

BCSFAzine #358

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Vol. 31 No. 3

March, 2003

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BC RENFEST PROPOSED * VCON 28 DATES AND RATES * OTHER NEWS

Colophon

BCSFAzine – *Something to ~~afford~~ interest everyone!*

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The shortcut URL to this list is

<http://www.yahoo.com/community/BCSFA>

F.R.E.D., the weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in coming, happens every Friday at 8:00 p.m. at the Jolly Alderman Pub, 500 West 12th Avenue (entrance on Cambie Street, just south of 12th Avenue), in the ground floor of the Plaza 500 Hotel (diagonally across from Vancouver City Hall).

The V-Con Society Web page may be viewed at <http://www3.telus.net/dh2/vconsociety/>

Vcon 28's Web page may be viewed at <http://www.v-con.ca>

Graeme's **Canfancyclopedia** page can be viewed at <http://members.shaw.ca/rgraeme/home.html>.

Andrew Murdoch's **Canfandom** page can be viewed at www.fandom.ca.

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BCSFAzine is also available by e-mail; please email the editor at hrothgar@vcn.bc.ca if you wish to receive our newsletter this way.

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Art Credits

Cover: Tactical Field Comedy Uniform of the Royal Swiss Navy Marine Corps

p. 1: Garth Spencer

Other interior illustrations by Michael Morse

Plain Speaking



Missing Members: Where are Alan Betz? And Butch Day? And Frances Higginson?

WITH THIS ISSUE, let's do something different. Let's address some real issues that are facing us, right here and now.

I'm really beginning to think I'm writing only for *myself*, and five or six other people! Are there *really* 100-odd current members in BCSFA? Why don't you *WRITE*? (Says the Jewish Mother of Canadian Fandom ...) Did you actually read the fanhistory article or the planetology article? I wonder because nobody pointed out some of my ~~typos~~ errors and omissions.

Seriously, I feel underappreciated here! (Maybe that's just the effect of the recent Valentine's Day, or the last ten years of accepting that I'm *just not wanted* anywhere, but still.)

Old-fashioned fans like me are continually disappointed when we try to find new people to share our interests with. I'm beginning to think 90% of BCSFans have forgotten they used to participate in an APA, or do a radio SF show, or anything besides gaming and watching Japanese animation.

On *really* bad days I think you've been replaced by plastic blow-up imitations of people, some of them with a few preprogrammed Animatronic™ routines, so that nobody at work or at the pub notices any difference in you.

So I'll ask again, like I did two years ago: what are you guys and gals and other people interested in seeing in these pages?

"Fan funds?" I can hear you muttering.

It may seem to you that if you've never heard of fan funds, or most of the people I've

named, they have nothing to do with your kind of fandom. To be honest with you I suspect fan funds were conceived by and for an old-fashioned kind of fandom, not representative of contemporary fandom in general. But it's entirely possible for fan fund winners to represent the fan community they come from.

More to the point, it isn't as likely today as it once was that a whole lot of fans in one community would hear about a fan in another community – unless they're in the same kind of activity, be it conrunning or gaming or costuming or what you will.

Like awards, fan funds presume something that is yet to be established: that there is some kind of broadcast advertising about science fiction, or writers, or SF fans, or their activities, that reaches fans over a wide geographical area, and across several subfandoms.

Yes, I know everyone is talking about the upcoming Phony War or the recent Space Shuttle disaster, instead of what really concerns us. Let's just take a *long* look at this stuff, shall we?

My recommendations for resolving any Middle East conflict are summed up in the Royal Swiss Navy article, later in this issue. 'Nuff said.

As to the shuttle disaster: The hard fact of any large enterprise is that *people will die*, while working on the enterprise. Any construction worker in Vancouver knows this.

The proper reaction to the latest shuttle disaster is to look at what redesign is necessary to the shuttles, if any is called for.

What is *going* to happen, *instead*, is a terrified restriction of shuttle missions for a few years, as happened after the *Challenger* disaster.

Who's going to dominate the 21st century in space? The Japanese? The Chinese? Maybe the Russians, or maybe even the Saudis?

I'm listing our recent fanzine trades in this issue. But I noticed something. For all of the good stuff in our trades, the kind of thing I call "news" – meaning, information about events of interest and importance to fans, more fans than those in one club or one city, that is; and not all of it about regional conventions, either, or TV and film series, or SF writers – is left out, even left out of the newsletters, and it's left to Internet listservs.

Why is that?

Letters

Michael Morbius, January 31, 2003,
BCSFazine

Art Credits - Correction: The Emperor Norton drawing used in "Our Calendar of Events" was by **Joe Devoy**. (The other two submitted along with that one were by me.) Anyway, I'm happy to see that it made it in, even though I submitted them after the deadline.

Our Calendar of Events - Second Saturday Feeding Frenzy: "Foggy Dew Irish Pub ... the food is ... much like that you would find at the Jolly Alderman, *but with more choices!*" The most important thing about the food at the Jolly Alderman is that the teriyaki chicken wings are [make that were] cheap. I hope this is a property shared by the Foggy Dew! By the way, there's a Foggy Dew here in Richmond, too (hint, hint).

Sweetness and Light: It's depressing that there are weapons policies at cons. People should be free to wear weapons or copies of weapons anywhere they want, at cons or otherwise.

(Editor responds: Why?)

(As far as convention costumes are concerned, weapons seem to encourage irresponsible behaviour among congoers - hall demonstrations of weaponslinging, whether or not there's enough room to avoid damaging people or property, whether or not there's enough indication for mundanes that this is not real assault going on. This is the reason conventions like Orycon declare themselves "weapons-free" [whether or not the conrunners say it, honestly and clearly and up-front].

