

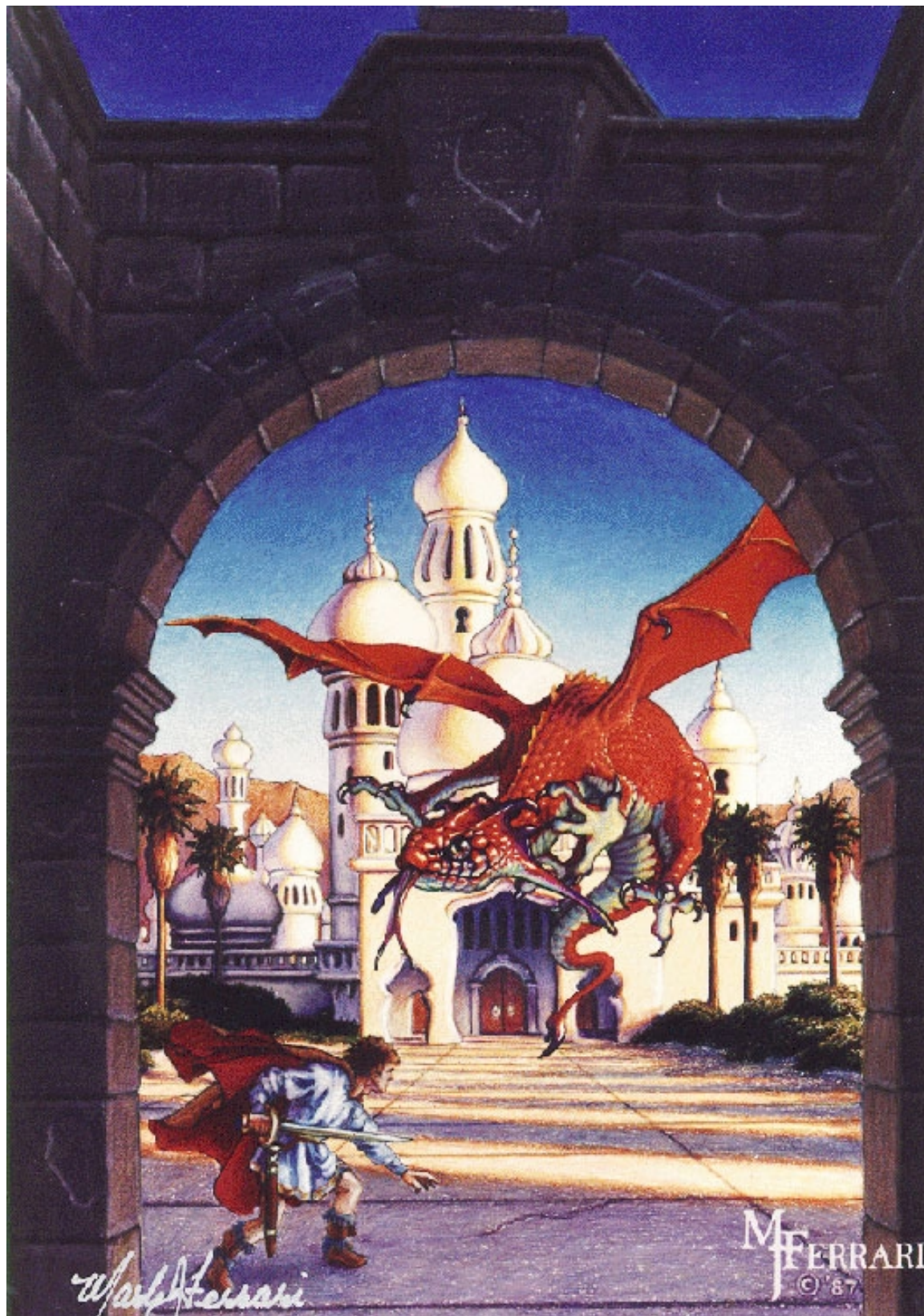


• EVENTS • LETTERS • FEATURES • MOVIES • REVIEWS • BOOKS • LISTINGS • NEWS •

SCIFI MAGAZINE

Vol. 28 Issue 4 Number 323
April 2000 \$2.50

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST COAST SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION



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REVIEW PAGE 8



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PAGE 8

MEMBERSHIPS

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Family (2 Votes)	\$31.00

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323 is the club newsletter published
by the West Coast Science Fiction
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*W.C.S.F.A. is also known as
B.C.S.F.A. which is the social branch
of the organization.*

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 BCSFAzine is also
available as a full colour
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WCSFAACTIVITIES

Contributor's Deadline - April 14th, May 19th, June 16th, July 14th, August 18th, Sept. 15th, Oct. 20th. Send, your submissions, comments, loc's to John Wong at 2041 East 10th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5N 1X9 or E-Mail me at woolf@mac.com

F.R.E.D. - Every Friday

The weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in joining us for an evening of conversation and relaxation, with pool table option. At the Burrard Motor Inn opposite St. Paul's Hospital (Downtown Vancouver) 6 blocks south of Burrard Skytrain Station. 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). #22

Knight/McDonald bus along Burrard. Begins 8:00pm. On the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

BCSFAzine Pickup/Collation at FRED - The Friday before the first Sunday of the month. Pick up your issue of BCSFAzine at FRED! Pristine, mint condition copies are available at FRED. Call Steve to let him know you wish to pick up your copy.

