

# CATCHPENNY GAZETTE

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It's not rocket science ... it's not brain surgery ... it's ...

## ROCKET SURGERY

David Burton

I recently spent some time looking at the scans of a few classic fanzines at fanac.org. I had the good fortune, not long after I became active in fandom the first time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of having access to the wonderful fanzine collection of Jim and Lee Lavell. They'd been active in the 1950s and 1960s, and while they didn't have *all* the classic zines from that period, they definitely had enough to whet the appetite of this neofan. They also had a fairly extensive collection of pulps which were of virtually no interest to me then, but which I wish I could rummage through these days.

So reading the scanned zines at fanac.org was in some cases re-reading what I'd first seen 30 years ago; in others, it was seeing the zine for the first time.

One of the "first time" fanzines that impressed me most was the legendary *Vega*, published, as I'm sure many of you know, back in the 1950s by Joel Nydahl, eponymous originator of "Nydahl's Disease."

This is the type of fanzine that you don't

see much these days – well, maybe *you* do, but I sure don't. It's chock full of charming enthusiasm and wrapped up in the Wonder of It All. Also a certain naiveté that, sadly, seems gone from our world forever. I doubt that any 15 year-old publishing a fanzine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would have quite the same attitude Joel had, and that's a pity. Wonderful contributions from BNFs (and BNFs- and Pros-to-be) certainly make for interesting reading, but what impressed me more were Nydahl's own pieces. They left me wishing, at nearly 52, that I could recapture some of that sparkling innocence and seemingly boundless energy that Nydahl had, and that I'm certain I had publishing my own fanzine at about the same age.

Robert Lichtman published an entertaining article by Nydahl in *Trap Door 21* (and a follow-up letter of comment in *TD 23*) that's well worth reading; Nydahl reminisces about Those Days and writes about reconnecting with fandom at a recent Worldcon.

It wasn't too hard to see the boy in the man in Nydahl's piece.



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Artwork: Masthead: features my great-great uncle Alexander Roan; page 1: dingbat font; page 2: photos from the Internet; page 3: dingbat font; page 4: Kyle Hinton

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**S**peaking of youthful enthusiasm, is it possible for a musician to “revisit” a never-released piece of work created 38 years ago and make it exciting today?

At least in one case, it seems like it. Brian Wilson manages to do just that with *SMiLE*, the legendary “teenage symphony to God” album he crafted for the Beach Boys in the mid-1960s. Shelved for a variety of reasons (including Wilson's nervous breakdown and problems with drugs), a few of the songs from *SMiLE* have been available only in much-altered versions on subsequent Beach Boys albums, and on bootlegs that were never “assembled” in the form that Brian originally conceived of. With the official release of *SMiLE*, it's easy to see that the album would have been something completely new and original in the mid-1960s.

Instead of releasing the original tapes of *SMiLE*, what Brian has done is to take the original concept and arrangements and record the whole album fresh. It's interesting to note that while Wilson worked on the original for a year and a half (or more), the 21<sup>st</sup> century version saw the basic tracks laid down in a week, with the overdubs taking a couple of more months. It's also interesting to me that this isn't a “Beach Boys” album (the full title is *Brian Wilson Presents SMiLE*); none of the surviving Beach Boys are on it. But maybe that isn't too surprising. When Brian



Brian Wilson Then

stopped touring with the band, he spent the time they were on touring laying down the instrumental tracks for their *next* album with studio musicians; when the others came off tour, they'd add the vocal tracks. It would be interesting to have an “official” CD containing both the original versions of the 17 songs and the new recordings, just to see how faithful the new ones are to the original concept and arrangements.

I've been a fan of the Beach Boys for more than 30 years, but a fan of specific time period – that between *Pet Sounds* (the album that preceded what would have been *SMiLE*) up to their 2 disc live recording (*The Beach Boys In Concert*) in 1973. For me, this was the period when Brian *really* stepped out as a musical innovator, producing music unlike anything else at the time. Albums like *Wild Honey*, *Friend*, and *Surf's Up!* are all favorites of mine. At first listen, they seem much simpler than the groundbreaking *Pet Sounds*, but they're all just about perfect little gems. None of them had anything like the scope of *SMiLE*, but then they weren't intended to, either. It's as if Brian proved to *himself* that he could write and produce an album like *SMiLE*, or as if, having abandoned it, he proved to himself that he couldn't.



