



Submitted for your consideration: Mo Starkey for Best Fan Artist. She's done a bunch of art for me, she even did the cover for Journey Planet issue 2. Her art was used by Steven H. Silver for last year's issue of Argentus. She's done a lot of for The Drink Tank, a cover for Claims Department, so on and so forth. She's certainly on my ballot, along with Espana Sheriff (for the fine stuff she's done in these pages, at art shows and the logo for my TAFFzine), and Genevieve, and Dan Steffan (the fact that he's only been nominated once disturbs me) and Ditmar.

I can also sign off on a bunch of other artists as worthy of nomination. Taral Wayne, Spring Schoenhuth, Brad Foster, Frank Wu, Brianna SkapeKat-Wu, Mike McLaughlin, Dave Howell (did you see last year's Hugo award? He designed it and it's amazing!) and Jason Shcachat, and on and on. I tend to nominate people who aren't regulars on the ballot because I know there are a lot of folks who will do that for me.

I would love to see Mo on the ballot. She did manage 5 nominations last year, the same as Espana, and I think she's done a great job and she's just flat-out good people.

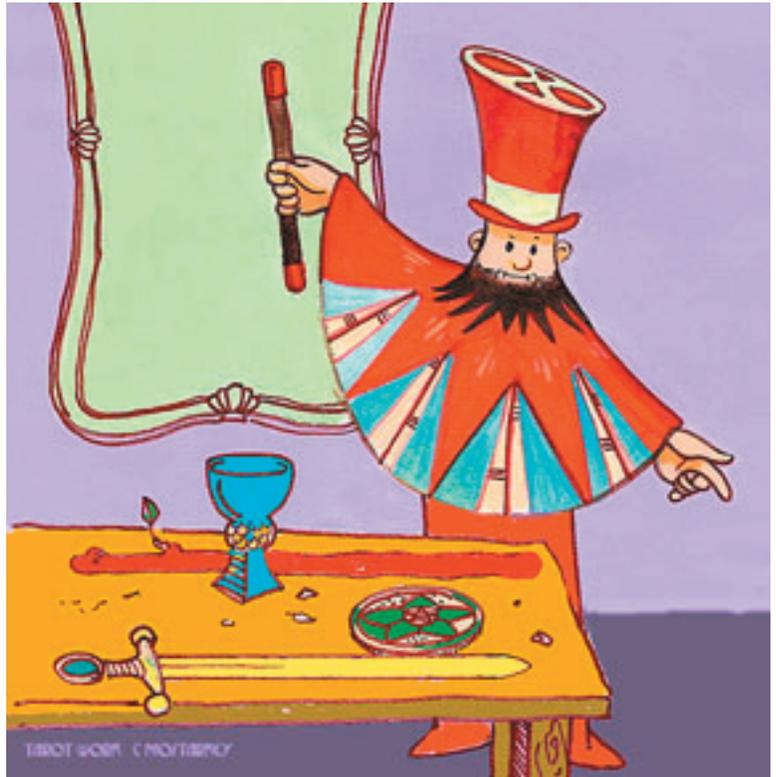
OK, this issue is kinda short, you'll notice, and there's something missing.

Taral Wayne doesn't have an article in it!

That's right, I went through all my Taral articles. This is what it'll feel like the day that the one island in the world where the granite used to make Curling stones is found runs out. That island is also the home of a very important Puffin rookery. I love puffins, and I love curling. I don't know if I could choose between them.

Speaking of curling: the US has not been doing well. Both the men and the woman have only one win each and so, they'll likely not make the medal round. The US Women's skip, Debbie McCormick, is adorable, my other Olympic crush this year (along with the sadly disqualified Lindsey Jacobellis) and she's made a few crucial mistakes. She's still all sorts of Curling hot though!

I haven't watched much Olympics other than Curling and that first weekend. I missed out on the US guy winning the Gold in Figure Skating. I love it when the US outsmarts Russia. I guess it's all those years of the Cold War having installed that desire in me. The Russian skated a harder, more physical programme, while the American skated a more artistic programme,



no Quads, but had excellent footwork and the jumps were all in the back end of his programme where they all get late in skate bonuses. It was ultimately intelligent and it's what allowed him to beat the Russian. Smart will always win out against good, and even sometimes against lucky.

