



**The Drink Tank - [Garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:Garcia@computerhistory.org)**

That's a new Mo Starkey and the first of a series. I love Dr. Who, though I'm much more into the current series than the old stuff. I think David Tennant is the greatest Doctor ever!

Cinequest has been slowly driving me insane. It's been a ton of fun, but, as I'm sure you've noticed from every year I write these issues, I've been burning the candle at both ends for a week now and I'm pooped. Up at 6am and to sleep around 1 or 2a, is not a good way to go. It's like a 2 week long convention!

On the other hand, once I get to hanging around with the good folks of Cinequest, I'm reborn. It's like walking into a ConSuite where everyone you know is sitting around.

This year has seen some great stuff, a really strong Norwegian film called Upperdog has been my fave, but the Science Fiction and Fantasy films have been a real hit, especially the short films.

The first one is a combination of Fantasy and Action called The Action Hero's Guide to Saving Lives. It stars Patrick Warburton as Ace Mulligan. If you've ever seen The Venture Brothers, you'll recognise Patrick Warburton's voice as that of Brock Sampson, and that's who he's basically playing. The story is pretty simple: a tough guy cop goes into a hostage situation and every time he makes a stupid choice, the whole thing starts over. It's hilarious! It gets the audience rolling. Really great comedy.

The other film in the comedy program that is hilarious and genral is Ducked & Covered. It's a fake training film dealing with how to live in the Post-Apocalyptic world following a Nuclear Devestation. There are some truly hilarious moments, especially since the story

is told in drawn, static images. There's a great quote in the film attributed to Albert Einstein.

"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but I know how World War IV will be fought...  
...with fuckin' lasers and shit!"

The best date movie of the festival is actually a great Irish fantasy short film called Out of the Blue. It's the story of a lonely guy who finds a TV floating in the water. He picks it up, plugs it in and there's a beautiful mermaid in there. He takes her out on a date, they have some fun, but her television starts to leak and he has to take her back to the ocean. It's a fun and adorable short.

The best science fiction film of last year was the Montreal-based Sunday Afternoon. I thought it was the best of all the shorts last year. I've re-watched it a bunch of times, largely because the filmmaker gave me a copy. It's a great thing.

The next issue will have words from some friends about the parties, events, random happenings, and the pre-show entertainment. If you're really interested, go to Twitter and search for #HellsBells. That tells much of the story of the festival.

I'm also happy to say that the Media Whore in me is so pleased with the festival because my face is shown on the screen before every movie as a part of the pre-show recorded material. I love seeing myself all big and funky. It's kinda weird to have people who don't know me saying "Hey, Chris!"

You'd think I'd be used to it!

I also set my beard on fire the other

day. Yes, on fire. I was cooking dinner, picked up the pan, knocked over the garlic jar, bent down to pick it up, put the pan down on top of my beard which was on the burner. Thus, I had a huge chunk out of it on the right side. I trimmed it, so now it's about 1/5 the length it once was. It was quite traumatic, but at least I managed to even it out mostly.

It's odd, as my beard was actually on fire for a bit, and I made the stupidest possible mistake when trying to get my beard free and could easily have ended up with a face full of Olive Oil and Butter. I got lucky. I was rather shocked to see that File 770 covered it.

OK, this issue has me, Taral, Jeff Bowan and Randy Smith! I love those guys! I'm also going to be trying to drum up support for DUFF. You need to go and vote!

Vote, Damn You!!!!



## **My DUFF “stump”**

My name is Jeffrey Allan Boman. I'm one of the entrants for DUFF to Aussiecon 4 in 2010, and likely someone you know nearly nothing about.

I'll release a mini-perzine about me on efanzines later in March. I'll try not to duplicate it here too much. I met Chris in person at Anticipation 2009 here in Montreal, but I'd spoken with him through the LOC section of several other fanzines for several years. At that same convention I won the Fan Achievement (fanzine) Aurora for my zine about comicbooks, The Original Universe. It's nominated again for 2010.

A zine devoted to comics, and like Chris I'm a fan of pro-wrestling. Likely you don't see the link to science fiction, but as well as my small pile of rejection slips from The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction (my badges of honor) I've been reading SF for over 3 decades. In fact I still own my first book (the “I, Robot” anthology by Isaac Asimov).