Brian Wilson Now

*SMiLE* is a concept album in just about every sense of the word. Wilson's ability to weave repeating melodies in and out of the album is more classical than pop. Melodies wind in and out of songs (generally arranged in triplets or quartets), either repeated verbatim or with variations. Brian's voice is in fine shape, and only occasionally do Van Dyke Parks lyrics seem odd being sung by a 60-something rather than a 20-something. The entire album seems almost wistful and child-like, which is part of its charm.

My only gripe with the album is that it *isn't* a Beach Boys album. No one can produce quite the same quality of vocal sound as Brian, Carl and Dennis Wilson, and Mike Love, Al Jardine (and later Bruce Johnston). I wish *SMiLE* could have been finished when both Dennis and Carl were still alive. •

# BLUE WATERS

by Dave Locke

*This piece originally appeared in Dave's fanzine AWRY in 1973*

**T**oday I was taking a shower when I heard someone knocking quite insistently upon our apartment door. As I am a very apathetic individual while in the shower, I found it the task of but a moment to soap my ears and wash away my otherwise ingrained sense of curiosity. Humming contentedly, I gave my body a preparatory rinse and then covered myself with the good lather of Irish Spring. As I reached up to swivel the shower head my way again, the water pipes started vibrating and thudding and the water started coming out of the nozzle in short machine-gun bursts. This lasted all of perhaps five seconds, during which the 5'7" pile of lather stared in wet-eyed amazement at the whole occurrence. Then it was over, and there wasn't any water at all coming from the shower-head except an occasional drop or two. With an additional 25 pounds of lather encumbering my movements, I leapt from the shower to the bathroom sink and twisted the hot and cold handles with my foamy hands. The faucet coughed at me, and spit up one rusty drop of water.

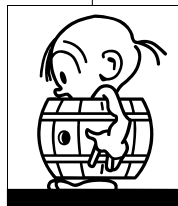
I then sloshed to the bathroom window and peered out. The window faces North, but with some effort I peered East anyway. A city truck was parked out front, and two men were busily working with something (I presumed water pipes) just underneath where I knew one of those square sidewalk-covers to be. So much for curiosity.

By this time I was no longer covered with foam. I was covered with dried lather. I briefly considered shaving my body, but dismissed the idea as I didn't know how safely I could do it without a sufficient number of mirrors.

Thankful for the fact that we drink instant coffee, I used the half-pot of water to rinse off my face and hands. That fixed up my face and hands, but the rest of my body was white with dried soap. And it was cracking. I tried to peel it off, and got my hands all soapy again.

I was now in a minor state of panic. I went back into the bathroom with a dim idea at the back of my mind, but upon lifting the toilet seat I observed that our 5-year-old had neglected to flush the john again. I made a mental note to talk to him about that, and went back to pacing up and down the hallway.

Then another inspiration hit me, and I went to the kitchen to get a pan. Taking it into the bathroom I lifted the lid from the toilet tank and peered inside. It was full. Joyfully, I scooped out a panful and hopped into the shower. Carefully, savoring every drop because the tank doesn't hold all that much water, I rubbed the dried lather back into foam on a selected part of my body and then rinsed it off. Leaving the shower door open, I hopped back to the tank for another panful of water and repeated the act on another



section of my body. The water was ghastly cold, contained rust, and was blue in color, but one cannot be too choosy when he has been encased in soap.

I was making my fourth or fifth trip between the tank and the shower when I noticed that my wife had returned from shopping and was standing at the bathroom doorway, watching me in strained silence. I dipped another panful of water, said hi, and jumped back in the shower.

"Would you mind rinsing my back?" I asked. "Be careful, though. There's not too much water left in the toilet."