WCSFA Executive Meeting. April 8th, 1 pm.
Firehall Branch Library 1455 West 10th Avenue,
Vancouver. Tenth & Granville.

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

Norwescon 23 April 20-23, 2000 Seatac, Washington

Guest of Honor - David Brin
Guest of Honor - Gregory Benford
Artist Guest of Honor - Barclay Shaw
Fan Guests of Honor - John and Bjo Trimble
Norwescon 23 Pre-Registration
PO Box 68547, Seattle, WA 98168-0547
Hotel: The Doubletree Seattle Airport Hotel is the site of Norwescon 23. The hotel is located at 18740 International Blvd in Seatac, Washington.
Call (206) 246-8600 for reservations. These rates are available for up to 3 days before and after the convention.

World Horror Con 2000 May 11-14, 2000

Guests: Peter Straub, Melanie Tem, Harlan Ellison, J. Michael Straczynski, Steve Rasnic Tem, Ellen Datlow, Dan Simmons
Address: WHC2000, Inc. PO Box 32167, Aurora, CO 80041-2167

For a limited time, WHC2000 memberships will cost \$75

To Obtain Room Reservations: Adam's Mark Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver CO 80202, 1-800-444-ADAM, (303) 893-3333
Room rates start at \$125/night for a single or double, \$159/night for triple occupancy, and \$179/night for quad.

Conduit 10 May 19-21, 2000

Author GOH: Charles de Lint
Artist GOH: Brian Durfee
Mail: CONduit Organizing Committee
PO BOX 11745, Salt Lake City, UT 84147-0745

Phone Number: SLC: (801) 294-9297
Ogden: (801) 776-0164

Hotel: Salt Lake Airport Hilton,

5151 Wiley Post Way, Salt Lake International Center Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Telephone: 801-539-1515

Membership Rates

Before November 15th, 1999 \$25.00

Miscon 2000 May- 26-28 2000

Guests: Jesse Marcel, Jr., Steve Jackson, Tom Smith

Memberships:

\$15 until end of 1999

Hotel: Double Tree Hotel Edgewater 100 Madison Tel: (406) 728-3100

Room Rates: \$79/night

Miscon P.O. Box 7721 Missoula MT 59807
www.miscon.org

SEACOUVER 2000 June 30th to July 3rd. Vancouver, BC A "Highlander: The Series" convention.

Guests, Jim Byrnes, and various actors from **Highlander: The Series** and **Highlander: The Raven**

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Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel & Marina from Friday, June 30 through Monday, July 3. Admission (in Canadian funds) is \$90 for the full convention, \$60 for Saturday or Sunday only, \$30 for the reserved seating section, and \$24 for the Jim Byrnes Band performance (in addition to having a full or Sunday Only registration). The first 50 paid registrations will receive a free Sunday breakfast (value \$15). Tour prices will be finalized shortly.

For more information, or a Registration Form, email to seacouver2000@aol.com or send snail mail with SASE to:

Seacouver 2000

Attn: Lisa King

#101 - 1001 West Broadway, Unit 334

Vancouver, BC V6H 4E4



VCON 25

MAMMALS BEWARE
DINOSAURS ATTACK!



GoH: Robert Sawyer!

Winner of five Aurora awards, including three for Best Novel, Sawyer is the author of 'Far-Seer', 'Fossil Hunter', 'Foreigner' (An intelligent Dinosaurs trilogy), 'End Of An Era' (also Dinosaurs), plus 'Golden Fleece', 'The Terminal Experiment', 'Starplex', 'Frameshift', 'Factoring Humanity', 'Flash Forward', & 'Illegal Alien'. Sawyer will launch of his latest novel 'Calculating God' at VCon. He will be accompanied to VCon by his wife Carolyn Clink.



**Fan GoH's:
Lloyd & Yvonne Penney!**

Well known long-time Toronto Fans and 1998 C.U.F.F. (Canadian Unity Fan Fund) Winners. Lloyd and Yvonne have won three Aurora awards for their Fannish activities.



**Toastmaster:
Mr. Science!**

His 'Corresponding Secretary' Al Betz won the 1991 Fan Achievement Aurora, and is the holder of a special Elron award as well.

It is rumoured Mr. Science will perform a diabolical experiment at the con.

GoH'S:

Spider and Jeanne Robinson!

Spider is the Hugo Award winning author of 'Time Pressure', 'Mind Killer', 'Life House', 'Night of Power', 'User Friendly', of the Callahan's series including 'Time Travelers Strictly Cash', 'Callahan's Crosstime Saloon', 'Lady Slings The Booze', 'Callahan's Secret', etc., and with his wife Jeanne, of 'Stardance', 'Starseed', and 'Starwind'.



Hotel:

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9850 King George Hwy, Surrey, B.C., V3T 4Y3, Canada. (Location is 1/2 block from King George Skytrain Station) Tel: (604) 588-9511, Fax: (604) 588-7949, Toll free phone: 1-800-663-0660, Email: res@surreyinn.com Web Site: SurreyInn.com

Special Convention room rates: single/double: \$75 Cdn. (Approx \$50 US) • Quad: \$85 Cdn. (Approx \$57 US).

Children under 18 stay free!

