



The Drink Tank Issue 196
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That is a Mo Starkey cover which might be the most accurate drawing of me ever done! It captures my grizzled prospector nature, I think. There's some Genevieve art in here as well~!

Sometimes, it gets tiring being this awesome. I mean, how am I supposed to keep it up? This Christmas break, I basically did nothing. I went to my Mom's, I wrote a few zines, I sent a bunch of TAFF ballots, I worked on more articles and zines, I ate a lot and I watched a lot of movies. A whole lot of movies. I think I averaged about four DVDs a day and I went to the theatres twice.

First off, *Bedtime Stories*, the Adam Sandler film that's on screens now, is a decent film. Sandler's a funny guy who often goes too far over the top (see *You Don't Mess with the Zohan*) and here he pulls back and becomes a family-friendly dude. He's good working with the two kids in the movie, both of whom are almost excessively cute. Well, I think they're excessively cute. I can only stand so much. The story is simple: Sandler tells stories and they come true...sort of. Kerri Russell is in it and she's fine, as is Courtney Cox, who only stops by for a bit of the film. There's a piece for Lucy Lawless and for my man Mr. Guy Pierce. He sorta fell off the Earth, didn't he? I mean, after *LA Confidential*, I thought he'd



be a huge star, but alas, no. There are some really good bits, especially featuring the marvelous Russell Brand, the guy who made *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* the great film of the summer. I would say you should see it.

The Spirit is quite another story. There's beautiful work in it. Simply beautiful cinematography which slides between sepia and red-splashed black and white. There's a lot of dialing down on the saturation, which is a trend I'm not that much a fan of. There's the beautiful Sara Paulson, from *Down with Love* and some TV shows I didn't like, and there's the amazingly hot Eva Mendez. There's the gorgeous Scarlett Johansson as *The Octopus'* assistant. She's the hottest one in the film. She's smokin' beyond all reasonable comprehension. At one point, she's

wearing a Nazi uniform. This is obviously a Frank Miller thing, but she's so hot in it, I felt terrible. Samuel L. Jackson was good in it, as he loves chewing scenery, and the guy playing *The Spirit* was OK. I liked *Plaster of Paris*, she's played by the incredible Paz Vega, and I thought that the film had a couple of moments, but Frank Miller is not the one you want writing a story like thing. One of his classic quote is 'Whores, whores, whores, whores, whores!' His film writing hasn't been great, though I thought that *Sin City* was pretty good.

The DVDs were much more frequent, I think that *The Spirit* made me less likely to want to go to the movies (that, and there really wasn't much that I wanted to see). The DVDs I got for Christmas were a bit of a dog's breakfast, as it were. *Mamma Mia*, the terrible film version of the awesome stage show of ABBA hits, was one of them. I had it on as I worked on various zine bits. I got *The Golden Compass*, a film I'd never managed to make it through before when I had it from Netflix and on the plane to England. I wasn't a fan. I actually made it through to the end, partly because through the middle moments, I was working on Claims Department. I also got *The Dark Knight*, which I haven't watched again, partly because it's not a short film and it's one that I'd want to actually pay attention to.

On New Year's Day, I bought four videos from Hollywood because Linda was sick so I wouldn't be hanging out with her. That made me sad, but I found that Hollywood Video was having a Buy 2, Get 2 deal. I tend to buy films that I'm only half-way into at deals like those. The first one was a film I already owned, but it was also the Unbearably Long, Self-Indulgent Director's Cut. It was Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story. At 2 hours, it was 1/3 again as long as the theatrical version. It's so much better than the original in that the biggest problem with the original was that it felt like it had been hacked up and major segments had been tossed aside. This one brings some of that material back and it works much better. Yeah, it's a touch long, but it works really well.

You Don't Mess With The Zohan I saw in the theatre and it was bad, but on DVD, it's the kind that you can have on and do stuff. Still, even on DVD, I wasn't into it. There weren't any good extras, though.

