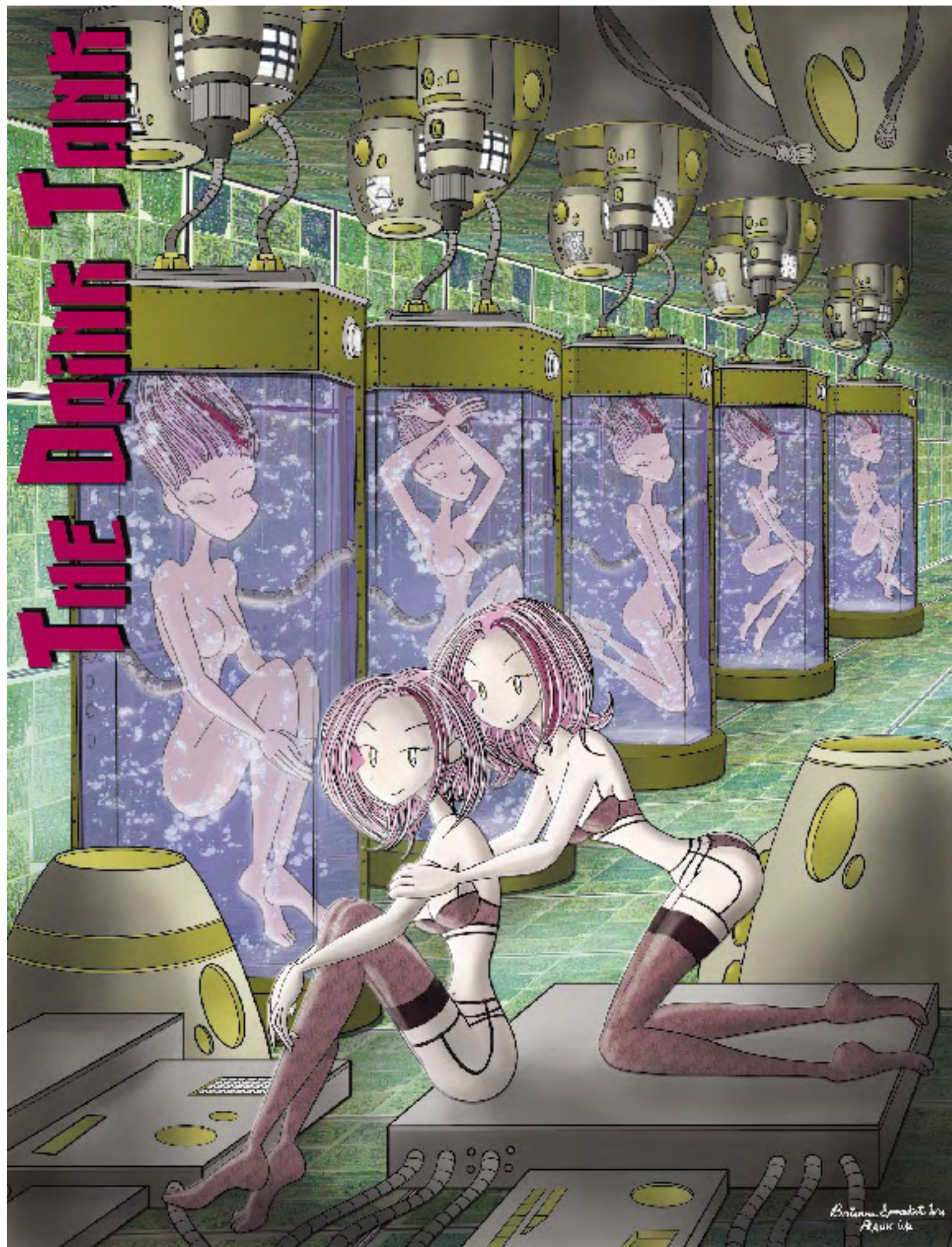


The Drink Tank



Britannia Symbol by
Aqua Up

Brianna Spacekat Wu and Frank Wu give us *The Lesbian Clones*. It's very Drink Tank, don't you think? I'd say it's exactly the kind of cover I'd expect to find on this thing. Well-done, indeed!