Three Day Membership Rates

Month	Cdn	US
March/April	\$40	\$27
May	\$45	\$30

(Send Cheques to above address payable to VCON)

Other Guests include:

Mary Choo, Carolyn Clink, Michael Coney, Don H. DeBrandt, Alyx Dellamonica, Lynne Fahnestalk, Steve Fahnestalk, Donna Farley, Stan G. Hyde, Eileen Kernaghan, Angelo Loperfido, Donna McMahon, Syne Mitchell, Rebecca V. Neason, Warren Oddsson, Reah Rose and MArchie Tentchoff

For More Info: Write: VCon 25, Box # 274—1857 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1M4 Canada. • E-Mail: rgraeme@home.com Phone: (604) 731-7553 Yes, we now have a web site courtesy Jacqueline Passey. It is located at: www.sfnorthwest.org/vcon/



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It is easy to change your subscription to this format. Go to the Adobe web site and download the free Acrobat Reader for you computer's operating system. (Make sure you get version 3 or higher).

Then e-mail me at woolf@vcn.bc.ca and let me know that you want to switch your subscription over. You will then receive the next zine in your e-mail.

A sample copy of the Acrobat BCSFAzine is available on our website.

<http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/dh2/bcsfa>

LETTERS OF COMMENT

DEAR JOHN

Fanzines have been arriving at their slowest pace in memory during the past couple of months. Maybe computer fanac is finally winning over paper as so many people had predicted. Or maybe most fans are still broke from the expenses involved in attending the Australian world con last year. Whichever, I'm as close to catching up as I've been in years on loc writing and thus the rarity of prompt response to the February BCSFAzine.

Any news about Dr. Who that doesn't include an announcement that the series is dead is welcome. Unfortunately, Maryland's public television network continues to run Dr. Who at an impossible time, usually 12:30 or 1:00 am on Sunday mornings. So I haven't seen an episode for a long time. I don't think this state's public television has bought any of the "early 1960's variety series" that Ray Seredin mentions, unless he is referring to rock programs that occasionally turn up. (Today's younger generation must think Ed Sullivan programmed only rock groups, because there have been a number of "reruns" of Sullivan that include only this particular type of offering.)

My main reaction to your article on the early history of computer use for fanzine publishing was fervent thankfulness that I wasn't part of it. However, I can't agree with your belief that fanzines are better in their computer guise than they were when mimeographed from typed pages because the greater variety of things available in typography and format.

TV Guide suffered the loss of several million copies in its circulation during a period of recent years. I feel certain that the main cause was the incredible mishmash of fx that had been introduced into its slick paper pages, the ones that are the same throughout the nation. (The pulp pages that contain program listings differ from one regional edition to another.) Almost all blocks of type were superimposed on dark-coloured backgrounds, the reader's eye wandered aimlessly over a page where it was impossible to be sure how the type was laid out amid illustrations and other distractions, the title of an article might appear without spaces between words but each word was set in a different typeface, and so on. Recently the sale of the magazine to another parent company seems to have caused the layout and typography to be less excessive.

I think that printer's rules developed over a half a millennium are still useful guides. One font for all body type because it's hard for they eye to adjust to different type faces or sizes. No body type against a shaded or coloured background, which should be saved for large headings. A minimum width for all columns, because it's awfully tedious to read a column only a few ems in width where a picture caused temporary narrowness. The largest body typeface that can be afforded with respect to finances and amount of material that must see print. This has worked for centuries. Today you can see how newspapers print the classified ads all in one section so their small type won't interfere with the larger typeface in which the news and other non-advertising material is set. Books where footnotes are in smaller typeface but relegated to the bottom of pages or a section at the end of the volume so they won't confuse the reader who doesn't need the information they contain. Photographs in non-fiction books usually collected on separate pages to permit the reader to do this thing without adjusting his eyes to different-looking pages, except in books where diagrams must adjoin the text for proper understanding. Circus posters have traditionally used yellow paper but all the red type was large so it would be readily legible.

I know your club's treasury couldn't handle the large number of

pages that would be required to set BCSFAzine in a larger font, enlarge pictures so they could occupy complete columns, and so on. It's just that I don't think fanzines from the pre-computer era, which were almost always attractive to the eye in their simplicity and easy to read (at least until office copiers became able to reduce the typed page) should be viewed with pity just because they're old-fashioned.

Garth's list of fanzines and other items for sale for CUFF impressed me as an excellent source of nostalgia. Just reading the titles and names made me think about fans and fanzines that are no longer active.

Yrs., &c.,

Harry Warner Jr.

DEAR JOHN:

Thanks for the BCSFAzine!! It looks really incredible. Gosh that colour stuff really jazzes it up.

I was interested in the articles, too. Good one on conspiracy theory! It was great too to see that Harry Warner Jr and the Penneys were still with us as loccers. I remember them fondly from my days on Neology in Edmonton.

Currently I'm writing for TVOntario on three different kids series. They're all 'science mysteries' which is lots of fun. (And no, I'm not in Ontario for this, ah the joys of emailing your work in....)

My CYBERSIX episode, "TERRA" airs on Teletoon regularly. There are only 13 episodes of CYBERSIX so far, interestingly enough, but they have been such a big hit on Teletoon that they continue to re-run them. They were the top rated series on Teletoon for while there.

Also, my episode of the animated kids series "Billy the Cat: Eau de Junkyard" is in post production. I'm not sure of the air date, probably this fall.