(As far as any other settings go ... I don't think we could get through the transition, from an unarmed society to one where people generally go armed, without needless fatalities. We arbitrarily ignore or take for granted the needless fatalities that automobiles cause; it's part of our mental wallpaper. We do not take weapons for granted - not, at least, in the part of Western Canada where I live.

(If groups like the NRA actually promoted responsibility in the bearing of weapons, that would be another matter. But we live in reality, not make-believe-land.)

"Agent, Author Kidd Dies": It's probably nothing to worry about, but if I forward news and it gets quoted verbatim in *BCSFazine*, please credit the original source (as you were before).
((Jeez, I would forget at least one thing.))

Fanzines: "carl juarez (who is one of those guys who doesn't want his name capitalized) ..."
Yeah! What's with those guys?

(Must be one of those arts-subculture things I never learned about.)

Media File: I don't think I want to see a Disney *Doctor Who*. An Amblin *Doctor Who* might be good.

"By the time the TV movie aired in May 1996, only 50 PBS stations with access to about 15% of the population were showing the series. This, combined with the TV movie's very poor time slot and the very 'Americanized' storyline, led to its near-to-last-place showing in the Nielsen ratings." Also, the movie was bad.

"Even the pure 'Americanized' version of the series will have a hard time getting around the advertisers, who could advertise on a reality series with thirty times the audience." Solution: *Doctor Who*, the reality show! *(shudder)*

Film Review: In my opinion 1990s *Trek* was best summed up by Sam Ramer in *The Joy of Trek*: "There's just too much damned *Trek*."

Although I haven't really liked any *Trek* (TV series or movie) that's come out in the last thirteen years, I guess the last two movies were fun at the time, as opposed to the previous two, which I find depressing and unwatchable.

Creative Planetology: "Delta Pavonis" - Yay! Delta Pavonis IV was a planet on which cat people lived in the *Transformers* episode "The Big Broadcast of 2006". (Their neighbouring planet, presumably Delta Pavonis III or V, was populated by dog people. Remember the comic strip "The Far Side"?) I'm glad to hear that Delta Pavonis is a G7-class star.

"Larry Niven": I *still* don't understand how the Smoke Ring works, despite reading and re-reading the passage explaining it, and despite Niven providing a diagram in the book.

Neat article! The experience reminded me of reading *The Left Hand of the Electron* by Isaac Asimov. I'll have to try re-reading your article while dining in a hotel restaurant for the full effect.

((Better yet, have a pencil and a pad of paper and a calculator handy.))



Lloyd Penney <penneys@netcom.ca>
February 12, 2003

Just printed up issue 357 of *BCSFazine* (the .pdfs are looking perfect these days), and while there's some time, I thought I could put together a loc. I'm at work again...there are periods of downtime, and I have to look busy. So, the opportunity is perfect for catching up.

Straight to the loccol: I haven't had a chance to have a look at *Hero of the Beach*, but I will, and I'll get some comments to you. I have heard that some dealers who go to Worldcons regularly will be passing on Torcon because they don't want to deal with Canadian currency, nor do they want to deal with Canadian Customs. Torcon has been fairly explicit in that they have set up channels to

make getting dealers' merchandise and artists' creations into Toronto safely and quickly, but there are still some who cannot bear crossing the border into unknown territory.
(*More ignorant jamtarts.*)

My letter...Yvonne was named the XPrize Foundation's Volunteer of the Month for January for her work in creating documentation that will govern how XPrize launches will take place. Yes, my comments about the Vancouver in 2011 Worldcon bid were directed at whoever is charge. Who is in charge of that bid, anyway?
(*Marie-Louise Beesley, one of our newer members.*)

I received a copy of Randy Byers' *Wassamatta U.* zine, as Ted White mentions...it is full of excellent writing, and I like the layout features of the zine as well, two main columns, with a thin column/margin in which to put some hypertext-like references. It is a labour of love, and I think this fine publication may be enough to put Randy over the top and win TAFF.
(*Randy has, indeed, won that fan fund.*)

Ryan Hawe is right, those of us who have followed the *Star Trek* franchise have been spoiled rotten...TOS, TAS, TNG, DS9, *Voyager*, *Enterprise* and 10 movies now. In a few years, I can see a new digital channel...the *Star Trek* channel, all ST, all the time, all the series and movies and documentaries, plus fan efforts. We have a glut of *Trek*, and we want more, and I think Paramount may be thinking that no matter what is produced, the *Trek* fans will watch it, and they are right. With that in mind, I agree that *Nemesis* is very much a remake of *Wrath of Khan*. I have heard rumours that in a few years, with *Enterprise* coming in on its fifth or sixth season, a new *Trek* series will be launched going back the timeline of the Next Generation, where Captain Riker will face a greater enemy than the Borg, and that enemy will decimate the Federation. Do we want more *Trek* like this, or is there another direction *Trek* fans would like the franchise to go? I'd like to see something different, but too many people want More of The Same.

(*Next up: the Federation is menaced by a marauding fleet of Swedish Chefs, led by Robin Williams ...*)

Creating a feasible world in which to settle your plot and characters is vital for today's demanding SF readers, but yet, there's also the demand for imaginative settings. After all these decades of SF writing, are there any planetary settings that are both imaginative and feasible? I must wonder. Perhaps there's a website in which you can enter the characteristics of the world you want to create, and click to see if those characteristics actually produce a viable world. Myself, I don't mind if the physics of the setting are a little fantastic. This is science fiction, after all...