I'm having a good time. I always try and have a good time, that's true, but it's been very easy of late. I dunno, maybe it's the holidays. On Friday night, I joined Miss Jean Martin (co-editor of SF/SF) and various other folks for dinner at a lovely Jordanian place (I had a kufta wrap which was delicious and onion-tahini-garlicy good!) and then off to the Stanford Theatre for *The Shop Around The Corner*, starring Jimmy Stewart.

I'm not a big Stewart fan. Never have been. Most of his films have other actors who prop him up and keep my interest. Cary Grant could carry a movie without any help (and he often did) but Jimmy's best stuff to my eyes took place once he got old. I still think *High Noon* is one of the three best Westerns ever made (I put *Hell's Hinges* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* up at that level too) and his performance is fantastic. *High Noon* so enraged Howard Hawks that he was forced to make *Rio Bravo* to counteract it. It's a great film, but it doesn't hold a candle to *High Noon*.

The story of *The Shop Around The Corner* is pretty much the same as the Meg Ryan-Tom Hanks vehicle *You've Got Mail*. Guy and Girl fall in love through a series of letters and it turns out that they work together and hate each other in real life. It's a simple story but it works. Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan star, but it's the performance of Frank Morgan as the owner of the shop that props Jimmy up the best. He's one of those actors of the 1930s and 40s who you might over-look, a great character actor with a wide range. He was wonderful and he provided a fine serious backbone to the work which allowed the rest of the comedy to be slightly more silly. It's always the character actors who carry the heavy load.

I'd say go out and rent it if you've not seen it. It's one of those movies that you'll never see remade as good as the olden days.



The Cover is from Frank and Briana Wu while we also have a fine series of piece from Genevieve, including the piece right above these words. And the rest of the art in the issue is either from Far Cry II, with the review, or from Genevieve. It's easy to spot which is which...

Far Cry II Review

by Brianna Spacekat Wu

The Good - Exciting sandbox world to explore, Intense action The Bad - Repetitive gameplay, Frequent skirmishes without reward, Snore-a-thon plot The Bottom Line - Far Cry II delivers immersion, intensity and repetitiveness.

Let's get something out of the way. Far Cry II has nothing whatsoever to do with the original groundbreaking game. There are no Trigen, no secret island laboratory, no convenient feral powers. That's a real shame, because the original Far Cry was a classic. There was nothing like the feeling of hiding out in the jungle, cartoonishly slaughtering your prey with stealth kills and rocket launchers.

Grumbles aside, Far Cry II is an excellent game - possibly the most addictive I've played this year. It takes place in a nameless African country where you're given the ultimate task of assassinating "The Jackal," the weapons dealer that armed both sides in a civil war.

You're allowed to pick between several characters to play as - though the gameplay effects of this are minimal.

After arriving in the war-torn country, you're taken for a lengthy car ride that showcases the north of the sandbox world you'll come to know. Suddenly, you're incapacitated by the delirious effects of malaria - and end up in bedridden in your hotel. Eventually you find yourself doing combat mission for the APL and the UFL to further various gameplay objectives, such as obtaining

malaria medicine and slaughtering dozens on assassination runs.

It doesn't take long to get into the gameplay groove of Far Cry II. It's largely what we've come to expect from open-world games such as Grand Theft Auto. You get missions, make sure your gear is maxed out, drive there, and murk fools. You'll be rewarded by conflict diamonds, which you can use to buy necessary gear from weapons dealers - a vital thing in Far Cry II. Most of the weapons you'll get from slaughtered enemies are prone to jamming, meaning you'll want cleaner, more reliable versions.

The atmosphere is much more desperate than a GTA game - the grittiness is off the scale. Get too damaged, and you'll be forced to "heal" your character - by pulling bullets out of your leg with pliers, or by breaking your arm back into a straight angle. The world is portrayed in brown sepia tones, war has ravaged everything in sight - poverty and desperation are everywhere. This is Far Cry II's greatest strength. You feel like an assassin, doing anything and killing anyone in order to accomplish your mission.

Human life is especially cheap when



it comes to the “buddies” you fight with in the game - most will die painful deaths while aiding you. You free your buddies from captivity, which are fully realized, fully voice-acted characters. They’ll help you subvert missions, rescue you from death when killed, and even call on you for help from time to time. Unfortunately, you’ll go through friends quickly - no matter how attached you are to them. You can attempt to heal buddies when they fall in combat, but a percentage of the time they die anyway. It’s also painfully easy to kill them through friendly fire, or by failing to complete mission objectives quickly enough.