Last year I worked mostly on SO WEIRD, a Disney Channel series available here on Family Channel about a girl who sees strange things. It's a paranormal/science fiction/fantasy kind of series. I really enjoyed my time on So Weird because I worked in the story department there, directly for the showrunners. I learned a lot there. I hope to continue to do that kind of work in the future, and eventually to create my own show (SF of course).

Anyway, really loved the pdf format. It gives such a wonderful look to the zine. Enjoyed the book reviews (Donna M.) and the anime review (Peter T) especially. Nice to see con listings again, although I don't have much time anymore to get to them...

Thanks again

Bye for now

Catherine Donahue Girczyc



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DEAR KEN/JOHN:

I'm sure I'm just skirting the deadline, but I have printed up the March issue of BCSFAzine, whatever number it is (321? 322?), and I should get on with a loc.

The convention list...Corflu 2000 is past a week, and from all the pictures I've seen on-line, it was a very enjoyable convention in Seattle. One of these days, I shall get to one of them. At this and every Corflu, the FAAn Awards are handed out to those who participate in fanzine fandom in various capacities. For the first time, I won a FAAn Award for Best Letterhack. That's about all I know! I should have more information later on.

My thanks to Harry Warner for his good wishes...I am under no illusions about any film career, but I am hopeful for a bit of fun. The screenplay for Illegal Alien continues at a glacier's pace, and at last report, Dr. Lloyd Penney is still a character in it. The shooting for the documentary on fandom has been going at a snail's pace for the last couple of months, but we are scheduled to do lots of interviewing at Eeriecon 2, the new convention in Niagara Falls, NY the end of this month. The producers have some ideas they want to explore, and we're willing to talk about our fannish lives, and the fun we can have in it.



Paul Carpentier's letter certainly makes a lot of sense. Your, Mr. Editor, and Graeme Cameron got Aurora nominations from me this year. All we can do is hope for the best when TT2000 issues the Aurora ballots. I'll have to check to see when that happens.

Ad Astra 2000 was a success this year, with 500 attendees total, and a good feeling throughout. I can't really be objective here, seeing Yvonne and I were the FanGoHs, but the con was very good to us and the Worldcon bid. The pro guests were happy to be there, and there was a very positive energy that permeated the con. Ad Astra is back, and the committee is already working on next year's con, Ad Astra 2001, which will have Connie Willis as a pro guest of honour. After seeing how competent the committee looks, Yvonne and I have decided to take a more active role on the committee, and will be seeking set positions. This will be my 19th year on the Ad Astra committee, and I still want to find out what's in the concom retirement fund (ha ha).

Natasha Eloi at Space:TIS is totally legitimate. Even though she loves SF, she'd never read any H.G. Wells, and didn't know that Wells used Eloi as the name of an underground race in The Time Machine. According to Mark Askwith, not only didn't she know, but neither did her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Eloi.

Thanks to Doug Finnerty for his offer of a list of Jim Johnston's collection. I am a collector, but I am also trying to save space for whatever SFnal detritus I accumulate over the next few years. As much as I like fanzines, I am rapidly running out of space. Yvonne and I expect we'll need to take a dealer's table some Ad Astra to hold a fannish garage sale.

Garth Spencer must have enjoyed it when The X-Files were being shot in Vancouver, being as conspiracy-oriented as it was. If I recall a programme I saw a while ago, I believe the Knights Templar still exist, and still meet regularly, especially in Great Britain. It has become an honorary society, and has as much ceremony and pomp as the Masons and Shriners.

The Toronto in 2003 Worldcon bid has reached the 1500-pre-supporter level, and we are still looking for more before it's time to go to Chicago and Chicon 2000 to see if we can win it. If you haven't yet sent in your pre-support money (this

will get you a discount on your membership cost should we win, and we think the odds are 97% in favour of that), please do so, or when we are in Surrey for V-Con 25, we can accept funds from you and get you registered right there. Remember, your \$20.03 pre-support will get you C\$20 to 35 off the cost of your attending membership.

I'll wind it up right here, and say my thanks for another good zine. Keep them coming, and we look forward to seeing all of you at V-Con 25 in May.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

ps: Just today, I had a job interview with an insurance-oriented publisher in downtown Toronto. The fellow who interviewed me? His name was John Wyndham. And that's his real name. The British SF/fantasy writer John Wyndham...his real name was John Beynon Harris.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

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Paul Carpentier	Julie McGalliard

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Fanzine E-Publishing

Last month, we covered the basics of planning a fanzine. We looked at everything from budgeting to circulation to establishing the physical format of the zine. This month, we look at the very elements on a page. The assembly of a layout is not as simple as dropping elements on a page and hoping that they look good. The fact that one does not see the printed page in museums does not make it any less of an art form. If, however, you are like me and lack formal artistic training, then you have two options.

The first option you have is to steal the designs you see in other professional magazines. This solution can only go so far as you will not be able to utilize the layout to its full potential, or the layout will not fully conform to the amount of illustrations and/or text that you need to assemble. On the other hand, if you want to add a bit of yourself to the look of the zine, then you have the other option of developing a formula. Here is a look at all the variables that make up a page.

COVER

Masthead: (Also known as a Banner) When you go into a magazine store, the first thing you see is the magazine's name. This is because, for the most part, magazines are displayed on an overlapping shelf which allows for only the top quarter of the magazine to be visible. People usually identify a magazine by the title which in effect becomes the logo of the magazine. Unless you have lots of money to buy the front display shelf space, your magazine will very likely be shown somewhere towards the back of a shelf. The Masthead must therefore be as unobscured as possible. This means large easy to read text, and if you can afford it, colour. Maintaining a consistent logo will help your readers find you.