I've never traveled beyond North America. I hope you choose me as delegate (no, I'm not a Pokemon)!



*The Fan Funds are, of course, near and dear to my heart. I think it's great that fandom pulls together to send someone they think worthy off to the other side of an ocean to hang with the fandom over there. I loved my TAFF visit, and I've been lucky enough to get to hang out with a few other winners on their trips. It really does fandom good to have something like TAFF, GUFF and DUFF out there, especially in years like this one.*

*The 2010 DUFF race is crowded. There are five candidates and they all have a shot. I think that any of them would do amazingly well in the role of delegate. I am a nominator for Jeff, and I'd love to see you vote for him. If you haven't read The Original Universe, you'll kindly close this PDF, go out and take a look because it is really strong. Perhaps the best reason to support Jeff is that when I mentioned that my one true wish was for pre-Crisis continuity, he laughed, but agreed!*

*John Purcell is also running and I can't say enough good things about the man who shared a room with me at the Austinn CorFlu. The man's been around, has put out many a fantastic issue and is still going strong. I really love Askance, a great zine which is going strong. It replaced two good zines that John was doing, and he's managed to improve on them both with a single regular piece!*

*Maybe you've heard of John Hertz? He's been around for a good long time, has supported the fan funds for years (including with his newest anthology of his fan writing*

*collected in honor of the 2007 WorldCon, On My Sleeve, available for a donation of 5 bucks to either TAFF or DUFF) and he's a generally good guy. Lord Hertz's resume is too long to fit in a fanzine, but I can say that his zine Vanamonde is very good and he's been nominated for the Best Fan Writer Hugo a few times now as well. He also looks pretty good in a tux.*

*I don't think I've met either Terry Fong or Jannie Shea. At least I don't think I have. They're well-known, as when I mentioned that I didn't know either of them (and apparently I also completely slaughtered my pronunciation of Jannie's name) I was corrected that everybody knew them. Just more proof that despite outward appearances, I really am out of the loop.*

*The final candidate (as I don't count either Hold Over Funds or No Preference) is Melanie Herz. Again, I don't think I've met her, but she's got some really good nominators (including the Sims, Pat and Roger) and she'd probably do well as again, when I mentioned her name at a BASFA meeting, I was greeted with a chorus correcting my pronunciation.*

*So, you can't go wrong voting in DUFF this year, and I hope you'll do so. The WorldCon in Japan is a significant moment, and there's some great stuff that a DUFF delegate will get to do. I've done the trip, I know how awesome it is not only to make the trip, but to run the fund and get to meet so many fantastic people who will help to raise funds and awareness of them!*

## My Utterly Cool Non-Fannish Parents By Randy Smith

Most of us who grew up with fannish sensibilities are familiar with any and all of the following cries of anguish:

“My mom made me throw out my comics!”

“My dad gave me a lecture on how role-playing games are ruining my life.”

“I really wanted the cool Star Trek communicator for Christmas, but I got a John Wayne action figure instead.”

“My parents told me that I should be reading ‘real’ literature, and not that trashy Burroughs or Heinlein stuff.”

I am very happy to say that my parents have never been like that—not then and not now. My parents were always very accepting about my fannish tendencies, even when they did not understand them. The only exception to this that I recall was during a period when my mother became convinced that super-hero comics were too violent and had me give nearly all of my comics away to another child. Yes, I was made to give them away, not throw them out.

At a recent fannish gathering I was discussing this with Ian Stockdale and he said, “Wow! Your parents were pretty cool.”

He was absolutely right. I only regret that I’ve never really thought about it in quite that way before. Right here, right now, I am taking the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which they have supported my fanishness over the years and to say “Thanks, Mom and Dad, I appreciate your attitude!” They will get to read

this article after it is published.

Let me be clear: My parents are not and have never been fans. Neither one has ever been to a convention, read a fanzine, worn a costume, sung a filk song, or tried to build a tower of beer cans to the moon. It may be that they simply never had the opportunity. My father was a farm kid from central Nebraska, far away from the places where the First Fans were gathering, and my mother was a girl during a time when fandom was an almost exclusively male activity.