"I can't right now," she told me, her lip quivering. "I have to make a phone call."

"Can't it wait?" I pleaded, leaning out of the shower with the panful of blue water in my hand. "This is important."

"My phone call is important, too," she informed me, staring at my pan of water. "I'm going to call some people to come and get you. And take you and your pan of toilet water into a padded room somewhere. Honestly, Dave, this is too much."

"I don't think you understand," I said indignantly. I was about to illuminate the entire sordid story when our son came rushing into the bathroom, stopping next to his mother. He, too, stared at my pan of blue water.

"What's that for, Daddy?" he inquired, in an irritating tone of voice.

"I'm going to boil some vegetables. What else?"

"Brian," his mother said, sternly, "your father has lost his mind and I don't think you should see this spectacle. Run along."

I spoke up. "Wait a minute, Brian. How many times have we told you to flush the toilet after you've gone to the bathroom?"

"I'm sorry, Daddy," he said. And then he reached over and flushed the toilet.

"NO!" I screamed, in outraged anguish.

But it was too late. The water in the tank drained away in one big gurgle, and didn't fill

back up again.

"Why isn't the tank filling back up again?" my wife inquired.

"Because they turned off the water," I sobbed.

She giggled. "And you were right in the middle of your shower when they did it?"

"Yes," I sobbed.

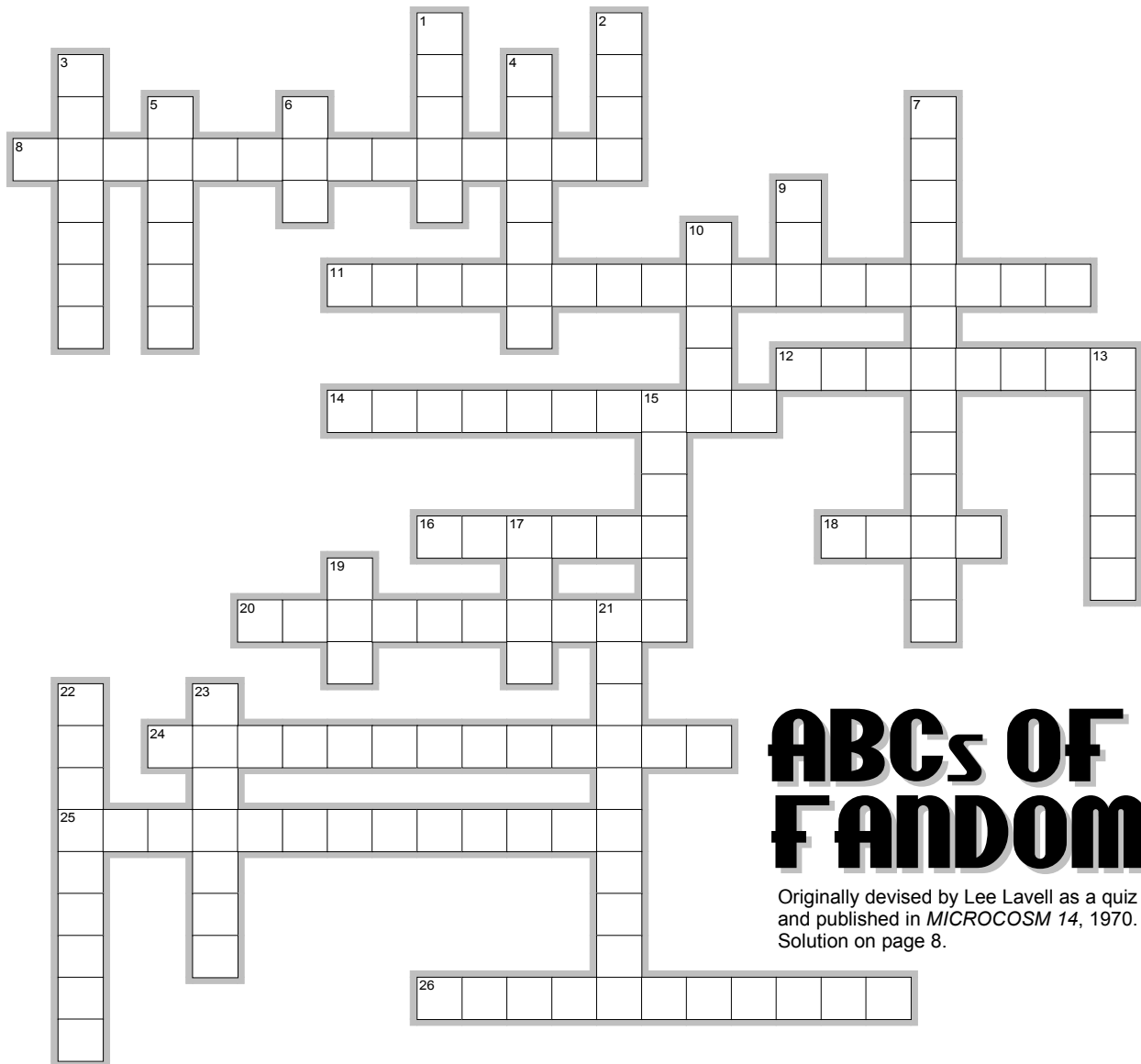
She giggled again.