Cover Art: Careful consideration must be made when choosing all the elements that go onto the cover. Unless you lack the funds to afford the luxury of a cover illustration, then cover art is the most important silent selling feature at your disposal. A well chosen illustration will increase your circulation more than the actual content of your magazine itself. Understanding and knowing your readership comes in real handy at this point.

Design Considerations: Featuring an image of what your readership wants to see is not enough though. There are other little elements that will trick people into picking up your magazine. If you can afford colour, then the use of bright blues, reds and oranges will attract the browser's eyes. Bright text, especially red text on a dark background has the illusion of being three dimensional as the text will seem to leap off the page. If you are featuring an image of a person, try and use one where the eyes clearly look at the readers because this will automatically draw the read-

er's eyes to them. When a person is browsing the shelves, their eyes are flying from magazine to magazine. If you can get their eyes to come to a sudden stop on your magazine, then your cover has succeeded in doing the most important part of its job.

PAGE FURNITURE

The most repetitive elements of a page are referred to as page furniture. These elements appear on almost every page and serve to guide the reader through the zine.

Header/Footers: A header is the line of text that runs along the top of a page on every page of the publication. Common elements of the header include publication name, chapter, article name, page number, and/or section name. Generally, the most basic information to help remind the reader what they are reading, and where in the publication they are. To help separate the header from the bulk of the text use a different typeface. Many people will use a line under the text to help with the visual segregation. Another simple technique is to reverse the text (make the text the colour of the paper) onto a solid bar. Footers are the same thing as headers, but runs along the bottom of a page instead. Publications can choose to use just a header, just a footer, or even use both on a page. It is important to choose a style and maintain it throughout the publication. Do not start with headers and suddenly switch to footers.

Headlines: The obvious function of the headline is to let a reader know where an article begins. As with all elements on a page, it also serves to attract an interested reader who has very little time to do any actual reading as they flip through your magazine at the store. Headlines must convey as much information about the content of the article in as few words as possible, which will afford it a bit of creativity so the use of huge and fancy typefaces is permissible here. Legibility can be sacrificed here in favour of eye-catching design.

Subheads: In order to break up large blocks of text which can be very hard to read, subheads can be used to show where different sections of an article begin. This also allows the readers to easily zero in on a specific topic of an article by glancing at the subheads.

Body Text: For the most part, body text is the most common element of all your pages. This is the actual text of the article itself. However, there are some specific rules you must keep in mind when dealing with body text, the most important of which deals with the legibility of the text. Choose a typeface which is easy to read. Look at your local newspaper and see what kind of font they use. For the most part, a serif font such as the one I use is the easiest to read. Serifs are the little curves and points you see at the ends of letters. They have a more classic look to them as they have been in use for many decades now. The most common serif font is Times, which is named after the newspaper which developed it. Sans-Serif letters, which are more common with headlines and subheads lack these embellishments and are more modern looking. However, without the visual guiding of the serifs, these fonts are a little harder on the eyes when reading them over long periods.

Call Outs: Ever notice those short sentences in the middle of a page which are several times larger than the text around it? Additional elements like lines or a box can be used to physically separate the sentence from the rest of the general text. Call outs are used primarily to fill space when you lack illustrations or enough text to fill a page. They have a very effective secondary effect of drawing

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Page Anatomy



a reader into the article. If the zine has several articles, the reader will be flipping from one page to another looking for something that will interest them. If an article is several pages long, then callouts can be used to draw readers in as effectively as a headline would. Callouts are usually interesting key phrases which are pulled from the article itself. They try to trick the browser into becoming a reader.

Illustrations: Everyone knows what an illustration is. We understand that they are there to help us understand the text more. What people may not realize is that the correct choice of illustration will help in the flow of the article as well. Subtle elements of an illustration help point a reader in a visual direction. The more interesting an illustration you provide, the more likely it is that the reader will read your article.

Captions: Usually found under illustrations, captions serve the dual purpose of explaining an illustration, as well as drawing readers into reading the article. This is effectively your second chance to bring the reader in as the illustration has served its purpose of drawing in the reader's interest.

Drop/Raised Caps: Usually the first letter of the paragraph, the letter is enlarged and either rises above the paragraph, or drops into the paragraph a few lines. When I was learning about page layout design, I made a point of asking about the rules concerning the use of drop caps. The answer I received was that there are no rules concerning the use of drop caps. For the most part, drop caps are used where an editor feels that the text, due to its length, is beginning to lose the reader. I make use of drop caps regularly at the beginning of most articles. Occasionally, I would use a smaller drop cap in the middle of an article which does not have many subheads. This helps break up the text, giving the reader a chance to rest.

Rules: Basically, rules are the lines which divide up a page into sections. Depending on how you use them, they can either separate different articles from each other, or be a unifying link. These lines are referred to by "weight", otherwise known as thickness.

Bars: When the weight of a rule makes it more a box than a line, then the line is called a bar. This item visually enhances the separation of the contents from the surrounding elements. The most common of this item is the Sidebar.

Sidbars: If you have additional information which is not easily included in your article, or complete short articles relating to your main article, then the sidebar is the ideal medium for this text. The sidebar is easily distinguished from the main article because it is usually inside a box (referred to as a bar). Additional distinguishing elements that can be brought into play by the use of a different typeface and/or a different colour. Sidebars are not restricted to rectangles as they can take on any shape.