I have never heard either one mention picking up issues of Astounding or Amazing from the newsstand, but I now have in my possession my father’s small accumulation of Big Little Books. The collection includes Red Ryder and King of the Royal Mounted, but also several different volumes of Buck Rogers. The Big Little Book that is in the worst condition is Tarzan of the Apes which my dad says he read and re-read many times until it nearly came apart. I also re-read the Tarzan volume many times, and this was several years before I read the full novel. A mint condition copy would fetch more money from a dealer than any other BLB. This particular copy is much more valuable to me because of the many hours of pleasure it has given to two generations of Smiths—my father and me.

Both of my parents had some early flirtations with comics. My dad remembers the Golden Age Hawkman, probably from reading issues of Flash Comics in the barbershop during his late

teens and twenties. Oddly, he has never talked about any other super-hero from that era. My mom tells of her cousin who had a large pile of comics at her house. Alas, no one in the family seems to know what happened to them. I’m guessing they were probably thrown out by a parent.

We always had lots of books in our house and my parents were quite happy to see me reading. Only a few of their books were Science Fiction, but I soon found what little our



local public library had to offer. When I had money and we were making shopping trips to the larger Nebraska towns, I would pick up a few paperbacks as well as issues of Galaxy and F&SF if I could find them. My parents never questioned my choice of reading material.

My first contact with another fan came on a trip to my mom's parents in Des Moines. In 1974, Ivor Rogers opened his first store, The Time Machine, in West Des Moines. It was three rooms full of pulps, paperbacks, old hardcovers, digests, artwork, fanzines and just about anything else related to Science Fiction and fandom. Ivor was the first person I had ever met with whom I could hold an intelligent conversation about writers, artists, and Science Fiction in general. He had also been to conventions and knew some of the writers personally. I thought it was heaven!

My dad was more cautious. Years later, he told me that he went into the store the first time in order to see what this place was all about that had me so excited. He said that when he first saw the narrow steps up from the side entrance of the building, then saw what appeared to be a haphazard collection of books and magazines presided over by a scraggly-looking balding, middle-aged man, we was not sure that I should be going into such a place. Nevertheless, he spent some time there on his first visit. He looked around the three rooms of books until he began to see that in spite of first appearances, there was some kind of order to it. He also talked with Ivor and decided that he was okay after all. That my dad was willing to take the time to see beyond his own first impressions says a great deal about who he is

and how he was willing to let me follow my own path.

A few years later, my parents were looking for a Christmas present for me and asked Ivor what I might like to have. He handed them a newly-published, hot off the press first edition of The Silmarillion. It was one of the best Christmas gifts I ever received.

When I took up role-playing gaming while in college, they were curious about it and came with me to one of my group's game sessions. They spent most of the time in the kitchen talking with the mother of the friend at whose house we were playing. On one of my visits to their house I tried to teach them to play, but they did not seem to understand that their characters were supposed to make decisions about what they wanted to do. I was a very frustrated GM. At least they tried.

At one point, long after I had left home, the local public library in the town near where I had grown up had a book sale to get rid of books they were removing from their collection. My mom bought everything they had by Edgar Rice Burroughs and gave them to me the next time she saw me. This is how I have come to have so many well-worn hardcover Burroughs books in the Grosset and Dunlap and A. L. Burt editions. It was a joy to receive them, but I have secretly wished that I could have clued her in about Sax Rohmer and Herman Landon as well.

Through the years they have understood that fandom is important to me and that on occasion I may choose fanac over something they would like me to do. They often want to hear about the conventions

I've attended, and my mom, never quite understanding that a masquerade is a costume contest often asks, "So, what did you wear?"

Mom and dad, please know that I am grateful for all of the ways you have supported this funny hobby of mine. I know that you have not always understood it, but I am thankful that you made the effort to let me explore it in my own way. Thanks for being my utterly cool non-fannish parents.



Art by Genevieve

## Anti-Theft Device Included

Tara Wayne



If you're a fan, likely as not you never grew out of wanting toys. Of course, "toy" is a matter of perspective. For some grown-up people, a "toy" is a Nissan 350Z "Nismo" or a Mustang GT500. For other grown-ups, a "toy" is a 60-inch plasma-screen, home entertainment system. Fans are more likely to collect books, models from Star Trek, action figures, bubble-gum cards and videos. To that list you could add coins, fossils, toy soldiers, and a myriad other things I'm forced to plead guilty to collecting myself.