"Now I'll have to stay like this until they turn the water back on again," I moaned.

"Well," my wife said, as she hauled our son out of the bathroom and was closing the door, "if you want to cry about it, maybe you can rinse yourself off that way." •



From the **You Can Say That Again Again Dept.**  
Heard on an NPR broadcast:  
"...sounding like an avuncular uncle."



# ABCs OF FANDOM

Originally devised by Lee Lavell as a quiz and published in *MICROCOSM* 14, 1970. Solution on page 8.

Created with EclipseCrossword — [www.eclipsecrossword.com](http://www.eclipsecrossword.com)

## ACROSS

8. Walt Willis' history of English Fandom
11. Group of hecklers at the NYCon II banquet
12. What a colophon is also called
14. The art of convincing other fans that you are a much bigger fan than you are
16. Nickname Harlan Ellison acquired after his article in *Lowdown* magazine
18. Another name for TASFIC
20. Burbee's famous story
24. The process of keeping even right-hand margins in a publication
25. The ultimate affliction
26. Fannish drink

## DOWN

1. The fan who perpetrated the *Odd Tales* hoax
2. How you drink 26 across
3. What Shaver remembered
4. The method used to mimeo with plaid ink
5. The beaver deity
6. The sound a ray gun makes
7. F. Towner Laney's indictment of fandom
9. The beetle-bodied deity
10. He's a louse
13. The creator of the Cosmic Circle
15. The Willis-Harris classic fanzine
17. The *Fancylopedia II* is his fault
19. Esperanto for etc.
21. Another name for correction fluid
22. What you address on one side and write on the other as opposed to writing on one side and addressing on the other
23. Lee Hoffman's fanzine

# EPISTLES

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## **Eric Mayer**

**I** enjoyed Catchpenny Gazette. Love the format. Kind of funny that with browsers and the Internet we've gone back to the ancient scroll.

Problem is I already "locxed" Dave Locke's article over at Trufen.net. The Internet certainly confuses the matter of response doesn't it?

*[[ With Eric's permission, I'm including his Trufen.net journal comments about Dave Locke's article in CPG 5 here. ]]*

Dave reminds me of a riddle I've never been able to solve. When is the Net like a fanzine?

As Dave points out the Net offers electronic publishers advantages in ease of distribution and reproduction and, provided you have online access already, you can publish, essentially, for free. In fact, when I belatedly got online ten years ago and learned about home pages one of my first thoughts was – Wow. Free fanzine! I uploaded, as a "cover" a photo of a bright purple nebula. Talk about cool. Never mind struggling with five different colors of messy ditto masters, now I had millions of colors! (Still, I had to use purple...) Then I added some essays, without worrying whether they'd fit on six pages and cost me an extra stamp to mail. And the moment I was done the new improved version of *Groggy* was instantly available, not to 60 fans on my mailing list, but the whole world! Fantastic! Only, somehow... it wasn't quite... a fanzine.