Column Rules: Between the text columns of some magazines, you may see lines running up and down the page. It may look purely decorative, but these lines do help direct the reader's eyes in specific directions. The lines both effect the flow of the eyes in an up/down direction when you are glancing at the page, and create a visual barrier helping in the readability and flow of the text.

All these elements combine to make up the basic page. Yet, each basic element has variations which make it possible to put together an endless array of layouts. How you put together a page effects the reader in subtle ways. Next month, we will explore some of the variations of these elements and how you can use the subtle effects to control the way the reader reads your zine.



CLASSIC SERIES:

Good news. After almost twenty years, the BBC is breaking up with CBS/FOX, the distributors of "Dr. Who" videos in North America to go it alone. LA's "Outpost Gallifrey" reports that BBC Worldwide will handle the series' home videos titles starting this summer. While some poorer selling titles will be dropped, there's a good chance that most of "The Doctor's" adventures can be ordered at your local video store or via the Internet by Christmas.

NOW SOME BAD NEWS.

Space: TIS has pulled the plug on "Dr. Who" after two and a half years with the end of Tom Baker story "The Sontaran Experiment" on March 10th 2000. The station replaced it with "Prisoners of Gravity" reruns. Space said it could pick up "The Doctor" again, either this fall or next fall with the Tom Baker episodes in movie format. However this depend on went or if the BBC starts on a new series.

A Good News/Bad News story back in the UK too. "Classic Dr. Who" episodes airing on BBC2 came in at an average rating of 58 in Britain for the last two months of 1999. It was number two in its 9:00 PM Thursday time slot, beating the first half hour of the triweekly game show "Greed" and occasionally came close to beating "ITV's Thursday Night Hollywood Film" for the number one spot. However in early January 2000 Channel 4 started to air "The Lost World" and Channel 5 modified "Greed" so a contestant could win at least \$1,500,000 US. each episode, causing The Doctor to drop to a strong fourth. Then in mid January ITV changed the "Thursday Night Hollywood Film" to the "Thursday Night Action Film", this sank The TARDIS as it fell to a greatly distant fifth after BBC1's "Nine O'clock News". BBC2 aired the last "Classic Dr. Who" on February 24 and replaced it with "Fresh Prince" reruns.

1996 TV MOVIE:

Good news on 1996 TV Movie on this side of the Atlantic. BBC America plans to air it at the end of the Tom Baker series. The cable station air the series only as one-hour episodes, so the TVM should air around February 2, 2002. Space said it also air it around the same time.

Back to school again, so be seeing you.

Ray "Dr. Media" Sepedin
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A Red Heart Of Memories,

Nina Kikiri Hoffman (Ace, Oct/99)

Matt Black, a homeless woman, is sitting on a park bench eating discarded sandwiches when a man steps out of a nearby ivy-covered wall. "The leaves wove together into green skin, the skin smoothed and formed a man, and then a man all green stepped away from the wall, shaking his head slowly."

The man is Edmund. Edmund wanders the world, going where the spirit moves him, and the spirit has told him to follow Matt. Thus begins a most extraordinary fantasy adventure set in the contemporary U.S., slightly to the left of reality.

I'm not going to say much else about the plot of **A Red Heart Of Memories** because I don't want to spoil it or prejudice readers. Not being a big fan of fantasy or some of the book's themes (or California for that matter), I would likely have avoided it based on a plot synopsis. However, Hoffman's terrific writing made it a novel that I'm glad to have read.

The characters in **A Red Heart Of Memories** are well drawn and compelling, but what impressed me most was the amazing sense of wonder Nina Kikiri Hoffman brought to her magic scenes, and her whimsical humour. Hoffman uses magic to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. For example:

The rocks were singing.

Matt kneeled and placed her hand on them. Gold bared her palm—Hello?—she thought.

"Greetings, man-thing. Thing like those that chopped us and split us and carried us and buried us, looking for seams and nuggets and ore. Greetings, thing that stripped us from our parent and brought us to a new place. Greetings, thing that left us shattered here an age ago.—

—Uh, greetings,— Matt thought. None of these events sounded very positive, but the rocks didn't seem too angry about them. On the other hand, all the rocks had sharp edges.

My only serious criticism of **A Red Heart Of Memories** is that the end of the book lacks impact, particularly given the emotional intensity of earlier chapters. Part of the weakness is structural. The book's viewpoint character, Matt, is pulled into a quest to solve Edmund's problem, and this in turn draws them into solving someone else's problem. These two steps distance us from Matt's needs and emotions, thus making the ultimate payoff inevitably less intense. Moreover, the climax of this magical quest begs for pyrotechnics and, unfortunately, Hoffman opts for a low key resolution. It is more realistic in human terms, certainly, but it lacks dramatic closure.

The disappointing end of **A Red Heart Of Memories** reminded me a great deal of **The Healer's War**, a fantasy novel by Elizabeth Anne Scarborough, based on her experiences as a nurse in Viet Nam. Because Scarborough hadn't resolved her feelings about Viet Nam, she wasn't able to resolve her protagonist's problems either, consequently this otherwise excellent book drizzled to an uncertain stop.

Hoffman has done a better job, nonetheless she tackled an ambitious, thorny theme and it's little wonder she had difficulties. I still recommend this book strongly, and will be watching for more of Hoffman's work.