Tropic Thunder might be the most wrong movie ever made, but it's also damn funny. This is the best comedy that came out this year and it's gory and hilarious. Jack Black was largely wasted in the film, but I thought that Ben Stiller gave one of his best performances in ages. I usually don't like him, but here he was great. The performance of my main man

Jay Burchell was great. This was the year of Robert Downey Jr. and he was awesome playing the Australian actor had pigmentation enhancement (an actual surgery, by the way) so that he could play the black sergeant of the company. It was a weird role, but it worked. Of course, Matthew McConahey was really good, as there are a lot of folks who hate him, and I've been with that at times, but here he was really funny. Tom Cruise's performance was way over the top and was just another thing that made it a fine film. I didn't get a chance to watch the extras, but I hear they're pretty good.

Sadly, the film that got the most attention from me was The Love Guru. Why'd I buy it when I really didn't like it in the theatre? Well, I am working on a complete Mike Myers collection, plus I'd heard that there were some awesome extras, which there were. The thing is, the movie is perfect for what I was using it as. I'd just put it on and start writing. I don't know if I watched every frame of the film because I'd tune in for a second, and then tune back into whatever else I was doing.

Yes, I feel terrible because Mike Myers was easily at his worst in this one. He's usually funny with a bit of wry to his work, and here he's just flat-out annoying. As the Guru Pitka, he's over-the-top, even by Mike Myers standards. There's an equally over-



the-top Ben Kingsley and Jessica Alba's also pretty flat, though she's always nice to look at. I actually think that Vern Troyer is the highlight of an otherwise terrible flick.

And while I was watching these flicks, I was writing Claims Department. You may have read some of the early issues on eFanzines. It was my first GimmickZine, basically the story of me doin' stuff and the movies, music and books that went along with them. The issue I just did was simple, a weekend at home where I planned on doin' a bunch of stuff, but I was waylaid a couple of times. Simple and overly-long, somewhere around 10K words, I wrote it up and managed to print 25 copies. And that led to an interesting problem. I had to figure out who to give 'em to.

You see, I like to give my zines to folks who may or may not be the kind who regularly read zines. I looked at all the people I regularly send zines to and I sorta shifted it to get folks who wouldn't normally see my stuff. And since I was giving away 10 at BASFA, since they're the best bunch of folks I know, I had 15 to send out.

I first took a couple of extra labels I had from the TAFF mailing, those going to Australia and Sweden, and figured that those could go instead of being wasted. I sent three to Oz, one to Sweden. That seemed right. I figured a couple of people in the UK might be interested, and a few folks in Canada. Sadly, I thought I'd sent one to Lloyd Penney, but apparently I did not. I'll have to fix that by eMailing him a copy, since he's a key to this entire experiment. That's right, there's even more gimmickry to this than I started with.

The US folks were harder to sort out. I knew I had to send one to Guy Lillian for The Zine Dump. I read TZD religiously, though sometimes the attachments don't make it through. I had to make sure he had it since he wants to see every zine in the English language. Guy's a good guy and I love Challenger, so he gets one. Same for Glycer. Mike's File 770 is everything a newszine should be and he's a damn nice guy. He got one of the few US copies. So did Christian McGuire. He's

awesome and I try to make sure he gets printed version of my stuff when it happens. I figured I'd send one to a couple of folks who have sent me stuff in the past, and a couple to folks I'm pretty sure I've never sent a zine to.

Claims will probably never have a regular mailing list due to the size of the print run, though I'll try and send it to folks who LoC and such, but I'm going to bounce it around, send an issue every now and again to all sorts of different people. I know that a smallish group reads The Drink Tank, but mostly, I'd like to get my words out to folks who I've never met, folks who have probably never read.

Of course, once they get a chance to read me, they may wonder why they, or I, bothered.