Just filled a page, and now it's time to say goodbye for this month. It's been deadly cold here, with temperatures around -20 degrees Celsius in

the mornings, temperatures Vancouver experiences only in its nightmares. Take care all, and I hope it's warmer when next I see a *BCSFazine*.

(*Next up: fantastic adventures of Fandom: The Next Generation in a bizarre, barely habitable land where subzero winters alternate with sweltering muggy summers ... and the fans actually bid to hold a Worldcon there ...*)

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Upcoming Events

March 2003

March 8 @ 7pm: **Second Saturday Feeding Frenzy** at Minoa's Greek Taverna, 3823 Kingsway, Burnaby.

March 13 @ 7pm: **BCSFA Book Discussion Group** at BLENZ Coffee, 2506 Granville, Vancouver (corner of Granville and Broadway). Book to be discussed: *Salt Fish Girl* by Larissa Lai.

March 14: *BCSFAzine* deadline.

Mar. 15: Greg Cairns, "Meaty Fontana", is "playing acoustic guitar/vocals at Panama Jack's Bar & Grill [1180 Howe St., 604-682-5225] from 9 until 1. I would really appreciate lots of you coming out, as this is the first time playing there, and if I get a good showing of friends, I hope to play there regularly. ... I hope to see a lot of you there."

March 14-16: **GameStorm 2003** at the Doubletree Hotel Columbia River, Portland, OR. Memberships \$25 to Feb. 16, \$30 at the door. Write GameStorm 2003, P.O. Box 764, Portland, OR 97207, email chair@pdxgames.com, or visit www.pdxgames.com.

March 21-23: **Anime Oasis 2003**, an anime con in Boise, Idaho. at <http://www.animeoasis.org>

March 21-24: **Ad Astra XXII**, Toronto Colony Hotel, Toronto, ON. SF convention. Guests: Michael Moorcock, Robert Gould, Alan Lee. Memberships: C\$40 to December 31, 2002, C\$45 to March 7, 2003, Can\$50 at the door. For more information, see www.ad-astra.org.

March 22: **PaganFaire XIII** at Washington County Fairgrounds, 873 NE 34th Hillsboro, Portland, OR. Theme: "Spring visits the Northern Realms." Presented by SisterSpirit. Featuring Heather Alexander. Also featured: Vendors, performers, artists, healers, readers, workshops, food, raffle for Michelle's Heart. By TriMet transit: Max Blue Line Bus #46. Free Parking. Open to the public for \$5 to \$10 donation at the door. Email paganfairexiii@yahoo.com or call (503) 736-3297.

March 23rd, 11 AM to 5 PM: **Vancouver Comicon** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Special Guests: Cameron Stewart, penciller of *Catwoman*; Pia Guerra, penciller of *Y, The Last Man*; Steve Rolston, penciller of *MEK, Pounded, Queen and Country*; Ian Boothby, writer of *Simpsons Comics*; David Lasky and Greg Stump, creators of *Urban Hipster*; Robin Bougie, creator of *Cinema Sewer*. Admission: \$3.00 per person; Kids under 14: Free! Dealer tables: \$50/55. Free comics for all the kids! Hourly door prizes! call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com. See

<http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

April 2003

April 4 - 6: **Sakura-Con 2003** - SeaTac (The Pre-eminent anime convention in the Puget Sound area) at the Seattle Airport Hilton and Conference Center. Memberships: \$45 to March 31, \$50 at the door. We recently discovered that the Sakura-Con Postal address had an error! The corrected address is as follows (changed from 4th Ave to 5th Ave): Sakura-Con, 800 5th Ave, Box 142, Seattle, WA 98104, U.S.A. See www.sakuracon.org.

April 11: *BCSFAzine* deadline.

April 13, 11-4: **Toy and Collectables Show** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Buy, sell, and trade character toys, action figures, toy cars, Star Wars, model kits, comic books, trading cards, Disney, games, and more! Admission: \$2.00 per person; Kids under 14: \$1.00; Dealer tables: \$35/40. Free comics for all the kids! call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com; See also <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

April 17-20: **Norwescon 23** at the Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport in SeaTac, Washington; a VERY large general SF convention. Writer GoH: Jane Yolen. Artist GoH: Jim Burns. Science GoH: Geoffrey Landis. Spotlighted publisher: Del Rey. Rooms \$96/night for up to 4 people; write 18740 Pacific Highway South, SeaTac, WA, or phone (800) 222-TREE. A preregistration form is available online. Write Norwescon 25, P.O. Box 68547, Seattle, WA 98168-0547, U.S.A., phone hotline (206) 270-7850, or email info@norwescon.org.

April 18-20: **Minicon 38** at the Millennium Hotel Minneapolis, in Minneapolis, MN. Writer GoHs: Robert J. Sawyer and Carolyn Clink. Musician GoH: Steve Macdonald. FanGoH: Sue Mason. Presented by the Minnesota Science Fiction Society. Memberships \$45 to March 17, \$70 at the door. Write to Minicon, P.O. Box 8297, Lake Street Stn., Minneapolis, MN 55408, U.S.A.

April 26-27: **Dak-Kon VIII**, a gaming event at the Lower Native Sons Hall in Courtenay, BC, on Vancouver Island. Memberships: one-day = \$10, both days = \$15, c/o Peter Dryden, #112 - 680 Murrelet Drive, Comox, BC V9M 3P2.

May 2003

May 16: *BCSFAzine* deadline.