One of the biggest problems with Far Cry II are the frequent scout encounters you’ll have to fight through. While driving from point to point, absolutely every car you see will charge at you and try to kill you. This must have happened to me 100 times in the first 15 hours of Far Cry II. Expect to

die frequently in the first 1/3 of the game from these skirmishes. There are two tactics I found that eased me through - pressing X lets you climb up and man any machine guns on your vehicle. Murking the driver and gunner from afar is always your best hope. If they manage to crash into your car and stop you, your best bet is to throw a grenade at the cars and scramble away - your attackers usually die in the blast. Unfortunately, this tactic leaves you without a vehicle on foot. These fights happen far too often, considering you get no reward from them.

The second problem is the repetitive gameplay. You’ll be murking the same shirtless goons at 35 hours that you were murking at 1 hour. The tactics are always the same - snipe them from as far away as possible, use molotov cocktails and grenades for suppressive fire, and keep near cover for reloading and when your gun jams.



Constantly upgrading your weapons helps break up the monotony, because you're getting more explosive methods to kill people.

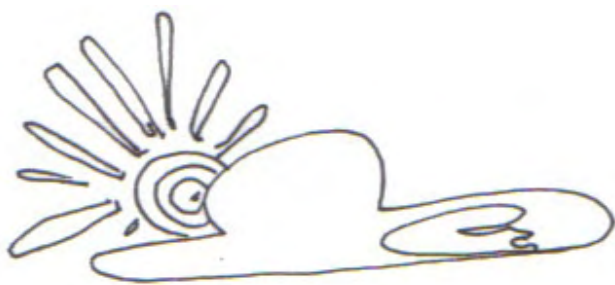
The DLC for Far Cry II is largely miss, as of this date. The Fortunes Pack, a \$9.99 download features two shotguns, a grenade tipped crossbow, and several multiplayer maps. I found the new shotguns to be blunderbuss and useless. Fortunately, the crossbow is one of the best weapons in the game. You get a higher ammo capacity than the standard rocket launcher, a scope with a high level of zoom, and relatively quick reloads. I still have not found a better weapon for my special weapon slot.

If you're a trophy chaser, then Far Cry II has some of the best trophies I've seen so far for the PS3. They generally aren't simple rewards you get for progressing through the game, they reward deeply exploring your mission objectives. Some of my favorites rewarded me for betraying every mission in the first half of the game, exploring every square mile of the world, and for ending a dying buddy's life with my sidearm.

I am not a multiplayer fan, but I did enjoy the gameplay for Far Cry II. It's similar to the capture point system in Star Wars Battlefront.

I was pleased to find a high level of cooperation with my teammates - we worked together, rather than all running off in individual directions.

Overall, Far Cry II is a great game, with that rare addictive quality that keeps you saying, "just one more mission!" I've put 40 hours into this game, and am nowhere near bored with it yet. It leaves me eager to see how Ubisoft throws all this great gameplay out the window for Far Cry III.



It's that time of year. Yes, I know, it's Christmas and Hannukah and Kwaanza and so on, but it's also Awards season and a time to look back and see what's going to be taking home all sorts of prizes.

Let's start with movies. There are two big names that seem to be standing above the rest. The First is Mickey Roarke and the second is Heath Ledger. Roarke for Best Actor for his turn as Randy The Ram Robinson, a washed-up wrestler in the film The Wrestler. The story is that The Ram was once a major star and has ended upon teh Indy Circuit, making no money and working a hard life at it. In other words, it's the story of about 1/2 of the wrestlers who were big in the 1980s. The story shows life for a wrestler on the Indy circuit and from everything I've it's a fantastic piece of acting. WWE owner Vince McMahon didn't like it because it presents a kind of wrestling that he thinks hurts his product, and that may be a fair comment because it does expose a lot of truths that are pretty much best left off the map.

I've always been a big Roarke fan, and I thought he was one of the very few good things about Domino, as an example. He doesn't work as much as he should, but when he does, he really gets the stuff right. He's a lot like Brando in that way, though he was never as big as Brando was...any way you look at it.