For one thing, where were the letters of comment?

As Dave writes, "We're at an inbetween time in our ability to use the net effectively. There are too many fans clinging to the old

model that a zine isn't a zine unless it's on paper, and far too many fans with the dunderhead idea that if a zine is free they shouldn't have to come up with *The Usual* in order to read it."

Sadly, *The Usual* does not seem to be found in the book of *Netiquette*. The electronic means of communication the Net offers are not simply just like fanzines but free.

I love the Net. I've sworn off paper entirely. But I have yet to find the true electronic fanzine. Is it out there somewhere? There are so many varieties of the Net experience and I've dabbled in more than a few. Usenet I find overwhelming in the speed and volume of talk, and discussion boards and listservs only slightly less bewildering. As for chat... well... that's too much like a social situation for me. Blogging is a bit like issuing a fanzine but piecemeal.

Maybe there is no electronic equivalent of a fanzine. Perhaps the solution is a Neo-Luddite one -- to limit some existing Net technology, carve it down to match what we were once used to.

I'm sure there are formats I haven't run across. What about a fanzine offered occasionally as a huge entry in a members only blog, with membership access limited to those who post a comment every few issues? Who can say what someone might eventually come up with. Perhaps apas like e-APA will catch on. Maybe the true electronic fanzine is out there, and then again, maybe not.

I agree with rich in that I've always been puzzled by those who purport to only write for themselves. Why bother? If its just for yourself, why not just think it? I've never been too concerned with having huge num-

bers of readers (luckily) but I do write with the expectation that a few people will read the words.

Now rich's comments brought to mind another aspect in which LoCs, as we know them, are superior to (or at least different from) a lot of the kinds of talk/writing you see on the Internet. The Internet is great for pure communication. Everyone has access, everyone has an equal voice. It is all very democratic. Problem is, art isn't democrat. A novel, for example – a traditional one at least – is a dictatorship run with an iron hand by the author. The readers don't have a vote about what happens. 95% agree Little Nell must live? Tough. For the duration of a novel you're welcome in the author's world. Think what you want, but you've got no say. But that's part of what's so interesting about art, as opposed to majority opinion, the consensus of the average – it's individualistic, a glimpse through the eyes of another.

Like a novel, a fanzine is a work of art. The editor isn't just offering readers a conduit to chat to each other. The editor is selecting, and usually writing, material he or she finds interesting. Readers are not going to be discussing any old thing but rather the topics selected by the editor. And the editor will shape the loccol to match his or her taste. It is interesting to see what an editor selects to print. Give five different faneds the same batch of LoCs and you'd have five different loccols. Some editors lean toward controversy, some lean away. Some like humor, others maybe mundane news, others interesting facts. Of course loccers tend to catch on to what's favored and reinforce the zine's personality. Loccols can end up sounding more like the editor than the loccers.

*[[ I like your observations here. The main competitor for fanac these days, with fanzine fans, seems to be the various mailing lists. At least it seems that way to me, because most of the fans I've contacted about writing for CPG all beg off saying they're "too busy" with mailing lists to have time for anything else. Mailing lists*

*are "conversations;" fanzines are something completely different. ]]*

The Internet is all about everyone having their say whereas a lot of art is just shutting up and listening.

I'll look forward to downloading the next issue and... um... listening... •

## Lloyd Penney

I agree with you on so-called reality television. I don't find them real at all, but contrived as can be, trying desperately to create some drama and tension with people who aren't actors. Doesn't work, does it? For me, reality television is the news, documentaries and science programming on the Discovery Channel. After that, it's pretty much a waste of good electrons and phosphorus.