I'd have to go farther, and say that my interest in acquiring new toys of almost any kind was a prime motivation for getting out of the house at one time. I had long ago explored every nook and cranny of my neighborhood. As I get on in years, it becomes more difficult to walk two miles just to leave behind the familiar streets and shop-fronts before *beginning* to see fresh sights. I evolved into a new pattern of behavior. Instead of wandering aimlessly, my walks became purposeful. I had a goal. That

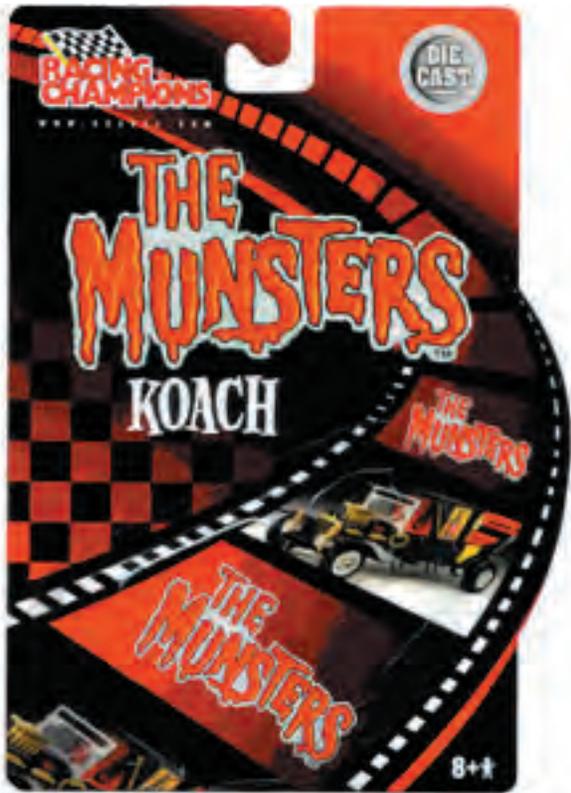
goal had a name.

Wal-Mart.



The toy section had a brisk turn-over, so every couple of weeks there was sure to be something I hadn't seen before, that might be affordable even on my restrictive budget. It was a poor week when I didn't find a 1/64 die-cast of a Studebaker 1937 pick-up truck with opening hood, or an action figure of Atomic Betty. The politically correct won't shop at Wal-Mart, for entirely good reasons. But I was willing to compromise so long as nothing I bought was marked at the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price, and it didn't take business away from local retailers.

In the old days, when you bought a toy it was a simple matter. You looked at the box, you opened the box and looked inside,



then you decided whether or not to buy it. If you decided you could not live without a 1/24 replica of the Munsters Koach or a cap pistol that folded into a fake 35mm camera, then you paid for your discovery and took it home. Boxes in those days were simple. Four sides, two ends, a painting or photo on the outside and perhaps a cellophane window. There was never any trouble opening a box, either in the store or at home. If the store had perversely Scotch-taped the lids shut, a thumbnail was sharp enough to slit the tape and look inside, despite the store's precautions. You *did* have to keep a sharp eye out for the salespeople, who would likely as not raise hell about shop-lifting and throw you out of the store. I just told myself I was “only looking” and did it anyway.



Of course, now that I am all-grown-up, a paid-in-full member of adult society, I can open packages brazenly. Nobody is going to accuse me of opening a box with a crappy \$2.99 replica of a motorcycle inside because I might pocket it. These days, I inspect toys that arouse my curiosity as thoroughly as I like – removing rubber bands to peer under the hood, peeling away tape, undoing twist-ties, and tearing plastic

bags with as much self-assurance as someone who had as good as purchased the thing. This is much the same principle by which most leading members of society – financiers, politicians and other confidence-artists – live. Act as though you *have* the right, and you *do*.

In response to the increasingly assertive tactics of buyers such as myself, packaging has improved enormously. A typical \$1.99 toy today is protected by at least two layers of plastic, each bonded to a cardboard backing by an adhesive originally created to glue re-entry tiles to the Space Shuttle. Once through the inner and outer plastic bubble, you face anywhere from three to six lengths of coated wire securing the toy to the cardboard backing. These are not ordinary twist-ties, but heavy-duty wire, twisted twenty or thirty times, doubled over and twisted a dozen times more just for good measure. There may be screws or bolts as well, just in case the product is subjected in transport to g-forces considerably in excess of mere *human* endurance. Various grommets, fillers, spacers and brackets are sometimes also encountered in penetrating a



package.