May 16-18: **Keycon 20**, Radisson Winnipeg Downtown, Winnipeg, MB. SF literary theme. Guests: Robert J. Sawyer (writer), Carolyn Clink (poet), Jolly Blackburn (artist). Memberships: Can\$40 until April 30, Can\$50 thereafter and at the door. Children 6-12: \$25. For more information, write Keycon 20, P.O. Box 3178, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4E6, call 1-204-669-6053, email loyalminion@hotmail.com, or see keycon2003.tripod.com

May 23-25: **MisCon 17**, "MisCon-spiracy" at Ruby's Inn and Convention Center in Missoula, Montana. Guests of Honor so far are: Authors) David Gerrold, Samuel R. Delany; (Media) Jennifer Blanc; (Artist) Chuck Bordell. Room reservations: write Ruby's Inn and Convention Center, 4825 North Reserve, Missoula, Montana 59808, tel. (800) 221-2057. Memberships: Before May 1, \$20; At the door, \$25; Family Rate, \$50. Write: MisCon, P.O. Box 7721, Missoula, MT 59807, U.S.A.

May 30 - June 1: **ConComCon 10** at the Cottontree Inn, Mount Vernon, WA. Convention topics will include: HOTEL NEGOTIATION and PUBLICITY. Hotel Rate: \$72/night, single/double/triple/quad (Includes breakfast buffet!) Call 360-428-5678 or 1-800-662-6886 to make reservations. Convention Membership Rate: \$30 until May 10; \$35 at the door. For more information contact: Becky Citrak @ 360-456-7441 or adonno@aol.com; Shawn Marier @ 425-957-7565 or smarier@oz.net.

Media File

BBC & ABC SAY MAYBE TO TIME TRAVEL, BUT NO TO "DR. WHO"

by Ray Seredin

With a deal already signed with BBC's rival ITV/Granada for an international spy series and with talks to merge ABC's news division with BBC's well underway, the two networks now are starting talks about co-funding dramatic programming. One of the possibilities is a time-travel show for Saturday mornings, but it will be confined to Earth and will not have that certain "Police Box" in it.

They fee that 'Dr. Who' carries too much baggage to make it succeed, according to a BBC insider. In America they have Viendi-Universal holding the series' title rights for the foreseeable future and now with Disney (ABC's parent company) entering the picture, they will likely double or triple the \$24 million (US) asking price. With the series off most PBS stations for a decade, it's very much unknown. This could make many ABC affiliates feel uneasy about picking it up when they could use the same time slot for 'infomercials'. Then there's Kate Spooner, who lost her son while playing a game based on 'Dr. Who'. She has some power over the American female audience and if she gets on either 'Oprah' or 'The View', could possibly cause a boycott of Disney products or dumping of company shares. Her first actions in the late 1980s led (in part) to the series being dropped by PBS and with ABC being a commercial network, it could cost millions.

It's a different story over here in Britain. The 'Dr. Who' universe is set in both time and space. Confining the Tardis to Earth would no longer make it 'Dr. Who'.. Yet putting him in space would mean competing with American sci-fi series. It's clear that even after commercialization the BBC won't be able to afford two million pounds per 50-minute episode without cutting deep into the dramatic programming budget. So making the new series with the Americans is the only choice, yet there are too many roadblocks over there to make it work.

So when will we see the successor to television's longest-running science fantasy saga? Both networks are quite hush-hush about it, but it could start airing as soon as the fall of 2004. Hopefully, by then the new series will find a Canadian outlet.

Hence "The Doctor's" gone, but he's not forgotten. It would be real nice if a police-box-shaped pencil box were sitting on a desk, or if one of the actors who played 'The Doctor' showed up in the new series' first episode, for a stoic handing-over of the reins to the space-time continuum.

That's all for now, I wish you the very, very best and I'll be seeing you.

News

A B.C. RENAISSANCE FAIRE is being proposed by Christina Carr, who writes:

"In order to gain more interest from possible supporters we need to show them that there is a desire for such a thing. We need to show them that their energy will not be wasted on us. I need the public's help for this. If you could, please go to:

<http://members.shaw.ca/BCRF> and read what is there, then fill out the guest book. We will be using the guestbook in order to put together 'stats' as to where people may come from, what they would like to see, what would they like to eat, what age range do they seem to be... etc. This will help in determining the target audience, as well as targeting certain supporters. If you'd like you can even put down what you'd be willing to pay at the door for such a thing. Most festivals in the States run \$8 to \$17 US at the gate. The Ontario one runs roughly around \$17 Can. What seems good for you? Use the space in your entry wisely. If you have any questions or feel that the guestbook space is not enough feel free to send us an email at: BCRF@shaw.ca."

VCON 28 will be held October Oct 10-12 in Vancouver, BC. Hotel: TBA. GoHs: TBA. Memberships: C\$25, US\$20 until May 31, 2003. Write VCon 28, c/o 2116 Macdonald Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA, V6K 3Y5 or PO Box 5171, Bellingham, WA 98227, U.S.A., or email paul@gothhouse.org or vcon@shaw.ca.

Other news from the recent V-Con Society meeting will appear next issue.

ANDREW MURDOCH and GARTH SPENCER are standing for this year's Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Andrew wrote in his candidate's position:

"The Canadian Unity Fan Fund exists to bring fans from across this vast land of ours closer, by selecting one prominent fan to travel across the country to attend Convention, the Canadian National Science Fiction

Convention. While at Convention, that fan makes contact with fan groups and organizations, as well as offers his expertise to the convention where asked and promotes the Fund. That fan travels with the help of the Fund to pay for the trip, and then is charged with replenishing the fund through fundraising and selecting the next candidate. This year, Convention is being held in conjunction with Torcon 3, the 61st World Science Fiction Convention, being held in Toronto over Labour Day Weekend 2003.