I've been reading a lot of year end zines. That is to say a lot of zines that've come out over the last few weeks. Argentus had a good year, as usual, including a piece of my TAFF report. There's a good issue of Askance that just dropped with a wonderful piece from Taral Wayne, who is being talked of for a Fan Writer Hugo. Lloyd Penney is also getting a lot of buzz. There's a lot of Hugo talk coming, and I'll be doing the Handicapping the Hugos issue which will likely be the biggest issue I've done in a long time. I've already started my reading for it (Anathem will probably take me a week of straight reading!)





To Cheslyn Hay, in the wilds of Staffordshire, for a weekend with my kid sister and her family. Back in the mists of fanhistory, Tracy was an occasional visitor to the Solihull Science Fiction Group, whilst husband John has occasionally let his enjoinment of epic fantasy influence his career as a jewellery designer (friends of former Pan Horror editor Jo Fletcher might remember her wedding tiara, with its band of silver bats); little wonder my five year-old nephew Tomas is exhibiting every indication of being a sf fan in embryo.

The major difference is that I was a voracious consumer of all things scientificfictional, from the yellow-jacketeted Gollancz hardbacks scooped up by my father at the local public library (that publisher's decision to use the same livery for its crime novels

Wars, in all its myriad merchandising opportunities: videos, models, t-shirts, Lego kits, trading cards, *ad paupertas*.

Ironically, despite the fact that I managed to finesse myself into the press launch for the original *Star Wars*, way back in 1977, the more recent movies represent one area where our interests fail to overlap. I found *The Phantom Menace* barely watchable, fell asleep the first time I attempted *Attack of the Clones* and never bothered with *Revenge of the Sith*, sorry, *Sith*. As for *The Clone Wars*, Tom's latest fave, my first impression is that it displays neither the stylish animation of Warners' *Batman* nor the narrative coherence of a first-season *Scooby-Doo*.

Still, that doesn't prevent me from trying out Tom's light-sabre, modelled upon that wielded by Yoda in the very films I've skipped. It's sturdy, nicely balanced, gives off an eerie glow

also explains my accidental childhood exposure to the works of Agatha Christie) to any and all 1960s British telefantasy (four decades on, I still rate *UFO* as one of the greatest sf series ever produced). Tom, on the other hand, is fascinated by *Star*

– and slices straight through the glass lampshade immediately above my head. My nephew is most impressed, whilst my sister assures me the lounge fittings were due for replacement this coming summer, but I still feel the Force let me down.

Equally unfortunate is the distant relative of Yoda's which John and I discover in their greenhouse the following morning. Puzzled by the pitiful trickle of water emanating from his watering can, John gives it a shake to dislodge what he initially assumes to be garden waste, only to discover a bloated and now extremely dead frog has jammed itself up the spout. Ick.

When I walk back into the house, Tom is waving a copy of *Attack of the Clones* at me and suggesting we watch it together. For a moment, I wonder if there's enough room up that spout for me as well, but hell, it's xmas, the season of suffering in silence.



Photo from Steve Green

I've been listening to various pieces of the Haunted Mansion soundtrack lately. Some of this might make my National Recording Registry list later this year. There are commercials and outtakes and so many other bits that just wow me. The recording of the soundtrack for the ride itself is awesome.

That's something I've thought about: the audio and video recordings of various amusement park rides need

to be preserved. There's one legitimate shot at the Registry for Captain Eo, a very innovative motion picture at Disneyland for fifteen years starring Michael Jackson. That probably had 50 million viewers over the years it was there. I remember when it was new and it was the biggest thing in the park. A couple of years later they introduced Splash Mountain and then Indiana Jones and then it was replaced. It's role in the changing face of Amuse-

ment Park entertainment should be recognised.

And with more than 40 years of entertaining guests, so should the Haunted Mansion soundtrack. I'm almost certain 100 million people have been through it and the Haunted Mansion has influenced three generations of Amusement Park rides.

And on that thought, I'll be back next week, with LoCs and such that I didn't manage to get to this time!

Tales of the DORK KNIGHT



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