Where on the box, does it say, “bolt cutters and acetylene torches may be required for removal?”



As often as not, security doesn't end with physical barriers. The Pharaohs were buried after a process of mummification hardly more complex than modern packaging. And, like the mummies of the Pharaohs, unwrapping a modern package brings disquieting surprises to view. Not magic talismans or sacred scarabs to warn of dire curses should the looter proceed in his desecration. Rather, strange little strips of rubbery material stuck to the plastic or cardboard. You find them in the packaging of DVDs and CDs, as well as in most toys.

They can be peeled off... with varying degrees of difficulty. On the back, you'll find an adhesive strip, and inside is either a tiny



circuit sensitive to radio frequencies, a strip of magnetic tape or a tiny bit of metal foil. Try to remove the packaged item from the store and something like a Klingon battle-alarm will sound at the door... often, even when you attempt to leave with a purchase made previously, resulting in much embarrassment.

Of course, all this inconvenient nonsense is the legitimate response to the efforts of generations of dedicated shoplifters, who have evolved cunning and ingenious methods to open a package before surreptitiously removing its contents. I don't know how many times I've seen a bubble-pack hanging on its hook in the toy section of Toys-R-U's, with nothing in it. I once found an authentic 1/72 LCM3 U.S. Navy landing craft with every part intact except for the three crew men who were supposed to be impossible to remove. They *had* been removed... somehow. Why? I don't know. But I took advantage of

the situation to show the toy to the manager and demand a discount on damaged goods, thus saving three dollars on an item I was prepared to buy in any case.

I wonder whether the war between shoplifters and packagers might not finally go too far one of these days. Computer chips, embedded in the cardboard or plastic, will use remote sensors in the store to appraise your intentions as soon as you lift the item from its shelf. Depending on your subsequent actions, other sensors will follow you from department to department. On the least suspicion, a cool, dispassionate silicon intelligence may make the decision to summon the police – or taser you from hidden sites. For his part, the shoplifter may bring into play some high technology of his own. A key chain, from which an innocent-looking Pikachu dangles, may jam Radio Detection Identification systems. A simple pair of nail clippers might in reality be a carbon-

steel wire-cutter, capable of exerting a force of up to 350 pounds per square centimeter. Configured differently, it might also loosen eight different kinds of screws.

Where does all this leave the innocent toy collector, such as you or me? Probably gasping in frustration at home, as we struggle to open our legitimate purchases. Perhaps, for the benefit of us who actually pay money for our toys, the makers would be so good as to print instructions for opening on the back of the box? But that would only make it easier for shoplifters. It seems as though there is nothing left but for the retail outlet to give printed instructions for opening each individual package at the checkout counter.

Failing that, we could fall back on time-honoured practice and just use our teeth.



#### ROVER MISSION TO MARS!

The Mars Pathfinder spacecraft is scheduled to land, cushioned by giant airbags, on Mars on the Fourth of July, 1997, after a 7-month voyage through space. The Sojourner™ Mars Rover™ will drive out to explore the Martian terrain and transmit data and pictures back to Earth!

Spin by the official HOT WHEELS™ Web Site at [www.hotwheels.com](http://www.hotwheels.com) for more information about the first remote-control vehicle to run on another planet!



Venture into the real world with HOT WHEELS™ Action Packs! Create your own daring adventures! Combine packs for more exciting races, stunts, and real world fun! Add Action Packs to your HOT WHEELS site! COLLECT THEM ALL!

**Letter Graded Mail**

**Sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org  
by our gentle readers**

Dear Chris:

Hello, you crispy critter you! You actually lit your beard on fire while making dinner? Shouldn't get that close to the burner, I guess. We need pictures of the you with no beard. In the meantime, I need to get you some comments on issues 240 and 241 of The Drink Tank.

The DUFF race continues onwards...best choice of candidates in a long time. Getting fandom shouldn't be that hard for some people, but those people probably don't play well with others. Look up Stompin' Tom Connors. I dare you. At the last anime con I attended, I saw so many people who looked like they might lead dreary, dishwater lives dress up in something anime-looking and sometimes very skimpy, and they seemed to be in their element. As you say, they were having a blast. A loc on Exhibition Hall real soon now. Save me some space.