There are 15 issues of Journey Planet issue 5 heading out to people and I'm rather proud of it. I think we did a good job with it, and you can see for yourself at <http://www.efanzines.com/JourneyPlanet/JourneyPlanet05.pdf>. I can't say that I've ever done a zine with as strong a list of contributors. Along with Claire, James and I, there's Scalzi, Paul MacCauley, Mike Perschon, Niall Harrison, Barbara Haddad-Johnson, Warren Buff and various others, too many to name, really. There's fiction, there's non-fiction and there's stuff that blurs the lines according to some. I think it's well worth reading.

I've been reading a lot about wrestling history lately, which shouldn't surprise you at all. I mean, I love history, I love wrestling, how could I not love Wrestling History. It all started with a conversation about England and wrestling that spun off an article that I hope I'll have in the next Journey Planet about Royal Albert Hall as a Wrestling Mecca. There's a lot of English wrestling history on the web, and there's even some video from the 1970s and 80s that I'd never seen. Sadly, there's not much Jackie Pallo or Mick McManus out there.

The National Recording Registry The Forgotten Recorded Decade

Part Three: Tragedy Tomorrow, Comedy at the Exact Same Time...

Comedy is represented on the Registry with works from the likes of Bob Newhart, Firesign Theatre, *Uncle Josh and the Insurance Company* and *Who's on First*. Since the start of recorded sound, there've been comedy bits and many have sold very well. There are certainly a number of comedy albums from various decades that should be on: *Live at Carnegie Hall* and *The Berkeley Concert* from Lenny Bruce, any number of Bill Cosby records, *The Wonderful World of Jonathan Winters*, and *Mort Sahl at the Hungry i. l*

purposely left a name off of that list, and I'm betting you can figure it out.

Richard Pryor.

Richard Pryor has several recordings that could easily end up on the Registry. I think that *That Nigger's Crazy* is perhaps his most significant album pre-1980. ...*is it something I said* and *Bicentennial Nigger* are also worthy. Pryor was a legend, a ground-breaker, a guy who understood how to shock while also making people think. He wrote a great

screenplay in *Blazing Saddle* and was twice held back from playing roles that were specifically written for him. He perfected the comedy concert film during the 1970s and 80s. He was brash, often drug-addled, and a genius. He influenced everyone who came after him and the comedy club explosion of the 1980s was in part a reaction to the power of comedians like Pryor, Steve Martin and Robin Williams.

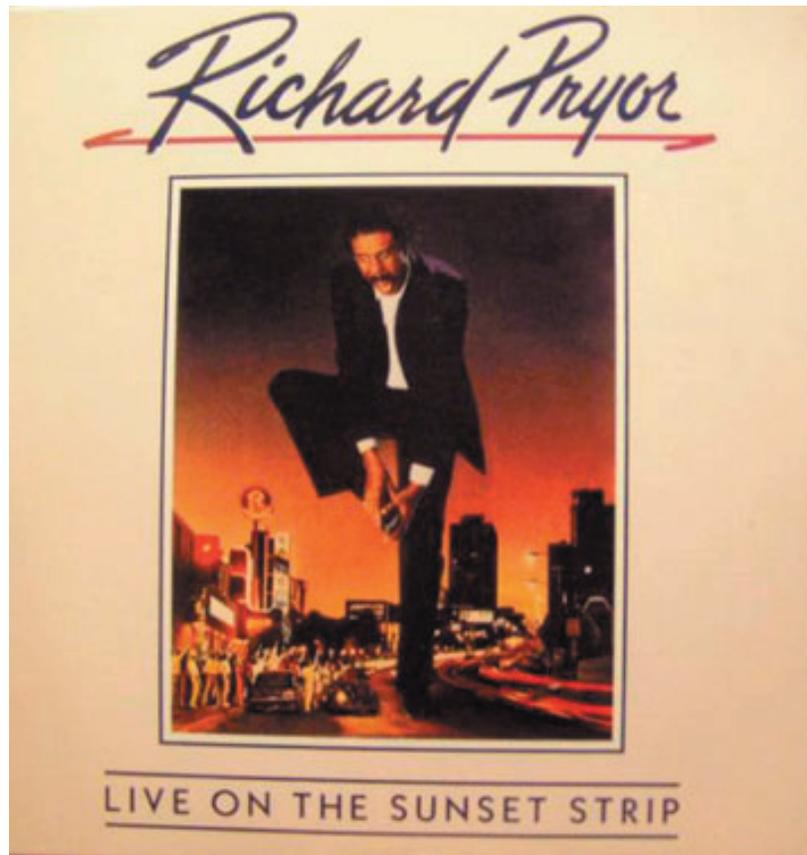
Pryor's work in the 1980s was really interesting. Some of it was just good. I thought that his albums *Supernigger* and *Here and Now* were both OK. Neither of them had the power of his stuff from the late 60s and 70s. *Pryor Goes Foxx Hunting*, a split LP with Redd Foxx is an excellent record of two of