<http://www.torcon3.on.ca>

"The winning fan is also required to publish a report of his trip to Convention, subsequently sold to interested fans with proceeds going towards the Fund.

"To be considered a candidate, I require nominations from three fans on either side of the Manitoba/Ontario border. I ask for your gracious support in this, and that you send your statement of nomination to Colin Hinz, this year's CUFF Administrator, by e-mail at asfi@eol.ca or by snail-mail at 148 Howland Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 3B5. Any Canadian citizen is eligible to nominate, and nominations are open **until 31 March 2003**."

Con-Version's email address (president@con-version.org) "currently will go nowhere. If you are needing to contact anyone on the Con-Version convention committee, you can write me at paulbushell@telus.net and I will give you the address of someone on the convention committee. "president@con-version.org" should soon be redirected to Dave Hall [the new Con-Version chair]."

Paul Bushell, Feb. 8, 2003

VikingCon and Moscon:

The most recent news is that both VikingCon and Moscon will be suspended in 2003; we hope to see them in 2004.

MidFanzine: Call for Submissions

Everyone is invited to send in articles, letters, etc, to *MidFanzine* #2: Discovery.

"Our second *MidFanzine* will

hopefully be out in April, 2003. ...

Conrunning articles are still welcome, but so is everything else (con reports, book and movie reviews, letters, essays, news, short stories, nonfiction stories about fans, comics, other art, history, poetry, etc). Please send submissions by or around the Ides of March (**March 15**)."

Editor: Anne KG Murphy

By Email: editor@midfan.org (.TXT / .RTF)

By Post: 509 Dartmoor Rd. Ann Arbor, MI 48103-4511 USA (from Timebinders)

Fanzines

by Ted White

Fanzines are a basic part of science fiction fandom, having been in existence as long as fandom itself – the past 70 years. Fanzines are a reflection of many fans' interest in the printed word and amateur publishing. The publication you are reading this in is a fanzine, but a specialized one. A variety of other fanzines are also available – many of them by request – and this column will cover some of them each issue.

All fanzines are published as a hobby and lose money. Their editors appreciate money to defray their expenses and sometimes list single-copy or subscription prices, but they appreciate even more your written response – a Letter of Comment, or LoC. Feedback – better known in fandom as “egoboo” – is what fanzine publishing is all about.

Check out the fanzine below and broaden your participation in fandom.

HEAD! #5 (Doug Bell & Christina Lake, co-editors, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, U.K.; e-mail to head@headwest.fsnet.co.uk; available “on whim, or for letters of comment, artwork, contributions, other fanzines and, of course, alcoholic beverages for llamas.” Some money to cover postage would no doubt also be appreciated)

Head! has within five reasonably frequent issues become one of the better fanzines around. It has accomplished this without pyrotechnics or even glitz, but the accomplishment has been noted by a Nova Award (voted on and handed out at the UK's Novacon, held every November).

The fanzine has two things going for it: its editors. Christina Lake has been an active fan for two decades, is a past TAFF winner, and a celebrated fanwriter whose own fanzines are always guaranteed good reads. Doug Bell is a relatively new fan, who brings with him the enthusiasm and energy which powers *Head!* – and is no slouch as a fanwriter himself. Between them they set standards to which the fanzine's other contributors live up.

Head! is an attractively produced (computer typeset, as are almost all fanzines now, in a double-columned format using a

readable san-serif typeface) 26-page fanzine. Beyond Brad Foster's cover there isn't a lot of interior art, although there a number of photographs relevant to the text they accompany.

But a sense of Art pervades the fanzine. It crops up most overtly in the first article, Gary Wilkinson's “Medicine Men,” which is all about the art of the last and current century, and has “Art” as its running head. But it crops up again in Doug's “Pil Pil, I Love You Still,” about his travels in Basque Spain and France, although now the running head is “Travel.” Doug spends several pages on the Guggenheim art museum in Bilbao.

This sets the tone for the rest of the issue. Christina opens the issue with a one-page editorial, writes about fracturing her arm in the course of a long bicycle ride (running head: “Health”) in “It's Not Quite Straight, Is It?” and offers some insightful musings into fandom in “Where the Neo-Fans Graze” (running head: “Fandom”). Nick Walters, a Dr. Who novelist, gets to meet his favorite Dr. Who actor at a poetry reading in “McGann,” (running head: “Media”) and is as thrilled about it as any fanboy while managing not to sound like one. Five pages of letters (running head: “Letters”) round out the issue.

Head! is solid without being pretentious. Like most well-written fanzines, it addresses a small and intimate audience with informality and humor while occasionally dealing with important and serious topics. And, like most of the better fanzines, it evokes a sense of the fannish community from which it springs and to whom it speaks – most explicitly in Christina's “Where the Neo-Fans Graze.” This is by no means a closed or snobbish community and *Head!* is a good way to gain access to it.

GARTH FINALLY LISTS OUR MOST RECENTLY RECEIVED TRADES:

Ansible 186 (Jan. '03), & 187 (Feb.); *Burnaby Writers' Society newsletter*, Jan/Feb '03; *Challenger* 16 (Spring '03); *Dark Echo* 18 (Jan. '03); *DASFAX*, Dec. '02; *De Profundis* 361 (Feb. '03); *Gila Queen* 114 (Feb. '03) & 115 (March); *Goth House Newsletter*, Jan. '03; *Impulse*, Dec. '02; *Made in Canada Newsletter*, Jan-Feb. '03; *Monster Attack Team Newsletter* 22; *Opuntia* 52 (Feb. '03); *Ottawa SF Statement* 302 (Feb. '03); *Pulsar* 291 (Jan. '03); *Voyageur* (Jan-Feb. '03); *Westwind* (last one I have is dated **MAY 2002!**)

Next issue: Garth writes at length about our trades.