**As you can see, I've given it some more space around these parts. Vote People!!!**

I don't want to see it, but I expect to see at least two websites in the running for Best Fanzine. It feels like uncaring kids coming and stealing your treasure. I wish that fanzines could win their own category...even if there was a Best Webzine or Best Website category, they'd still go for Best Fanzine.

**It sadly doesn't seem like anyone's interested in keeping Best Fanzines for Fanzines. Yeah, I think there should be a**

**category for Podcasts, Blogs, etc, but I don't think it should be a category that already has a strong definition.**

Lately, I have been feeling like local fandom has passed me by. At the age of 50, I am thinking that fanzines are my future, because there isn't much demand for us, even with our level of experience. Guess younger fans have



to learn from doing as well, and they need the opportunity to do it, too. Some of that feeling came from delivering some Ad Astra flyers to a brand-new furry con in Toronto, called Furnal Equinox. Don't know if Taral knew about that convention, or if that convention knew about Taral. Yes, even furry fandom had its own written fanac network, and I think that except for Rowrbrazzle, it's just about all gone. the Internet has provided so much, yet taken so much away. (Even if I am feeling too old to work on SF conventions now, there may be a steampunk convention coming up in the city of Hamilton, to the west. A steampunk group there is eager to get a con going, and seeing that steampunk also attracts a fair number of older fans, maybe that where our next niche is. **There are still Furry zines, and blogs and podcasts and what have you, that have in many ways came from the APAs in a way. It's odd if Taral isn't well-known by them because he's widely known at Further Confusion, at least among the folks I hung out with at the Art Den. I'll fly out for a Toronto Steampunk con. I can't make the one in Edmonton, but I've got ears on the inside of that one!**

Ah, the Vancouver Winter Olympics, the greatest games ever for us. We did break the jinx of never having won a gold medal at an Olympics on Canadian soil; more like smashed it, with 14 gold medals, more than anyone else. That was a week of feelgood for everyone here. You understand curling, Chris? It's like big marbles on ice. Norway beat Canada for the women's competition, and Canada beat Norway for the men's gold. We've always had

reason to sing our national anthem, but no reason big enough than this. Comments on the weird closing ceremonies? I liked how the organizers made fun of themselves and the opening ceremonies by getting the part of the cauldron that failed to work finally working and lit. That was a smile that started a nationwide WTF? experience.

**Oh, I get Curling! I love it. I'd love to start GLOC- Gorgeous Ladies of Curling! It'd be an awesome league of hot women and big stones. And there's always a reason to sing the Canadian National Anthem. Oh, Canadia, your flag is white and red...**

241...I knew that the best granite for curling stones came from Scotland (Ailsa Craig, if I recall), but a very good stone also comes from Northern Wales. I had no idea that curling stones were so expensive. There used to be a major curling rink just south of where we live, but it costs money to keep the building and property.

**I've never gotten to play (there is one rink around here that has a set of stones, but I've never made it out there.**

I got my Journey Planet, and I owe you a loc there, too. Same goes for Exhibition Hall. There's a lot of zines coming out recently, and just for your information Nick Ottens' Gatehouse Gazette II is now available off his website.

**Indeed it is, and it's got an Editorial that has garnered all sorts of negative attention.**

I am on the ballot for this year's Auroras Awards. I've been nominated for fan-writing, a nice generic term for fan activity most local fans don't understand, and I think this year, my

chances are fairly good, but one local media SF club participates en masse, and I suspect we'll all lose to an astronomer who gave a lecture at one club meeting. It is still an honour to be nominated, and to still be nominated at this stage in my fannish career.

**Congrats, big guy! I also noticed the Jeff Boman was also nominated for The Original Universe. Good on ya!**

There's still a lot of zines to respond to, so this will go off to you, and I keep all the .pdfed zines I receive on a thumbdrive. It's the only way I keep up... Take it easy, grow back that beard, and see you soon with another loc.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

**Thanks much, Lloyd!**

**And now...Jeff Boman!**

Not surprisingly Lloyd appears in the local here too. :) As with Chris I owe thanks to Yvonne for nominating me for DUFF (thus his support for me here, John)... I have a LOC for my zine now by John Purcell and a zine from John Hertz. This is cool; we're in competition, but not war. Obviously I hope to win, but just strengthening our respective fandom circles is a good thing.