Comments? Questions? Rebuttals? donna_mcmahon@sunshine.net



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PETER PANS MISSION TO MARS

Since you can probably guess the plot, including the final revelation, from the TV commercials for **Mission to Mars**, there's no need to warn about spoilers.

Director Brian De Palma has a tendency to structure his movies around cinematic set-pieces, which are usually technically proficient but not always successful. In this case, he gives us a Martian tornado with a mean streak ripping through an astronaut crew, a spacewalk to abandon a crippled spacecraft, and the final encounter with the Martian intelligence. The first feels more like an outtake from **Pitch Black**, the second is an honest failure and the third is utterly sappy.

What goes in between is terrible. Somebody had the idea that astronauts, even in the year 2020, are the kind of bland, all-American caricatures astronauts were supposed to be back in the 1960s. Even gifted character actors like Tim Robbins get stuck playing cardboard cutouts, and Gary Sinise looks like he knows this is a huge step down from **Apollo 13** (a movie which did make 1960s astronauts human.) We're introduced to them with remarkably ham-fisted charac-

ter exposition in a backyard barbecue, packed with product placements.

With no characters to care about, the final climax would have to be truly revelatory to save this movie. Instead, we get a resounding and rather predictable thud. The alien artifact on Mars has killed three people, and one person has died mounting the rescue mission. And yet, at the final encounter with the intelligence behind these phenomena, the astronauts never challenge it for negligence equivalent to leaving an attack dog off its leash.

Perhaps the space travellers are so dazzled by the alien's IMAX show explaining the origins of life on Earth, they forgot about their dead comrades. We are told that all life on Earth originated on Mars, after the planet was devastated by a meteor strike, and that the Martians spread out into the galaxy, while one stayed behind. And guess which one of the humans gets to travel with the lonely Martian?

This is the dinner-theatre version of the climax of revelation and transcendence at the end of **2001**. As flawed as Stanley Kubrick's

white elephant is, it's still a better movie all around than this dreadful effort. The use of voiceovers and flashbacks to drive home plot points indicates a low opinion of the audience's intelligence. The pace could have been done as frantic, **Armageddon**-fast, or meditative, **2001**-slow; instead, it's just lethargic.

Despite the generally credible-looking space hardware, this movie is likely to disappoint space buffs too. It seems to suggest that travelling to Mars is only worthwhile if there actually are alien artifacts there. Only a second or two is spent showing the astronauts collecting geological samples before they rush off to that old bugbear, the alleged Face on Mars. (If the number of product placements and corporate logos is any indication, the real purpose of this mission was to make money for the sponsors. Apparently soft drinks and candy can be used to detect air leaks and model DNA.)

If **Mission to Mars** had been sent to **Analog** magazine in story form, it never would have made it into the slush pile.



SEACOUVER 2000

HIGHLANDER



Seacouver features a Sunday night concert with Jim Byrnes and his band.

A NEW TWIST IN MEDIA

You don't have to be a fan of "Highlander: The Series" to appreciate that a new breed of media-based SF/Fantasy conventions is debuting in Vancouver over the July long weekend.

What's so special about 'Seacouver' 2000? On the surface it's not unlike most other media-based conventions. It features a costume event, a video room, Q & A sessions, panel discussions, a Sunday breakfast, and a dealers' room.

Maybe it's the Sunday night performance by Jim Byrnes and his band?

Nope. That's not new to Highlander fans. They've been enjoying the music of the popular local blues player at Highlander conventions for the past several years, in addition to grilling him about his work as "Joe Dawson" on both "Highlander: The Series" and "Highlander: The Raven".

What is new and special about Seacouver 2000 is the focus on Vancouver, where the series was shot for 6 years.

Fans attending this medium-sized convention will have the opportunity to sign up for location tours. They will spend 3 to 4 hours on 24 passenger tour buses and their tour guide will be a local actor who appeared on the show. Each tour will visit a variety of different locations, with time at most spots to disembark and take pictures.

Tour guides will talk about the locations, relate anecdotes about their own filming experiences, and provide general information about Vancouver.

BC's film industry is booming, but most of the actors and production people remain unsung heroes, just names on the credits. This convention provides an opportunity for our local talent to receive the recognition they so richly deserve, as well as the chance to showcase our beautiful city.

The convention will take place at the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel & Marina from Friday, June 30 through Monday, July 3. Admission (in Canadian funds) is \$90 for the full convention, \$60 for Saturday or Sunday only, \$30 for the reserved seating section, and \$24 for the Jim Byrnes Band performance (in addition to having a full or Sunday Only registration). The first 50 paid registrations will receive a free Sunday breakfast (value \$15). Tour prices will be finalized shortly.

For more information, or a Registration Form, email to seacouver2000@aol.com or send snail mail with SASE to:

Seacouver 2000
Attn: Lisa King
#101 - 1001 West Broadway, Unit 334
Vancouver, BC V6H 4E4



MY READING HABITS IN THE PAST YEAR

Along about 1983 or so, when I was still imprinting on Monty Python and that sort of thing, I discovered the Illuminatus! trilogy. Perhaps you've heard of this, and perhaps you understand why I became delighted with conspiracy theory as a form of entertainment. To this day I think Evil Sinister Mind Control Plots are funny. I hope I can share this kind of funny with you.