Roake has some serious contenders, including Brad Pitt for the Curious Case of Benjamin Button and former winner Phillip Seymour Hoffman for Doubt. I still expect him to win, unless one of those ends up in a sweep.

Heath Ledger for Best Supporting Actor is an amazing and terribly sad story, but it also happens to be one of the greatest performances in the history of Hollywood. Heath played the Joker much better than any other person who has ever tried. Jack Nicholson was a great Joker, an amazing and bizarre combination of chaos and comedy and just plain madness. Heath's Joker was much different, yes, there was chaos, but there was a different kind of

madness, a brutality that didn't exist in the comics and worked so hard. Gritty wouldn't begin to describe it. If you read the script, his role is written specifically to give whoever took on the role the range to play with. Without changing any lines, you could have gotten Nicholson's performance out of those words. Ledger went another direction, a darker, almost unseeable direction. It's amazing, and it's not quite the showy role that he pulled off so well in *Brokeback Mountain*. It's an amazing performance of great material.

As for Best Picture, I'm torn. I'd like to see *The Dark Knight* and *The Wrestler* up there, and I'm betting *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* will be up there too. *Valkyrie*, or however you spell it, might make that list too. I'm betting on *The Dark Knight* winning, actually.

And let's talk Hugos. Fan Hugos are always hard to call. I dunno if I'll make the cut again or not. All the zines that were up for the Best Fanzine last year had good years, and with a stronger British contingent at Montreal than at Denver, I'd bet on something like *Banana Wings* or maybe even *Prolapse* making it on. Who gets knocked off? Who knows?

Best Dramatic Presentation should be interesting. I've got my choices for Long Form- *Iron Man*, *Wall-E*, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, and perhaps *Cloverfield*. There are others that could end up there, like *Jumper* or *The Incredible Hulk*, but I'm guessing those four will be joined by something that was released on DVD...or maybe *Heroes* again (*shudder*) or someone will pull the same crap and get *Pushing Daisies* First Season nominated as a whole.

As far as Short Form, I'm all torn up. There's the best thing on TV Ever, *The Venture Brothers*, and the first episode of Season Three, *Trial of The Monarch*, certainly deserves consideration. That would get my vote. There are others that would as well. I assume there's some *BSG* or *Stargate* that folks will consider. I'd like to see *Venture Bros* on the ballot.



Letter Graded Mail
sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my gentle readers

Let us start with Lloyd Penney!!!

Dear Chris:

It's old tradition time, a loc on more than one issue of *The Drink Tank*. What follows are comments on issues 191 and 192.

You know how I love Lloyd Penney LoCs!

191...what more can be said about the loss of Forrest J Ackerman? We will miss him and his absence will be felt in many ways. We do so many things in fandom that were his idea or suggestion. His smiling face was a fixture at many Worldcons. What do we do now? We honour his memory, we pay tribute, and we carry on with fanning, because he'd do it that way. Notices of Forry's passing went through the Canadian press, too, with notices in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*. There were the usual reports of the ubergeek is dead, but there were some reporters who confessed that they were science fiction fans, and they were mourning Forry's passing.

There was a very nice small tribute at the Psychotronics Film Festival, including showing old footage of him from Bob Wilkins' Creature Feature.

Alan White has produced a fine tribute zine about Forry, and I have responded to

that with my own meetings with him, at Chicon IV in 1982, Montreal in the early 90s, and my final meeting with him at LAcon IV. I hope I'll see more tributes in the fannish press and other publications.

Alan's was a far finer tribute than I could ever have produced. I wish I'd known because I'd just have sent him all my material!

I did not know about Forry's activities in gay right in its earliest years in the 50s. Bless his heart for that...I can only imagine what his reaction was to the legalization (pre-Prop8) of same-sex marriage, and seeing so many people together and happy.

He knew the first couple to get married legally in California who also were founders of the DoB.

Some of the stories about Forry's passing have come late enough so that they are combined with the story about the passing of Majel Barrett Roddenberry. The former is bad enough, but Majel's passing just adds to the sense of loss in California fandom. I guess the Trek torch now passes to Eugene Roddenberry Jr., and I'd like to find out what plans Rod may have for the future of the franchise.