**That's one thing I find great about the fan Funds: we're pretty much all friends. There was a year, I believe the year that Dave Langford won, where the candidates issued a single zine promoting both of their candidacy. I will not even go into how awesome the race that went on between Anne & Bryan and Frank this year was!**

The Winter Olympics are now over. Canada holds the new record for most gold

medals won by the host nation. We also broke the fictional curse of never winning gold on home soil.

**Yes, you used San Jose Sharks player to deprive us of our Hockey Gold!!!**

I'm not a sports fan and I'm a heretic in not liking our national sport (some call it a religion) hockey. I'm not a fan of curling - I think it's more a celebration of house-sweeping. I also think the biathlon is a silly concept for an event. It may have been useful in the 1800s, but now it feels like a stunt in a James Bond film, not a sport.

**Now, if assassination attempts were added to the Olympics, I'm sure the rating would increase and MI6 would have Gold medals all over the place!**

Guns n Roses: their last concert for the original group was here in Montreal; Axel Rose started one of their worst riots by being obnoxious and leaving after just 3 songs (they were already on an hour late). The destruction overshadowed their music for me.

Sincerely, Jeffrey Allan Boman

**Thanks much, Jeff!**



## The Forgotten Recorded Decade

### Part Four: The Young Man Working in the Old Style

Jazz is America's only indigenous art form, if you ignore Abstract Expressionism, Bluegrass, the situation comedy, soap operas, rock 'n roll, the Buddy Cop film and quite a few others. Jazz, though, is the most artistic of those, I'd say. Incubated in America and dripping of American experience and power. Many of the greatest pioneers in the history of Jazz were working in the 80s, including Miles Davis, probably the most innovative trumpeter in the history of Jazz. There was another trumpeter who burst on to the scene in the 1980s. He was a young guy from New Orleans from a family that produced a couple of other significant Jazz musicians. His name was Wynton Marsalis and the album that deserves inclusion on the Registry is *Black Codes (from the Underground)*.

Now, having said that, I know exactly what recording the Library of Congress will put on first from Marsalis. That's *Blood on the Fields*, his 1997 oratorio which won him the Pulitzer Prize in Music, a first for a Jazz recording. While that recording, 3 and a half hours of a piece about slavery, is majestic, I still consider *Black Codes (from the Underground)* to be the piece that should define Marsalis.

Let's start with one of the big things that happened in the 1980s that changed everything: the CD. They started showing up in record stores about 1982. The first album to sell a million units was *Brothers in Arms* by Dire Straights in 1985. All this info is

neither here nor there, I just like to include it. By 1985, there were hundred of back catalog titles that were being pressed onto CD. Record companies discovered they could repackage, re-release and remaster records and audiophiles would pick them up. This led to the 're-discovery' of dozens of musicians, at least by mainstream listeners. It really wasn't until the release of *The Complete Recordings of Robert Johnson* that anyone but the hardest of the hard core had heard of Robert Johnson. Even by 1985, there were hundreds of jazz recordings from the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s out there. Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* was a big seller from the moment it hit CD in 1984. The first set of Thelonius Monk was giant too. Jazz on CD started growing another generation of listener. I was among them. At the age of 11, I bought *Kind of Blue* and a disc of Charlie Parker at the Warehouse record store by my house. I remember riding my bike home with them in a paper bag, worrying about the bag tearing and the CDs shattering when they would inevitably fall.

I managed to make it home with both of them.