Of course conspiracy theory goes back a long way; people who express such theories are generally Dead Serious about them; and there are any number of claims of conspiracies, about almost any people or institutions you can name. Like science fiction, or lost-civilization stories, or contemporary cults, or UFO stories, conspiracy theories express some preoccupations that people tend to have, in a particular time and place. It might actually be constructive to survey contemporary conspiracy theories in that light, as warnings against some seductive mistakes in thinking.

POLITICAL CONSPIRACIES.

THE ANCIENT AND ILLUMINATED SEERS OF BAVARIA

There is a dimension beyond the Kennedy and King assassinations, or the Watergate conspiracy, or the alleged Jack-the-Ripper murders. Of course I am speaking of the Bavarian Illuminati, alleged to this day to be working on world domination.

By about the 1960s, a number of conspiracy allegations were levelled at public, private, political and religious institutions. Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson were editors at Playboy magazine at the time, and correspondents sometimes wrote in claiming persecution by one or another institution; they received help, if they merited it, from the Playboy Foundation. But there were always a number of letters that came in claiming that fluoridating water led to mind control, or that sex education was a godless Commie plot, etc., etc. Some conspiracy claims were much more far out. And some of the writers tended to group every conspiracy they perceived into One Big Plot, attributed to the Illuminati.

Who were the Illuminati, really? As a matter of historical record, the Bavarian Illuminati were founded by a hacked-off radical professor at the University of Ingolstadt,

back in the years before the American Revolution. There have been conflicting claims and counterclaims as to what Adam Weishaupt and the Illuminati were, and intended, and did; but it seems to be established that they infiltrated Freemason lodges across Europe, tried to create a covert power structure, and intended to subvert and displace the existing structures, represented by feudal states and the late-medieval Church. It also seems to be established that the states and the Church quashed the Illuminati, and turned against secret societies generally, when an Illuminati courier died and his papers were recovered.

If you regard conspiracy theories as contemporary myth, then the Illuminati entered the realm of myth as soon as someone asserted the Illuminati weren't dead. (And not even resting, yes.) Somebody named Robison published a book, a little after the American Revolution, titled *Proofs of a Conspiracy*; his notion was that the Freemasons had never shaken loose of Illuminati direction, and were in fact infiltrating all countries everywhere, they were forming a worldwide covert power structure. Probably this explains a few peculiar things that developed subsequently in American politics, such as the Anti-Masonic Party.

What the two Roberts at Playboy found was that, every generation or so, somebody takes the myth of the Illuminati, adds their favourite pet peeves to the stew, and expands on the previous body of myth, I mean, conspiracy theory.

The latest turn taken by this developing mythology – at least, the spin put on it by one Fritz Springmeier in *Bloodlines of the Illuminati* – maintains essentially that the super-rich of the world form an international subculture, an actual Illuminati organization, not only working for their own enrichment and power, not only working against the general good of the world's population, but actually directed personally by a literal, physical Satan.

SCIENCE FICTIONAL THREATS, E.G. UFOS

Almost any technology or industry today can be the subject of a conspiracy theory – germ dissemination, or biochemical and chemical weapons, or inept nuclear technology; mind control techniques; most recently, genetic engineering – all of which have documentably been tested by Western governments on unoffending, uninformed Western civilians. But the most spectacular theories tend to centre around alien visitors from other planets.

There are a number of conspiracy theories relating to alleged government cover-ups of encounters with alien beings. From the Roswell incident to this date, these allegations tend to ignore contemporary political and military tensions, the background against which UFO flaps take place; especially, they ignore the natural unwillingness of authorities to admit there are things they don't know, don't understand, and don't control.

A radio interviewer in Victoria, doing a show with members of a local SF club, once asked me what I believed about UFOs. I was bogged; I had never considered the matter and thought it was completely out of left field. I think I stammered something about the out-of-context experiences related by alleged UFO abductees representing some phenomenon that has to do with geomagnetism, and the effects that electromagnetic induction can have on the human brain. But I don't suppose the interviewer or his listeners got the idea.

The theory I had heard about, which is advanced by parapsychologist Susan Blackmore, and by Michael Persinger of Laurentian University, is that an abduction experience is, at least, temporal lobe epilepsy. The high incidence of UFO experiences near tectonically active areas; or by people who have experienced electrocution; or the points of similarity that abduction experiences have with classical nightmares, and sleep paralysis, are all kind of suggestive.

Granted, this hypothesis doesn't cover any physical evidence, at least on the order of radiation burns a man suffered in the Ontario bush or the alleged implants which laboratories have failed to assay.

So we have a mystery; meaning, something that refuses to make sense.

Next month, Common conspiracy errors.



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WCSFA AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Back in April of last year, longtime fan Jim Johnston bequeathed a ton of stuff upon me with the intention that it either go to the WCSFA archives or be sold off to benefit the WCSFA treasury.

To date, I've managed to catalogue half of it: two dozen pieces of art, one hundred magazines and another hundred or so items of a fannish nature. Whatever does not go to the archives will be sold at the highest possible price — no, not given away as war booty.

A copy of said listings will be freely made available to all who attend future WCSFA meetings (as well as all WCSFA executive members and longtime loc'ers Harry Warner and Lloyd Penny).

As for the rest of you who cannot attend WCSFA meetings, send me a Self Adressed Stamped Envelope. T Mail me your name, address and a book instead to the following address.

Doug Finnerty

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