the most important stand-ups of all-time. The most significant record of stand-up comedy in the 1980s has to be Pryor's record *Live On The Sunset Strip*.

The first thing you must know is that Richard Pryor almost died when he set himself on fire while freebasing cocaine. He was drinking 151-proof rum and lit himself on fire. Then he launched himself out of the house and ran down the street. That was one of the defining moments of Pryor's life. This played a major role in the film/album of what he was calling

his final Stand-Up Performance: *Richard Pryor: Live on the Sunset Strip*.

Comedy changed in the 1950s with Mort Sahl introducing politics into the mix, and not too long after, and certainly into the 1960s, Lenny Bruce started to make things both more personal and more political with his famous non-funny readings of the transcripts from his trials. The 70s changed things again, turning a few guys into serious arena headliners, and then came the 1980s



and Pryor introduced the idea of confessional comedy. It was bound to happen, with all the stand-ups living like rock stars, but Pryor had the big famous moment running down the street. In *Live on the Sunset Strip*, Pryor brings it all out and makes it into something personal.

He doesn't just make a reference to the event, which he plays up with typical Pryor intensity, but he also talks frankly about his addictions. There had been a few folks who have done that since and before, but none of them had the same open frankness that Pryor pulls off. Listening to the album, you realize that this is a guy who thinks funny, not just a guy who comes up with funny stuff to say. There aren't a lot of people

like that, whose very thoughts are humorous enough to supply an entire album, but I don't think anyone comes close to Pryor in that regard.

Interestingly, this album, which I had as a kid because my Mom bought it, didn't like it and put it in with my records, probably had a lot to do with the way I tend to write. It's all about presenting what there is to present, not ignoring the big stuff, realising that you're a human, you're a failure (at times) and trying to work with it the best way you can. Pryor was a comedian who believed that anything could be funny, and nothing more hilarious than the stuff that he did or that happened to him. If you ran down the street, naked, your head on fire, you can't deny that that's funny, no matter how much it hurts. Finding that comedy, the kind that doesn't come from a place of light but from a place of personal darkness and pain, that's the kind of comedy that Richard Pryor didn't invent, but he certainly understood it better than almost anyone and presented it better than most.

The list of comedians who were influenced by Pryor is huge (everyone from George Carlin to Louis CK), but the ones who were specifically pushed by the frankness of *Live on the Sunset Strip* is impressive, including people like Chris Rock, Henry Rollins and the entire spoken word movement of the 1990s. There are times in *Live on the Sunset Strip* that you feel like you're listening to an album of spoken word that just happens to be funny. There's a certain charm

to it that cuts through the strong language and harsh rejection of himself that Pryor unleashes. It is only a comedian who can truly believe in the tragedy of life that can produce comedy like this. The things he says, without his delivery, aren't so much funny as they are terrible, but he makes it work.

One way I've always thought that you can discover the impact of a performer is through the people who reference and set their act up in either opposition to or merely in the opposite direction. Sarah Silverman's act does her bit as a comedian who portrays her act as personal, but in a way that is completely false, almost exactly opposite to what Pryor was doing. It's most impressive. When you can do that, you know that there is a movement to react to and that means that Pryor had a bigger effect when people can recognise the reaction against it.

Hugely influential and probably the best album of 1980s stand-up, *Live at the Sunset Strip* certainly passes every test I could think of as to what comedy should be on the Registry, and it's a shame it's not already on. You've got Robin Williams as another example of American stand-up, but his stuff, while occasionally powerfully personal, lacks Pryor's attack at the material, which is almost invariably himself.

Next time: *The Young Man Working in the Old Style.*