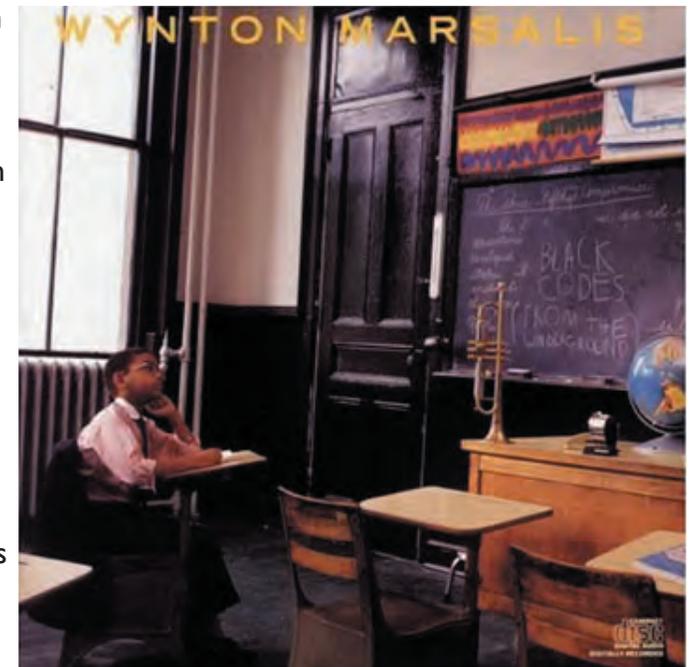
Now, a bit of the History of Jazz, the only class in college where I was the one setting the curve. Miles Davis isn't entirely to blame, but mostly. Miles was always an innovator, and he was instrumental in introducing electric instruments to Art Jazz. I had to add that little bit because there were many folks playing electrics what many considered 'soft jazz', including Les Paul. Miles would go up on stage in the late 1960s and he'd play as a Rocker who happened to be

playing Jazz. Arguably, the real salvo in the war on traditional Art Jazz was *Bitches Brew*. This was a major change and the mainstream of Jazz was seen as following a path towards fusion.

This path ran far and wide, sweeping hundreds of acts along with it. Herbie Hancock was certainly one of them. His group, The Headhunters, were standard-bearers in the Jazz-Funk Fusion world, and in 1983, he released *Futuroshock*, an electro jazz album that was a major success both critically and commercially. Few remember that the first Video of the Year from the MTV Video Music Awards went to Hancock's *Rockit*. The trend was ever-more electric, ever more fusion, even less tradition.

Well, not for everyone.

Wynton Marsalis played with Art Blakey, one of Miles' former sidemen and the leader of The Jazz Messengers. Here, Wynton learned



how to lead a band from a guy who had been doing just that for decades. The beauty of that being it taught Marsalis in the ways of the old. Wynton played with Herbie too, as a part of the Herbie Hancock Quartet. They played it pretty straight considering how far down the line Herbie was as far as fusion and the whole Electro Jazz thing was going. He recorded *Quartet* with Wynton on trumpet just a few weeks before he did the studio work for *Futureshock*.

Wynton's never been one for fusion. He's seen as a traditionalist, one who preferred the work done in the various Bop eras. He's often criticized for just that, that he is more interested in going back over what has already been done than in moving Jazz forward. Marsalis would say that for Jazz to remain the most significant of America's art forms, it is important that we not sully it with other forms, that a purity is required to maintain the tradition. It's an interesting argument. Look at it like this: traditionalism brought us Wynton and fusion brought us Hiroshima. Hmmm...

I can recall a conversation I had with Jay about how *Black Codes* was a reaction to Miles Davis recording covers of *Time After Time* and *Human Nature* for his album *You're Under Arrest*. What could be more damning to the great Art Form of Jazz than one of its great practitioners turning away and recording covers of light pop tunes? This would make logical sense if it were true, Wynton trying to out-do Miles in Miles' own style, but the truth is that Miles finished recording one day before Wynton and the band went in to record *Black Notes*, so it's pretty much impossible that he's have any idea what

he was doing.

The specifics of *Black Codes* (from *the Underground*) make it an even stronger candidate. It is not a retread of Miles or Evans or Blakey, it is something new and fresh from the well they had earlier drank from. The peak of the album is *Phryzzinian Man*, a complex and luxurious track which feels like a classic piece of Hard Bop. This is the track that I keep coming back to for richness, though *Chambers of Tain* is probably the more definite track in the Hard Bop vein. The entire album explores the bounds which had been defined by Davis, Evans and Blakey, going into the cracks that they'd never fully explored. It is not an album by a pilgrim or an adherent. It is an album by a developed master who has found his own voice in a tradition most thought had passed.

Is it Marsalis' defining album? I'd argue that it is, as his works such as *The Majesty of The Blues*, which explores New Orleans Trad Jazz, lack the deep definition of the material that you find in *Black Codes* (from

*the Underground*). Yeah, *Blood on the Fields* is a seriously significant high point in the history of American music, it is *Black Codes* that defined Wynton and turned him into a true star.

**Next issue: A Debate Around the Talking Heads.**