If JJ Abrams can't make the series work again, I doubt anyone can. I was working the TimeCon in 1989 or so when I met Majel. She was a nice lady. I spent much of my time playign chess with Takei (or ogling Brinke Stevens) but I was very blessed to have gottan a chance to chat with her.

192...I have an illustration at home of Yvonne and me as StarFleet officers, singing our Royal Canadian Mounted StarFleet song. We won it as a prize in a masquerade. I cannot remember the name of the comics artist who drew it.

I must see that!

I've read about chupacabras, and see

television shows about them, too.

There was a great episode of the X-Files about them (it was a one-off, no connection to the main story, which are the only ones of the series that I really enjoyed) and there was a good episode of Freaky-Links about them too, if I remember correctly.

The mess continues at home...the Canadian senate is an appointed body, and the prime minister, Stephen Harper, has just appointed 18 cronies to the Senate, including broadcasters and back-room guys. I'd like Taral's take on that.

You Canadians and your whacky politics! I just don't understand your system. Then again, I barely begin to comprehend our own system, so I guess there's that as well.

Next time I hit an ATM, I will pull out some Canadian cash with which to vote for TAFF. I don't mean to be making the process any more complex with a third currency, but I figured that if the winning candidate is coming to Canada, some Canadian cash on hand would be a smart idea. I will send cash only.

That's great! We haven't had too many votes, but I've only started sending out the ballots.

First, Forry, then Majel and now Betty Page. She moulded many a young boy's sexuality with her poses and pictures, and as you say, the modern art of nude photography was born. My, she created sexy, all by herself. She may have launched the idea of the men's magazine, which has gone forward into the current magazines and websites that show everything, without the idea of flaunting without exposing.

I've always enjoyed Betty's work, and it also reminds me that there are a lot of other folks from that world in that era that are getting on in year. Tempest Storm is one of them. Of all the

burlesque dancers, she's the one I most worry about.

I'm finished, and I'm tired. Still got both jobs, and I'm sleep-deprived, and man, do I ever need some holidays. You've probably read how cold and snowy it is on most of this continent...Vegas got snow for once, and some part of the prairie provinces are getting temperatures close to -40 Celsius, which is also -40 Fahrenheit, and dangerously cold on any scale. It's about zero Fahrenheit here, and not any fun at all. Christmas is almost here, with a brightly-lit tree and warm home, and I can't wait. Yvonne and I wish you and the SF/SF folks and the Lovely Linda a great Christmas, happy New Year and a grand party. We will get together and party in 2009, and I look forward to it.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

It's cold here, though only in the 40s. I hate weather, but Cold is better than hot, without question. And the happiest of Season's to Yvonne and yourself, my good fellow! A great year should follow for us all!



Alright, this issue draws to a close, some 8 pages in. There are two more issue this year: the next one which will be pretty regular as far as The Drink Tank goes, and issue 195 which'll look over the full year of The Drink Tank with commentary on what's what, who's who and why I did some stupid thing or another. It'll be entirely useful for everything but really knowing what was in which issue.

And, there's gonna be a look at the National Film Registry, my favourite list of the year. It's announced on Tuesday and I'm hoping to have the issue out that morning. I'm always hyper thrilled that day. This year some strong candidates include my favourite musical of All-Time, 1776. It got a special screening at the Library of Congress and has a large number of nominations, including my own. There's also LA Confidential, which I believe was eligible last year but didn't make it. It's rare that a film 10 years out from release will make it in (Do The Right Thing, Fargo and Goodfellas all managed it, while Bladerunner, Beauty and the Beast and Boys 'n the Hood all made it in their 2nd year eligible) but I think LAC has a chance. Titanic, released the same year, may also get the nod. I know it'll happen eventually, but I must make myself ready. Of course, Good Will Hunting could also end up on the list.

Also eligible for the first time are Shakespeare in Love, Saving Private Ryan (a shoe-in eventually), Elizabeth (which may not be eligible because it's British, but then again The African Queen is in), There's Something About Mary (also a lock for a future time because comedies take time to make the list) and The Truman Show. These all have a chance, but I don't think any will make the list this year, with the possible exception of Ryan, a film I generally dislike.

I'd also like to see a few much older films make it, like The Cat and the Canary, Sandow the Strongman and at least one of the Superman serials. Those would make good additions.

OK, Busy, busy, busy.

I'll talk to you next time!