Book Reviews

by Donna McMahon

THE MAQUISARDE, Louise Marley (Ace
Dec/02, hc 386p)

ALTERED CARBON, Richard Morgan
(Gollancz, 2002, mm 534p)

EMPIRE OF BONES, Liz Williams (Bantam,
Apr/02)

THE MAQUISARDE, Louise Marley (Ace
Dec/02, hc 386p)

Ebriel Serique has it all. A world-renowned flautist, she lives in an elegant Paris apartment with her physician husband and six-year-old daughter. In the late 21st century, the "InCo" corporate government runs Europe and North America, and has drawn a "Line" of embargo between the industrialized nations and the Third World, abandoning the majority of humanity to war, famine and disease.

Comfortably insulated from poverty and injustice, Ebriel has never questioned InCo's propaganda - until her vacationing husband and daughter are killed by terrorists. InCo's General Glass claims their yacht had illegally crossed the Line to smuggle medical supplies, but Ebriel knows this is not true. There is a cover-up going on, and InCo treats her with utter callousness - offering her no answers; only her family's ashes delivered in two gray metal containers marked "Human Remains."

From that moment on, Ebriel has one goal - revenge. And when she is taken in by an underground organization called "The Chain," she finds what she needs - combat training and weapons. Obsessed and half insane with grief, Ebriel will not hesitate to betray even her new allies if it will give her a chance to kill General Glass.

Louise Marley is a terrific writer, and her latest novel is full of strengths. Her prose is polished, her future settings are vivid and credible, and her characters are always well drawn. In particular, she manages to catch the genteel Parisian flavour of her protagonist, even down to her educated, uncolloquial English. I also admired Marley's depiction of James Bull, an idealistic young man from a poverty-stricken background who sought honour and stability in a military career, but is becoming increasingly disillusioned.

In fact, the only significantly weak element of *THE MAQUISARDE* is Marley's resistance movement - a group which is supposed to be clever and tough enough to have evaded InCo's paranoid military for years. I found them naive, amateurish and considerably too nice to be credible. But what the heck. Marley's gripping story kept me glued to this book right to the end.

#

ALTERED CARBON, Richard Morgan
(Gollancz, 2002, mm 534p)

The *London Times* described *ALTERED CARBON* as a "seamless marriage of hardcore cyberpunk and hard-boiled detective tale," and I can't improve on that except perhaps to mention overtones of galactic space opera.

It's far future Earth, and mercenary Takeshi Kovacs is waking up in another unfamiliar body.

"Nearly two decades I've been doing this and it still jars me to look into the glass and see a total stranger staring back. It's like pulling an image out of the depths of an autostereogram. For the first couple of moments all you can see is someone else looking at you through a window frame. Then, like a shift in focus, you feel yourself float rapidly up behind the mask and adhere to its inside with a shock that's almost tactile. It's as if someone's cut an umbilical cord, only instead of separating the two of you, it's the otherness that has been severed and now you're just looking at your reflection in a mirror."

Kovacs has been revived to investigate the murder of Laurens Bancroft, a man centuries old and immeasurably wealthy. Bancroft is alive and healthy in a backup copy of himself, but he wants to know who managed to kill him and how. And if Kovacs succeeds, he will earn freedom, money and release on his home world.

" 'You're a lucky man, Kovacs.' Sure. A hundred and eighty light years from home, wearing another man's body on a six week rental agreement. Freightened in to do a job that the local police wouldn't touch with a riot prod. Fail and go back into storage. I felt so lucky I could

have burst into song as I walked out the door."

After the graphically violent prologue of this book, I didn't expect to finish more than a few pages, but I soon found myself intrigued by the setting and gripped by Kovacs' dilemma. This is not usually my kind of book - extreme violence and tough, wise-cracking detectives don't turn my crank. But Richard Morgan kept me reading. Some of the draw was sheer momentum - the plot is complex, with much action and many marvellous twists - but the real strength of *ALTERED CARBON* lies in the complex and subtle characterization, which takes Kovacs far beyond hard-boiled stereotypes. And there is utter fascination in the relationship between Kovacs and police Lieutenant Kristin Ortega, partner and lover of the man whose body Kovacs is wearing.

The background is terrific, too. Morgan paints it in as he goes, avoiding excessive chunks of exposition while still managing reveal a richly detailed society, technology and history.

I didn't only read *ALTERED CARBON*, I went back and immediately re-read it. Expect to see this book win all kinds of awards.

#



EMPIRE OF BONES, Liz Williams (Bantam, Apr/02)

When *EMPIRE OF BONES* opens, Jaya Nihalani is having hallucinations, and she doesn't welcome them. Strange visions caused her rapid rise from a poor conjurer's daughter to a wealthy guru and then to a revolutionary Bandit Queen. But all that's over now. Her guerrilla movement has been crushed and Jaya, only in her twenties, is crippled with premature aging, the victim of a new disease called Selenge which is

decimating the untouchable caste in 2030's India.

But the visions, unexpectedly, are real and are Jaya's salvation. She has been chosen as the "Receiver", sole human contact for all communication with an advanced alien race whose ship is entering orbit around Earth. The Americans are furious - why would an alien race contact some powerless woman in India instead of sending an emissary to Washington, DC?! The Bharat government is no less furious to have to deal with a notorious Marxist troublemaker they had hoped to execute.

