- 2014

Polaris 25, SFCOntario 2, Ad Astra 31, Polaris 26, Sci Fi Fan Expo 2012, SFCOntario 3, FilKOntario 23, Anime North 2013, Polaris 27, V-Con 38, SFCOntario 4, FutureCon 4, Ad Astra 33, WesterCon 2014, Worldcon 2014, SFCOntario 5.

The fanzine fandom study will be done out of pocket and is a sidebar to the major research project.

~~The Continuing Quest for Swill...~~

While it is wonderful that issues #1 and #2 have been recovered, there are more issues remaining to be found and scanned. Issues #3 through #6 are most wanted. Any surviving copies of Daughter of Swill, Mother of Scum Issues #1 through #3 would also be appreciated.

Nadmenmy

...when you thought it was safe
to go back to another New Year's Eve Party...

bugatty

do gooders



THE WRATH OF



An upscale New Year's Eve Party
December 30, 2011 - January 1, 2012

vilefen soviet clapping the
cally bolnoy bratchnie into a
singularity

For more information please visit

www.futurecon.org