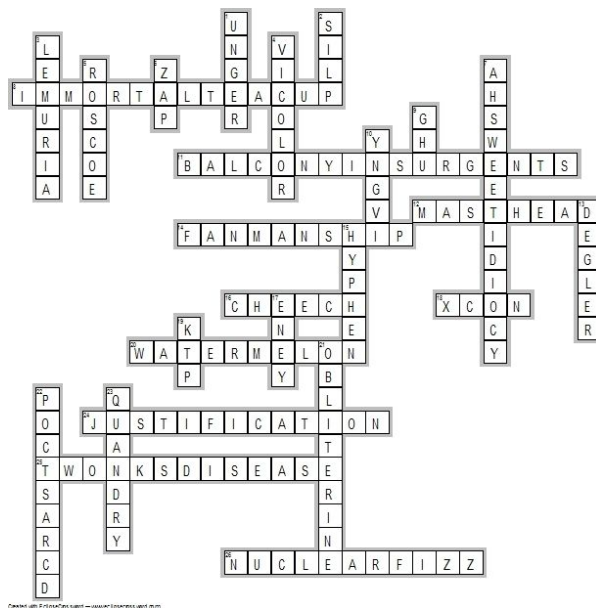
When I LoC a fanzine, I am carrying on a conversation with the editor and his/her readers. We're discussing the issues raised, the stories told, the opinions expressed and the reminiscences remembered. Through feud and flame, I think we do something constructive, and that's what I want to take part in. I get most of my letters printed, and I am pleased with that; good for the ego indeed. Some zines may not publish a LoC of mine because I might not have anything new to say, or my LoC may have come in a little too late. *C'est la vie*. Some zines do not publish a locol, and that is up to the editor, no matter what I might want. I try to serve the higher purpose, too, and I do that by loccing zines I know will not publish my letters. I think Marc Ortlieb and I may be the only fanzine fans that LoC *Emerald City* regularly. Cheryl Morgan will not print my LoC, but she does appreciate the feedback, we chat via e-mail, and I like to think my feedback improves her zine. She won the Hugo for it this year, didn't she? Higher purpose, and all that.

Welcome back to Arnie on fanzine reviews...for me, I receive print and electronic zines about half and half these days. I'd like

nothing better than to see a copy of Andy Porter's new fanzine, but I doubt I'd ever get it. Part of the uncertain availability, no doubt. No longer am I the fan who must have a copy of every fanzine out there. I'm doing fine with what I receive, thank you very much. However, Andy, if you're feeling generous, I'll happily take an issue or two, and I promise a letter of comment.

Congratulations to Frank Wu on his Best Fan Artist Hugo! Well done, and well deserved. The discussions on producing a zine for screen viewing...perhaps more would do it with details of the margins, type sizes, settings, etc. We could use a primer on this, and once we know what we're doing, we might be more inclined to give it a try. •

Solution to crossword puzzle on page 3



As you may have noticed, there is an actual *print* version of *CPG*. What's going on, you might ask?

After giving the matter a considerable amount of thought, and listening to the opinions of older, wiser heads, I've decided for the moment to abandon the PDF-only, on-screen viewing format that the last four issues used (the first issue was a FAPA-zine – printed of course – that was also available as a PDF file).

It just doesn't seem that a digital-only version of this fanzine – and from what I can tell, *any* fanzine – gets much in the way of response, whether written or artistic contributions, or letters of comment. I don't know why this is, exactly; a number of theories have been put forth, all of which make sense, and all of which are frustrating to someone trying to publish a digital-only fanzine.

In the past I've said that I publish *CPG* for myself and for my own enjoyment, and frankly there are times when it *feels* that way... No matter how much I enjoy playing with layouts and so on, however, the zine won't be able to continue without contributions of one sort or another.

So in the future I plan to publish both a print and PDF version – using the same 8½ x 11 format (making it easier to print the PDF version) although undoubtedly the PDF version will have color. The print version will have a fairly small print run, and the PDF version will be password-protected at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) -- the password will be freely available, but you'll have to contact me to get it. With both the print and PDF versions, you'll have to do *something* within two issues to continue to receive or download copies. This goes against the grain for me, and I don't really *want* to do it, but to be honest I'm tired of publishing in a vacuum. See you in March!