And Jaya is deeply suspicious. The aliens hold out all sorts of promises, including a cure for Selenge. But why should she trust them?

"The British, the Americans, aliens, whatever. They all made promises. They all lied."

A parallel plot thread follows politicking among individuals in the galaxy-spanning caste-based alien society. Sirru, a lower caste mediator, has been called to Earth to communicate with Jaya. But Sirru begins to suspect that members of the 'khaithoi' elite intend to sabotage his mission and destroy Earth.

This is a terrific plot for a fascinating novel, which nonetheless has a lot of flaws. The most critical, for me, was missing that odd sense of disorientation I get when reading books from another culture. For all her effort in building convincing characters and settings, Williams is a Westerner writing about India. Jaya's narration has all the notes, without the music.

Creating convincing aliens is tough, too. Still, Williams gives it a good shot. Her caste-bound individuals, communicating by pheromonal signals and scent, form an interesting counterpoint to the structure and corruption of Indian society.

Finally, the story momentum lags somewhat in the second half of the novel and the resolution is not entirely satisfying. Nonetheless, I stayed glued to this book, intrigued to see what would happen next.

EMPIRE OF BONES is an admirably ambitious novel, well worth reading for its attempt to put a unique cultural spin on the shop-worn first contact story. It earns a place of honour on my bookshelf and I'll be looking for more from Liz Williams.

#

THE BONE HOUSE, by Luanne Armstrong
(New Star Books, Nov. 2002, trade pb 277 p)

As *The Bone House* opens, 18-year-old Lia is living a harsh, perilous existence as a street kid in the slums of mid-21st-century Vancouver. After her friend, Star, leaves the city in search of a legendary "Kind Place", Lia decides to follow. If she can't find Star, at least she can return to her grandmother's abandoned house near the town of Appleby (in an area that's presumably the Kootenays).

Meanwhile, in Appleby, a former logger named Matt is living rough in a shack in the woods. Crippled in a skidder accident, Matt is more than half crazy, and he's haunted by visions of the house he wants to build.

"He saw a wall, a monument of bones, wide and tall and high. No, not a wall, but a house made of bones, white and shining, bones made useful, made solid, made as a mark, a monument to waste and stupidity and death and the living wild creatures all around him."

This image embodies Luanne Armstrong's dystopic future BC, where a few wealthy families live in luxury while the majority struggle for survival. Hospitals, schools, and even the police have been privatized, and the corporations running them have downgraded services, cutting off small communities and the poor. Environmental degradation and global warming are disrupting agriculture and industry, and the worldwide crisis has made our forest and water resources ever more of a target for ruthless international corporations.

It's a stark but very credible background, and Armstrong, a Vancouver writer, paints it well. She is skilled at handling characters and their dialogue, particularly the confused and delusional Matt, who often frightens people without intending to. Armstrong also paints the wilderness landscape with loving care, although her prose is sometimes hampered by passive constructions and the overuse of sentences starting with "there was." Unfortunately, after a punchy start, the novel grinds almost to a stop. Armstrong's characters dig weeds, chop wood, worry about the future, and hold tedious, improbable conversations about what went wrong with the world. One incident after another demonstrates how bad things can get without ambulances or schools, but fails

to move the story forward. And Matt spends chapter after chapter wandering aimlessly through the landscape as he slides ever deeper into psychosis.

The science fictional elements are weak, too. Armstrong tosses in a few dubious bits of technology (hydrogen fuel cells that are radioactive?!) but her future Kootenays are firmly in the 1970's. There are no cell phones, satellite uplinks, debit cards, biotech, or tools more advanced than a chain saw, and although everybody talks about computers, nobody seems to own or use one. (Her organic farming commune isn't logged into sustainable growth networks, and their technology seems more medieval than Green.)

Armstrong also tells too much of her story, rather than showing it. For instance, we're told that too much water is being diverted to the U.S., but we aren't shown the effects of that on daily life. And – most seriously – she doesn't seem to have any solutions. While she posits that the sell off of public services and resources is a long-term disaster, no one in the book tries to do anything to reverse it. Characters even state that it's not possible to escape society's problems by hiding out in the backwoods, but that's exactly what they do.

Finally, in a little rush of action at the end, villains are dispatched with ridiculous ease and all the grim social/political/environmental problems are dismissed with a bit of vague authorial hand-waving.

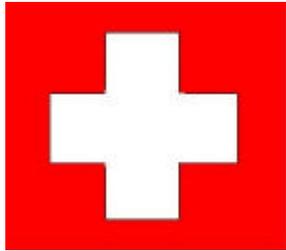
I find it hard to identify whom this book will appeal to. Lia is a believable teenager, but kids are likely to be bored by all the gloomy lectures and the lack of action. Regular SF readers will find the story unrewarding. And Armstrong's prose doesn't have the convoluted artifice to attract the literati.

Lia, Matt and the rest are helplessly caught up in the chaos of their deteriorating world – realistic, perhaps, but it leaves *The Bone House* without direction or momentum.

Comments? Questions? Rebuttals? E-mail donna_mcmahon@sunshine.net



What Is the Royal Swiss Navy?



(<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/sig/rsn>)

"Credo quia absurdum"
(I believe because it is absurd)

(motto of the Ancient Order
of E Clampus Vitus)

My main agenda, with the Royal Swiss Navy, is to battle the Forces of Evil by *making fun* of them. After all, if budding psychotics insist on banding together to form terrorist groups and multinational corporations, if they insist on forming international terrorist networks, why not blunt their effe ctiveness by forming an international *humorist* network to combat them?

The RSN was originally a gag kicking around in my head, in 1996 and 1997. I also wanted to play work with a Web page, and at that time the local Freenet only gave web hosting space to community groups ... so I invented one. So far I have concentrated on presenting documents at the RSN page, just generally absurd and amusing stuff. Also I wanted to start my own gang. Also, I wanted to invite other people into a gang that is neither royal, nor Swiss, nor does it float.

I want to recruit fans of science fiction, Monty Python, and Gibson Girl illustrations. I want us to show up at SF conventions in tuxedos. (This originates from back when people held Banffcon in 1989 and 1995, and its diplomatic-reception-themed opening party.)

I want to mount a complicated joke at the expense of Starfleet™, Mounties, navies, royalty, gnomes-of-Zurich conspiracy theories, the Masons, the CIA, radical terrorist networks, and other criminal gangs.

ROLE MODELS

I suggest the following paragons as models for us to emulate:

Bugs Bunny (Warner Bros.)
Ferris Buehler
J. O'Connell and Eve Carnehan (*The Mummy*)
The Good Soldier Schweik
Cpl. Benton Fraser (*Due South*)
Inspector Clouseau (Pink Panther movies)
Dudley Doright (*Rocky & Bullwinkle Show*)
Maxwell Smart (K.O.N.T.R.O.L.)
Mr. Magoo (Hanna-Barbera)
Stephen Leacock
Brian Salmi (*Terminal City*, The B.C. Rhinoceros Party)
Emperor Joshua Norton I (San Francisco)



OATH

The Royal Swiss Navy oath goes like this:

On my honour I promise to do my best
To love and serve the Infinite Goof,
My country, my tribe and my fellow beings,
and to live by the Unwritten Code.

SALUTE

The Royal Swiss Navy salute is holding an arm out straight and stiff, clenching your fist, bringing it to the side of your head, then turning your first as though you're twisting a corkscrew into your brain. Good times to use the salute are when you are reciting the RSN Oath, when anyone else does, when attending the investiture of another RSN officer, when you are not in uniform, or when you are in uniform. This is also good for weirding people out.

SIGN OF RECOGNITION

The Royal Swiss Navy sign is an open hand, facing the person you're addressing, and then you move your hand in a vertical circle facing them, like as if you're washing a window.

GRIP

The Royal Swiss Navy grip is to take someone's hand, then jump up and down, instead of shaking hands like a normal person. Either it weirds people out, or you get them doing it.

SLOGANS

Adopt, adapt and improve.
Square, flat, crumbly at the edges.
Be prepared.
Almost sort of slightly without doubt presumably perhaps under certain circumstances but not otherwise. Blues.
Do a good deed every day.
Frong! Baroo? (Gnortz.)

UNIFORM

The Royal Swiss Navy uniform varies according to circumstances. I have found that you can get a second-hand tuxedo for a little over \$100 (Canadian), even today. This is the foundation of RSN uniforms.

The RSN *dress* uniform is the *ultimate* tuxedo – white tie and tails.

The RSN *undress* uniform is a standard tuxedo, with your choice of bow tie or cravat, and either cummerbund or vest.

The RSN *field* uniform is a tuxedo jacket, black boots and beret, and your choice of camo colours for shirt and pants, *as long as they won't blend in with any background.* (See cover.)

ORGANIZATION

DENNIS: ... We're an anarcho-syndicalist commune. We take it in turns to act as a sort of executive officer for the week.

ARTHUR: Yes.

DENNIS: But all the decisions of that officer have to be ratified at a special biweekly meeting.

ARTHUR: Yes, I see.

DENNIS: By a simple majority in the case of purely internal affairs, –

ARTHUR: Be quiet!

DENNIS: – but by a two-thirds majority in the case of more–

ARTHUR: Be quiet! I order you to be quiet!

(Monty Python and the Holy Grail)

Does this suggest any ideas to you? I won't do more than *suggest*.

PROPOSED SUBDIVISIONS:

Department of Redundancy Department
Ministry of Housing
Department of Infinite Monkeys
The Home for Indignant Cats
The Christian Anarchist Party
Black Marxist Lesbian Front
The Frong (a new *elective* ethnic group)

Intelligence Branch of the RSN

A separate document on the Royal Swiss Navy site will describe, for those interested, the new Intelligence Branch and Home Guard of the Royal Swiss Navy: or what we would *really* be doing, if in fact we were fighting a war against terrorism.

The RSN Home Guard

People have *done* terrorism, allegedly as a last resort to seek political justice, and we have seen just how much – and how little – it can accomplish. Even with Moscow gold, and secret training camps in various countries, and an international network of hate groups and terrorist organizations, there's a limit to what you can accomplish.

But with a *humour* campaign – an *international humorist network*, even! – what could you not accomplish? Think of it: Pie-Kill goes to Washington (again)! Whoopee cushions in the House of Lords! Someone hacks into the United Nations Security Council database, and inserts Serbian jokes into top-level position papers! Someone hacks into the Serbian database, and makes Saddam Hussein's toilet flush backwards! Or something.

And just think of the fun we could have with terrorists ... !

THE PARFAIT GENTILHOMME

The Royal Swiss Navy ideal is to behave like a gentleman or lady; this means never doing or saying anything unkind, *unintentionally*. Also, it means teaching cats to bark, like I did.

A gentleman is:
helpful and trustworthy,
Kind and cheerful,
Considerate and clean,
Wise and thrifty.

REMEDIAL LIFE SKILLS

Some people need ... um ... to catch up to the level of life skills most people take for granted. For those of us who Just Don't Get certain things, I'm putting together a rudimentary life skills tipsheet.